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FIGHTING THE HYDRA

**Lessons From Worldwide
Protests Against Corruption**

Sarah Chayes

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About the Author

Sarah Chayes is a nonresident senior fellow in the Democracy and Rule of Law Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Her work explores how corruption exacerbates international crises such as terrorism, revolutions and their violent aftermaths, and environmental degradation. She is the author of *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security*, winner of the 2016 *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize.

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Summary

In the past half decade, a succession of uprisings against corruption has broken out worldwide. The frequency and significance of these events forces the question: What is going on? And does this international phenomenon hold lessons for others beset with systemic political corruption, not least in the United States? A look at countries as diverse in culture and political history as Brazil, Burkina Faso, Guatemala, Lebanon, Romania, South Africa, and South Korea suggests that it does.

Patterns

- Navigating between specific material concerns and all-encompassing ideologies, these recent anticorruption protests take up one of the roots of modern democratic development: obliging the powerful to submit to the law.
- Because the corruption they challenge is systemic, the protests have frequently encountered a tension between making concrete demands of those in power (say, cleaning up streets or reversing an amnesty law) and aiming at the kleptocratic system more broadly (such as demanding electoral reforms).
- This generation of protesters has been attracted by a horizontal model for action, and has balked at designating leaders. But the conceit of leaderlessness has its limits.
- Crucial allies have been found within the justice sector, where independence is prized. Defecting elites have also contributed to the fall of some regimes.
- In only one of the countries examined (Burkina Faso) has a structural change been won. Elsewhere, the results have been mixed, with some specific reforms gained, a more robust civil society, and some shifts in attitudes and behavior on the part of business and government officials alike.
- The sophisticated networks the anticorruption campaigns are challenging are highly flexible and resilient. Often bouncing back after sacrificing a few heads, they have been particularly skillful at playing to identity divides within the population.

Takeaways

Activists elsewhere who wish to challenge corrupt systems should consider the following.

Leadership is necessary to give direction to what might be spontaneous and multipolar protests. The leaders must be rigorously principled and able to cross political and identity boundaries.

Consistent decisionmaking mechanisms should be established to allow for transparent processes that can federate participants.

A detailed reform agenda that targets the kleptocratic network's diverse capabilities will be crucial to exploiting whatever window of opportunity does open.

This agenda should be communicated to ordinary people in such a way as to capture their imaginations, so support doesn't flag when some symbolic victory is achieved.

Long-range planning is required to effectively deal with the multiple likely countermoves the campaign will encounter.

Alliances are force multipliers. Independent individuals or institutions within a corrupt government invariably control some levers of power, or at least information. Because kleptocratic networks are transnational, alliances outside the country's borders are also key.

Introduction

With a mammoth sky-blue and white Guatemalan flag looking down on the scene, thousands of citizens flocked to the central square of their capital, Guatemala City, in April 2015. A striking mix of people—indigenous villagers, their skin like worn leather, urban youth wearing glasses and goatees, retired office workers, beribboned young girls—braved the memory of massacres to voice a common demand. Amid demonstrable evidence that their president and vice president were entangled with organized crime in a vast corruption scheme, protesters required nothing less than their resignations. A few months later, halfway around the globe, slum-dwelling Shia youngsters joined with Beirut intellectuals to call for an end to the corruption that had heaped the streets of the Lebanese capital with decomposing offal.

It's happening everywhere: in the past half decade, a succession of huge, often protracted uprisings against corruption have broken out worldwide in countries as diverse in culture and political history as Iceland and Brazil, Lebanon and Malaysia, South Africa and South Korea. In at least five cases, the protests have forced the impeachment or resignation of chiefs of state.¹

What is going on? And does this widespread international phenomenon hold lessons for others—not least in Western democracies—who are disturbed enough by the apparent capture of their political economies to wish to challenge it?

A look at seven such recent protest campaigns, selected for their seriousness and the geographic, economic, and ideological diversity of the countries where they have occurred, suggests that it does. This study examines experiences from the Americas (Brazil and Guatemala), Africa (Burkina Faso and South Africa), Europe (Romania), the Middle East (Lebanon), and East Asia (South Korea). Each case has involved street demonstrations described as historic in size and spread, and often in duration. Many of them have delivered significant results—in Brazil, Burkina Faso, Guatemala, and South Korea, they helped unseat presidents and other top officials and subject them to criminal proceedings. Often they feature an objective alliance between crowds in

The phenomenon of international protests holds lessons for those—including in Western democracies—who are disturbed enough by the capture of their political economies to challenge it.

the streets and tenacious legal professionals, as citizens have insisted on the fundamental principle that rulers be subject to the law. Yet across the board, in the face of sometimes dramatic outcomes, the networks that perpetrate the offending practices have proven resilient: even the most resounding “successes” have seemed almost pyrrhic to many protesters, who consider their efforts incomplete and ongoing.

At a time when some in developed and developing countries alike argue the cultural specificity of democracy—its ineffectiveness or even inappropriateness in some contexts—the sheer variety of these examples demonstrates that the demand for accountable government, for government “by and for the people,” is both strong and widespread.²

But the question remains: what aspects of democracy matter to these activists? The act of voting? Personal liberties? Or the implied principles of equal justice under laws that are legitimately devised and enacted; the comparable weight, across the population, of votes cast; and, perhaps at the core, the premise that those entrusted with public office should exercise it in the interest of the people and not themselves?

By addressing these questions in sometimes technical detail, the recent protests implicitly affirm the value of the basic framework that modern democracy has established. Although the perception is strong in each case that the ills are systemwide, protesters are not denouncing the scaffolding that corrupt officials exploit or bend to their purposes, but rather the bending—the de facto capture of economic and political power, in violation of the structure’s more even-handed promises. Chiefs of state have made convenient scapegoats

in several cases, but it is the mechanics of the (sometimes ungainly) constitutional contraption that most activists seek to adjust, so as to make it actually deliver on the shared well-being constitutional democracy holds up as an ideal.

These protests invite consideration of the effort that is required, again and again, to secure the prized features of this form of government. A sense of history’s directionality permeates many belief systems, coloring assumptions about the arc of political development—presumably

toward more liberty, inclusiveness, and equity, an inexorable march down a one-way street. That presumption has proved dangerously wrong. The circumstances giving rise to these anticorruption protests, and their outcomes to date, suggest instead that government in the public interest is vulnerable to constant and often insidious attack.

This wave of uprisings comes against a backdrop, stretched across about three decades, of abrupt upheaval in political systems followed by sometimes painful absorption of the changes and then rising countercurrents. Assessments of democracy’s viability have pitched and rolled in rhythm with

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these developments. From euphoria in the 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite governments, the end of several long-running civil wars and military dictatorships, and the demise of South African apartheid, the mood has shifted dramatically. As democracy experts Thomas Carothers and Richard Youngs wrote in a 2017 article (explaining the flaws in this new, more pessimistic view), “Democracy itself appears to be unraveling—helped along by resurgent authoritarianism, weakened liberal democratic values, rising populism, and contagious illiberalism.”³

Many of the political revolutions of the late 1980s and early 1990s came suddenly, without the theoretical exploration and practical experimentation that marked the slow democratization of northern Europe and America. As Carothers points out elsewhere, the shoots of pluralism and liberty that sprang up across the postcommunist landscape and parts of the developing world germinated in an impoverished mulch of weak or stunted state institutions. State building often had to be launched from scratch, sustained by ill-monitored financial assistance from the West.⁴ Opportunities for capture were rife.

Coming when they did, the late-twentieth-century shake-ups also coincided with apparently separate cultural and technological transformations that may have helped new rulers buck the democratizing intent. A rising ideology glorified the personal accumulation of wealth. Legal and technological transformations facilitating the free (and invisible) transfer of capital made it easy as never before to spirit that wealth to safe harbor or transform it into real assets—buildings or sports teams or art. The result was an explosion in transnational organized crime and kleptocratic governance.⁵

In the two decades since the initial eruption of postauthoritarian chaos in Eurasia, when public goods were snatched up in a free-for-all, a measure of structure has come to characterize the capture of state-governed revenue streams. Networks have burgeoned that weave together the reconstituted public sector and the criminal world, while stitching in key segments of private industry. These sophisticated and purposeful structures are the face of severe corruption today. To shrug off corruption as “tawdry tales of Ferraris, Rolexes, and ball gowns,” as the U.S. Supreme Court did in a 2016 decision, is to dangerously underestimate its significance.⁶

Rather, in some five dozen countries worldwide, corruption must be understood as the operating system of complex networks that are bent on maximizing monetary returns to their members.⁷

These syndicates look quite different in different countries. Sometimes they are controlled from the top, by an unabashedly authoritarian leader. Sometimes they are multiple, or internally chaotic, disrupted by bitter rivalries (which may take the form of partisan politics). In some countries, largely subordinate

The late-twentieth-century shake-ups also coincided with apparently separate cultural and technological transformations that may have helped new rulers buck the democratizing intent.

presidents and legislatures do the bidding of one or more private sector oligarchs who hold the reins behind the scenes. Everywhere, there are pockets of courageous resistance to this prevailing incentive structure that selects for and promotes criminality.

The role of public officials in these networks is to harness their political office—twisting the functions of their agencies if possible, sabotaging them if necessary via budget cuts or rotation of qualified personnel—to serve the interests of the network at the expense of most ordinary citizens.

It is this type of governance that today’s anticorruption protests are contesting. At significant cost in effort and material resources, sometimes at physical risk, people are demanding public-spiritedness from their governing officials. They are insisting on the substance of democracy, not just the outward forms that many of their countries gained in the 1980s and 1990s. As one Brazilian protester put it, “This is like a second revolution.”⁸

The seven countries discussed here represent only a subset of places where corruption has played a significant role in recent political developments. To their number (and the others mentioned above) could be added more than a dozen others—including China, France, Iraq, Israel, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Moldova, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Slovakia, the United States, Venezuela, and Vietnam—where some manifestation of the issue has upset elections, upended political establishments, or sent thousands into the streets. With this issue roiling so much of the world, and spoilers competing to capture the energy of popular indignation, frustrated citizens and civil society activists are struggling for effective ways to mobilize. They may find some useful teachings from the array of anticorruption protests taking place around them.⁹

The seven countries discussed represent a subset of places where corruption has played a role in recent political developments. More than a dozen others could be added.

The Triggers

It was after ten at night on January 31, 2017. A televised press conference, droning and technical, by the bespectacled Romanian finance minister to lay out his month-old government’s economic policy, was interrupted twenty-two minutes in. Abruptly, the cameras cut to an identical podium, also flanked by Romanian and European Union (EU) flags, and the then justice minister, Florin Iordache. He announced an emergency edict: to reduce prison overcrowding, nonviolent financial crimes in which less than about \$46,000 was at stake were decriminalized.¹⁰ It was the dead of winter, the middle of the night. Yet within hours, Bucharest was heaving with indignant protesters.

In Burkina Faso, similarly, it was an attempted legal revision that sparked mass protests in 2014 that ended the twenty-seven-year presidency of Blaise

Compaoré. On October 21, the cabinet sent a bill to the national assembly mandating a referendum on a proposed constitutional amendment to increase the number of terms a president could serve from two to three. The new provisions would have allowed Compaoré to run (yet again) in 2015 elections and beyond.¹¹

Something more in-your-face set off the summer 2015 uprising in Lebanon. “You couldn’t walk in the streets; the smell was everywhere,” recalls Rima Majed, a political sociologist at the American University of Beirut, adding: “There’s something insulting about trash.”¹² Garbage collection, one of the lucrative public services the Lebanese government had privatized along sectarian lines, had ceased, with Beirut’s dumps overflowing and no plans for a sustainable alternative.¹³ Nizar Ghanem, one of seven activists who launched the You Stink movement that stamped its name on the crisis, can still smell the insult. “It was disgusting. You’re going to rob the country, then you’re going to throw garbage in our face?”¹⁴

Flouting the Rule of Law

But even in Lebanon, where the grievance that set protesters off was as concrete as they come, intangibles lay just beneath that repellent surface. New legislation regulating elections had languished, and the country had been without a president for months. In a move many deemed unconstitutional, parliament voted a three-year extension of its own mandate in November 2014.¹⁵

The recent anticorruption protests are qualitatively different from labor strikes over an unfavorable turn in contract negotiations, or revolutionary eruptions against repressive dictatorships. Going beyond immediate material grievances, they take up the objective that lies at the root of modern democratic development: making the powerful submit to the law.

In Brazil in 2015–2016, as well as in Guatemala and South Korea, shock at the scale and sophistication of corrupt practices that were exposed, and at the webs of high-ranking public figures involved, sent people into the streets—where they stayed for months on end. The information was either unsealed by investigative bodies or, in South Korea’s case, exposed by the media. “It became like a landslide, the information that started pouring out,” says Kim Sun-chul, professor of Korean studies at Emory University.¹⁶ Koo Se-woong, editor-in-chief of the online publication *Korea Exposé*, remembers how stunned he was by the television news reports that “exposed the president as a liar. No one expected to see hard evidence that contravenes the chief of state.”¹⁷

Often, the apparent arrogance with which implicated officials flout the law adds to the outrage. “The level of corruption was so absurd, so visible,” notes Salvador Biguria, a Guatemalan businessman. He was referring to

Going beyond material grievances, recent protests take up the objective that lies at the root of modern democratic development: making the powerful submit to the law.

the investigation by an international commission, called the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (Comisión Internacional Contra la Impunidad en Guatemala, or CICIG), that in the spring of 2015 exposed millions of dollars in customs fraud and kickbacks, perpetrated by a network that included the vice president and the president.¹⁸ “They felt so untouchable they started doing things that were truly outrageous.”¹⁹ For Cosmin Pojoranu, of the activist association Funky Citizens, the Romanian government’s late-night attempted corruption amnesty “showed defiance to the citizens, who had demonstrated several times that very month to tell them, ‘Don’t do it.’ We were appalled by the degree of defiance.”²⁰

Protecting Anticorruption and Justice Sector Institutions

Arguably, the origins of modern democracy can be traced to a determination to subject rulers to the law, *not*—at least initially—to an effort to allow the people to choose their rulers through suffrage. The most radical act of the English Civil War, for example, was to put Charles I on trial. The dramatic event took place in 1649. Recognizing the profound significance of the move, he refused outright to enter a plea. He preferred to face certain death rather than defend himself in a court of law and in doing so implicitly accept its jurisdiction over him. Likewise, sixty years before Charles’s trial, the Dutch Republic came into being through a bloody struggle to force Philip II to abide by the terms of the governing contracts he had signed with the nobles and burghers of his northern provinces—the precursors of modern constitutions.²¹

Echoing this preoccupation with ensuring the law applies to the powerful as well as the weak, citizens have risen up in recent years to defend anticorruption bodies that seek to enforce their jurisdiction over public officials. Romania’s

A fresh wave of protests was set off when the Guatemalan president fired the head of an investigatory commission with a tweet.

amnesty edict, coming as it did amid concerted attacks on the National Anticorruption Directorate (Direcția Națională Anticorupție, or DNA), was seen as a bid to reduce the body’s remit.²² “After the DNA put some big people in jail, beginning around 2012, people feared the government would mess with the laws to reduce its independence and benefit themselves. That’s exactly what happened in 2017,” notes Pojoranu.²³ A few months later,

legislation to overhaul the rules for appointing and overseeing judges and prosecutors came before the Romanian parliament, bringing crowds back into the streets.²⁴

In the view of political sociologist Daniel Sandu, some of the most crucial reforms the European Union required of Romania in order to join focused not on electoral processes but on the judicial branch. In the wake of the changes, “a conflict between political leaders and the judiciary which would have been normally seen as a battle between interest groups became a battle between right and wrong. The population, especially the most sophisticated and hopeful for

change, jumped in to support the judiciary,” and its scrutiny of suspected corruption.²⁵

Other countries have had their own versions of Romania’s controversial late-night broadcast seeking to shield officials from the full force of the law. On August 27, 2017, the official government Twitter account of the current Guatemalan president, Jimmy Morales, announced the expulsion of the CICIG commissioner.²⁶ That tweet set off a fresh wave of protests. In South Africa, respected former finance minister Nhlanhla Nene may not have played an overt anticorruption role, but many saw him as standing in the way of “[then president Jacob] Zuma and his cronies getting their hands on the treasury,” in the words of David Lewis, executive director of the nongovernmental organization Corruption Watch. When Nene was fired in the night of December 9, 2015—“a shock,” says Lewis—“that was the dramatic act that triggered the protests.”²⁷

It Gets Personal

Even for today’s protesters, moved as they have been by grievances of a conceptual nature, it does make a difference when the effects of corruption take a vivid, even personal form—the way stinking refuse blocking your street is personal. For Nina-Kathrin Wienkoop, a Burkina Faso researcher at Leuphana University in Germany, “the genius” of one of the groups spearheading the protests there “was its ability to link corruption to people’s everyday lives.” She contrasts its style with “the old leftist abstractions of capitalism and neoliberalism.” Pictures of the huge houses belonging to top officials and their notorious mothers-in-law, for example, were placed alongside scenes of the poverty most voters experienced, in images on posters or spread via social media.²⁸

In South Korea, what drove home the corruption of former president Park Geun-hye’s coterie most biting was the apparent ability of her controversial personal confidante, Choi Soon-sil, to use her ties to the president to secure her daughter’s admission into a prestigious university. “That made me really disgruntled about Korea,” college student Kang Hae-ju exclaims. “Everyone’s really smart around me, and that seemed really unfair.”²⁹ Lee Sook-jong, director of the East Asia Institute in Seoul, explains that Koreans, who normally respect hierarchies, are viscerally egalitarian about two things: “The draft and higher education,”³⁰ which is a “make-it-or-break-it rite of passage” in the judgment of *Korea Exposé’s* Koo.³¹

Several participants—in Lebanon, for example—noted an initial government bid to quell the demonstrations by force. But today’s anticorruption uprisings are not primarily about state violence or heavy-handed repression. Governments and demonstrators alike seem to have gained sophistication since

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the momentous events of the 1990s. As officials have adopted many of the procedures of representative government—and learned to game them in the service of personal enrichment—alert citizens are reacting to the subtler tactics. Describing Romania, correspondent Andrew MacDowall sums up the evolution this way. Romanians, he says, “view their democracy as largely stillborn. These protests were aimed at completing the work begun in 1989.”³²

The Protesters

“The revolution,” Black Panther Huey Newton is said to have said, “has always been in the hands of the young.” It is perhaps no surprise that youth have been in the vanguard of today’s anticorruption protests.

A New Generation

In Burkina Faso, a troupe of performing artists would roar into slum neighborhoods at the head of a motorcycle caravan; they’d unpack a makeshift stage for a free concert or movie and, between sets, engage their audience in a debate on democratic citizenship. In Lebanon, seven young men, including artists, communications consultants, and journalists, hit on the “You Stink” slogan.

That core largely directed the unfolding movement. In Guatemala, “It was university students,” says Claudia Escobar, a former judge who helped the emerging protest leadership strategize. “My generation grew up in the civil war and a lot of fear—‘Don’t talk; don’t get involved; don’t denounce.’ This was a new generation doing something for the first time.”³³

Indeed, a prickly generational divide has marked some of today’s protests.³⁴ The group that helped ignite Burkina Faso’s 2014 uprising with its road shows, Citizen Broom (Balai Citoyen), was born of its leaders’ defection from

older, largely labor-based protest groups, “which seemed tired out,” comments Idrissa Barry, one of the founders. Other freshly formed associations quickly joined the actions. “Relations weren’t particularly cordial,” Barry admits, especially at first. “We were new. We stole the limelight from our elders. They saw us as inexperienced jokesters.”³⁵

In Romania, the age divide is even more significant. Though, unusually, cities outside the capital joined the 2017 protest,³⁶ some observers depict nothing less than two separate countries, a “dynamic Romania” pitted against a “neo-feudal Romania,” with the poor, rural, older population “dependent on the goodwill of the public authorities” and therefore largely opposed to anticorruption demands.³⁷

Despite the fresh faces found on the front lines of most demonstrations, experience—even collective or historical experience—has mattered in their outcomes.

The Value of Experience

Yet, despite the fresh faces found on the front lines of most demonstrations, experience—even collective or historical experience—has mattered in their outcomes.

“These were expert organizers,” says Emory’s Kim Sun-chul, who argues in his 2016 book, *Democratization and Social Movements in South Korea*, that public protest has largely propelled South Korea’s democratization process over the course of decades.³⁸ “Street protest,” he wrote in another publication, as they were taking place, “became the new normal as the democratic space expanded.”³⁹ Through this long practice, he elaborated in an interview, “social movement organizations have developed a tight network,” which was able this time to overcome earlier infighting. “Everyone knows each other. The leading activists have all worked in other organizations. It has grown customary to visit each other, participate in each other’s actions.” He describes a well-honed decisionmaking process, with some meetings held classroom-style with moderators in front of the rows of desks helping elicit a consensus. Such trust-based organization was crucial not just in bringing people into the streets but also in handling the gargantuan crowds.⁴⁰

Although this South Korean model is somewhat exceptional, Burkina Faso, too, is known for its history of protests—much in the French tradition. “In primary school, from the age of eleven or twelve, we said ‘we will oppose this system, whatever the cost,’” says Citizen Broom’s Barry. “We were always going to debates and student protests.”⁴¹ As Sten Hagberg, an anthropologist specializing in Burkina Faso at Uppsala University, writes, the military’s involvement in Burkinabe politics “coexists with a long tradition of protest and resistance.”⁴²

Moreover, analysts ascribe some of the movement’s unexpected success in toppling Compaoré to its alliance with the established political opposition, which supplied organizational structure and material support, largely behind the scenes. Zéphirin Diabré, who had been finance minister in the mid-1990s but left to teach at Harvard University and work in international development and consulting, returned to Burkina Faso and founded a new opposition party, the Union for Progress and Change (UPC), in 2010. “The UPC played a coordinating role,” says Eloise Bertrand, a doctoral candidate at the University of Warwick researching political parties and opposition dynamics in Burkina Faso.⁴³ Nina-Kathrin Wienkoop also highlights the close collaboration between Citizen Broom and several opposition parties, judging it “not so critical for mobilization,” since many younger Burkinabes had grown suspicious of organized politics, “but very important for media coverage and the movement’s strategy and tactics.” The performing artists and their social-media-savvy friends met regularly with opposition party members, and may have had access to inside information on upcoming National Assembly votes as

well as some logistical support outside the capital.⁴⁴ And in the end, old-guard labor unions did weigh in with a general strike.

The Conceit of Leaderlessness and Its Limits

But between the importance of such organizational experience and the youth of the anticorruption ringleaders lies a contradiction—beyond the obvious one that young people tend to lack experience. A particular feature of the protest style of much of the current generation is its determined rejection of leadership altogether. In contrast to earlier democracy protests, which, according to Dawn Brancati, “do not emerge spontaneously from among the public, but rather are carefully planned by actors both inside and outside government,”⁴⁵ several of the recent protests were sparked by a little-known *indignado* equipped with a Facebook account. Most have purposefully, even militantly, rejected formal leadership structures.⁴⁶ Interviewees insisted on spontaneity and the reluctance of participants to “claim ownership” of the unfolding events. “Tentative leaders,” notes Romanian sociologist Mircea Kivu, “are rejected by the crowds.”⁴⁷

Yet no human endeavor can proceed without some direction. Inevitably, leaderlessness is something of a conceit.⁴⁸

Lebanon’s You Stink uprising may have suffered the most from the clash between the irreconcilable imperatives of organizational experience and anti-hierarchical spontaneity. “It was very consciously rooted in the new social movement literature,” recalls Rima Majed. “You know, ‘We don’t need leaders, the structure will be horizontal and peaceful.’ But the lack of organization was a major problem. There was no decisionmaking process, so the leadership that

emerged was meeting seven hours a day, fighting behind closed doors.”⁴⁹

“Yes, the decisionmaking was closed,” acknowledges You Stink co-founder Nizar Ghanem, but adds: “That’s a good thing, when you’re facing the government. We were afraid of infiltration.” A reasonable concern, concede even some You Stink critics.

As a result of this undemocratic style, however, the command group alienated many protesters. “They were effective shitheads,” says one, comparing it to other groups

that she describes as idealistic, oblivious, and ineffective. “Decisionmaking was centralized in the hands of four or five misogynistic men. It was three or four stars, we lead, you follow.”⁵⁰

In her rigorous study of the movement, “Politics of Coincidence,” American University of Beirut’s Carole Kerbage documents the “feeling of exclusion and inferiority” that resulted, as highly motivated volunteers found themselves firmly out of the loop. Kerbage identifies the paradox at the heart of the proclaimed leaderlessness: “‘Organizational flexibility’ consolidated ambiguous and hidden rules to identify who was entitled to attend meetings and make

Most recent protests have purposefully, even militantly, rejected formal leadership structures. Yet no human endeavor can proceed without some direction.

decisions. . . . This ambiguity guaranteed a de facto leadership without a mechanism for accountability.”⁵¹

For an anticorruption movement, that is a particularly ironic paradox.

Overcoming Divides

In almost every case, participants describe an evolution. First the veteran activists show up, people who have made political protest a feature of their lives. But then something happens: the numbers rise, and suddenly the streets are filled with unfamiliar faces.

In fractured Lebanon, this shift represented a once-in-a-generation event. It was the “first time,” for longtime protester Rima Majed, that “I go to a demonstration and see a lot of people I don’t know.” That, for Alexandra Tohme, a researcher and field worker in northern Lebanon, was “what was so beautiful about it. People came down from the mountains—from someone as old as my grandfather to little kids. It truly represented the diversity of Lebanon.” Especially meaningful in Lebanon was the explicit rejection of sectarian affiliations. “I had never witnessed anything like it,” says one protester, who grew up in a working-class Shia neighborhood and asked that her name not be used. “No flags but the Lebanese flag. It was truly something to see all these Lebanese in the streets, without hundreds of different flags.”⁵²

South Korea’s 2016 mass movement also “changed over time,” observed Emory’s Kim in an interview. “When the protests were still small, it was mostly left-progressive groups. But then, as the movement unfolded, a culture developed—half protest, half show, with music and theatrical productions. That brought families out. By November or December, even the president’s former supporters joined.”⁵³

“Performance art has been an element of South Korean protests in the past, but they were never this festive,” confirms *Korea Exposé’s* Koo. “Gone were the angry, shouted slogans of the 1970s and 1980s, which could be a turnoff. You don’t usually see people over sixty at leftist demonstrations, but older people started coming. They would get up on the stages set up so people could testify, and say they had voted conservative all their lives and felt cheated.”⁵⁴

The appearance of families, or, in the case of Romania as well as South Korea, the older generation, often marks the transition from professional protest to mass action. “At first you saw people from the protests of 2012–2013,” says Cosmin Pojoranu. “But as momentum grew, the age of the protesters rose, to include people who had been in the streets in the 1990s.”⁵⁵ Political sociologist Sandu points out the importance of this age group, “as it is the main demographic that is traditionally either nonvoting or votes for the non-reformist political parties. Their participation in protests is generally what scares the [ruling] party into backing down.”⁵⁶

In Guatemala, says Adriana Beltran of the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), “what was remarkable about the protests was that they

brought together people from different economic and political backgrounds,” especially historically polarized student groups.⁵⁷ As in South Korea and Romania, the key identity divides are not ethnic or sectarian, but they are deep and searing nonetheless.

“What was remarkable about [Guatemala’s] protests was that they brought together people from different economic and political backgrounds,” says Adriana Beltran.

This ability to mobilize—convincingly, if imperfectly—across age and identity divides or beyond familiar sectoral grievances was crucial to the ability of many anticorruption campaigns to mark some successes. In their full-throated defense of nonviolent protest, Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth focus on numbers, not diversity. But breadth of appeal is suggested, if not specifically treated, as one of the advantages of nonviolence.⁵⁸

Nevertheless—with the notable exception of South Africa, where students have largely kept their distance—youthful demonstrators from relatively prosperous, educated, and citified backgrounds have made up the bulk of the crowds.

The Demands

Traditional protests, even revolutions, usually put forth fairly plain demands—quay-side bathrooms and showers for stevedores; maintenance of subsidies on basic commodities; or, more ambitiously, the single French word that was fired at a generation of Arab autocrats in 2011: *dégage*, or “Get out of the way!”

The more recent anticorruption protests, which have taken up some of the issues raised in the Arab Spring and Ukraine’s Euromaidan revolutions, are battling interlocking structures and practices that produce a variety of nefarious effects. They illustrate the difficulties of pressing for systemic change.

For many of those who spilled into the streets as the crowds swelled, the chief of state was a kind of allegory who personified a whole catalogue of ills. However, the more thoughtful protesters have consciously strived to get at the mechanics of the kleptocratic system those presidents symbolized. Given this more complex agenda, they have faced a dilemma. They could focus down on specifics that seem to be achievable first steps, but might not inspire all protesters or even affect the underlying problem. Or they might voice too grandiose or too chaotic a welter of demands. To pilot the ship through these shoals—to clearly articulate the connection between the concrete, keenly felt grievances and the architecture and practices of the system that gives rise to them, and then hit on demands that will disrupt that system—requires exceptionally skillful navigation.

It is hard to see such a quality emerging from even nominally leaderless movements, successful though they may be in generating turnout.

Concrete Asks Versus Systems Thinking

In Lebanon, this clash between specific and systemic objectives may have been fatal to the garbage protest. “We learned from other movements to keep the demands practical, so we focused on solid waste management,” Ghanem explains as the You Stink group’s approach.⁵⁹ But because of this choice, say others, the movement got bogged down in the details of trash collection, which ceased to be meaningful to most protesters.

What the bulk of them wanted—from secular-minded urban sophisticates to the coastal salt miners, the firefighters, and the urban and rural poor who lacked adequate healthcare or water or electricity—was not just to clear the garbage off the streets but to challenge the kleptocratic capture of the Lebanese political economy that had caused it to pile up in the first place.

Lebanon’s ruling network is structured around an elite bargain, under which political parties defined by religious affiliation decide “who gets to run the public beaches, who gets the telecoms, the electricity, oil and gas,” explains professor of public administration and protester Carmen Geha.⁶⁰ “They put on a charade of political rivalry,” adds Tohme, “so they can continue to expand their mansions.”⁶¹ And so, says Geha, “We were clear on framing garbage as a political crisis, and the heads of these sectarian parties as garbage.”⁶² When we got access to the files, we could see which CEO of a contracting company was in bed with which politician.” For many, agrees Kerbage, “trash was just a political opportunity. What really mobilized protesters was the commodification of public services, the mafia-like, clientelistic division of spoils that was leaving people without electricity, water, housing.”

But “the organizers imposed demands on the movement,” she continues, that resonated for them but not necessarily for others: “Very technical solutions to the trash crisis that did not challenge the interests behind the accumulation of wealth. There was no organizational framework to translate the widespread frustration and grief into coherent political demands.”⁶³

Within a few months, the movement had fallen apart, with only one significant gain: a decision to transfer to local governments the proceeds of a fund that is earmarked to help pay for local services but was being spent on behalf of municipal governments by the national government in Beirut.⁶⁴

The 2013 protests in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil, against a hike in public bus fares were analogous to Lebanon’s, and suffered similarly from the contradiction between broad vision and narrow demands. Initially sparked by declining public services, especially in contrast to spending in preparation for the 2014 World Cup and other big-ticket infrastructure, the movement ballooned and grew more general in both objectives and participation. However, like Lebanon’s, it failed in the end to challenge the underlying systemic corruption that motivated many of its participants.

In Brazil's case, the government made a concession. It rescinded the fare increase. And "when the [de facto] leaders got what they wanted," recounts a participant who works in banking and asked that her name not be used, "they said 'We're not in charge anymore.'"⁶⁵ Lacking a clear enunciation of the related grievances that had emerged, or a list of desired reforms that could address them, the hot-burning movement died down to embers.

In Tunisia as well as Egypt, the results thus far represent more a restoration of network domination than a revolutionary application of justice and imposition of effective constraints.

Arguably, the specific demand that packed the streets of Bucharest, Romania, in the middle of a winter night was more tightly related to kleptocracy. The emergency decree announced that night was a transparent guarantee of impunity for corrupt government officials. In less than a week marked by huge demonstrations, the measure was repealed and Iordache, the justice minister who had proclaimed it, was out of office. "But it's like a hydra," says Funky Citizens' Pojoranu. "You cut off one head and

another grows. They've started taking the effort more slowly, through parliament, where Iordache now presides over the judiciary committee." Keeping people mobilized around a more complex platform of reforms is difficult, he concedes. "We're reaching the point where we're coming to terms with the need to come together and organize, run for office even."⁶⁶

The King Must Die!

In four of the seven cases examined here, a specific demand was set forth, and it was ambitious: nothing less than the ouster of the chief of state, whether by resignation or impeachment. Protesters and outside observers alike tend to equate this objective with fundamental, systemwide change. Manifestly, it would seem, the unseating of a ruler is the one case in which a "specific" demand intersects with "systemic" aspirations.

And yet the earlier Arab Spring proved otherwise. In Tunisia as well as Egypt, the results thus far represent more a restoration of network domination than a revolutionary application of justice and imposition of effective constraints. In the more recent cases, too, the downfall of presidents has failed to dramatically alter the underlying kleptocratic structure. Many activists are painfully conscious of this reality.

In Guatemala, for example, "we knew one or two resignations might not change anything," says Álvaro Montenegro, whose group Resign Now (Renuncia Ya) changed its name to Justice Now (Justicia Ya) after helping topple the president and vice president. "We got the resignation of Otto Pérez [Molina], but we didn't get the electoral law changed. Without that, we knew we'd be facing the same problem later."⁶⁷

Outsider television comedian Jimmy Morales won elections held in the autumn of 2015, but Guatemala's network of corrupt officials, top businessmen,

and former military converted to organized crime remained largely in place. Morales himself, who ran on an anticorruption platform, turned on the CICIG, without whose investigations he would still be a second-rate comic.

Long Live the King!

Networks, as experience from Ukraine's Euromaidan movement and the countries of the Arab Spring have demonstrated, are highly resilient structures; they will secure their survival even by cutting off their own heads. The experiences of Brazil—where the president impeached in 2016 may well have been less corrupt than most of the politicians who voted to impeach her—and of Guatemala have added a further layer of evidence confirming that reality.

It is a reality that lay at the heart of the generation gap between the young rappers who led Burkina Faso's Citizen Broom movement and the old-guard activists who remained on its margins. The way much of the traditional labor-based opposition saw it, according to Abdoul Karim Saidou, who teaches political science at the University of Ouagadougou, a change at the top would be only cosmetic. "They say: 'If Blaise [Compaoré] goes, he'll be replaced by someone from the same political family, and the economic and social situation won't change. The whole capitalist system needs to change.'"⁶⁸

At Citizen Broom, counters Barry, "We were insisting on the principle of political contestation—meaningful elections. *Then* you can try to get a revolutionary elected." The group had three goals: "First, the president must respect the constitution" and its two-term limit. "Second, people must get more involved in public affairs. We did a lot of education in poor neighborhoods and villages, to get people thinking: 'What is the role of citizens in a democracy?' And third, we must demand leaders with integrity, aware of their duties as well as their rights. Many people want to gain office; fewer want to be accountable to the people."⁶⁹

As it turned out, the broad-based movement did topple Compaoré and force an election. But the crotchety old guard was right; he was replaced by "someone from the same political family"—Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, former prime minister under Compaoré and president of the National Assembly.

Though the matter remains the subject of contentious arguments, many at Citizen Broom take a long view, as described by Barry: "It's true that he's of the system. But you don't conquer power overnight. You make changes by weakening the ruling coalition so the opposition can defeat them down the road. Yes the people running Burkina Faso are the same ones who have run it since 1980. But the question is, do they pay taxes? Do they respect environmental regulations? Do they submit to judicial investigations when they do something corrupt? We think that in five or ten years, you won't be hearing about those people

"You don't conquer power overnight. You make changes by weakening the ruling coalition so the opposition can defeat them down the road."

-Burkina Faso's Idrissa Barry

anymore.” And in the meantime, there’s work to do: “Seventy-five percent of the population is under thirty-five. They’re not interested in voting. We have to get people to realize that by voting they can change their destiny.”⁷⁰

Improving the Mechanics of Government

Thoughtful protesters like Barry are bent on modifying the rules and procedures that constrain their public officials’ behavior and order the functioning of the government. These objectives depart from the grandiose ideological framing of many twentieth-century movements. They indicate a faith in the basic architecture of democracy. If the levers and knobs of the constitutional contraption can be correctly adjusted, these protesters seem to be saying, then democracy is the system most apt to deliver equitably distributed benefits of life in society.

For some, as in Romania, South Korea, or Brazil, the first piece of the machinery requiring a tune-up is the justice sector, to ensure its independence and ability to constrain the powerful. Other targets have included the rules governing public procurement or interactions between public officials and those whose interests they regulate, or weak or nonexistent codes of conduct spelling out the behavioral norms deemed appropriate for civil servants. Sometimes protesters have seen new electoral laws as a potential panacea, guaranteed at least to shatter the current gang’s lock on the gates to power, if not automatically to deliver officials motivated by more public-spirited values.⁷¹

The Strategy

The Burkinabe farsightedness—Citizen Broom’s map toward a horizon several years out—is the exception among recent anticorruption protests. Most have been marked by an absence of planning for the future, especially for what to do if initial objectives are achieved.

The well-organized South Koreans, according to Emory’s Kim, did at least consider the potential implications of success. “There was some debate about what should happen after [Park’s impeachment]—talk of constitutional reform or revision of the electoral law,” as well as political organizing by the opposition. Most people, however, relied on extant mechanisms to carry out the next phases of the transition. The assumption was that “the institutions are robust and impartial enough to be trusted to function,” he says.⁷²

That’s how college student Kang saw it: “We were completely shocked by the impeachment. We never thought it would actually happen. When it did, we assumed other changes would automatically follow, the way it’s laid out in the constitution.”⁷³ “Because the constitution lays it out,” echoes the editor Koo. “There’s a clear process. If you want to be a citizen, everyone needs to be an expert in the constitution!”⁷⁴

Elsewhere, protesters bemoan the utter absence of forward planning.

For example, Juan Domingo Perez Flores, a rural indigenous organizer in Guatemala—where institutions are less trustworthy than South Korea’s and a more careful strategy might therefore have been called for—saw none to speak of. “When [the resignation of the vice president and president] happened, the protests died down. Because people didn’t think further than that, we’re stuck with the bad government and president we have now.” Or, as another Guatemalan put it: “We’ve got the demolition team working well. But the reconstruction team is not on site at all.”

It is edifying to contrast some current experience from the United States. Recent investigations have laid bare the effort and the careful design that was invested in two complex objectives with far-reaching consequences: redrawing congressional districts so that Republicans would be guaranteed disproportionate representation for at least a decade, and reversing the widespread consensus on the causes and implications of climate change.⁷⁵ These campaigns, both successful, suggest that important systemic and attitudinal change is achievable. But it requires considered strategy and disciplined execution, often over decades.

The Allies

The anticorruption uprisings examined here have been preoccupied with the foundational principles of democracy that rulers be subject to the law. Given this focus, and the widespread perceptions of criminal behavior by governing elites, it is logical that the most decisive allies of the protesters have been justice sector professionals.

The Justice Sector

Whether it is the CICIG and its local partner, Attorney General Thelma Aldana Hernández de López, in Guatemala, or a similar specialized anticorruption unit in Romania, or South African or South Korean courts, or Brazil’s Judge Sérgio Moro, investigators and prosecutors in some countries, judges in others, are hailed for actions that have been crucial to the fight against corruption. The selection of comments below gives a sense of the enthusiasm:

“Judicial institutions have been critical here in South Africa. The public prosecutor is very compromised, but a strong judiciary has protected democracy.”⁷⁶

“Congress has impeached a South Korean president before, but this was the first time the Constitutional Court confirmed the procedure. That was pivotal.”⁷⁷

“The conviction and sentence against Samsung [acting chair Lee Jae-yong] is an absolute landmark.”⁷⁸

“When [Brazil’s] Lava Jato [investigation] started, it was just some crazy judge at a low level doing it more or less on his own. Now people are going to jail. [Construction magnate Marcelo] Odebrecht went to jail. No one ever, ever imagined he would go to jail.”⁷⁹

“The executive is delegitimized in Brazil, and Congress is corrupt. So the Supreme Court is the last place we can look for some wisdom and light.”⁸⁰

“None of this would have materialized without CICIG. The head of CICIG is a hero, the most popular person in Guatemala.”⁸¹

“[Institutions like DNA] are sometimes seen as gods.”⁸²

The aggressive justice sector professionals praised in these terms did not spring from nowhere, interviewees point out. Several emphasize the long process by which they consolidated their prerogatives and built up edifices of evidence, working quietly for years—a decade in the case of Guatemala. “A huge process,” comments Justice Now’s Montenegro. “Only later did we see the results.”⁸³

An important symbiosis developed between these legal professionals and their fans in the streets. If Guatemala’s protests could not have happened without CICIG, the protests in turn lent CICIG legitimacy. Similarly in South Korea and Brazil, court rulings were buttressed or even midwived by pressure from the huge crowds.

Judicial function is typically seen as technical, set above the fray, cloaked in decorum and erudite complexity—an unlikely object of public fervor. But ironically, though what anticorruption campaigners crave most from their justice sector is independence, they came to a critical insight. In a kleptocratic environment, independence is more threatening than partisan competition. Unswayed by affiliations and armed with the powers of subpoena and punishment, an independent judicial institution can explode the elite bargain that binds so many corrupt networks together across political divides. In the face of these networks’ inevitable survival instinct, protesters realized they could not just sit back and expect such a potent but fragile tool to do its work unaided. In the words of former Guatemalan judge Escobar: “We need the backup of people. We need people to demand that the judicial system do its work.”⁸⁴

Elite Defections

Defections by erstwhile members or supporters of the corrupt network also mattered. As Chenoweth and Stephan note, “campaigns that divide the adversary from its key pillars of support are in a better position to succeed.”⁸⁵

“At first,” Kim Sun-chul recalls of South Korea’s movement, “the opposition party was not calling for impeachment. Then thirty members of the ruling party defected, founding a new party,” and that changed everything.⁸⁶

Subsequently, Lee of the East Asia Institute relates, Park's own party "changed its name and leadership in an effort to disassociate itself from her."⁸⁷ Koo shares the consensus: "Elite defection was critical. It was important not just to get enough impeachment votes, but also it showed this wasn't just another ideologically charged partisan movement. Conservative voters could not see it as a leftist, pro-North Korean coup d'état."⁸⁸

In Burkina Faso, too, politicians with whom Citizen Broom collaborated "included some defectors from the ruling party," says Wienkoop. "If the bulk of the political and economic elite had stayed on his side, it's not sure Compaoré would have fallen."⁸⁹ Chief among the political defectors, of course, was the current president, Kaboré, "the ruling party's main strategist," in the view of political science professor Saidou. "If he hadn't resigned, it would have been very difficult to make Blaise [Compaoré] leave."⁹⁰ A final turning point came when the Régiment de la Sécurité Présidentielle—in effect, Compaoré's Praetorian Guard—"stopped following orders and decided not to shoot" at protesters, notes Wienkoop.⁹¹

Even in Brazil, it was the ability of right-wing activists to swing some former members of the government coalition in Congress that sealed then president Dilma Rousseff's demise.

Without serious slippage of support for the system—defections by people who count, not just those who remove themselves from politics and so have nothing to lose—it is difficult to see campaigns against kleptocratic governance achieving even symbolic successes. And yet, such defections can be a double-edged sword: they may be the avenue by which the kleptocratic system reconstitutes itself and reestablishes its grip on a country's political economy.

Mainstream Media

For all the credit—or blame—the new social media deserve for enabling activists outside formal organizational structures to ignite many of these movements and to plan and announce actions, and for real news to be disseminated, the role of mainstream media should not be overlooked.

It was an investigative report on South Korea's JTBC television network that brought to light what most understood to be proof of the inappropriate relationship between Park and her controversial confidante Choi Soon-sil. JTBC broadcast files from Choi's tablet computer containing drafts of Park's speeches and other state documents.⁹² Brazilians say that Globo TV's active anticorruption coverage, which continues today, helped propel Rousseff's impeachment. Lebanese activists, looking back, say that when media coverage started falling off—or started linking them to the U.S. embassy—they knew their movement was dying.

"Elite defection was critical. It was important not just to get enough impeachment votes, but also it showed this wasn't just another ideologically charged partisan movement."

-South Korea's Koo Se-wong

Foreign Agents

“They tried to smear us. They said we were Hezbollah, jihadists, backed by the CIA.”⁹³

“The government casts itself in the role of victim—of the deep state, of foreigners, of a campaign mounted by George Soros.”⁹⁴

It has become customary for beleaguered regimes to accuse foreigners of fomenting the protests that challenge them,⁹⁵ and the recent anticorruption activists have not been spared that slur. But in fact, two of the fallen rulers enjoyed the active support of their principal Western interlocutors, and international reaction to the protests has been muted.⁹⁶ What has been striking, indeed, especially in contrast to the immediate post–Cold War period or 2011, has been the relative Western indifference.

In at least one case, it was the kleptocratic system rather than its opposition that seems to have benefited from a remarkable foreign alliance. That case is the second round of protests in Brazil, which began in 2015.

In an August 2017 investigation that unveiled a campaign by the U.S.-based libertarian Atlas Network to profoundly influence politics in Latin America, Lee Fang highlights Brazil, writing that “nowhere has the Atlas method been better encapsulated than in a newly formed network of Brazilian free-market think tanks.” Corruption scandals rocking the country involved “leading politicians from all of Brazil’s major political parties, including the right-wing and center-right,” he writes. Yet, in that country’s second wave of protests, the Atlas-backed Free Brazil Movement “managed to direct the bulk of outrage squarely at Dilma [Rousseff].”⁹⁷ Apart from espousing left-leaning policies, Rousseff can be said to have threatened the kleptocratic system by initiating anticorruption reforms, protecting the independence of the Lava Jato investigations—the sprawling web of anticorruption cases, dubbed “Car Wash”—and appointing competent judges to the Supreme Court.⁹⁸

Participants in the 2015–2016 protests agree that they seemed less spontaneous than the earlier ones over bus fares. “It was very sudden,” says the bank employee, “and very focused on impeaching Dilma.”⁹⁹ Veteran *Washington Post* correspondent Dom Phillips says that the protesters looked different: “They didn’t have so many beards.”¹⁰⁰ The organizers were “right-leaning libertarian groups,” confirms Thiago Lamelo. “They had structure and money—some wealthy people must have been funding them. You could see from their signs, their sound system. It was a visible subgroup within the protest.”¹⁰¹

Elsewhere, although fellow-travelers—in Senegal and Burkina Faso, for example, Romania and Poland, or Arab Spring countries and Lebanon—communicate and share experiences and advice, foreign material support or formal training does not appear to have significantly bolstered these movements.

The Outcomes

The most spectacular achievements of the wave of anticorruption protests should perhaps be ascribed to the people of Burkina Faso. Not only did they, like Egyptians of the Tahrir Square revolution, topple a long-reigning authoritarian and prevent the succession of his immediate relative,¹⁰² they also helped thwart an attempted military coup aimed at reversing that accomplishment.

A year after Compaoré fled the country and just weeks before scheduled elections bringing the transition period to an end, members of the Régiment de la Sécurité Présidentielle (RSP)—the presidential guard unit that had refrained from shooting protesters a year before—burst into the chamber where the transitional cabinet was meeting. As armored vehicles took up positions in the streets outside, the plotters seized the interim president, prime minister, and other officials.¹⁰³ The next day, September 17, 2015, an RSP officer in tan fatigues went on national television to announce the news: “The Patriotic and Democratic Forces, uniting all elements of the nation . . . have decided to put an end to the deviant transitional regime.”¹⁰⁴

Had the ruling clique at first trusted the transitional authorities (which included as prime minister a member of the presidential guard itself, Lieutenant Colonel Yacouba Isaac Zida) to steer the country back to the status quo ante? If so, it was a miscalculation: amid other reforms, the transitional government was debating the dissolution of the presidential guard altogether. “These were people who had committed not to run in the future election, so the notion of maneuvering to stay in power did not arise,” notes Eloise Bertrand. Led by a former diplomat, the members of the transitional government “came from all sectors of society and really were working to institute reforms.”¹⁰⁵

A somewhat belated international reaction, piloted by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Nigeria’s austere new anticorruption president, Muhammadu Buhari, may have helped abort this blatant putsch.¹⁰⁶ But there is no question that the civic protesters of 2014, back in the streets en masse, played the critical role. “Even in villages, the whole country was paralyzed!” recalls Barry.¹⁰⁷ “It was the people,” confirms Bertrand, “who helped persuade the army to act against the coup. They’d hold their demonstrations in front of military barracks.”¹⁰⁸ The army marched on the capital, and less than a week after it began, the coup was over.

Three other chiefs of state have been unseated amid these seven countries’ anticorruption protests, but whether this outcome represents success is debatable. “While people were still celebrating,” laments Guatemalan activist Flores Lopez, “the powers that be founded a new party, with the most corrupt military people, the ones involved in drug trafficking, and the most corrupt business people. They got a puppet elected, and he’s in power now.”¹⁰⁹ In Brazil, similarly, President Michel Temer is actually a subject of investigation, as his

toppled predecessor Rousseff never was, and is seen by some as a more integral member of the corrupt ruling network than she. “Since Dilma fell, people realized this is bigger than any one person,” says *Washington Post* reporter Dom Phillips.¹¹⁰ Even in Burkina Faso, “if you ask what networks are in power,” concedes Weinkoop, “not that much changed.”¹¹¹

Only in South Korea does the new president, Moon Jae-in, seem to be offering a convincing alternative to the earlier rigged system.

Today’s corruption, this experience indicates, is not entirely personified even by its most high-profile perpetrators. The diverse capabilities at the disposal of kleptocratic networks and the flexibility of their structures lend them a formidable resilience.

Despite this unexpectedly daunting challenge, analysts as well as activists insist “there have been real gains.”¹¹² Apart from the unprecedented and ongoing investigations and sanctions, these gains can be roughly divided into four categories: structural transformations, legal and policy reforms, the appointment of competent and constructive officials, and behavioral shifts. The examples below represent a sample of each.

Structural Transformations

For Burkina Faso, which previously had lurched from coup to dictatorship, the very fact of a contested presidential election constituted a fundamental shift in political structure. “Burkinabes can be proud of their election. It was truly democratic—not won by a 90 percent margin like before,” says Wienkoop.¹¹³

“It is now established that the president of Burkina Faso serves for only two terms,” pursues Saidou, who also emphasizes the more decisively civilian nature of the office, now that the Régiment de la Sécurité Présidentielle has been disbanded. “He no longer has personal command of a military unit. That militarized the presidency; it meant even if you have elections, you get a coup if the president doesn’t like the results. Dissolving that unit represents an important change.”¹¹⁴

In no other country examined here, however, has any major structural change been won—such as a switch to proportional representation in multi-party electoral systems, or an end to the provision of public services by partisan or sectarian entities.

Legal and Policy Reforms¹¹⁵

Most of the more modest changes listed below have been completed; others are still being formulated or enacted—or are the subject of a fierce rearguard action.

- Ban on campaign contributions by corporations (Brazil: awaiting a Supreme Court decision)
- Creation of a ministerial-level council to develop and implement anticorruption policy (South Korea: enacted)

- Creation of an independent anticorruption investigation and oversight authority (Burkina Faso: enacted; South Korea: promised)
- Explicit prohibitions of a number of corrupt acts, including, in South Korea's case, the solicitation of payments by public officials (Brazil, Burkina Faso, South Korea: enacted)
- New rules requiring asset declarations by public officials and their families (Burkina Faso: legislation enacted by the transitional government and tightened in 2016)
- Limits on the value of gifts officials may lawfully accept (Burkina Faso: enacted)
- Criminalization of sudden unexplained rises in wealth (Brazil: proposed but then stripped out of a bill now before the senate; Burkina Faso: enacted)
- Rules increasing autonomy for criminal investigators (Brazil: enacted; South Korea: promised, including separating investigative from prosecutorial authority)
- Rules to increase transparency and competitiveness of public tenders (Brazil: enacted; Burkina Faso: enacted, especially regarding mining)
- New conflict-of-interest rules (South Korea: in process)
- Criminalizing “slush funds” and money laundering by political parties (Brazil: bill now before the senate)
- Enhanced whistleblower protections (South Korea: enacted; Brazil: proposed but then stripped out of a bill now before the senate)
- Updated rules of criminal procedure, especially for white-collar crime (Brazil: enacted, notably a law providing for plea bargaining, seen as “absolutely essential” to Lava Jato and related investigations¹¹⁶; South Korea: in process)
- Release of funds earmarked for municipal services to local governments for allocation, presumably allowing for better oversight by citizens (Lebanon: enacted)

In Romania and South Africa, protesters have beaten back sham reforms that actually would have weakened anticorruption standards and bodies.

Good Appointments

Brazil's Rousseff gets credit even from those who wanted her impeached for appointing Supreme Court justices who were “very correct.”¹¹⁷ After some missteps, Korea's Moon Jae-in has also appointed competent, untarnished officials to ministries that will spearhead his anticorruption campaign.¹¹⁸ In Guatemala,

anticorruption activists worry about the appointment in May 2018 of a new attorney general to replace the pugnacious Thelma Aldana.

Shifts in Attitudes and Behavior

Many interviewees saluted an increased popular demand for civic oversight, imposing accountability from public officials. South Korean youngsters speak of the protests as a kind of political baptism.¹¹⁹ In Burkina Faso, “The people are getting engaged in real oversight, now,” says Saidou.¹²⁰ “Ten years ago, no one would have been talking about corruption,” agrees Weinkoop, mentioning a recent scandal in which members of the country’s National Assembly received free computer tablets—and were forced by public outcry to give them back.¹²¹ An online “Presimetre” keeps track of the rate at which Kaboré fulfills his pledges.¹²² In Guatemala, too, a Transparency Commission is “trying to teach people to get access to public information, so, starting with the little people, we can bring about a culture of accountability and make elected officials explain themselves,” says the organizer Perez Flores.¹²³

Public attitudes toward the political system are also changing. In South Korea, for instance, people are questioning the appropriateness of the almost incestuous relationships that have historically linked business executives and public officials. “How can the president exert such strong influence over Korean conglomerates?” Lee wonders aloud.¹²⁴ Emory’s Kim describes the shift this way: “Koreans had been ambivalent. The success of the big conglomerates brought us from rags to riches, gave us pride. People were aware that their growth could be attributed to collusive relations with the government, but they were ambivalent. With this scandal, that ambivalence tipped over into a purely critical attitude.”¹²⁵

The protests have achieved subtle but significant shifts in practices and attitudes.

In Brazil, the very fact that top businessmen entered plea bargains represents a significant mental shift in business attitudes and practices, according to Marcus Melo of the Federal University of Pernambuco. “It’s an indicator that people realize things have changed. In the past, they might have felt that their army of lawyers could get them out of things.”¹²⁶ Frightened corporations, adds the banker who requested anonymity, are revising some time-worn behaviors: “Companies are getting out and out and out of business with the government.”¹²⁷ Petrobras, right at the center of Brazil’s corruption scandal, has introduced measures increasing internal oversight and protecting whistleblowers.¹²⁸

New Types of Political Organization

Some participants in Lebanon’s anti-garbage protests moved on from that disappointment to found a quasi-political organization: Beirut, My City (Beirut Madinati).¹²⁹ Deliberately working on a local level and focused on practical issues, it was founded by a nonpartisan group of professionals, including

political analysts, architects and engineers, doctors, and the head of a fisherman's union.¹³⁰ It fielded ten candidates in the 2016 city council election. With no political track record, and after an impromptu fundraiser in a bar, the list garnered more than 30 percent of the vote, an impressive score. But under Lebanon's winner-takes-all electoral rules, none of its candidates was seated. A year later, however, a member was elected head of the Order of Engineers.¹³¹ After deciding not to run in parliamentary elections, Beirut, My City remains active in opposition to the dominant political system, consciously straddling the line between traditional political party and civil society organization.

In Brazil, right-wing activists have been making alliances with new or even more conventional political parties, making a concerted effort to get candidates elected at all levels.¹³²

While Burkina Faso's Citizen Broom concluded that it will take five or ten more years before the time is ripe to enter the political fray with a well-thought-out platform, Guatemalans and Romanians are turning their energies to the launch of new political parties.¹³³

Fiercely mistrustful of established political formations, in other words—often seeing them as mere channels for rivalries within or between kleptocratic networks rather than champions of voters' interests—anticorruption activists nevertheless remain largely committed even to these traditional pillars of democratic politics.

A canvass of the recent anticorruption movements thus suggests two contrary appreciations. On the one hand, despite their eye-catching effectiveness in bringing down top officials, these efforts have not made much of a dent in the transnational kleptocratic networks that rule their countries. On the other hand, below those wave-tops, the protests have achieved subtle but significant shifts in practices and attitudes.¹³⁴

Although protesters have shown remarkable stamina in taking to the streets night after night for weeks or months on end in order to achieve their dramatic objectives, it remains to be seen whether their staying power is sufficient to maintain focus on less emotionally satisfying legalistic reforms, and to anchor the newly articulated ethics in public expectations and official behavior.

The Countermoves

If the anticorruption campaigns' gains have been as modest as this picture suggests, it is largely because the sophisticated networks they challenge have been adept at defending themselves. The Empire lost no time striking back.

Some network counterattacks have been direct and straightforward: violent crackdowns, as in Brazil and Lebanon—where, says one protester, “it was the first time we saw our army shooting at us. And the military courts: we hadn't seen them since the Syrian withdrawal. They were willing to do anything to protect the autocracy.”¹³⁵ In many countries, efforts to disparage and besmirch activists hit home, damaging some of their professional and personal lives.

Divide and Conquer

Subtler tactics, however, have been the rule. Networks' most potent stratagem has been to play on deep-seated identity divides to shatter protesters' solidarity. In fractured Lebanon, this tactic was implemented to devastating effect. After some days of remarkable cross-sectarian and cross-class mobilization, "maybe the first time the haves and have-nots were in a protest together," recalls Tohme, "carrying signs with pictures of all the politicians faces, chanting 'All means all!'—party leaders deliberately excited our fears of 'the Other.' They'd issue veiled threats on radio: 'We can't promise your village will be safe from your neighbors.'"136 "The regime," agrees Kerbage, "played on the sectarian divide. They said the movement was majority Shia."137 Other protesters recall how personal the community-specific messaging got. "Parties would send SMS's straight to their supporters' phones," the working-class Lebanese protester who requested anonymity notes.¹³⁸

In Guatemala, too, says WOLA's Beltran, the establishment powers have been effectively utilizing social media "to change the narrative to a left vs. right or communism vs. capitalism agenda. In Guatemala, this plays into people's fears . . . given the history" of civil war-era mass atrocities.¹³⁹

Hitting People Where It Hurts

In Lebanon, such a tactic is particularly effective because dependence on parties' patronage reinforces the sectarian divide. The cleavages, explains Kerbage, "aren't just ideological: they have a material basis. Wealth, power, interests are all divided along sectarian lines. Every detail of your life is controlled this way: your access to school or hospital; even when you want to die, you're connected to the political economy of sectarian channels."¹⁴⁰ (In Lebanon, family law, which governs marriage and burial, is the purview of religious leadership.)

"People from [the factional parties] Amal and Hezbollah said 'If I join, they'll fire me/close my shop/cut off my mother's medicine tomorrow.'"141 And that, says Majed, is a terrifying prospect: "Most people live on little jobs they get through the network. It's their safety net. It's how you survive in this country if you don't come from a certain class."¹⁴² "Only the middle class," confirms Kerbage, "can afford to avoid these affiliations."¹⁴³

But the middle class, which would have done well to bear this class dimension in mind, instead reinforced the divide. As protests amplified, drawing in disadvantaged youth from southern Beirut slums, You Stink and its followers ostentatiously distanced themselves from that cohort. "The discrimination took a lot of forms. They flung epithets—like 'Amal riffraff'—they even asked the police to 'clean' the poor people out of their nice neighborhoods."¹⁴⁴

Majed concurs: "They segregated the space, dividing protesters between Beirut's two main squares. People in You Stink T-shirts would block the road connecting them, saying: 'Don't go down that street. They don't look like you.'

And so the lower class people felt abandoned and alienated, felt You Stink didn't represent them."¹⁴⁵

"There was no effort to connect with the poor. They were seen as members of Amal or Hezbollah, so 'fuck off, why are you in the streets with nice people like us,'" adds the anonymous Lebanese protester.¹⁴⁶

The Romanian government's ability to play the different Romanias off against each other resembles the deft maneuver of Lebanon's sectarian elite. As in Lebanon, it is the urban middle class that has gained choices, that can evade subordination to political bosses. It "saw its economic growth as economic independence and liberation from state control," while the older, rural population "was forced by its complete lack of opportunities . . . to become even more dependent on the goodwill of the public authorities," writes Sandu.¹⁴⁷

As in Lebanon, the party in power uses material benefits to cement these voters' loyalty. "When the new prime minister started working to pass new laws to subordinate the justice sector," explained former journalists (now advertising professionals) Ionel and Irina Bara in an interview, "he promised increases to wages and pensions."¹⁴⁸ Thus, in the context of challenges to the government's integrity, according to Sandu, "the interests of the two Romanias [are] irreconcilable."¹⁴⁹ "The small cities depend on the party structures and the money that drips down from the top of the system, and they're trying to buy people with wage hikes and so on," agrees Pojoranu, who admits that he "feel[s] the divide strongly. I don't really even know what country people's lives are like."¹⁵⁰

The more fervent religiosity of the older rural population—and the Orthodox Church's alliance with the government—adds a twist to the cultural aspect of this rift, which is further inflamed by a proposed constitutional amendment to outlaw same-sex marriage. "The government is deliberately playing on the culture divide; that's exactly their strategy—often using really irresponsible statements."¹⁵¹

The result, says Sandu, "seems to have been an increase in political polarization." The inhabitants of older, rural Romania see the protests as engineered by the opposition for partisan purposes, while the more prosperous urban Romania sees them as legitimate cries for democracy and EU membership. "The ruling political coalition does not seem to have lost any electoral points from the protests and would likely win elections again without a problem," he adds, "because they have convinced their electorate that these protests either threaten their livelihood or are politically motivated."¹⁵²

These two examples, similar in both their religious and material overtones, present an instructive contrast. Whereas in Romania, the largesse takes the form of public benefits or "entitlements," in Lebanon the jobs and the access to healthcare and education or other services are distributed through nongovernmental sectarian channels. Network strategies thus cut across traditional positions in favor either of "more government" or "more privatization." Therefore,

remedies must avoid the broad-brush approaches dictated by twentieth-century ideologies, and instead be tailored to the specifics of a given context. They must be designed as precise mechanisms carefully tooled to ensure that decisionmaking—by whichever sector controls it—truly serves the public interest.

Also speaking from opposite sides of the political spectrum, Guatemalans and Brazilians point to similar divide-and-conquer tactics, but this time along political lines. The right-wing hijacking of the anticorruption narrative and impeachment of Rousseff in Brazil led to what most observers see as a toxically polarized environment. “Everything has become partisan, in a very personal way,” says Margaret Keck, professor of political science at Johns Hopkins University. Like others, she describes it as almost impossible to criticize any politician without being seen as rooting for the opposing party. “So it’s difficult for civil society to have an independent voice.”¹⁵³

In South Africa, the chasms are soaked in as much bitterness and blood as Lebanon’s. There, the identity issue has sidelined the very group that has led anticorruption fights elsewhere: educated youth. Cape Town University student Zuko Zikalal participated in the 2015 Fees Must Fall movement that demanded reasonably priced higher education. “People are thinking about decolonization,” he describes the ambience. “Thinking radically about what must be changed in this country.” But he and his peers understand that imperative almost entirely in terms of inborn identity: “Intersectionality. Anti-blackness.” They take great inspiration from Black Lives Matter, he says. As

for corruption? He’s reserved. “There’s a distancing from that campaign, mostly because those people are really concerned about property. It’s not that we don’t see the corruption. But there’s a loud, white, capitalist presence in the Zuma Must Fall movement,” a latent racism embedded in the complaint that “the country is going to the dogs.”¹⁵⁴

“That perception [was] cultivated by the Zuma regime,” notes Lewis of Corruption Watch, who is white. “The response [was] to present the protests as a white middle-class initiative. You can hear it especially in the

things Zuma [would say] in Zulu to his supporters. His discourse is laced with identity issues—race, class, even tribe.”¹⁵⁵

While the tactic may have been successful in suppressing public protests, it ultimately did not save Zuma himself.

These observations reflect uncomfortably on the attitudes of many educated, urban Westerners today. So viscerally do they recoil from opposing voters, whose culture or even intelligence they denigrate, that they usually fail to mobilize around cross-cutting interests—including the interest in accountable governance. Meanwhile, they jump instinctively into the fray over

The right-wing hijacking of the anticorruption narrative and impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in Brazil led to what most observers see as a toxically polarized environment.

identity-based grievances. The seventeen-year-old unwed Mexican girl who sought an abortion while being held in a Texas immigrant detention facility is a prime U.S. example. It is difficult to imagine a bone of contention better selected to irritate the cultural divisions that pit Americans against each other. President Donald Trump—whose appointments, policies, and practices resemble those of many of the countries where anticorruption protests have flared—cleverly strokes identity loyalties. And American progressives, no less than his base, fall for the ploy.

Reconfiguring the Network

As the organizer Perez Flores noted ruefully, the entrenched Guatemalan network swiftly reconfigured itself, founding a new party that—almost accidentally, many judge—landed a well-known but apparently apolitical candidate in Jimmy Morales. His inexperience and lack of solid convictions made him vulnerable to co-optation.

This example holds implicit lessons for South Korea. “The former ruling party survives so many crises and transitions,” points out *Korea Exposé’s* Koo. “It just changes its name.”¹⁵⁶ Lee, at the East Asia Institute, wonders how the current North Korea security crisis might play into its bid to reconsolidate.¹⁵⁷

Hijacking the Narrative

A more sophisticated maneuver was the Brazilian networks’ espousal of the anticorruption narrative.¹⁵⁸ Accurately gauging the outrage that Lava Jato and other investigations were generating, they harnessed that energy to bring down a president who, while perhaps incompetent, did not incarnate the corruption that was dominating the headlines. “There was no evidence connecting [Rousseff] to corruption,” concedes Lamelo, who participated in the anti-Rousseff demonstrations despite some unease. “I thought those scandals were not her fault. In fact, she did a good job empowering institutions to fight it.” But in the end, his opposition to Rousseff’s policies proved stronger than his sense of fairness. “It could be proven that she had lied during the campaign, and that was a strong case for impeachment. For me, that was the only possible solution for the economy. It was the best opportunity for the country to recover.”¹⁵⁹

President Trump might be credited with a preemptive use of this technique, in his ongoing mantra about draining the Washington, DC, swamp. According to *Fire and Fury* author Michael Wolff, Trump’s former chief strategist Steve Bannon intends to revive these themes in the 2020 presidential campaign.¹⁶⁰

So viscerally do urban Westerners recoil from opposing voters, whose culture or even intelligence they denigrate, that they usually fail to mobilize around cross-cutting interests.

Targeting Justice Sector Officials and Institutions

Logically, given the spotlight these protests have trained on issues of justice and equal application of the law; the alliance between independent justice sector professionals and protesters; and, more generally, kleptocratic networks' need to guarantee impunity to their members, many of the networks examined here have taken aim at legal institutions. Going after the justice sector is almost a feature of this system of governance. The most flagrant examples, from Brazil, Guatemala, and Romania, have been touched on above. This is another pattern that can be discerned in the United States.¹⁶¹

The Takeaways

Like any civic movement, the anticorruption uprisings have been chaotic, sometimes contradictory, and often disorganized. They fared worst in the countries torn by deep-seated identity divides, especially Lebanon. Where interviewees concur that such cleavages are less pronounced, or where manipulating them is considered taboo, such as Burkina Faso and South Korea, the protests have achieved the most significant results.

Although many protesters have identified some divide-and-conquer tactics, they have been almost helpless to counter them. And they have been less alert

to the ability of kleptocratic networks to operate across political or ideological boundaries. These syndicates flourish under both conservative and left-wing governments; they have made both privatization and state control of economic variables work to their benefit. Broad demands based on the ideological economic framings that dominated many twentieth-century revolutions are unlikely to be effective in dismantling them.

Indeed, kleptocratic networks have largely withstood the energetic but willfully unstructured protesters. Of course, no single blueprint can serve as a design for a successful anticorruption uprising; each context is specific. Nevertheless, patterns emerging from this study suggest that to move beyond symbolic victories and truly unwind or pinion kleptocratic networks, at least several of the following attributes may be needed:

successful anticorruption uprising; each context is specific. Nevertheless, patterns emerging from this study suggest that to move beyond symbolic victories and truly unwind or pinion kleptocratic networks, at least several of the following attributes may be needed:

1. **Leadership.** Their spontaneity and multipolar impetus lent these protests legitimacy and aided in mobilizing participants. Their experiments in direct democracy may have generated innovations worthy of transfer to political reforms. Still, the lack of structure proved to be a handicap given the protests' objectives. To be effective, anticorruption movements need people to call the shots. The command group likely should include:

Patterns emerging from this study suggest that to move beyond symbolic victories and truly unwind or pinion kleptocratic networks, several attributes are needed for anticorruption movements.

- New faces untainted by affiliation with current political parties. The crystallization of kleptocratic networks has been under way for more than three decades infecting all political parties in affected countries. Old hands have overlooked this development, and party loyalties have blinded devotees to its real extent.
 - Demonstrably and rigorously principled individuals. Corruption is a matter of ethics. It cannot be credibly combated through moral compromise and cut corners.
 - Those who by background or inclination are able to federate across identity affiliations. Not only has divide-and-conquer proven to be kleptocratic networks' most effective counterattack, but the principle of integrity in government is valuable to all members of society and essential to democracy's ability to deliver on its promises. That principle should not become a camouflage for purely partisan jockeying. Purpose and energy must be devoted to involving diverse and even unlikely segments of the population.
2. **Consistent and legible decisionmaking mechanisms.** The point of leadership is not the allocation of power to certain protest participants. It is to clarify decisions by identifying decisionmakers and to provide a means of holding leaders accountable. Those individuals should follow a clear and widely understood process for arriving at their choices. That process should be as transparent as feasible.
 3. **A detailed reform agenda.** Kleptocratic networks are hydras that dispose of diverse assets and capabilities. Bringing down individual members can help alter the incentive structure influencing them but in itself is unlikely to end their damaging practices. Desired reforms should be specific enough to avoid presumptions of automatic outcomes from either the removal of individuals or a major muscle movement like across-the-board privatization, but not so technical as to appear irrelevant to large numbers of protesters.
 4. **Skill in communicating** this agenda to ordinary people in inspiring ways. Democracy rests on an assumption of an intelligent and educated citizenry. Still, the modern world and material deprivation supply numerous distractions. The content of citizenship, and the best set of rules for exercising it, must be made into a gripping, vital objective.
 5. **Long-range plans.** Many of the reforms envisaged by today's anticorruption protesters are significant, challenge long-held privileges, and require important mentality shifts—even on the part of their proponents. Such societal changes do not happen quickly or even inevitably over time. Long-range planning for how best to influence attitudes, first, and then laws to conform to the new ethos, is required. These plans should include

a list of likely countermoves the kleptocratic network might deploy and, conversely, what to do in case of initial success—how best to take advantage of the inevitably narrow window of opportunity success will afford for further systemic changes. The plans also should candidly examine the protest movement’s own critical vulnerabilities and overcompensate in those areas. And they should include a varied repertoire of actions aimed at different audiences, sensibilities, and contexts.

6. **Alliances**, even if tacit, with independent institutions that retain control over some levers of power. Every government, no matter how corrupt, includes true patriots who wish to see its actions benefit the many instead of the few. Such people often wield legal or administrative authority that can be brought to bear against corrupt officials and practices. They always have access to useful information. Nongovernmental nodes of power and influence should not be ignored, including professional or faith-based organizations.
7. **Internationalism**. Kleptocratic networks are transnational. Their opponents can multiply impact by networking across national boundaries as well. Diaspora communities, international structures, and foreign governments and prestigious institutions are potentially vital allies.

No one configuration can guarantee the success of an anticorruption movement. Such a campaign tilts at the windmill of one of the most deep-seated human traits: greed. But the aspiration for justice is every bit as deep-seated.

The campaigns also take their place in a long-standing historical tradition. Human societies have long sought to ensure that their leaders act in the public interest. Investiture or coronation was a rite of passage, by means of which the ruler was expected to undergo a sacred transformation. Crossing that threshold, it was hoped, would cause him to shed his private persona and adopt a new, public one, that of protector of his people.¹⁶² But that sense of sacred obligation often failed to take hold. And so, different communities in different periods devised ways to *force* their rulers to prioritize the public interest. In the modern era, the first constraint subjects sought to apply was that of man-made law; the second was to condition rulers’ very tenure to selection by the governed—that is, to suffrage. Today’s kleptocratic networks have largely succeeded in disabling both these constraints.

What choice is there but to fight for their restoration and repair?

Notes

- 1 These events are part of a broader uptick in mass protest movements, a phenomenon that has generated considerable expert debate; see, for example, Stefan Kühn et al., *World Employment Social Outlook* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2017), http://embargo.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_541211.pdf. For an analysis of this broader context, see Richard Youngs, “What Are the Meanings Behind the Worldwide Rise in Protest?,” *openDemocracy*, October 2, 2017, www.opendemocracy.net/protest/multiple-meanings-global-protest. The author would like to thank Youngs for permission to read the manuscript of his comprehensive forthcoming book on the topic, under the working title *Activism Unleashed*, and for his willingness to read a draft of this paper.
- 2 Some readers have contested this point, pointing to polls showing declining support for democracy, notably in Latin America. But this discussion seeks to consider the constituent elements of democracy, especially the notion of government in the public interest, rather than what the word may conjure in any particular context.
- 3 Thomas Carothers and Richard Youngs, “Democracy Is Not Dying,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 11, 2017, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2017-04-11/democracy-not-dying. See also Larry Diamond: “In the thirty years following [Portugal’s] Carnation Revolution, democracy expanded around the world like never before. But around 2006 it came to a halt . . . space for civil society is shrinking. Freedom and democracy are in recession.” From Diamond, “Timeline: Democracy in Recession,” *New York Times*, September 13, 2015, www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/09/13/opinion/larry-diamond-democracy-in-recession-timeline.html; and Washington Post Editorial Board, “Democracy in Retreat,” *Washington Post*, March 13, 2016, www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/democracy-in-retreat/2016/03/13/dd2e5eba-e798-11e5-a6f3-21ccdbc5f74e_story.html. The painfully indelible enunciation of the triumphalist view was, of course, Francis Fukuyama, in *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992): “What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such. . . . That is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”
- 4 See, for example, Thomas Carothers, “The End of the Transition Paradigm,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 1 (2002): 5–21, esp. 16–17.
- 5 Misha Glenny, *McMafia: A Journey Through the Global Criminal Underworld* (New York: Vintage, 2008).
- 6 *McDonnell vs. United States* (2015), Supreme Court of the United States. www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/15pdf/15-474_ljgm.pdf.

- 7 For a list, see Sarah Chayes, “Corruption: Violent Extremism, Kleptocracy, and the Dangers of Failing Governance,” testimony before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, June 30, 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/experts/analysis/712?lang=en&pageOn=2>. See also Sarah Chayes, “When Corruption Is the Operating System: The Case of Honduras,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 2017, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/05/30/when-corruption-is-operating-system-case-of-honduras-pub-69999>; and Haroon Borhat et al., “Betrayal of the Promise: How South Africa Is Being Stolen,” Public Affairs Research Institute, May 2017, <http://pari.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Betrayal-of-the-Promise-25052017.pdf>.
- 8 Telephone interview, October 27, 2017. It may not be a coincidence that each of the seven countries examined here, with the possible exception of Burkina Faso, went through a major democratizing political transformation in the 1980s or 1990s. Brazil transitioned to civilian rule in 1985 after twenty years of military government. Burkina Faso experienced a coup in 1987 (though this was hardly a democratizing event), and in that same year democratic reforms in South Korea also shifted the country over to civilian rule. In 1989, Romania’s political system was entirely transformed with the collapse of communism. The bitter civil war in Lebanon ended in 1990; the South African system of apartheid was overturned in 1994, and in 1996, Guatemala’s civil war drew to a close.
- 9 Given this spread and the internationalist character of some protest movements in the 1990s, some scholars have wondered whether there has been much transmission of knowledge and grievances across borders. See, for example, Donatella della Porta and Alice Mattoni, eds., *Spreading Protests: Social Movements in Times of Crisis* (Colchester, UK: European Consortium for Political Research/University of Essex, 2014). That volume largely concludes that there is a more country-specific character to more recent protests, a result corroborated by this research.
- 10 The amount is more than six times the average salary in Romania, according to *Der Spiegel*. See Walter Mayr, “The Smart Phone Revolution: Young Romanians Take on Corruption,” *Spiegel Online*, February 13, 2017, www.spiegel.de/international/europe/protests-in-romania-continue-in-political-awakening-a-1134328.html.
- 11 Noufou Kindo, “Révision de l’article 37 : Un projet de loi à l’Assemblée nationale pour convoquer un référendum,” *Burkina24*, October 21, 2014, <https://burkina24.com/2014/10/21/revision-de-larticle-37-un-projet-de-loi-a-lassemblee-nationale-pour-convoquer-un-referendum/>; for the text of the proposed amendment itself, see “Révision de la Constitution : Le contenu du projet de loi de modification déposé à l’Assemblée nationale,” *lefaso.net*, October 23, 2014, <http://lefaso.net/spip.php?article61348>.
- 12 Telephone interview, June 7, 2017.
- 13 See, for example, Emmanuel Haddad, “Liban: «Vous puez», une crise des déchets très politique,” *Libération*, August 26, 2015, www.liberation.fr/planete/2015/08/26/liban-vous-puez-une-crise-des-dechets-tres-politique_1369840. The French title translates to “Lebanon: ‘You stink,’ a very political garbage crisis.”
- 14 Telephone interview, June 20, 2017.
- 15 Oliver Holmes, “Lebanese Parliament Extends Own Term Till 2017 Amid Protests,” Reuters, November 5, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-parliament/lebanese-parliament-extends-own-term-till-2017-amid-protests-idUSKBN0IP18T20141105>.
- 16 Skype interview, July 27, 2017.
- 17 Telephone interview, September 4, 2017.
- 18 For overviews of the investigations, see Bill Barreto, “Negocios, traiciones y la voluntad de monopolizar el fraude,” *Plaza Pública*, June 10, 2015, www.plazapublica.com.gt/content/negocios-traiciones-y-la-voluntad-de-monopolizar-el-fraude; Bill Barreto, “Ocho casos y siete empresas que se beneficiaron de ‘La Línea,’” *Plaza Pública*, June

- 11, 2015, www.plazapublica.com.gt/content/ocho-casos-y-siete-empresas-que-se-beneficiaron-de-la-linea; Bill Barreto, “Cuatro cuentas por orden de ‘El Presidente,’” Plaza Pública, June 14, 2015, www.plazapublica.com.gt/content/cuatro-cuentas-por-orden-de-el-presidente; and Amanda Taub, “Guatemala’s Crisis, Explained: Why the President Just Resigned,” Vox, September 2, 2015, www.vox.com/2015/9/2/9248587/guatemala-president-corruption-crisis-molina.
- 19 Skype interview, November 22, 2017.
- 20 Skype interview, November 23, 2017.
- 21 See, for example, Geoffrey Robinson, *The Tyrannicide Brief* (London: Random House, 2005); and Sarah Chayes, *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security* (New York: Norton, 2015), especially chap. 12, “Forging an Appeal on Earth,” 156–71.
- 22 See, for example, Daniel Brett, “Romania’s Protests: A Response to a Three-Pronged Assault on Anti-Corruption Measures,” *EUROPP* (blog), London School of Economics, February 2, 2017, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2017/02/02/romaniyas-protests-a-response-to-a-three-pronged-assault-on-anti-corruption-measures/>.
- 23 Skype interview, November 23, 2017.
- 24 “Thousands of Romanians Protest Against Proposed Judicial Reforms,” Reuters, December 10, 2017, www.reuters.com/article/us-romania-protests/thousands-of-romanians-protest-against-proposed-judicial-reforms-idUSKBN1E40TF.
- 25 Written communication, December 31, 2017.
- 26 Gobierno Guatemala, “El presidente @jimmymoralesgt al pueblo de Guatemala informa:,” Twitter, August 27, 2017, <https://twitter.com/GuatemalaGob/status/901777057809563649>.
- 27 Telephone interview, December 1, 2017.
- 28 Skype interview, June 29, 2017.
- 29 Skype interview, September 12, 2017.
- 30 Skype interview, August 17, 2017.
- 31 Telephone interview, September 4, 2017.
- 32 Telephone interview with Carnegie’s Elena Barham, May 12, 2017. Sociologist Daniel Sandu puts it slightly differently: the protests were aimed not so much at advancing the 1989 agenda, but at protecting some of the advances that were made subsequently. “It was an attempt to defend some of the hard-won progress of the judiciary in the European Union integration process” (written communication, December 31, 2017).
- 33 Interview, December 5, 2017. “This is such an important point for understanding the significance of the mass protests in Guatemala,” concurred Adriana Beltran, of the Washington Office on Latin America (written communication, January 25, 2018). “Many were afraid to take to the streets due to the level of repression and abuses that took place during the internal armed conflict.” Until 2015, Beltran notes, protests were small and sectoral.
- 34 This divide seems particularly marked in countries that suffered traumatizing civil conflict, such as Guatemala or Lebanon.
- 35 Telephone interview, August 4, 2017.
- 36 Ana Adi, “Here, There, and Everywhere: How Spaces and Images Shaped the Romanian #Rezist Protests,” in *#rezist – Romania’s 2017 Anti-Corruption Protests: Causes, Development and Implications*, ed. Ana Adi and Darren G. Lilleker (Berlin: Quadriga, 2017), 84–85.
- 37 Dani Sandu, “Ten Years in Search of a Political Voice: A New Generation of Protest in Romania,” in *Protest: An Independent Photographic Album of Romanian Social Movements*, ed. Bogdan Dinca (Bucharest: Documentaria Publishing, 2017). Interviewees agreed with this assessment. “Romania is really divided,” advertising professionals Ionel and Irina Bara, said (written interview, December 25, 2017), not-

- ing also: “City versus village, higher education versus the uneducated population. It is classic situation, and is similar in many countries, for example, the United States” (email correspondence, December 25, 2017). “Indeed there is a huge gap between large cities, on one side, and rural areas and small towns on the other hand,” agrees sociologist Mircea Kivu. “The gap is visible in many dimensions, from the access to commodities such as sewerage [sic] to modern [vs.] traditional values” (correspondence, January 24, 2018).
- 38 Sun-chul Kim, *Democratization and Social Movements in South Korea: Defiant Institutionalization* (London: Routledge, 2016).
- 39 Sun-Chul Kim, “South Korea’s Candlelight Protests,” *East Asia Forum*, February 7, 2017, www.eastasiaforum.org/2017/02/07/south-koreas-candlelight-protests/.
- 40 Telephone interview, July 30, 2017.
- 41 Skype interview, August 4, 2017.
- 42 See, for example, Nina-Kathrin Wienkoop, “‘It Takes More to Tango’ – Cross-Movement Alliances of Youth-Led Movements in West Africa,” *openDemocracy*, August 14, 2017, www.opendemocracy.net/nina-kathrin-wienkoop/it-takes-more-to-tango-cross-movement-alliances-of-youth-led-movements-in-west. Wienkoop finds it “remarkable,” given this rich protest history, that “musicians were the leaders.”
- 43 Skype interview, June 2, 2017.
- 44 Skype interview, June 19, 2017. Citizen Broom’s sources of funding might be a valuable topic for further research, in the context of a closer look at protest organizers and their structures.
- 45 Dawn Brancati, *Democracy Protests: Origins, Features, and Significance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 11.
- 46 Donatella della Porta, in her comparison between the 1990s global justice movement and the uprisings of 2011, notes the emphasis on openness and inclusivity, and a demand for “direct, unmediated democracy.” See “Learning Democracy: Cross-Time Adaptation in Organisational Repertoires,” in *Spreading Protest: Social Movements in Times of Crisis*, ed. Donatella della Porta and Alice Mattoni (Colchester, UK: European Consortium for Political Research/University of Essex, 2014), 51. Compare Donatella della Porta, *Mobilizing for Democracy: Comparing 1989 and 2011* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) and Richard Youngs, *Activism Unleashed* (draft manuscript). “Informality,” Youngs finds, is a hallmark of recent social protests that, whatever their cause or objective, “tend to reject standard forms of leadership” (p. 11). However, this was less true of the 2015–2016 protests in Brazil, which eschewed political parties but not leadership altogether (per written communication with Marisa Von Bülow, University of Brasília Institute of Politics, January 12, 2018).
- 47 Written communication, January 24, 2018. Kivu is a controversial figure because it has been revealed that he collaborated with Romanian secret police before the collapse of communism. However, many members of Romanian civil society concede that he was forced to do so.
- 48 Given this reality—that some type of organizing structure will inevitably crystallize—a fruitful topic of further research would be to identify actual organizers and carefully examine de facto leadership structures.
- 49 In Romania, according to one protester, the choice to forego hierarchy was strategic as much as ideological. “There was a general fear that leaders would be arrested or co-opted” (anticorruption lawyer Claudia Postelnicescu, interview with Elena Barham, June 29, 2017). Brazil’s 2013 protests against fare hikes in public transportation were similarly “hostile towards participation by organized groups,” according to Margaret Keck, who spoke to Barham on June 8, 2017. “The focus was on having no leaders and being horizontal and egalitarian.” But, lacking structure, it “became anti-system and lost unity and cohesion,” says Thiago Lamelo (phone interview, November 2, 2017).

- 50 Skype interview, July 13, 2017.
- 51 Carole Kerbage, “Politics of Coincidence: The Harak Confronts Its ‘Peoples,’” working paper, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, 2017, 15, http://website.aub.edu.lb/ifi/publications/Documents/working_papers/20170213_wp_hirak_english.pdf.
- 52 Telephone interview, July 13, 2017. Brazilian protesters in 2015–2016 also framed corruption in patriotic or nationalistic terms, according to Von Bülow: “Mobilizing against corruption was framed as part of a defense of one’s country.” The flag was “used to unify heterogeneous groups of people that have different political views” (written communication, January 12, 2018).
- 53 Telephone interview, July 30, 2017.
- 54 Skype interview, September 4, 2017.
- 55 Skype interview, November 23, 2017. Compare this account by another protester (email communication, December 25, 2017): “After two days, Friday night, we went out to protest together with our seven-year-old son, Stefan. . . . He put on a neck whistle and protested. He went to the gendarmes and warned them: ‘Watch where you put your weapons, because I heard this man named Dragnea (the PSD leader) is a thief!’ They laughed. The atmosphere was a relaxed one, people were making jokes about the governors, and the messages written on billboards were extremely inspired. Protesters came through Victoria Square as if taking a pleasant walk, buying coffee or hot tea and offering some to the gendarmes. Most of the people in Square were young people who had received a higher education and earned above-average salaries in liberal professions. . . . We wanted to go out to protest to show Stefan that it is important to defend your rights and to do so in a civilized way. I was delighted to meet with other friends who also brought their children to the protest. The next day, Saturday and Sunday at noon, the Victoria Square was full of parents and children. Some were in trolleys, others wrote on the asphalt in chalk.” See also Ana Adi, “Protester Profiles,” in Adi and Lilleker, *#rezist*, 51–57.
- 56 Written communication, December 31, 2017.
- 57 Written communication, January 25, 2018.
- 58 Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), especially 32–42 on participation and 46–52 on elite defection and backfiring. Corroborating that analysis, attendance at Lebanese protests fell off after instances of violence and vandalism after dark. “The night was when it falls apart, gets more chaotic, with people burning things and vandalism,” remembers Tohme, with regret. “That led to a schism.” But Chenoweth and Stephan place more emphasis on numbers than diversity of protesters.
- 59 Skype interview, June 20, 2017.
- 60 Skype interview, June 16, 2017.
- 61 For an analysis of this system, see Bassel Salloukh, “The Architecture of Sectarianism in Lebanon,” in *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East*, ed. Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). It roots “the sectarianization of politics in Lebanon” in the initial state-building process. Cementing it in the 1943 National Pact was “an unwritten gentleman’s agreement” by which “elites institutionalized historically constructed sectarian identities into a static power-sharing arrangement . . . that served their own political and economic interests” (p. 218). This structure, writes Salloukh, was entrenched and even expanded under the 1989 Taif Accord that ended Lebanon’s fifteen-year civil war. Since then, the arrangement has been effective in “dividing the state apparatus into elite-recognized sectarian fiefdoms, exposing state finances and the country’s natural resources to the predatory neopatrimonial appetites of sectarian elites, protecting corrupt clients and institutions, perpetuating regional and sectoral economic disparities, [and] politicizing everything—from the judiciary

- and the state's oversight agencies to public-sector appointments, sports activities, and university campuses" (p. 224). For "elites," I would substitute "elite networks"; for "neopatrimonial," "kleptocratic"; and for "politicizing," "capturing."
- 62 Signs in this vein read: "Some garbage should not be recycled."
- 63 Skype interview, June 15, 2017.
- 64 Sami Atallah, "Liberate the Municipal Fund From the Grip of Politicians," Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, October 2015, <https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/featuredArticle.php?id=52>.
- 65 Telephone interview, October 27, 2017.
- 66 Skype interview, November 23, 2017.
- 67 Skype interview, November 27, 2017.
- 68 Telephone interview, July 21, 2017.
- 69 Telephone interview, August 4, 2017.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 According to Guatemalan activist Juan Domingo Perez Flores, "The first thing that needs to be changed is the electoral law, which allows all this corruption. Nowadays, a political party is like a franchise. It's for sale. Each party has an owner who puts up money and decides who the candidate is—from the president down to the mayors of towns" (Skype interview, November 19, 2017).
- 72 Telephone interview, July 30, 2017.
- 73 Telephone interview, September 12, 2017.
- 74 Skype interview, 4 September, 2017.
- 75 See David Daley, *Rat**cked: Why Your Vote Doesn't Count* (New York: Liveright, 2016); Robert O'Harrow Jr., "A Two-Decade Crusade by Conservative Charities Fueled Trump's Exit From Paris Climate Accord," *Washington Post*, September 5, 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/a-two-decade-crusade-by-conservative-charities-fueled-trumps-exit-from-paris-climate-accord/2017/09/05/fcb8d9fe-6726-11e7-9928-22d00a47778f_story.html; and Jane Mayer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* (New York: Anchor Books, 2017).
- 76 David Lewis, telephone interview, December 1, 2016. A Judicial Services Commission, only four of whose twenty-three members are appointed by the president, appoints judges. Appellate jurisdictions have ruled against Zuma on several occasions. Public prosecutors, by contrast, are political appointees and frequently drop charges against politicians in power.
- 77 Sook Jong Lee, Skype interview, August 17, 2017. See, also, Sook Jong Lee, "A Democratic Breakthrough in South Korea?," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 24, 2017, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/03/24/democratic-breakthrough-in-south-korea-pub-68394>.
- 78 Hae Ju-kang, Skype interview, September 12, 2017.
- 79 Telephone interview, October 27, 2017.
- 80 Thiago Lamelo, telephone interview, November 2, 2017.
- 81 Interview with Haverford Professor Anita Isaacs, November 17, 2017. Echoed almost word for word by Salvador Biguria, Skype interview, November 22, 2017, and Álvaro Montenegro, Skype interview, November 27, 2017. WOLA's Beltran marks a distinction between the attorney general, whose "strong and collaborative relationship with CICIG has been critical to the advances achieved," and the courts, where "the level of corruption and cooptation has been a big obstacle," despite individual ethical judges (written communication, January 25, 2018). In Guatemala, judges reached out to activists to help them develop strategies beyond resignations and punishments, including lists of desired legal reforms.
- 82 Mircea Kivu, written communication, January 24, 2018.
- 83 Skype interview, November 27, 2017.

- 84 Interview, December 5, 2017. Marcus Melo similarly told Carnegie's Elena Barham that the protests were "crucial in terms of providing protection for the public prosecutors" in Brazil (telephone interview, July 12, 2017).
- 85 Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, 44.
- 86 Skype interview, July 30, 2017.
- 87 Skype interview, August 17, 2017.
- 88 Skype interview, September 4, 2017.
- 89 Skype interview, June 19, 2017.
- 90 Skype interview, July 21, 2017.
- 91 Skype interview June 19, 2017.
- 92 Hyun-ju Ock, "Tracing the Beginning of Park's Fall," *Korea Herald*, December 11, 2016, www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20161211000133.
- 93 Alexandra Tohme, Skype interview, May 17, 2017.
- 94 Cosmin Pojoranu, Skype interview, November 23, 2017. Soros is depicted as one of the 1990s kingmakers, whose efforts created a haughty intellectual elite.
- 95 See Thomas Carothers and Saskia Brechenmacher, "Closing Space: Democracy and Human Rights Support Under Fire," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 2014, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/02/20/closing-space-democracy-and-human-rights-support-under-fire-pub-54503>; Harriet Sherwood, "Human Rights Groups Face Global Crackdown 'Not Seen in a Generation,'" *Guardian*, August 26, 2015, www.theguardian.com/law/2015/aug/26/ngos-face-restrictions-laws-human-rights-generation; and "Russia: Government vs. Rights Groups," Human Rights Watch, September 8, 2017, www.hrw.org/russia-government-against-rights-groups-battle-chronicle.
- 96 France, for example, saw Compaoré's Burkina Faso as a key counterterrorism ally. See Virgile Dall'Armellina, "Mystery Deepens Over How Much France Helped Ousted President Flee Burkina Faso," *Vice News*, November 4, 2014, <https://news.vice.com/article/mystery-deepens-over-how-much-france-helped-ousted-president-flee-burkina-faso>. Former U.S. president Barack Obama maintained warm relations with Park; see Julie Hirschfeld Davis, "Obama and South Korean Leader Emphasize Unity," *New York Times*, October 17, 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/10/17/world/asia/park-geun-hye-washington-visit.html. By contrast, U.S. pressure was critical to CICIG's operations in Guatemala; see Sofia Menchu and Enrique Pretel, "Exclusive: U.S. Pressed Guatemala's Perez to Back Corruption Probes That Toppled Him," *Reuters*, September 4, 2015, www.reuters.com/article/us-guatemala-corruption-usa-exclusive/exclusive-u-s-pressed-guatemalas-perez-to-back-corruption-probes-that-toppled-him-idUSKCN0R41SE20150904.
- 97 Lee Fang, "Sphere of Influence: How American Libertarians Are Remaking Latin American Politics," *Intercept*, August 9, 2017, <https://theintercept.com/2017/08/09/atlas-network-alejandro-chafuen-libertarian-think-tank-latin-america-brazil/>. Romanians also point to a class of government-funded "NGOs," whose purposes are to: "(1) delegitimize NGOs generally in the eyes of the Romanian people, (2) compete for foreign funding with real NGOs, (3) create fake information and quotes for the government to use, (4) provide patronage jobs, (5) complicate organizing by making it hard to know which organizations can be trusted" (Claudia Postelnicescu, interview with Carnegie's Elena Barham, June 29, 2017).
- 98 Among the critical reforms Rousseff espoused was a plea bargaining law, which helped investigators gain information from inside corrupt networks. See Jonathan Watts, "Operation Car Wash: Is This the Biggest Corruption Scandal in History?," *Guardian*, June 1, 2017, www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/01/brazil-operation-car-wash-is-this-the-biggest-corruption-scandal-in-history.
- 99 Telephone interview, October 27, 2017.
- 100 Interview with Carnegie's Elena Barham, July 27, 2017.

- 101 Telephone interview, November 2, 2017.
- 102 Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak and his son Gamal, and Burkinabe president Blaise Compaoré and his brother François.
- 103 See, for instance, Nadoun Coulibaly and Joe Penney, “Burkina Faso Presidential Guard Seize President and PM,” Reuters, September 16, 2015, www.reuters.com/article/us-burkina-army/burkina-faso-presidential-guard-seize-president-and-pm-idUSKCN0RG2HZ20150916; and “As It Happened: Burkina Faso Crisis,” news24, September 17, 2015, www.news24.com/Africa/News/LIVE-Crisis-in-Burkina-Faso-as-coup-fears-rise-20150917.
- 104 “VIDEO. Burkina Faso : l’armée annonce le coup d’Etat à la télévision nationale,” franceinfo, September 17, 2015, www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/coup-d-etat-au-burkina-faso/video-burkina-faso-l-armee-annonce-le-coup-d-etat-a-la-television-nationale_1087847.html.
- 105 Skype interview, June 2, 2017.
- 106 Simon Allison, “How the People of Burkina Faso Foiled a Military Coup,” *Guardian*, September 25, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/25/burkina-faso-foiled-military-coup>.
- 107 Telephone interview, August 8, 2017.
- 108 Skype interview, June 2, 2017. On the role of the army, see, for instance, Mathieu Bonkougou and Nadoun Coulibaly, “Burkina Faso Army Enters Capital to Disarm Coup Leaders,” Reuters, September 22, 2015, <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKCN0RM0HQ20150922>; and Pauline Simonet et al., “Burkina Faso: l’armée en route vers la capitale pour contraindre les putschistes à déposer les armes,” France24, September 21, 2015, <http://www.france24.com/fr/20150921-dien-dere-rsp-putsch-ouagadougou-bobo-dioulasso-cedeao-abuja-cherif-sy-mogho-naba>.
- 109 Perez Flores, Skype interview, November 19, 2018.
- 110 Carnegie’s Elena Barham interview with *Washington Post* reporter Dom Phillips, July 27, 2017.
- 111 Skype interview, June 19, 2017.
- 112 Abdoul Karim Saidou, telephone interview, July 21, 2017.
- 113 Skype interview, June 19, 2017.
- 114 Telephone interview, July 21, 2017.
- 115 On Burkina Faso, see “Burkina Faso Adopts Two Anti-Corruption Laws,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018, www.unodc.org/westandcentralafrica/en/new-2015-burkina-faso-anti-corruption-laws.html; and “Burkina Faso: Corruption,” Global Security, n.d., www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/africa/bf-corruption.htm. On Brazil, see “LEI N° 12.846, de 1° de agosto de 2013,” Presidency of Brazil Civil House Sub-Office for Legal Affairs, August 1, 2013, www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_Ato2011-2014/2013/Lei/L12846.htm (with unofficial English translation: http://f.datasrvr.com/fr1/813/29143/Trench_Rossi_e_Watanabe_-_Brazil's_anti-bribery_law__12846-2013.pdf). For the ten measures submitted to the Brazilian parliament with more than 2 million signatures, see Aguirre Talento, “Pacote de medidas contra a corrupção já tem 1,2 milhão de apoios,” *Folha de S.Paulo*, January 2, 2016, <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2016/01/1725128-pacote-de-medidas-contra-a-corrupcao-ja-tem-12-milhao-de-apoios.shtml>; Carlos Ayres, “Ten Measures Proposed by the Brazilian Federal Prosecution Service to Fight Corruption (Part I),” FCPAméricas Blog, April 26, 2016, <http://fcpamericas.com/english/brazil/ten-measures-proposed-brazilian-federal-prosecution-service-fight-corruption-part-i/#>; and “Brazil Legislators Vote Against Anti-Corruption Bill Even as Nation Mourns,” *Guardian*, November 30, 2016, www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/30/brazil-graft-scandal-anti-corruption-bill-congress. For the significantly gutted version of the ten measures that is now under, see “Redação final projeto de lei N° 4.850-C DE 2016,” Câmara dos Deputados, 2016, www.camara.gov.br/proposicoesWeb/prop_mostrarintegra?cdteor=1512405&filename=REDACAO+FINAL++PL+4850/2016; and Geanluca

- Lorenzon, “Corruption and the Rule of Law: How Brazil Strengthened Its Legal System,” Cato Institute, November 20, 2017, www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/corruption-rule-law-how-brazil-strengthened-its-legal-system. On South Korea, see “Anti-Corruption Policy Strategy for the New Administration,” Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission, November 15, 2017, www.acrc.go.kr/en/board.do?command=searchDetail&method=searchDetailViewInc&menuId=020504&boardNum=67460; Konstantin Asmolov, “Moon Jae-in’s Great Purge. Episode 5: The Fight Against Corruption and the Control of the Media,” *New Eastern Outlook*, October 25, 2017, <https://journal-neo.org/2017/10/25/moon-jae-in-s-great-purge-episode-5-the-fight-against-corruption-and-the-control-of-the-media>; and “Policy Roadmap of the Moon Jae-in Administration,” unofficial English translation, July 19, 2017, accessed December 12, 2017, www.korea.net/koreanet/fileDown?fileUrl=/upload/content/file/1500533508268.pdf.
- 116 Marcus Melo, interview with Carnegie’s Elena Barham, July 12, 2017.
- 117 Telephone interview, October 27, 2017. Compare Lorenzon, “Corruption and the Rule of Law.” Lorenzon’s analysis in the libertarian Cato Institute notes the quality of the appointments but does not credit Rousseff or her Workers’ Party.
- 118 Choi He-suk, “Moon Nominates Justice Minister, Anti-Corruption Chief,” *Korea Herald*, June 27, 2017, www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20170627000271.
- 119 See, for example, Youngbean Kim, “Park Geun-hye’s Impeachment, Through the Eyes of a Korean Millennial,” *Diplomat*, March 20, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/park-geun-hyes-impeachment-through-the-eyes-of-a-korean-millennial/>.
- 120 Telephone interview, July 21, 2017.
- 121 Skype interview, June 19, 2017.
- 122 See www.presimetre.bf/.
- 123 Juan Domingo Perez Flores, Skype interview, November 19, 2017.
- 124 Skype interview, August 17, 2017.
- 125 Kim Sun-chul, Skype interview, July 30, 2017.
- 126 Telephone interview with Carnegie’s Elena Barham, July 12, 2017.
- 127 Telephone interview, October 27, 2017.
- 128 “Petrobras Introduces Measures to Fight Corruption,” *Offshore Energy Today*, August 5, 2015, www.offshoreenergytoday.com/petrobras-introduces-measures-to-fight-corruption/.
- 129 See <http://beirutmadinati.com/>.
- 130 Elie Fares, “Meet the Candidates of Beirut Madinati,” *A Separate State of Mind*, April 22, 2016, <https://stateofmind13.com/2016/04/22/meet-the-candidates-of-beirut-madinati/>.
- 131 Timothy Louthan, “From Garbage to Green Space: The Rise of Beirut Madinati,” *New Perspectives in Foreign Policy* 13 (2017): 37–40.
- 132 Von Bülow, written communication, January 12, 2018.
- 133 On the Union for the Salvation of Romania, see Dinu-Gabriel Munteanu, “Beyond #Rezist: the Surreal Challenges Facing Romania’s New Civic MPs,” in Adi and Lilleker, *#rezist*, 138–44.
- 134 For a detailed discussion of the impact of recent social protests, see Youngs, *Activism Unleashed*, which spells out some observers’ criticism that “protests are generally failing to move from street action to lasting policy or institutional changes. . . . Today’s activism may be noisy and dramatic . . . but its results are meager.” Youngs, who tallies the toppling of a ruler in the “success” column, concludes that “most protests achieve mixed results” (p. 50). As to whether they “improve upon traditional forms of democratic practice . . . or simply bring turmoil to the political debate,” he concludes both views have merit, and “are not entirely exclusive of each other. . . . Citizens fix limits to what they find acceptable,” but “problems and frustrations [may be] more likely to gestate until this activism generates dramatic breakthroughs” (pp. 98–99).

- 135 Skype interview, July 13, 2017. For some graphic images, see Alan Taylor, “Lebanon’s #YouStink Anti-Government Protests,” *Atlantic*, August 24, 2015, www.theatlantic.com/photo/2015/08/lebanons-youstink-anti-government-protests/402163/.
- 136 Skype interview, May 17, 2017.
- 137 Skype interview, June 15, 2017.
- 138 Skype interview, July 13, 2017.
- 139 Written communication, January 25, 2018.
- 140 Skype interview, June 15, 2017. See also Salloukh, “The Architecture of Sectarianism in Lebanon,” and Alexander M. Henley, “Religious Authority in Sectarianism in Lebanon,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/12/16/religious-authority-and-sectarianism-in-lebanon-pub-66487>.
- 141 Skype interview, July 13, 2017.
- 142 Skype interview, June 7, 2017.
- 143 Skype interview, June 15, 2017.
- 144 Ibid.
- 145 Skype interview, June 7, 2017.
- 146 Skype interview, July 13, 2017.
- 147 Sandu, “Ten Years in Search of a Political Voice.”
- 148 Email interview, December 25, 2017.
- 149 Sandu, “Ten Years in Search of a Political Voice.”
- 150 Skype interview, November 23, 2017.
- 151 Ibid.
- 152 Written communication, December 31, 2017.
- 153 Interview with Carnegie’s Elena Barham, June 8, 2017.
- 154 Skype interview, November 28, 2017.
- 155 Telephone interview, December 1, 2017.
- 156 Skype interview, September 4, 2017. Romania’s reconfiguration was more limited, according to interviewees, restricted to key personnel and tactics: “They changed the government, intensified the manipulation campaign and these days alter the laws of justice in Parliament without a serious debate,” laments a former television news editor, who responded to questions in writing on December 25, 2017.
- 157 Skype interview, August 17, 2017.
- 158 See comments during impeachment debates in Andrew Jacobs, “Brazil’s Lower House of Congress Votes for Impeachment of Dilma Rousseff,” *New York Times*, April 18, 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/04/18/world/americas/brazil-dilma-rousseff-impeachment-vote.html.
- 159 Telephone interview, November 2, 2017. Several interviewees suggested that opposition leaders stoked the protests and pushed for impeachment precisely because Rousseff was allowing Lava Jato to move forward. See, for example, Carnegie’s Elena Barham interviews with Margaret Keck (June 8, 2017) and Jose Mario Maravall of the Juan March Institute, Madrid (July 13, 2017).
- 160 Michael Wolff, *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House* (New York: Henry Holt, 2018), 309.
- 161 On the evidence of an effort to gain control of justice sector agencies and institutions, see, for example, Michael Schmidt and Maggie Haberman, “Trump Ordered Mueller Firing Last June,” *New York Times*, January 26, 2018; and Philip Rucker, Josh Dawsey, and Ashley Parker, “‘He’s Not Weak, Is He?’ Inside Trump’s Quest to Alter the Judiciary,” *Washington Post*, December 19, 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/politics/hes-not-weak-is-he-inside-trumps-quest-to-alter-the-judiciary/2017/12/19/b653e568-e4de-11e7-833f-155031558ff4_story.html.
- 162 See, for example, the overarching narrative of the two parts of William Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*; and Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2006), 10–11.

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