

Corruption index (CPI) since 1995 (Maximum, minimum and median scores)

In spite of the noisy anti-corruption buzz generated at international (United Nations, World Bank) and national levels, the actual presence of corruption perceived by the public does not cease to grow, as indicated by the downward trend of the lines. The chart shows the maximum, median and minimum parameters of the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) developed by Transparency International (TI), and the corresponding regression lines for the years 1995 to 2011. The index measures the perceived level of corruption, (low index value) or probity (high index value) of a nation.

The CPI distribution has shifted to the lower end of the scale along the 17-year period in the chart. All parameters expose the decay of probity, not only amongst the most corrupt, but also among the less corrupt nations. The shift is quite strong for the median (regression line slope of -0.13 corresponding to an average annual change rate of -3.4%), indicating a deep deterioration of social morals in at least half of the countries under investigation. The long term trend sings loud and clear the triumph of corruption and the demise of probity across the planet.

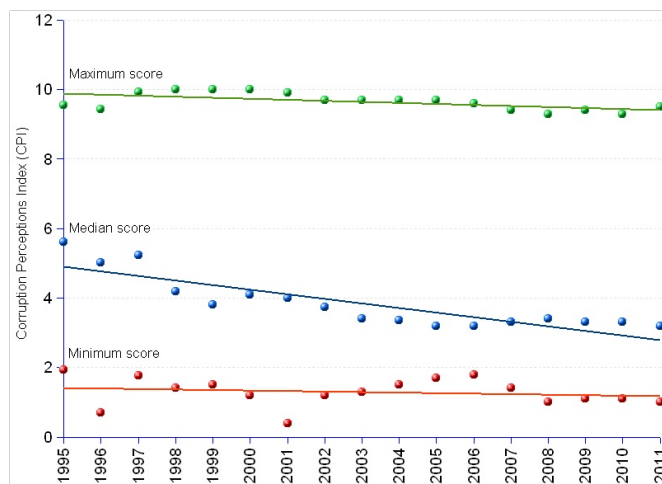
Good souls in the developed countries may feel comfortable at the sight that the nations with the lowest CPI (higher corruption) are poor, southern countries of Africa and Asia,

whereas those with the highest CPI (lower corruption) are the customary northern European nations and New Zealand. Indeed, as noted elsewhere, there is a correlation between inequality of income distribution and perceived corruption. Nevertheless, righteous people should refrain from any hint of flippant, condescending or patronizing behavior for at least three good reasons.

- First, they are not immune. As the numbers unquestionably

tell, less corrupt nations are losing their virtue, slowly but steadily. They are just becoming somewhat corrupt like everybody else, and are unqualified to teach morals.

- Secondly, they are to a large extent the culprits. Developed nations have been and still are corruption pushers, by supporting corrupt networks, actively purveying the necessary fuel to feed corruption, and being the ultimate beneficiaries of corrupt practices in the less developed countries. Just think of Afghanistan, one of the most corrupt nations according to the index. The country is in the hands of a gang extending from the ruling Karzai family to a tight net of local warlords, all of them kept in power by the NATO military, including virtuous Danes, Norwegians



and New Zealanders, and by the huge inflows of money taken from the taxpayers pockets to partially irrigate local accomplices, and eventually permeate the balance sheets of a myriad of mercenary services, construction companies, base maintenance providers, arms dealers, weapons and ammunition makers, private intelligence outfits and a number of private consultants, all of them residents in god-fearing, lily-white nations.

Another example. As we write this comment, the pharma giant Pfizer and its subsidiary Wyeth have been fined by the SEC for paying off officials, doctors and healthcare professionals in Bulgaria, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Italy, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Serbia during 2001-2007 in violation of the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

For further education, the reader may perform a Google search for the keywords "corruption in ... fill the name of a corruption champion". Responses will provide abundant stories with names of corrupted and corruptors, bringing to light the dark side of a number of allegedly blameless, spotless agents from so-called non-corrupt nations.

- Thirdly, they choose the law enforcement part only to perform crime at ease. Although nations reputed to be above all suspicion have promoted international efforts to curb corruption worldwide, they also have taken seats in the executive bodies of the organizations entrusted with that mandate and have performed a sad show of abuse, self-dealing, deception and wholesale corruption. The United Nations (UN) adopted in their


2003 General Assembly a Convention against corruption. The ink was barely dry and already the UN was shaken by a string of scandals involving rape, murder and billions of dollars in fraud and embezzlement on a global scale.

The infamous Oil-for-Food relief program in Iraq is only the most obnoxious scandal. In its seven years of operation it became a vehicle for billions in kickbacks, payoffs, and sanctions-busting arms traffic, directly involving senior figures in both the international body (including the very son of the UN Secretary general) and members and high ranking officials of several national governments. This has been by no means an isolated case. The disappearance of UN funds earmarked for tsunami relief in Indonesia or the exposure of a transnational network of pedophile rape by UN peacekeepers in Africa are other conspicuous instances of fraud, corruption and abuse.

Another "champion of anti-corruption", the World Bank (WB), has been serving for almost two decades streams of rhetoric deploring fraud and corruption, without being able to walk the talk. Wolfensohn, the WB's president from 1995 to 2005, while waving the anti-corruption banner on the one hand, forcefully silenced staff members who tried to warn investors that an international criminal was hijacking a privatization scheme in Azerbaijan. His successor, Wolfowitz, someone who earnestly stated that "corruption is often at the very root of why governments don't work", while touring Africa preaching anti-corruption, was moving his girlfriend to a new executive position with an extremely

high salary without review by its ethics committee, and quietly suppressing a report showing that Kabila, the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, allowed his girlfriend to feather her nest with the WB's money, more precisely with funds intended to finance airlifts to transfer Congolese children from war zones. What can one reasonably expect when the arsonist is appointed chief fireman ?

Corruption, as suggested by the statistics, is a historical legacy likely to remain alive and prosperous for a long while. The much

heralded anti-corruption initiatives by national governments, the UN, WB and others will remain squarely a smokescreen for the gullible. By focusing exclusively on ethics or on legal and bureaucratic governance practices, instead of fixing the social, economic and political structures that foster inequality and dependency thus creating a fertile terrain to breed corruption, they are solely an easy means to distract attentions, capable at best of delivering lukewarm and low-scale results, but quite useful to shut the clap of critics and whistle blowers. 

Corruption Perceptions Index ¹				
Median, Maximum & Minimum scores				
1995 - 2011				
Year	Median	Maximum	Minimum	
2011	3.2	9.5 New Zealand	1	Korea DPR, Somalia
2010	3.3	9.3 Denmark, New Zealand	1.1	Somalia
2009	3.3	9.4 New Zealand	1.1	Somalia
2008	3.4	9.3 Denmark	1.0	Somalia
2007	3.3	9.4 Denmark	1.4	Myanmar
2006	3.2	9.6 Finland	1.8	Haiti
2005	3.2	9.7 Iceland	1.7	Bangladesh
2004	3.4	9.7 Finland	1.5	Bangladesh
2003	3.4	9.7 Finland	1.3	Bangladesh
2002	3.8	9.7 Finland	1.2	Bangladesh
2001	4.0	9.9 Finland	0.4	Bangladesh
2000	4.1	10.0 Finland	1.2	Nigeria
1999	3.8	10.0 Denmark	1.5	Cameroon
1998	4.2	10.0 Denmark	1.4	Cameroon
1997	5.2	9.9 Denmark	1.8	Nigeria
1996	5.0	9.4 New Zealand	0.7	Nigeria
1995	5.6	9.6 New Zealand	1.9	Indonesia
Average change rate	-3.44%	-0.07%	-3.93%	
Slope	-0.13	-0.03	-0.02	

¹ Corruption Perceptions Index ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians. The country with the lowest score is the one where corruption is perceived to be greatest among those included in the list.