

## The Fight against Corruption – Achievements, Challenges and Future Prospects

Occasionally it's good to take stock. How is the world changing around us? Is it becoming more corrupt, or less so? Can we learn from other times and places? Last week I attended a major conference to do just that. It was held by Transparency International and Sussex University's new Centre for the Study of Corruption, hosted by city lawyers Clifford Chance at Canary Wharf.

Papers ranged from direct accounts of corruption in Russia, to academic and legal analysis, to study of the causes and politics of corruption. The first day focused on the causes, politics and measurement of corruption. The second on the legal aspects. By and large, I think it vindicated IGI's "grass roots" approach of working within local cultures. Here is a very personal selection of highlights from two busy days.



- Over twenty years there has been a huge increase in political and academic interest (15 times as many papers) in the subject, leading to international codes, legislation and agencies. But there has not been a corresponding decrease in the amount of corruption around the world. Changes to national cultures, political will and practical enforcement have not kept up. Progress has been "dismal" (Bertrand de Speville, ex-Anti-Corruption Commissioner in Hong Kong). Much of the globe is still riddled with corruption.
  - Corruption often varies from area to area within a country and between sectors (Paul Heywood, Univ. of Nottingham). We need to understand mechanisms, power structures and networks of corruption.
  - You don't necessarily fight corruption by overtly fighting corruption – it may be more effective to focus on positive issues of ethics and values. Improving governance institutions doesn't always solve corruption. Get the support of the community and respond to their concerns, rather than appearing to victimise certain people. Supporting whistle-blowers is key – not just big stuff.
- England of the Eighteenth Century was quite corrupt. It improved over a long period, alongside the evangelical revival, growing social protest, and a change in national culture (Mark Knights, Warwick University). What lessons can we learn now?
  - Andrew Feinstein (ex-ANC MP in South Africa) and Elena Panfilova (Director of TI in Russia) gave very outspoken accounts of their countries. Elena in particular painted a frightening picture of Putin at war with civil society.
  - Edward Clay: "Corruption is a process of rotting..." Why are we giving development assistance to corrupt countries, whose leaders are unfit to govern? Western government interventions are often counterproductive.
  - Philippa Foster Back (Director of Institute of Public Ethics): the need to embed ethics in business and decision making. The law is "a sledge-hammer to crack yesterday's nut".
  - Very positive work is being done in Kenya by *Lawyers without Borders*, to train law enforcement staff in prosecuting corruption (Mark Handley, Gibson Dunn).
  - There are some very clear success stories – e.g. Hong Kong – and some surprising discouragements – e.g. South Africa, Afghanistan. Methods must be appropriate to the locality or can go very wrong (e.g. Afghan police breaking up drug trade were selling back the materials confiscated on the black market).
  - Challenges for the future – going beyond compliance to ethics, capturing public sentiment, interface with organised crime, funding of political parties, opportunities from the control of natural resources (Laurence Cockcroft, Gavin Hayman and others).