

# **Corruption in Bangladesh**

## **An Analytical and Sociological Study**

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### **Introduction**

This Analytical and Sociological Study of Corruption in Bangladesh seeks to break new ground on a subject which is widely discussed in virtually every area of public and private activity.

Corruption is a topic of interest and concern in academic circles, in the media, among people of different professions, within the civil service, among members of parliament, politicians, government officials, members of the business and financial communities, students, foreign investors, aid agencies and non-governmental organisations. In other words, the term corruption is not new to Bangladesh.

A general impression conveyed by the media and by popular discourse is that among ordinary people in Bangladesh, corruption is viewed quite clearly as 'a way of life'. A recent survey carried out by the Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad reinforces that impression: the survey found, among other significant data, that 95 per cent of respondents believed that the police were the most corrupt department in the land, followed very closely by the customs, the department of excise and taxation, the bureaucracy, and the judiciary. A solid 62 per cent of respondents believed that the primary responsibility for corruption in Bangladesh lay in the hands of government officials.

The extent to which corruption has become accepted as 'a way of life' in Bangladesh is challenging in its implications. A recently published feature on corruption in a leading weekend magazine, entitled, 'Corruption of Politics and Politics of Corruption' consisted of a virtual litany of dubious deals, underhand agreements and blatantly corrupt acts by political leaders and parties in Bangladesh, from the infamous regime of H.M Ershad, to the present leadership as well. But surprisingly, both the media report and the research conducted by the Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad, upon which it was partly based, appear to have generated little reaction. Certainly, there were no reports of a public outcry, not even a barrage of letters or telephone calls in response to these successive and extremely challenging expressions of public opinion and media analysis.

Does this mean that the people of Bangladesh are unmoved by the all-pervasive level of corruption in their polity? Or have they become so immune to its horrors, so cynical about what they perceive to be the unhappy reality of their lives, that they have ceased to care? Whatever the reasons, people appear extremely reluctant to believe that anything can be done about corruption.

Perhaps this is one reason for a marked absence of objective, analytical literature on corruption as a social exchange or process. There are, of course, other reasons. But generally speaking, there is a tendency to focus on the enormity of the problem, on the normative aspects of corruption, on the (undoubtedly) negative impact of corruption and indeed, to perpetuate the notion that corruption is its own culprit. The media report mentioned above, for instance, states at the outset that 'Corruption, in our view, lies at the root of the overall degeneration of politics and of a section of our politicians that we see today.' Thus, corruption is seen both as the root and as the effect of a situation, with the result that its salient features are often masked and its behavioural patterns difficult to discern.

Indeed, as far as Bangladesh is concerned, little is known about the manner in which corruption occurs, the process by which, presumably, it grows and flourishes, the conditions which

are conducive to its existence and the structures which support its survival. Little is known about corruption as a process, as practice and as structural outcome. It can be said, therefore, that there is inconsequential independent appraisal of corruption as a social phenomenon in this country. Whatever independent or neutral discussion has been generated, tends to focus mainly on the political or economic aspects of corruption. Certainly, very few academic works have been devoted towards obtaining empirically sound, theoretical analyses of the subject from a sociological perspective with special reference to Bangladesh.

This Study will, it is hoped, redress the lack in several ways.

A major aim of this Study has been to seek out works with a sociological perspective of corruption in Bangladesh. As the Study will bear out, the search has been disappointing in the sense that only a few works of specific relevance have been found. Consequently, the challenge has been to identify and analyse the literature available, from a sociological perspective. Many works on the political or economic aspects of Bangladesh do contain data on social issues in general and corruption in particular and hence, such works have been included as sources on corruption. It is hoped that this Study will form the basis for further research on the subject.

The Study is arranged in three parts:

Paper I is a [Critical Analysis of the Sociology of Corruption in Bangladesh](#), with a section marked [Alternative Approaches](#), which recommends measures to examine corruption in the light of this Study.

Paper II is a [Literature Review](#) which summarises the broad trends which have emerged from some 38 works which have been reviewed.

Paper III is an [Annotated Bibliography of the Literature on Corruption in Bangladesh](#), from a sociological perspective.

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## **Paper I**

### **Critical Analysis of the Sociology of Corruption**

#### **Reality of Corruption**

The [Annotated Bibliography](#) in this Study establishes the reality of corruption as a social phenomenon in Bangladesh. In some 38 works selected and reviewed, only a few deal with corruption in a general and global context. All the remaining works in the selection, either implicitly or explicitly, provide ample evidence that corruption exists as a process, usually as a form of social, economic or political exchange, often in an institutionalised form, in the socio-economic and political life of Bangladesh. It reaches far, wide and deep: from the senior bureaucracy in the capital city, to the far-flung corners of the country, from the apex of political activity to the minute activities of a rural community.

Corruption is not just an economic exchange, generated by a monetary or 'economic' motive. Neither is corruption an exclusively political activity, motivated by a desire to attain or retain political power. The process of corruption is more than economic or political - it is a social process as well, existing side-by-side with, and sometimes complementing economic and political activity.

As a social process, therefore, corruption is everywhere in Bangladesh. It is present, for instance, in the process of political patronage, and/or the socio-political institutional arrangement called a patron-client relationship, through which public resources are appropriated by a select group of people, usually described as elites; it is visible in economic exchanges such as the process of rent-seeking which (regulatory requirements by) public servants impose on players in

the market: also known as *ghoosh* or bribe; it is visible and invisible in a host of activities which range from outright bribery to more subtle forms of patronage or persuasion such as *tadbir*, from underhand deals involving vast sums of money at the national and international levels, to petty, everyday *baksheesh* which the doorman at a bureaucrat's office extracts in order to perform his normal duties.

Yet, as the Annotated Bibliography will also disclose, there is very little objective analysis to explain why and how there is corruption in Bangladesh. This is not because there are no reasons attributed for corruption. On the contrary, a majority of works either directly or indirectly attribute several causes and advance various theories for the existence and survival of corruption. But attempts to understand the fundamental social processes which are related to corruption are notably absent

For instance, the dichotomy of 'good' versus 'evil' is a popular theme in many works - both in those few works (mainly articles and reports) which specifically address the issue of corruption in Bangladesh, as well as in a large number of books, journal articles and reports, which make references to corruption, while examining other issues such as socio-economic or political events, poverty or development in Bangladesh. In these works, corruption frequently features as a vice, caused by human failings such as greed, avarice, selfishness, self-interest, callousness, and consequently, its eradication is seen to require actions which are virtuous, such as nobility, patriotism, dedication, honesty, integrity, zeal, and so on.

Some works rely on 'modernisation' theory as their basis, implying that countries like Bangladesh have not progressed from a 'primitive' to a 'modern' state of polity and hence are still showing signs of 'traditional' forms of organisation, among which corruption features prominently. At the same time, a number of authors blame capitalism and the quest for 'modernity' as the root causes of corruption. Many blame politicians, bureaucrats, the state apparatus, regulatory policies, political upheaval, tradition, culture and western influences for the prevailing 'high' level of corruption in Bangladesh. Indeed, although corruption as social process is difficult - some would say impossible - to measure, many works allude to 'more' or 'increasing' levels of corruption in this country.

In other words, while theories abound, only a few works are dedicated to studying corruption as a process, removed from its normative implications. As a reading of the Annotated Bibliography will confirm, by far and large, wherever the issue of corruption is discussed - either in passing or as part of a dedicated section within a work - it is invariably dominated by its normative impact - as an immoral act or process which has a negative effect and is thus socially reprehensible.

Which is not to suggest that corruption is in any way socially or otherwise desirable, but only to make the point that there is a notable absence of research on corruption from an objective, and sociological point of view.

### **Sociological Perspective**

It might be asked, what is a sociological point of view? Sociology is the study of the development, nature and laws of human society. Society, in turn, is a term which describes a mode of life, and includes a range of interests and activities, such as process, organisation, structure, human behaviour, human relationships, customs, and forms. The term 'sociological', therefore, can be fairly widely applied.

To provide an understanding of corruption from a sociological perspective, it would be

necessary to examine, explore and critically analyse corruption as a process of social formation, encompassing corruption in the real world of social structures, institutions and modes of exchange, and at the same time, to also locate and reconcile the reality within an analytical framework which would critically explore the discourse on corruption.

This Study aims to approach the subject of corruption in Bangladesh from the sociological perspective by critically examining a selection of literature on the subject, and by seeking through this examination to explore the fundamental processes of the social formation of corruption in Bangladesh - both as a reality, as well as expressed in the literature selected on the subject.

Sociological interpretations must take into account social, political and economic forces, both as societal conditions, as well as rhetorical and historical influences which inform the discourse on corruption. It is also important to move beyond dichotomous, normative conclusions and focus instead on corruption as an exchange, as well as behaviour, process and outcome. Consequently, the challenge in exploring corruption from this perspective lies essentially in being able to critically focus on the subject of corruption as it exists in Bangladesh, together with the conceptual demands of the dominant discourse on the subject.

As will be discussed in some detail in this Study, many of the works under review are informed - either implicitly or explicitly - by an ethnocentric, modernising ideology, which is not necessarily applicable to the reality of conditions in developing societies like Bangladesh. The significance of these influences is enormous because they reflect the dominant discourse on corruption - especially as an issue of development -- in no uncertain terms.

Corruption as behaviour, process or activity, is impossible to quantify. Consequently, for social scientists the functional argument which focuses on the 'positive' aspects of corruption necessarily provides only a means of understanding process. Thus, while it might be argued that corruption functions as a useful mechanism to aid social, political or economic exchange, the relevance to social science lies in the process as activity, without reference to its normative qualities. Consequently, while this Study adopts many 'functional' arguments, it does so in a non-judgemental way, the aim being to further the understanding of the process by which corruption takes place in a given situation.

### **Eliminating Corruption**

The ultimate aim of this Study, and presumably of all similar research, is to eliminate corruption in Bangladesh. The question is, how can this be achieved? A popular notion, reflected to some extent in the [Annotated Bibliography](#), is to simply stamp out corruption. There is no doubt about the need to end corruption, but it is worth asking if the solution is to simply mount an attack on corruption or indeed, as is also often suggested, on its root cause. Apart from the fact that there are different points of view on exactly what constitutes the root cause of corruption, it is also moot to consider that repeated attempts to do so have not met with success. By all accounts, Bangladesh is still - perhaps more so now, than ever before - a corrupt polity, society and economy.

It is concluded in this Study that part of the solution to corruption lies in posing questions which address the fundamental social concepts of corruption as a prerequisite of all research and especially of any sociological research on the subject, thus encouraging a more searching and comprehensive 'assault' on the culprit. In other words, before devising programmes to eliminate corruption we must know a great deal more about its nature, characteristics and patterns.

It is further concluded that a study of corruption must be more than a piece of evaluation which examines a set of conditions within a predetermined framework. Too often, developing

societies have been subjected to these types of appraisal and, predictably, have been found wanting. When society is assessed within a pre-determined framework which is alien to the problems of the real (Bangladeshi) world, wherein corruption exists as an institutionalised mechanism of exchange under specific socio-economic conditions, the existence of any differences tend to be dismissed as departures from the norm, or negatively assessed, or even completely misunderstood.

This Study finds a considerable number of works on corruption or related topics to be influenced by predetermined influences. A key conclusion reached by this analysis therefore, is that there is a need to assimilate an objective outline of appraisal before undertaking any research on corruption and/or initiating measures to eliminate it.

### **Defining Corruption**

Corruption is not identifiable as a single, separate, independent entity which can be isolated and destroyed. Corruption is a complex set of processes involving human behaviour and many other variables, some of which are difficult to recognise or measure. Even though corruption manifests itself as a force on its own and often generates its own momentum, it is linked to many other factors, and it is by understanding these factors that we can hope to understand corruption.

Understanding corruption is therefore the first step in eradicating or, at least, containing corruption. In order to understand corruption, we have to first define it.

There are several meanings of the word corruption but when we use the term, we usually refer to a specific kind of exchange, activity or behaviour. For instance, corruption could mean a process of physical decay or degeneration; the loss of innocence; a state of moral impurity or moral deterioration; perversion in taste or language; and also the wrongful, negligent or wilfully corrupt act of a public official in the discharge of his or her public duties.

It is this last meaning of corruption, as the *destruction of integrity in the discharge of public duties* (Theobald, 1990) which features most often in our language. Defined also as '*the misuse of public power for private profit*', it is this specific definition of corruption which dominates our interpretation of the term.

Therefore, when we discuss corruption in Bangladesh, we are referring to the exchange, activity, process or behaviour which occurs when the public domain comes into contact with the private domain. From this definition, it is obvious that corruption carries within it several assumptions - of a 'public' as opposed to a 'private' domain; an official code of behaviour as opposed to an unofficial code of behaviour; the existence of a public or state apparatus; and even the existence of a particular kind of social, economic and political organisation (within which the public and private can operate smoothly).

These assumptions, embodied in the popular meaning of corruption, are significant because definitions aside, when it comes to dealing with corruption - at the political, economic and certainly, at the sociological level - it is often difficult to decide exactly what constitutes corruption.

For example, a question which is frequently posed is whether corruption is an age-old practice or a relatively new innovation. In the specific definition which we use most commonly both in our lexicon and in this Study, corruption can only apply to a situation in which there is a clear and specific demarcation between the 'public' and the 'private'. In 'pre-modern' times, when political organisation was based on kingship, there was no clear demarcation between the ruler's public and private duties, rights or responsibilities. Yet, there is evidence that corruption did exist in

'pre-modern' times (Theobald, 1990 p. 41- 45 and *passim*). So was the corruption of an earlier era a different kind of corruption, and if so, what made it different? How can we distinguish between the older and newer versions of corruption?

In answer to these questions it may be said that yes, what constituted corruption in an earlier era was different from what constitutes corruption now in the sense that the present notion of corruption - as the 'misuse of public office for private profit' - has emerged as a result of a particular historical context and socio-economic circumstances. This historically specific notion is discussed in some detail below, but what can be stated here is that corruption as we define it now can be distinguished from the older variety, so to speak, mainly because it rests on the fundamental assumption that the world is divided into distinct, 'public' and 'private' spheres of influence.

In fact, it must be noted that in our quest to understand corruption, it is this very assumption which presents the most obvious challenge because, as we will discuss below, the question of what is 'public' and what is 'private' is open to much interpretation.

At this stage, it can be summarised that while we do have a specific meaning of corruption as a starting point for our discussion, what constitutes corruption within the parameters of the specific definition depends on a number of variables. Consequently, the specific definition which we use is itself problematic and subject to debate.

### **Applying the Definition**

Definitions of corruption are important for two main reasons. First, because the options which offer themselves indicate to a great extent the varied and often over-lapping meanings of corruption and the consequent difficulties in finding compact explanations for the term. Second, because when it comes to application, corruption as we have defined it, is problematic.

While it can be said that corruption usually describes an activity of the public and the private sectors, or of the state in relation to the market, exactly what constitutes corruption is the subject of some debate. If corruption refers to the (illegal) diversion of public resources into unauthorised private use, does it refer only to the corrupt behaviour of officials or to those private individuals who interact with officials? In this sense, therefore, is corruption about the state or about the market? In terms of social exchange, there seems to be little difference between the way a public official or a private individual behave; or between interactions between people and the state and the interactions between people in markets. In fact, it might even be argued that instead of becoming the formal regulator of an immoral market, the state, too, is immoral in the sense that it takes on the functions of allocation in an imperfect market. Can the actions of the state, as a player in the marketplace, therefore be seen as corrupt in a sociological sense? (Wood, 1994)

Furthermore, how do we resolve questions of motive and power in these relationships, for if the private individuals are seeking to secure what is theirs by right, but which is only made available to them if they enter into informal transactions with officials who control these rights, does that constitute corruption? The example of a repressive regime, where officials may have to be bribed in order to prevent torture or death, illustrates one of the varied ways in which the application of a specific meaning of corruption might pose a serious dilemma (Theobald, 1990).

Corruption describes behaviour which is usually unacceptable to society, consequently there are criminal and legal sides to this definition as well. But when it comes to the actual application of official responsibility or actions, especially on a day-to-day basis, legal definitions are not always enough - indeed, under the guise of regulations, they may even create a rigid bureaucracy

which becomes inefficient and eventually requires 'speed-money' or other forms of graft to make it work (Guhan and Paul, 1997). Indeed as one analyst has noted, there is only one thing worse than a 'rigid, over-centralised dishonest bureaucracy' and that is, a 'rigid, over-centralised honest bureaucracy'. In a perverse sort of way, therefore, corruption can therefore actually enable the public sector (and the economy) to function.

The problematic in the 'public office for private profit' definition lies in the reality that for public officials to efficiently discharge their duties, they require some degree of flexibility and yet, their office is also open to abuse. It is difficult to decide, therefore, exactly which act of public office can be termed 'discretionary' and which 'corrupt'.

For instance, as one interesting work in the Annotated Bibliography points out, for a public servant in Bangladesh, what is the difference between coming habitually late to work, receiving gifts, keeping people in power 'in good humour', or committing a corrupt act entirely because of pressure from a 'controlling forum'? (Hussain, 1990) The author of this work, entitled *Corruption in Public Offices: Some Conceptual Issues in the Context of Bangladesh*, analyses responses to questions like these which are part of a questionnaire circulated to public officials in Bangladesh. The responses collated by him indicate that under certain circumstances, a public servant has to be 'corrupt' but a majority does not regard this to be corruption: it all depends on the circumstances. Consequently, while it can be said that there are degrees of corruption, from the subtle practice of keeping powerful people happy, to the outright act of receiving a bribe, it is also worth noting that ambiguities remain and it is difficult to decide which would be considered 'more' corrupt - the misappropriation of public funds for the purchase of private luxuries, or the use of influence by a public official to obtain a particularly lucrative job for a kin or a client.

Needless to say, these questions are difficult, even impossible to answer with complete certainty. Which is why other suggestions are put forward. For instance, some people suggest that corruption should be defined as an act which goes against the 'public interest'. But there is debate over what constitutes the 'public interest'. A similar suggestion with regard to 'public opinion' as a criterion for identifying corruption is also problematic because, among other reasons, public opinion can vary from time to time and from place to place. And, as has been already stated, a legal definition is also not without drawbacks for it would imply a demarcation of potentially rigid boundaries which would preclude consideration of the more subtle forms of corruption, for instance, nepotism.

### **Impact of Corruption**

A significant consideration in this discussion must be the impact of corruption and with it, the moral impact of corrupt acts, especially when committed by the state. Although there is considerable debate about the causes of corruption, and also about the manner in which corruption manifests itself, there can be no denying the negative impact of corruption. True, there are arguments which claim that, under certain circumstances, corruption can be beneficial in oiling the wheels of a rigid, over-regulated economy, in providing a safety-valve from repressive regimes, in overcoming delays caused by administrative hurdles and even in personalising what would otherwise have been an impersonal and uncaring distribution system. (Theobald, 1990; Guhan and Paul, 1997) Examples of graft in the former Soviet Union, and the patronage system in the cities of the United States which originated in the 1830s, are often used to illustrate the instrumental advantages of corruption (Theobald, 1990).

Similarly, it is argued that in the developing world, corruption is a form of indirect taxation

which, if removed, would cause bottlenecks which would prevent the smooth functioning of government and business (Consumark Limited, undated, Paper I, p. 17). Furthermore, analysts argue against the assertion that corruption is a waste of resources. They point out the fallacy in the assumption that resources 'diverted' into graft would otherwise have been spent productively, or redistributed to the poor, claiming that resources 'saved' from graft would most likely be spent on luxury items, not on development projects. In other words, in a situation of chronic scarcity which is what exists in the developing world, there would be other ways in which income inequities would be maintained.

It is true that under certain circumstances, corruption can provide some instrumental advantages. It is possible that without corruption, administration in many parts of the developing world would - at least temporarily - be impeded. It is also undoubtedly true that under certain conditions, corruption lends a humanising aspect to what may otherwise have been an impersonal and rigid exchange. In economic terms there is no difference between illicit and licit goods indeed, as an economic exchange, corruption often stabilises the business environment, functioning as an important medium through which the logic of the market asserts itself. Examples abound, a well-known one being the case of Brazil where a class of brokers called *despachante* had emerged entirely to act as intermediaries in a bureaucratic maze which evidently was so complex that in one celebrated case, it required 1470 separate legal actions, 13 government ministries and 50 agencies to obtain a single export license (Theobald, 1990, p. 157).

Arguments in support of corruption can be applied to many developing societies, where a large bureaucracy is usually so extended and inefficient, that business and trade can only function with the aid of consistent corruption. In Bangladesh, certainly, although corruption is seen to be a serious problem, it is also evident that corruption has its uses. Two works in particular convey the distinct impression that without corruption, business would be paralysed (Consumark, undated; Quddus, in Ali, et al, 1996). As these studies explain, the plethora of bureaucratic rules and regulations in the country is such that entrepreneurs like an ordinary rickshaw malik (owner) or a garment exporter can survive only by being corrupt.

But do these instances imply that we might regard corruption as being beneficial in any way?

Granted, that in the absence of exchanges which make the bureaucracy 'flexible', much activity in Bangladesh would come to a halt. But surely the illicit exchange, or the bribe, itself, is not the problem. It is extremely important to realise that the 'benefits' of corruption are, in all likelihood, masking symptoms of a seriously dysfunctional socio-economic or political system. It is more than likely that corruption has emerged because of other, hidden or deep-seated problems or, as is often the case in the developing world, corruption flourishes because structures have been imposed on people without due consideration of their applicability in these environments.

Whatever the circumstances or the historical reasons, there is no getting away from the fact that the impact of corruption is negative. Furthermore, although corruption in any form is undesirable, it appears to be considerably less acceptable when the state is corrupt. This is partly because the state presumes upon the membership and loyalty of its citizens - something which a private body does not (cannot) assume. Consequently, because the state has a special position, and is regarded to be a neutral, impartial, and representative body which will provide for and protect the rights of the people, any perversion of this understanding is regarded to be far more serious than if the same act were carried out by a private body.

In fact, the behaviour of the state is important for other reasons as well. To borrow from



another discussion, the behaviour of the state is significant because the market cannot be depended upon to be caring - indeed, it is not meant to be a caring organ. As Amartya Sen explains in a discussion on the behaviour of the market during the Irish famine in the 1840s, the reason the market continued to export potatoes to Britain from Ireland during the famine was because the market was not concerned with relative needs - only with relative demand. (Sen, in Abdullah and Khan, (eds) 1996). In Sen's words, the market is an 'organ of alienation' which is neither friendly, nor hostile, simply unconcerned about anything save comparative purchasing powers. (*ibid.*, p. 23, 21). In other words, the market does not care if people starve in a famine or eat in a famine. This does not mean that the market is an evil institution, but it implies that someone has to care, especially if the market does not. And that is why the state, in addition to being the only institution which, under given circumstances, can be expected to be moral, also becomes the repository of much human aspiration. This is one reason why, when the state is corrupt, it undermines the moral fabric of society.

A pertinent objection to corruption is the reality that it is virtually impossible to confine corruption to those areas, for instance, where its effects are deemed to be desirable. (Theobald, 1990). Consequently, it is safe to conclude as the World Bank did some 15 years ago, that corruption weakens the effectiveness of governments, undermines popular confidence in the public service, and leads to a situation where public servants will do nothing without bribes. The purchase of favours is nothing but an unproductive exercise. Corruption enables the wealthy, the powerful and the unscrupulous, at the expense of law-abiding citizens of a country. (Theobald, 1990)

In other words, the general consensus seems to be that although corruption may have some instrumental advantages, it is undesirable in the balance and should be controlled, as far as possible. It may therefore be summarised that even though the definition of corruption as an activity which applies to the misuse of public office continues to have limitations, in the absence of a more acceptable definition, and because the dominant socio-economic and political model of our time is premised on a demarcation of the 'public' and the 'private' spheres within a modern nation-state which the popular definition reflects, it is this definition which continues to provide the basis for discussions on corruption.

As we have already noted, the dichotomy of 'public' and 'private' continues to be problematic. How and why this is so can best be explained by examining the historical basis of this definition.

### **The Rational-Legal Paradigm**

At the core of the 'public power for private profit' definition lies the assumption that there are two discrete private and public worlds, separated by clearly demarcated boundaries. This definition is the product of a historically specific, and ideologically biased paradigm. An integral component of this paradigm is the ideal of the 'rational-legal bureaucracy', a term defined by Max Weber and adopted by the developed, as the dominant model of public service and state-craft (Theobald, 1990). The Weberian ideal envisages a hierarchical organisation of public servants chosen according to merit, who are paid a regular salary according to rank, and who are guided through clearly outlined rules and regulations, to make decisions based on objective, universalistic criteria, all the while remembering to scrupulously segregate public affairs from private interests (*Ibid.*).

While the model itself began somewhat incidentally, accompanying the emergence of the nation-state in nineteenth century Europe, it was, like the concept of the new nation-state, shaped

by major political and social changes of its time. It is worth noting that as a consequence of these changes the state was redefined as the 'harbinger and main instrument of social change', as well as the 'trigger for and protector of the modern institutions associated with industrial capitalism.' (Nandy, in Sachs, 1992, p. 264 - 274) In one way or another, this European notion of the nation-state, together with the structure and processes of capitalist industrialisation, organised under the rubric of 'liberal-democracy' have informed subsequent political development in the third world. The rational-legal model of bureaucracy has been an integral part of this influence.

### **Problem with the Paradigm**

The problem with the rational-legal paradigm is, however, three-fold. First, as a theoretical concept, it is problematic to blur ideal and reality, or concept and evidence. In other words, the application of a Weberian ideal which lies outside the reality of the social structure of Bangladesh, weakens any analysis because, "the comparison is being made between reality and rhetoric respectively, or between actual behavioural patterns on the one hand and ideal-type propositions on the other." (Wood, 1994 p. 533). In the rational-legal paradigm, the existence of a patron-client based organisation, and a multi-transactional culture, and their respective interactions with the state can only be interpreted as a subversion of the principle of bureaucratic rationality (Wood, 1994 ). In this paradigm there can be no reconciliation between evidence and concept, or theory and practice (*Ibid.*).

The second problem with this paradigm is that, inasmuch as the bureaucratic structures of the developed world might be seen to approximate the rational-legal model, it is debatable whether the Weberian ideal, or a particular cultural ethic, or indeed, the influence of western liberal thought, can be held responsible for the establishment of this structure. Indeed, it can be argued that although there were far-reaching behavioural changes in Europe in the nineteenth century which ushered in the era defined as 'modern', these changes were not, as is often assumed, an emerging social work ethic inspired by protestantism and the cultural values which were informed by it, but rather the result of a "dramatic economic expansion" (Theobald, 1990, p. 151).

It was capitalistic industrialisation and the changes wrought from this innovation which allowed the fruits of the economic expansion to be enjoyed eventually by the masses - changes such as institutional growth, mass awareness, democratic and accountable norms of political and social organisation. For the social scientist it is worth noting that it was the "development of public accountability and awareness of its necessity, rather than some alleged diffusion of greater honesty" in the developed world that eventually defined notions of public and political corruption (*Ibid.*, p. 152).

In fact, the sometimes violent intervention of the state in the market was also a major factor in the development of the national economy, an activity which is often subsumed under the theory that market forces emerged on the European landscape, in spite of the so-called limitations of the state. (Polanyi, 1944). The part played by the industrial revolution and the state in the 'emancipation' of the market in the developed world is crucial to an analysis of the future of the state in general and in the developing world in particular. At the same time, it must be taken into account that the 'bureaucratic principle', as embodied in the notion of a corruption-free public service in the developed world is based on a historically specific paradigm (Theobald, 1990, p. 3).

Which leads us to the third problem with the paradigm and this is that, in any case, the assumption that the developed world has managed to replicate the institution of a rational-legal bureaucracy which conforms perfectly to the Weberian ideal is an extremely debatable, some

would say mythical notion. Public administration cannot function without some degree of 'flexibility' and therefore, reality in the developed world is quite different from the idealised role model. To sum it up:

*...no institutional apparatus can cohere on the basis of rational-legal principles alone. The state apparatus is necessarily pervaded by personal exchanges expressed through networks which embody some combination of ideal and material interests and along which flow resources such as friendship, various forms of support, information, material inducements and suchlike. In no organisational context is it possible to maintain a permanent and impenetrable division between public resources and private interests. In other words, patrimonialism is both normal and necessary at all levels of public (and private) bureaucracies...* (Theobald, 1990 p. 131 - 132)

Does this mean, therefore, that under certain circumstances, corruption is normal? The difficulty in answering this question with any degree of certainty illustrates the problematic just discussed. It can be argued, however, that corruption appears easier to 'absorb' or accept as normal, under certain conditions and circumstances. Why this should be so depends on a range of factors, some of which are discussed below.

### **A Question of Perception**

As far as the developed world is concerned, there is ample evidence of corruption in the public sector, involving the state apparatus and politicians, in petty as well as in comparatively more lucrative illicit exchanges. And yet, there is a distinct impression that the countries of the developed world boast of a more or less 'clean' bureaucracy and even, with a few notable exceptions, of a corruption-free polity. The observation of Gunnar Myrdal in the influential work, *Asian Drama*, in 1968, illustrates a commonly held view. Discussing corruption in the developing world, he observed: "Concerning the general level of corruption it is *unquestionably much higher* than in Western countries, (even including the US) or in the Communist countries." The reasons for this impression are worth examining because they point to a fundamental bias in perspective which, in turn, has an effect on how we understand corruption.

A primary factor to consider is perception. A recent poll by Transparency International (TI) of how business communities in some 47 countries around the world perceive corruption is extremely interesting. In this poll, businessmen working for multinationals companies and institutions were asked to rank countries according to the level of corruption and its impact on commercial and social life. In the *TI Corruption Perception Index* for 1997 which emerged as a result of this poll, Nigeria came out as the most corrupt country among 52 economies under scrutiny, and Denmark as the least corrupt. Among the most corrupt countries, there were far more countries from the developing world than from the developed - an aspect which was fairly publicised by the media. There was some adverse reaction to this Index, the criticism being that the businessmen polled were mainly from the developed world and hence, biased in their attitudes.

The stated intention of the poll, as TI chairman Peter Eigen explained, was not to indicate the level of corruption in any country, but to present an assessment of the perception about corruption. To that end, this poll is faithful. It clearly demonstrates that business, particularly in developed countries views corruption as being higher in the developing world.

An interesting point is how corruption in the developing countries is linked to actions by, and activities in the developed countries. Measurements aside, as the chairman of TI again states, "a large share of the corruption (in developing countries) is also the product of multinational corporations, head-quartered in leading industrial countries, using bribery and kick-backs to buy

contracts in the developing world and the countries in transition." It is worth noting that in spite of the links between foreign investment and corruption in the developing world, the perception remains that it is the developing world which is 'more' corrupt.

### **Measuring Corruption**

Which leads us to a fundamental question and that is whether we can measure corruption with any degree of accuracy. If so, is there a way of deciding which countries are 'more' and which are 'less' corrupt than others?

The literature on corruption in Bangladesh contains innumerable references to measurements of corruption, the authors implying with reference to different situations that there are greater, more insidious, more pervasive, and more blatant instances of corruption now than have existed before. The problem is, there is no way of knowing for sure if at all, and to what extent, the authors are accurate. One way of finding out about the level of corruption in a given society could be by monitoring the media, and other public forum. But these signposts can be extremely misleading. If anything, corruption may acquire bigger proportions in certain situations, for instance under a repressive regime, but continue to remain 'hidden' from public view. And conversely, in situations where there is greater public discussion of corruption it does not follow that there is 'more' corruption, because where the media is free, there is likely to be more discussion of a subject - and also, more accountability. In other words, media or other public methods of gauging the 'size' of corruption are not reliable.

In economic and development terms, corruption can be quantified by placing a monetary value against a corrupt act. And so, for instance, the 'cost' of paying bribes in the running of a garment industry can be calculated (Quddus, in Ali, et al 1996) or, a similar calculation can be made with reference to rickshaw owners and entrepreneurs (Consumark, undated). It can also be shown how, for instance in the agricultural credit market in Bangladesh, the effective interest rate from a formal credit source (which includes a bribe), and the informal interest rate from an informal source, are eventually equal in equilibrium, the point being that market forces will encourage price adjustments in order to incorporate the opportunity cost of a service or product (Gupta and Chaudhuri, 1997). The formal 'cost' of credit to the borrower can therefore be calculated as being the same as the informal cost, even if the formal interest rate is lower than the informal rate. (*Ibid.*)

But by far and large, calculations of the 'cost' of corruption are misleading. As Geoffrey Wood argues, in monopoly conditions, when the only option for a consumer of public resources is to accept the terms of the monopolist, or accept total exit, the consumer will continue to pay the bribe demanded for a product because total exit is not an option (Wood, 1994). It is much the same situation as the members of a society decrying the level of corruption within that society but being able to do nothing about it because the only option is to refuse to live in that society. In such circumstances, there is no option, and hence, the 'cost' of corruption is infinite.

Consequently, it can be asserted that the so-called cost of corruption cannot be relied upon as a guide to understanding corruption, because although corruption as an economic exchange can be quantified under certain conditions, this is no indication of its real value. The point which must be made is that corruption is more than an economic exchange. Certainly, there is no calculation which can account precisely for the social impact of corruption. There is no foolproof way of measuring the loss entailed by corruption in a social and psychological sense - just as there is no way of calculating the social 'advantages' which might accrue from corruption.

Although measurements of corruption are unreliable and imprecise, there is a general impression that some parts of the world are 'more' corrupt than others. Indeed, as stated earlier, there is a general impression that the developed world is less corrupt than the developing world. Certainly, contemporary perceptions seem to be inclined in this direction. The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index for 1997, quoted in the previous section, demonstrates that among the 52 countries assessed in the poll, the top 30 countries are predominantly from the developed world. The notable exceptions are, Singapore (9th), Hong Kong (18<sup>th</sup>), Costa Rica (22<sup>nd</sup>), Chile (23<sup>rd</sup>). In the bottom, i.e. 'more' corrupt, section of this Index, there are no countries from the developed world.

### **Developed and Developing World**

It seems difficult to get away from the impression, therefore, that the industrialised countries of the North possess a 'cleaner' polity. The question is, how far is this perception a true reflection of reality? A brief survey of the industrialised world demonstrates that far from being absent, corruption is both present and frequently disguised in the polity.

The latter aspect is significant because it highlights the complex nature of corruption. It also highlights the fact that perceptions are misleading: we cannot assume that there is no corruption in the developed world. Indeed, as one writer concludes, 'patrimonialism, in the sense of the distribution of public resources according to personalistic criteria, and/or the appropriation of public resources for private ends, appears to be *normal* among dominant groups in industrial societies.'(Theobald, 1990, p. 64)

For instance, there is the 'spoils' system in the United States - a 'classic example of a polity thoroughly permeated by patronage' (Theobald, 1990, p. 54). The roots of the system go back to the political 'machines' which originated in the 1830s, subverting democratic principles in order to mobilise blocks of relatively unsophisticated electors. They declined gradually, over the years, but remnants still remain on the US political landscape. Interestingly, an act of legislation to establish the principle of merit in civil service appointments was enacted as far back as 1883, but patronage continues unabashedly in American politics. One estimate claims that no less than half of the 8 million local government employees in the country are appointed in some form of patronage (Theobald, 1990, p. 56) while other works (Smith, 1988) provide details of a complex, imbedded network of patronage extending from the upper reaches of the social ladder, to an exclusive segment of clients and beneficiaries, which include subtle, minute and seemingly innocent ways of influencing politics and the allocation of resources.

In the other industrial societies, the picture is not dramatically different. Here, too, it is generally acknowledged that patronage plays a major role in the recruitment and cohesion of dominant political and economic elites (Theobald, 1990). In the United Kingdom, for instance, where though there is no overt 'spoils' system like the United States, there is a complex network of political patronage on a scale which is far from negligible. (*Ibid.*) It extends from the extensive kinship and friendship connections which closely connect members of the ruling classes or the 'establishment', to the regular dispensation of patronage by the ruling party through a well developed reward system. (*Ibid.*)

Apart from the existence of patronage or what some writers define as 'industrial clientage' (Theobald, 1990, p. 73), there have also been many public breaches of confidence in the industrialised countries. Although the more celebrated cases, like Watergate, Iran-Contra and so on, easily come to mind, further examination reveals there is a sizeable body of evidence about more

serious infringements of the public trust as well (Theobald, 1990 ). The interesting aspect of all these publicly exposed cases of corruption, however, is that they appear (in the public consciousness, at any rate) to be exceptions to the rule.

This Study is not concerned about the nature of corruption in the developed world, so it is not relevant to dwell further on this aspect of the subject. What is relevant to our critical analysis, however, is that contrary to popular notions, corruption is an imbedded, consistent feature in developed societies. Consequently it becomes important to understand why there is a distinct impression that developed societies have a 'clean' polity and developing societies do not.

There are two major reasons for this perception.

First, a close examination of the developed societies reveals that by far and large, there is little or no evidence of corruption in the visible, widespread, day-to-day, petty and routine aspects of public administration. In these societies, corruption exists in the upper, less visible, more exclusive domain of the rich, wealthy, senior members of government, bureaucracy and civil society (Theobald, 1990).

In developing societies, on the other hand, corruption is not restricted to an exclusive elite network alone but extends to different levels of socio-economic and political activity. Corruption in these societies prevails at virtually every point of contact between the state and the market, or the public with the private. In Bangladesh, for instance, as has already been stated, there is ample evidence to show that corruption is not the exception to the rule. It is found at virtually every level of activity in which the state plays a role - from the national, political level to the far-flung rural level. Corruption permeates not only the relatively higher, politically sensitive, and sensitive aspects of state activity, but also its routine functions and structures.

So the perception of a difference between the developed and the developing world in terms of corruption, is not entirely without basis in the sense that corruption 'extends' over a greater range or area in the developing world, though it does not, necessarily involve a greater volume of activity. Nevertheless, the wider area of reach of corruption can explain to some extent the existence of a general impression that there is 'more' abuse of the public office in the developing world.

But the second reason for the perception that developing countries are 'more' corrupt is interesting. This reason is not easily or compactly described because it is more or less an attitude or approach which influences and informs the manner in which corruption is perceived - as an activity, as a social, economic and political exchange, and as an outcome. Several trends of thought can be discerned in this approach, some of which are discussed below. Among these trends, the most dominant - and the most challenging - is a set of theories which have been defined as 'modernisation' theories.

By understanding the implications of 'modernisation' which, together with several historical and ideological trends, has shaped our ideas about corruption, we can unravel some of the myths and misunderstandings about corruption and in so doing, devise solutions which will work in Bangladesh.

### **Modernisation and Corruption**

It is tempting to interpret the existence of corruption on a widespread scale in the developing world as the result of cultural traits or traditional ways of existence. Indeed, one reason corruption appears as a 'problem' in developing countries is because it is associated with certain so-called innate, cultural and traditional traits.

The rationale for this line of thinking began with a school of thought in social science described as the 'modernisation' school. According to this school of thought, civilisation essentially means the movement of people from a 'backward' to an 'advanced' state of existence, the aim of the movement being, ultimately, to achieve a level of 'modernity', which signals the end of the journey. The theory holds that the developed world has already moved from a 'backward' to an 'advanced' level of organisation, but that the developing world is in a process of transition - from the 'primitive' to the 'advanced' stage.

In this hypothesis, 'modernisation' is offered as the ultimate goal of all civilised societies. Through this world-view, the developed world appears to display all the characteristics of a 'modern', 'advanced', socio-economic and political system. In dramatic contrast to this, 'modernisation' seems to be absent in the developing world. Here, poverty and economic deprivation are linked inexorably to a 'backwardness' in social, economic and political organisation.

While modernisation doctrine has been the subject of much debate, its relevance to this Study lies in the influence it has had in defining and interpreting the processes and structures of social systems, and how corruption features within those systems.

Modernisation dogma holds that certain characteristics in developing societies are innate, or essentially primordial. The argument is furnished that a 'traditional' way of life predisposes developing societies to a less developed level of existence, holding them 'back' from becoming more sophisticated and advanced. A key element of socio-political organisation in these developing societies is apparently, patrimonialism. The term itself has been used widely, with differing interpretations, but generally speaking, it is used to describe a kind of extended patriarchy in which the authority of the patriarch is required to expand in order to meet the needs of a growing polity or state. Since patrimonialism relies on a personalised dispensation of political and social resources, it cannot be reconciled with the impartial, rational-legal bureaucratic principles of the 'modern' state.

According to the modernisation hypothesis, developing societies are essentially patrimonial in character, displaying a personalised, patron-client based political and socio-economic organisation. They are prone to factionalism, clientelism and differing types of kinship-based ties and arrangements - all of which are throwbacks of their more 'primitive' and 'pre-modern' roots. Modernisation acknowledges that all 'pre-modern' societies displayed these general characteristics, but while some societies in the developed world eventually managed to advance out of their 'backwardness' into a sophisticated level of development, others did not. Consequently, these societies have to advance stage by stage on a path of development which has already been traversed by the developed world.

As might be obvious to many, the problem with modernisation theory, is not only that it is a somewhat crude, evolutionary interpretation of human activity, but also that it fails to resolve several fundamental inaccuracies and contradictions in its hypothesis.

Modernisation ignores the reality that the development of the modern polity, such as exists in the industrialised world, was the result of a specific set of circumstances, not the evolution of a special, culturally sophisticated set of values. Indeed, as has been stated earlier in this Study, historical evidence clearly demonstrates that the growth of the modern nation-state and the concept of the rational-legal bureaucracy came into its own on the expansionist heels of colonialism, industrial capitalism and the social changes which accrued as a result of all this. The

'modern' notion of the nation-state did not 'evolve', but came into existence both in the consciousness of the developing world, as well as in the physical domains of colonial rule, because it managed to marginalise all other concepts of state and, at the same time, to successfully enter the interstices of public consciousness all over Asia, South America and Africa (Nandy, in Sachs, 1992). The legacy of this colonisation of the narrative of the state has been felt everywhere in the developing world and to this day, informs the terms of reference on discussions of the state, the nation and issues of corruption, transparency, democracy and development. The terms of reference of the modernisation theories are thus based on an assumption of reality which stems from a particular historical specificity.

Modernisation is unacceptable also because it cannot resolve several basic contradictions. For instance, it cannot explain why, if the developed world has already arrived at the 'end-state of modernity', remnants of the 'old' way of life still remain. If corruption is an example of the 'backwardness' of a social system, how can we explain its existence in the industrialised world? Here, as has already been mentioned, evidence of corruption is found not only in the few, highly publicised cases of corruption in high places, but also in a consistent, permeating level of patronage in political circles. As far as social structures are concerned, therefore, developing societies also display characteristics which, by the terms of reference established by modernisation, are clearly 'backward'.

Dyadic structures, (regarded as the hallmark of 'backwardness'), are evident in many societies in the developed world, from the patronage system and the political machines of the United States, to the familial organisations in Italy, to the network of business, friends, family which in Britain provides a special kind of patronage to the members of the 'establishment'. Modernisation has no explanation for the survival of these 'pre-modern' traits in the 'advanced' societies, except to suggest that the process of modernisation is 'discontinuous', hence some old structures from 'pre-modern' times have survived the 'transition' to 'modernity'.

The core problem with modernisation, however, is that although it recognises the existence of poverty, social deprivation and individual forms of organisation in developing countries, it fails to understand the relationship between these factors and socio-economic and political change. The hypothesis of modernisation ignores the reality of social, political and economic processes in the developing world, because they are not structured according to Weberian notions of rationality. Consequently, it is easy to declare that poverty and a chronic scarcity of resources are somehow the result of a particular cultural condition which includes, among other 'backward' traits, a propensity to be corrupt. Modernisation fails to comprehend - or even to consider - the possibility that poverty and deprivation are the most likely causes of instability, rent-seeking and a so-called mind set such as developing societies tend to display - not the other way around.

Modernisation cannot resolve the problematic inherent in the rational-legal ideal of bureaucratic transparency, nor can it account for the reality of patrimonial forms of organisation in the developed countries. Furthermore, it cannot satisfactorily explain why, when the developed societies and states do come under socio-economic pressure, they tend to become as 'soft' as their counterparts in the developing world - the presence of large, immigrant, so-called 'ethnic', or socio-economically challenged communities, living on the margins of 'civic' life in the developed world, is a case in point and worth noting (Theobald, 1990 p. 168). We might also remember that public administration in the developing world is regarded to be 'clean' because it has seldom been tested - at base, it is a fragile system, prone to abuse and misuse, just like any other system (Wood,



1994, p.21). In other words, we can safely conclude that the developed world is not really 'modern', nor even real, after all.

Given these obvious limitations, it is not surprising that 'modernisation' as a doctrine has been explicitly abandoned by social science. The problem is, its basic tenets continue to influence contemporary thinking. True, the bias is not necessarily obvious, and there are refreshing departures from the influence, but by far and large, development doctrine is inspired by a fundamental concept which encourages the differentiation of societies along ethnocentric, ideological lines. Modernisation continues to inform the discourse on development, and therefore on corruption and transparency, shaping the framework within which these issues are discussed, defined and subsequently (attempted to be) resolved. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that reforms which radiate from this basis are difficult to implement and ultimately futile in their attempts to stem the tide of poverty in the developing world.

### **Alternative Approaches**

The foregoing discussion has highlighted some of the weaknesses in existing formulations of corruption, a lack of understanding about the implications of this term, and the conflict between perception and reality. It is useful now to proceed beyond the problematic of corruption and move to an understanding of the reality of corruption, thus enabling the innovation of pragmatic measures which will tackle corruption with greater success than has been achieved so far. In order to do so, we have to actively consider Alternative Approaches to corruption in Bangladesh.

### **Absorbing Corruption**

It is crucial to understand the terms of reference of corruption in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is a developing country, and by definition, poor. The state and society both have to cope with severe socio-economic and political pressures, such as a chronic scarcity of resources, unpredictable political changes and needs associated, frequently, with post-colonial upheavals, as well as the intervention of outside influences which bring with them alien ideas and often alter the dynamics of the country. These circumstances, accompanied by wide disparities in income distribution and the needs of vast numbers of people who survive under conditions of extreme poverty, add special significance to the prevalence of corruption.

This is one reason so much attention is paid to corruption in the developing world. In a climate of chronic scarcity in which a majority of the population lives under severe economic and social pressures, corruption is seen as an unforgivable waste, a squandering of the national wealth - especially by political leaders and public servants who are expected to devote their lives for the betterment of their country. While it may be argued that expectations like these seem to be unrealistic, because there are a host of personal and professional pressures on political leaders and public servants themselves (to be corrupt), and these are by no means negligible, it must be acknowledged that in the modern nation-state, the political leader and the public servant are expected to rise above their own problems and play a noble, even altruistic role.

Consequently, the impact of corruption in a developing country like Bangladesh will continue to be emphasised.

It is important, therefore, to locate the context in which corruption is a problem. In Bangladesh, corruption cannot be 'absorbed' - as it appears to be, in developed societies - because of three basic reasons. First, as explained above, because it is located within the existing socio-economic and political conditions of poverty and social cleavages. Second, corruption is also located within the overall discourse on the subject and this discourse discourages the

understanding of any other intellectual framework as a rationale for social process and formation (in Bangladesh). Third, because it has a serious, negative impact.

The point here is not that corruption should be 'absorbed', or that it should be regarded as less serious than it is. The question which is being asked is whether corruption in Bangladesh should be seen as an unmitigated evil, an entity on its own, or whether it should be located within the context of its circumstances. The answer is clearly in favour of the last-mentioned move.

The aim of 'absorption' of corruption - i.e. to contain corruption to acceptable, tolerable levels - is no aim at all, because it advocates an abdication rather than a resolution of the problem. But neither can the aim of elimination of corruption be adopted without reservation because of the several problematics inherent in the term.

Consequently, what is suggested is that the solution to corruption lies in following an avenue of assessment and activity which is not hostile to the reality of developing societies but seeks to advance in harmony with the indigenous processes and formulations. In other words, Alternative Approaches need to be grounded in reality, while also encouraging the exploratory aims of an open mind.

### **Corruption and Development**

To understand corruption, it is important to re-examine the contemporary context of corruption as an issue for development administration. It is crucial to do so with an exploratory aim in mind. This implies, that first, we must acknowledge the historical context in which the discourse of development has been founded. The term 'underdeveloped' had been in use for several years, but it was in a famous inaugural address on January 20, 1949, that US President Truman launched a term and an era, at the same time (Estevo, in Sachs, 1992). The term was 'underdevelopment' and the era came to be known as the 'era of development'. It was the beginning, in formal terminology, of the terms of reference for a body of practical and theoretical knowledge which came to be known as development administration. President Truman's words speak for themselves:

*We must embark on a bold new programme for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. The old imperialism - exploitation for foreign profit - has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a programme of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing.* (Estevo in Sachs, 1992 p. 6)

It is crucial to note that since that day in 1949, the 'underdeveloped' world and its perceived problems have been at the centre of the development agenda, but they have been there for very specific reasons.(Estevo in Sachs, 1992).

Indeed, the present platform of 'good governance' which incorporates fundamental requirements such as transparency, is premised to a great extent on the development formula launched after the Second World War. Truman's words are important because they remind us that the goals of development which prioritise the battle against corruption, were premised to a great extent on the exigencies of an internationally determined political and socio-economic scheme of organisation, formally launched soon after World War II, in which the world was viewed through several key and undeniably presumptive concepts. Prominent among the assumptions was a western style liberal-democracy, regarded to be the best - and the only - path of 'development' for all societies in the world. That world-view has not changed. As President Truman's words had highlighted, the aims of the United States, followed in time by the rest of the industrialised world,

in pursuing the agenda of development has been fairly uncompromising. The dominant development formula has allowed little room for exploration. The problems which accompany the uncritical acceptance of this formula cannot be addressed within the confines of a predetermined framework. Original, authentic, relevant solutions cannot emerge under these constraints.

Indeed, proof of this statement can be found in the reality that, nearly fifty years after development officially began, the developing countries of the South are seriously 'behind' the developed countries of the North - in terms of economic, social and political stability and prosperity. In 1960, the countries of the industrialised world were 20 times richer than the countries of the developing world; in 1980, 46 times (Sachs, 1992, p. 3). There are social tensions as well, as income disparities show little sign of declining yet real incomes continue to fall. Cut-backs in the public sector further destabilise large sections of the population and people are caught in what one writer describes as the 'deadlock of development' - when the 'old' ways have been abandoned and the 'new' agenda poses problems of application. (*Ibid.*)

Given these circumstances, the only avenue to travel upon is one which is fundamentally exploratory. Before we blindly accept the exigencies of the development agenda which appears to recommend that we keep re-applying the same formula of liberal-democracy, a rational-legal bureaucracy, and the 'modern' nation-state, until the developing world gets it right, it is useful to critically analyse the fundamental basis of development agenda, especially its implicit advocacy of modernisation doctrines.

One problem with the development formula launched by President Truman, was that its roots spread into modernisation theory. But it was not until the end of the first development decade that modernisation theory first came under serious scrutiny and was found wanting. It was at this time that, contrary to western expectations, the countries of the 'underdeveloped' world displayed clear and on occasion, violent signs of having 'failed' to modernise on schedule. Political upheavals, economic crises and social problems attacked many parts of the developing world, including Africa, resulting in a serious re-assessment of development goals. (Theobald, 1990)

The result was the birth of 'modernisation revisionism' led by the eminent social scientist, Samuel Huntington, who argued against economic growth as the panacea of all underdevelopment evils (Theobald, 1990, p. 77 and *passim*). Huntington warned that far from promoting social stability and democracy, rapid economic growth had the potential to exert more pressure on an already overburdened state apparatus than it could handle, create severe inequities in income, and actually undermine the goals of development (*Ibid.*). Soon, others joined the discussion and the result was a growing sense of suspicion about the role of development, as well as about its evolutionary interpretation of human activity. The notion that the western world had effortlessly achieved the 'end-state of modernity' came under scrutiny, as did the structures of political and socio-economic organisation in the third world.

There is no denying that armed with these ideas and influenced by repeated 'failures' in the 'underdeveloped' world, the doctrine of development began to emphasise social and not just economic development as key components of its agenda. Terms like 'participation' and 'participatory' appeared in the terminology, gradually becoming more popular as development administration tried to find new avenues of addressing what it saw to be the same old problems (Rahnema, in Sachs, 1992). At the same time, 'top-down' strategies were re-examined, with special reference to the failure of growth to equitably reach the poor. The part played by development - in perpetuating poverty - was recognised for the first time. The President of the World Bank himself

admitted in 1973, that growth had been accompanied by 'greater maldistribution of income in many developing countries'(ibid), thus acknowledging that development could alter the dynamics of a society in more ways than development, itself, was capable of understanding.

But, even though new avenues were explored, the fundamental assumptions on which the dogma had been based - essentially, a western world-view of progress and change -continued to inform the discourse of development. The ideal of a western model of the nation-state comprising of among other things, a rational-legal Weberian model of public administration and liberal-democracy, remained intact. True, there was, renewed emphasis on establishing mechanisms - such as transparency, for instance - which would provide an enabling environment for development to bear fruit. But in the final analysis, the 'failure' of development resulted mainly in a re-ordering and re-organisation of old ideas, not a fresh way of approaching the entire subject of development.

Corruption, too, has remained a key factor in the development agenda, perhaps even more key than before, because in a climate of increasing economic strain, the proportion of assistance to the third world has come under some constraints and this has added a greater sense of urgency to the need to achieve tangible results. The efficient application of development programmes have been regarded as necessary in any case, but with repeated failures to contend with, development administration is becoming more and more frustrated. The result is, there are increasing pressures on third world countries like Bangladesh to accept the terms of reference set by the developed world.

For social scientists trying to unravel the processes of corruption in a society like Bangladesh, these terms of reference are significant - not so much because of what they have achieved, but unfortunately, because of what they have failed to achieve. In Bangladesh, for instance there has been a notable failure to implement change, or even to create an enabling climate for change. There has been no move as yet to 'reform' the bureaucracy, for instance, a move which it is believed would play a crucial role in the eradication of corruption. This, in spite of the fact that pressure has been exerted on the government from the aid community - pressures which, in view of the reality that the country has received millions of dollars in external aid and continues to receive approximately \$2 billion annually even now, cannot be taken lightly.

Given this scenario, surely it is important to explore -- and not merely to evaluate -- the reasons for the existing situation.

### **Re-examine Development**

It is strongly suggested that, as a starting measure, Alternative Approaches are taken seriously. In order to do so, development administration must change in a fundamental kind of way. It must, for instance, re-examine the term 'development' itself, and be able to acknowledge its implications. As one analysts most ably sums it up;

*The word always implies a favourable change, a step from the simple to the complex, from the inferior to the superior, from worse to better. The word indicates that one is doing well because one is advancing in the sense of a necessary, ineluctable, universal law and towards a desirable goal....But for two-thirds of the people on earth, this positive meaning of the word 'development'!...is a reminder of **what they are not**. (Esteva in Sachs, 1992, p. 10)*

Development administration would do well to examine the implications of its fundamental premise on the developing world. Any agenda which emerges from this premise must necessarily present an imposition of an external ideal upon an indigenous reality. Can development, as it is

formulated today, be in harmony with the social, political, economic forces which it seeks to stimulate or harness?

It is necessary to allow and encourage indigenous creative thinking to emerge, unsaddled as far as possible by ideas which are no longer relevant. The need for this kind of intellectual and empirical approach is obvious, particularly after reading the Annotated Bibliography both because of what the works actually state, as well as because of what they *do not* say. The absence of rational and objective narratives on corruption is as striking as the fact that modernisation theory continues to influence the works which are focused on corruption or social formation. The theme found in many works is representative of an evolutionary way of appraising change - with Bangladesh, unfortunately, at the bottom of the ladder of 'civilisation'.

It must be noted that research on matters of indigenous importance has not necessarily been the focus of the external aid community's interest - even if it has been ostensibly aimed at the 'development' of Bangladesh. Critical analyses of development issues have been undoubtedly influenced by the objectives of the development community which, ironically, has become one of the most influential dispensers of patronage inside Bangladesh (Jansen, 1993; Wood, 1994). The donor community has the funds to commission the more talented writers, researchers, academics and other professionals in the land. Consequently, not only do the best writers concentrate on development issues as the donors perceive them to be, but also, it is arguable whether their work ultimately makes development discourse more searching, innovative or meaningful.

In fact, as two accounts (Jansen, 1993; Wood, 1994) reviewed in the Annotated Bibliography will bear out, the Flood Action Plan (FAP) is a good example of what may be termed a crisis in research in Bangladesh. This multi-donor project, initiated as a reaction to the floods of 1987 and 1988, has proposed a huge investment in physical infrastructure to control water flow. It has commandeered and coalesced a wide and rich pool of contractors, academics, consultants, virtually creating a whole new class of aid-dependent elites in Bangladesh (Jansen, 1993). In the process, the FAP has generated a body of research which raises important questions about the 'intellectual autonomy' of social scientists in the country (Wood, 1994 p. 8). The FAP illustrates a wider issue namely, that as a result of the scale of social science consultancy opportunities in the country, 'a half-generation of Bengali social science talent has been diverted from the analysis of fundamental processes in society to underpin development policy making in the future' (*ibid*).

The point worth noting here is that although there is a vacuum in meaningful and relevant social science research, there is no paucity of knowledge *about* Bangladesh, *within* Bangladesh. Indeed, the situation is quite the opposite:

*....there is much knowledge about the detailed conditions within which poor, rural people have to arrange their survival....there is other knowledge about the ecology and options for harmonious interaction with it. Social science, especially in the anthropological tradition, is especially equipped to access this knowledge and participate in the wider policy process (ibid).*

If we are to really understand the dynamics of a developing society's interface with corruption we must free the discourse on development in general and on Bangladesh in particular and allow it to become a reflection of the country's thinking.

### **Perception of Corruption**

Third world societies are sometimes seen to display an amoral attitude towards the 'civic order', (Theobald, 1990, p. 9) an approach which contrasts sharply with their attitude to a more personalised structure, such as the family or kinship group and leads to a seemingly callous

exploitation of public resources. In an example from Nigeria, for instance, analysts were struck by the honesty with which funds were handled within ethnic unions, while public resources were misappropriated with a seeming lack of conscience (Ibid.). The attitude of amorality, as it were, was summed up in a remark attributed to President Mobutu Sese Seko in which he apparently advised the people of Zaire, that "if you want to steal, steal a little in a nice way". (*ibid*)

These examples are part of similar instances recorded, related and examined in some detail by social scientists of different schools of thought. These narratives tend to convey the reaction of the observer, in this case, for instance, that the behaviour of the Nigerians was surprising. Surprising to whom, is the question which comes to mind. The Nigerians, by all accounts, were not struck by a contradiction in their respective attitudes to public and ethnic institutions. Nor, for that matter, was the 'amoral' president of Zaire. Both of them might well have found the western obsession with 'civic order' and honesty, irrelevant and perhaps even tiresome. The point here is not that the Nigerians are honest or that they are corrupt, but that the structure of relationships in their countries and in many developing countries is worthy of objective, unbiased examination.

Therefore, while it is useful to identify that Nigerians are honest in one environment but dishonest in another, the characteristics of the respective environments are defined according to an alien notion of what they are or ought to be. Are 'ethnic' unions really 'ethnic'? It might well be asked if the Nigerians see them in the same light and if not, what do these unions represent to Nigerians? The aim of the exercise ought to be exploratory in its fundamental outlook so that it is more than the mere evaluation of behaviour according to a pre-determined format.

In the same way, it is worth noting that the perception of corruption in Bangladesh is an important factor in determining how solutions are devised and also implemented. A primary step towards making perception relevant, it to re-define the term.

### **Beyond the Dichotomy**

It is important to proceed with the understanding that our contemporary definition of corruption as the 'misuse of public office for private profit' is problematic in that it refers to an ideal which does not exist but which is seen to exist (in the developed world) and, what is even more challenging, which is seen to be a goal worth pursuing by the developing world. The challenge for social scientists is to reconcile concept with evidence or ideal with reality and in so doing, to be able to overcome the limitations which the dichotomy of 'public' versus 'private' imposes on our thinking.

In a sociological framework which travels beyond the dichotomy of 'public' and 'private', there is no clash between two opposing spheres of activity, no 'clash of rationalities' (Wood, 1994). This is because corruption is examined not merely as a moral or ethical issue, prompted by a concern over the diversion of public resources away from the poor towards the already wealthy, but a key factor in socio-economic exchange since it "refers to a process of public expenditure allocation and concerns an important interface between state and society, between state and market, or more accurately a process of marketisation of the state in the provision of public services." (*Ibid.*, p. 533)

This approach leads to the realisation that corruption is relevant *beyond* the (justifiable) concern over misappropriation or misuse of scarce resources. As Geoffrey Wood convincingly argues, what is significant for social scientists is the relevance of corruption as a pattern of behaviour, together with its structures and codes, determining to a considerable extent how all public services are managed in absolute rent-seeking conditions. (Wood, 1994)

According to Wood's analysis, markets and states interact in a complex manner, almost always with some degree of rent-seeking. In countries like Bangladesh, where the state plays a major role in the market, the suggestion that privatisation of public services will remove conditions for rent-seeking ignores the reality of imperfect market conditions. In these societies, transactions within the so-called marketplace resemble those between the state and its clients, hence there is no 'clash' of opposing rationalities, but rather what may be called a state of 'parallel rationalities'. It might be argued, therefore, that instead of becoming the formal regulator of an immoral market, the state, too, is immoral in the sense that it takes on the functions of allocation in an imperfect market (*ibid*). Can the actions of the state therefore be seen as corrupt in a sociological sense?

Furthermore, since the state (usually in a local form) remains an actor in the marketplace anyway, (through subsidies, projects, target allocations) the cultures of these two theoretically contrasted systems of allocation are seen to have actually merged, empirically. As Wood concludes, this seems to be an important way of understanding this 'frontier' in rural development administration. Furthermore, it renders the 'good governance' conditionality hopelessly unrealistic to actually existing processes, because if it is seen that imperfect markets coexist in the same institutional space with imperfect official service provision, then it is also clear that people, even poor people, will obtain service in this complex structure.

What is important, therefore, is to try to determine how the poor will overcome the challenges of the real world, which includes rent-seeking. A key aim of the exercise must be to suggest how the poor might access the services or resources which the state provides for them. An innovative suggestion is to focus on the 'resource profile' of the poor (Wood, 1994, p. 19). The term refers to several innovative and indigenously inspired ideas about human capital development among the poor, focusing specifically on four categories of resources: material, human, social and cultural (Wood, 1994, p. 19, 539, 490 and *passim*). It is by strengthening this profile that it may be possible to change the terms of reference under which the poor are marginalised and prevented from accessing resources (*ibid*, p. 539).

The aim of development as a means of making social and economic changes for the improvement of the people, and this includes controlling corruption, must be to enable people to cope with the "real world of service provision rather than an *imaginary* one of transparent bureaucratic allocation". It cannot be over-emphasised, therefore, that the real world is a "complex and opaque place and the discourse of development administration does the poor no favours when it fails to recognise this." (*Ibid.*, p. 540)

It is worth reiterating that although a chronic scarcity of resources provides fertile ground for corruption, it is not always eradicated in conditions of economic growth. In fact, experience demonstrates that slower, more consistent economic growth accompanied by other mechanisms of sustainable change, usually translate into overall improvements in social welfare and political organisation. By contrast, an upsurge in economic growth invariably creates higher levels of corruption, as well as of social and political instability.

Growth itself, therefore, is not the key variable for the eradication of corruption but rather, a particular kind of growth. This denotes that a more holistic approach is required, together with an emphasis on mechanisms which support economic changes.

### **Politics, Civil Society and the State**

Several important and related issues require special attention in the quest to understand the nature of corruption - the political process, civil society and the state.

Political pressures continue to play a vital role in sustaining corruption in Bangladesh. Politics is so permeated by graft that a political leader who is not perceived to be corrupt is singled out for recognition. A good example is that of the late Ziaur Rahman, whose track record as a politician was not unblemished by any means: patronage was not unknown during his regime and as a leader he was, as one analyst puts it, "ruthless to his militant and armed opposition..."(Jahan, 1980, p. 221). Nevertheless, Ziaur Rahman's reputation as a leader of personal integrity has seldom been questioned, even by his most virulent opponents. (Novak, 1993, p. 182) Indeed, he is arguably, the only leader in Bangladesh to have had a reputation for personal integrity.

By contrast, the regime of the father of the nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman - and even his personal integrity - have been implicitly and explicitly tarnished. Granted, the early years of his government were also the most turbulent in the country's history, but it was, nevertheless, a corrupt polity - a reality which has been well-documented (Maudud, 1983). Similar accounts have been recorded about another former leader, H.M. Ershad, whose regime was marked by a level of corruption which was reputed to be of immense proportions (Muhith, 1991).

The point which is being made here is that the perception of corruption at the highest levels of government has serious negative effects on the morale of a nation, a point which is more than evident in many of the works which are reviewed in the [Annotated Bibliography](#). Furthermore, since political corruption affects the social structures of a society in no uncertain terms, normative assessments of the impact of corruption are to be expected. Nevertheless, in order to address the problem it is necessary to adopt an objective approach. Thus, while columnists and political writers are useful in providing an important context to political corruption in Bangladesh, in order to comprehend the process of corruption, these works alone are fairly inadequate.

Similarly, the role of civil society in supporting the smooth functioning of the political process within a liberal-democracy is well established. If the historical specificity of liberal-democracy, the nation-state and the rational-legal model of bureaucracy are examined, it will be seen that they emerged as a consequence of several simultaneously occurring events, and under specific circumstances. Among these, an important condition was the growth of a bourgeoisie which was independent of the political elite and the landed aristocracy - an element which is largely absent from post-colonial and post-modern societies in the third world (Theobald, 1990, p. 94) . There are historical reasons for these conditions, but the moot question here is how these conditions can be improved in order to support the growth of independent, well-informed, self-sufficient and potentially influential bourgeoisie.

Civil society is weak in any case in developing countries like Bangladesh, and it is further destabilised by the presence of a 'bureaucratic bourgeoisie', which seeks to extract benefits from and through the state and its resources, gravely impeding mass participation in socio-economic and political processes, even as it inculcates an insidious level of rent-seeking and patronage within and from the state apparatus (Theobald, 1990, p. 95). To support the growth of different components of a civil society must then be seen as an important pre-requisite of containing corruption. But in order to do so, a greater understanding of what is meant by civil society, its various components, their nature and respective processes of formation - especially in the context of abuse of public office - would be most valuable.

Conventional anti-corruption formulae tend to focus on limiting the activities of the state, of 'downsizing' the state apparatus, and in the process they run the risk of creating serious political and social problems. As one work in the [Annotated Bibliography](#) illustrates, (Siddiqui, 1996) the



persistent battering of a beleaguered bureaucracy is unlikely to soften the stance of the bureaucracy and can even make it more entrenched. The civil service is more than likely to pose serious and persistent obstacles in the way of 'reform' if the issue is applied without reference to the context in which it is being initiated.

Furthermore, the reality of political and economic conditions in Bangladesh is such that the dislocation of an important segment of society can - and does - have a serious impact on the socio-economic and political balance of the country. There are many examples, from around the world, and especially from developing societies which demonstrate the dangers inherent in launching an all-out assault on the bureaucracy (Theobald, 1990, p. 159 - 160). A disgruntled segment of society is potentially volatile and, apart from providing a genuinely insecure and unstable influence on the economy, it can be exploited by political forces in the country. In Bangladesh, for instance, the potential political fall-out from any retrenchment of the civil service will be seen as an insurmountable hurdle by any ruling party, unless there is genuine and enduring reform - initially, but not only, from within the party itself. Consequently, all attempts to streamline the undoubtedly cumbersome, inefficient bureaucracy will be blocked, unless the political implications of the action are successfully addressed.

Second, the conceptual underpinnings of privatisation and the cutting back of the state are extremely important. While an inefficient state is not desirable, the crucial role of the state especially in a country like Bangladesh where development is a major component of the state's regular activities, cannot be underestimated or undervalued. Indeed, an abdication of the state's role in the country would be a wilfully dangerous solution to the prevailing situation which admittedly is permeated by graft. As has been stated earlier in this Study, the presence of corruption is symptomatic of serious problems and it is those problems which ought to be addressed. Cutting back the state is therefore useful only as far as it creates a more healthy and more workable administration, not because it dilutes the strength or size of the civil service, or merely removes regulations.

It must be added that in addition to the arguments offered in favour of the state in third world countries, one significant aspect emerges from the literature reviewed. This is that the very notion of corruption, as we understand it now, emphasises the state as the pivot upon which the country revolves, endowing it with special responsibilities, rights and characteristics. Without this understanding, the notion of corruption as the 'misuse of public office for private profit' becomes meaningless. Consequently, as long as societies continue to be arranged along the lines of a nation-state, the role of the state cannot be underestimated and any fresh strategy to curb corruption must explore the ways in which the state can play a more successful role in Bangladesh.

Finally, it might be noted that corruption is high on the agenda of 'good governance' and hence a vital factor in the discourse on aid to Bangladesh. A recent statement by bilateral donors on the eve of the annual Aid Group meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh has summarised the problems inherent in the relationship between donor and recipient - problems which seem to be difficult to overcome. The statement appears to be a thinly veiled threat to Bangladesh to either put its political house in order or else face the possibility of 'adversely affected' flows of aid. It is important to note that this statement has not gone unnoticed - indeed it has generated considerable pain, for as one media headline put it: "It is an insult, but did we not deserve it?"

The point here is that that by all accounts, Bangladesh is aware of its own failings. This

fundamental fact ought to be incorporated by those who advocate change. A fresh perspective towards external assistance would require serious thought being given to the problems inherent in the dealing of the donor community and the recipient country. In this regard, it is worth quoting Paul Streeten who comments on what he calls the 'double paradox' of receiving aid with conditions attached to it:

*First, arduous conditions are imposed which are claimed to be in the interest of the recipient country. If the conditions are truly in the interest of the receiving country, why are they not pursued by its policy makers? Why is outside pressure needed for adopting measures that are in the country's self-interest? Second, if they can be convinced of the correctness of these measures, why does the country have to be rewarded with funds? Normally, one would expect to have to pay for good advice, not to be rewarded for following it. This, after all, is how consultants make their living. But once again, the roles here are reversed. (Streeten, in Abdullah and Khan, 1996) .*

If Streeten's comments are applied to the elimination of corruption, their import is strong. They raise important issues - such as why corruption is seen as seriously damaging by a vast majority of those who comment on it, and yet it is also accepted as a 'way of life' in Bangladesh. If Bangladesh, itself, has the time, resources or the inclination to root out corruption, what prevents it from doing so?

The answers to these questions provide the foundation upon which Alternative Approaches might well be constructed. It is worth considering that Bangladesh has the knowledge to find the answers to its problems but under the present ideological agenda of change, it is extremely challenging to do so. That is why it is important to adopt an alternative approach entirely.

The term, Alternative Approaches suggests an exploratory perspective which is free of preconceived limitations.

Corruption needs to be re-defined as a social phenomenon of global proportions which exists under different socio-economic and political conditions. In our quest to understand corruption, we must resist the easy acceptance of the developed world's perception of reality. Specifically, we must abandon the mythical notion that cultural or traditional traits predispose any society - developed or developing - towards poverty, prosperity or progress. Society, in Bangladesh and elsewhere, is the interplay of various factors which lead to sometimes unpredictable, yet no less valid outcomes. If we have the ability to see these outcomes as essentially *sui generis*, we are more likely to be able to work with them.

It is dangerous *not* to lose the mythical notions of an ethnocentric ideology. Not only do these notions perpetuate myths which obscure reality and prevent the true appreciation of any society other than the dominant one, but also they impede the so-called 'progress' which the dominant society wishes, presumably, to encourage in the margins.

To borrow again from Amartya Sen, the ethnocentric attitude is reminiscent of the colonial mind-set which represented a general tradition of blaming the colonial subject or victim for his own plight - a tradition which actually delayed crucially the mobilisation of relief to the victims of the Bengal famine in 1943 (Sen, in Abdullah et al, 1996).As Sen explains, it was Winston Churchill's comment that the famine had been caused by a tendency of the people to breed 'like rabbits' which set the tone for the inordinate delay by the British - who refused at first to even recognise that there was a famine in Bengal, and subsequently, were extremely slow to mount a humanitarian response to the situation.

In a similar way, an ideology or influence which encourages the notion that people are poor

because they have, in an innate or primordial sense, asked for it, is dangerous. To 'blame' corruption for the poverty of Bangladesh is an exercise along these dangerous lines. That they are connected is obvious; but corruption occurs as a result of poverty, chronic scarcity of resources and very specific socio-economic and political conditions.

Only when the discourse of corruption begins to lose its inherent bias, and acquires the ability to search for, observe and learn from reality, will corruption as a persistent condition of social exchange be addressed. This calls for independent research, focused on issues which are relevant, which will bring the 'problems' of development closer to the reality of conditions in the country.

### **Conclusion**

This Critical Analysis of the Sociology of Corruption has examined the existing discourse on corruption, with particular reference to our contemporary understanding of the term. This Paper has found the issue of corruption to be shaped by historically specific ideological influences, among which 'modernisation' theories have played an important part.

As a result of these influences, it is generally believed that the eradication of corruption will have a 'civilising' effect on society, the implication being that corruption is closely related to 'backward' or 'traditional' forms of organisation. According to this theory, since third world countries have not yet achieved the required level of 'sophistication' to be completely 'civilised' or 'modern', they are required to emulate the example of the developed societies which, it is implied, have achieved a higher level of 'modernity' already. The ideal held up before the third world, personified in the concept of a 'rational-legal' bureaucracy, and a liberal-democracy, is regarded to have been nearly perfected in the developed world.

But, as this Study has argued, the basis upon which the above thesis originates is faulty. In the first place, the changes which came about in the developed world were largely the result of socio-economic changes of a specific kind. They were not, as is claimed, universal movements of cultural development which can be replicated with the same results elsewhere. Second, as this Study also argues, the assumption that the 'rational-legal' bureaucracy has been adopted in the developed world is inaccurate because by definition, the idealistic vision of public polity is impossible to achieve. In other words, even the developed world is corrupt.

Yet, there is a general perception that developing countries are 'more' corrupt than developed countries. Granted that in the developing world, corruption permeates both the routine as well as the exclusive aspects of the state and polity; while in the developed world it does not - here it is found mainly at the apex of political activity. But there is evidence to indicate that corruption in the developed world is by no means negligible.

Consequently, the reasons for the perception are worth noting.

One reason appears to be that even though corruption exists everywhere, in certain environments it is seen to be less acceptable, and thus less easy to 'absorb'. In poverty stricken conditions, pervasive and rising levels of corruption become an issue of national concern and are far less acceptable than they are elsewhere. Hence their importance in Bangladesh.

Indeed, the significance of corruption to Bangladesh is not underestimated. It has been noted that corruption in Bangladesh is almost a 'way of life'. There is ample evidence that corruption in the polity undermines the moral fabric of society. But it is also noted that in spite of this reality, there is little independent and objective research on the process of corruption, removed from its (undoubtedly) normative implications. Most works which deal with the subject, tend to focus on the normative aspects of corruption, often confusing cause with effect. The drawback of this

approach is that it tends to obscure reality, and implicitly or explicitly, it usually encourages the attribution of 'blame' for the existence of corruption.

Consequently, there is an urgent need for social science to devise effective ways of addressing the issue of corruption. In order to do this, it is necessary to isolate and where necessary, abandon concepts which are inaccurate, alien or ideologically biased, so that the various characteristics of corruption as they exist in the real world can be understood.

It is important to relate the perception of 'more' corruption in the developing world with socio-economic conditions and to examine how they influence and create conditions for corruption and abuse. It is also important to locate the issue of corruption in the context of development administration because over the years and to a great extent, the development agenda has defined and set the standards of what corruption implies to the country.

In the light of the discussion in this Paper, several suggestions are touched upon. These all rest on the basic idea that it is only by adopting Alternative Approaches that solutions will be found for corruption in Bangladesh. The key difference between these approaches and conventional attitudes to corruption is that Alternative Approaches are not mere evaluations of existing structures and/or processes, within a given framework, but exploratory in outline and aim. The aim of an exploratory process of thinking is to be able to follow the realities of discovery, rather than remain limited within a framework already established.

This Paper recommends that corruption as a subject be addressed with these key concepts in mind.

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