



Anti-Corruption Dynamics of Pakistan in Face of Succumbed Perceptions

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Corruption is commonly termed as “misuse of public office for private gain”. It has adverse implications for development and governance initiatives. Such as, creating doubt about the legitimacy of state institutions and credibility of public policies. Therefore, it has become a major challenge in various countries. The menace of corruption is rampant and deep rooted in developing countries like Pakistan. Even though, anti-corruption initiatives are high priority agenda in some economies, most of combating reforms seem to bring little or no improvement in international rankings. Hence, it requires having in-depth knowledge about the dynamics of anti-corruption and understanding so-called rankings we want to improve. Here we briefly review important aspects with reference to Pakistan.

Pakistan has struggled with high levels of corruption since its inception. Different political regimes have taken various initiatives to combat this evil. In particular, there was

introduction of anti-corruption acts and establishment of anti-corruption institutes. Such as, Special Anti-Corruption Establishment (1947), Federal Investigation Agency (FIA, 1975), Accountability Bureau (1997) and National Accountability Bureau (NAB, 1997) etc. According to the Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International, Pakistan's rank in 1996 was the second most corrupt country. Although, Pakistan has improved over the years but it has never made it above the bottom ranks. Recently, it has gone 3 points down the ratings with absolute score of 32 and is ranked 120 among 180 countries (Figure 1). Naturally this report creates an outrage among the people of Pakistan. And has casted doubt about the ruling party's proclaimed “fight against corrupt status quo”. However, empirical evidence discloses some facts behind such increased corruption. Some of the evidence is discussed here.

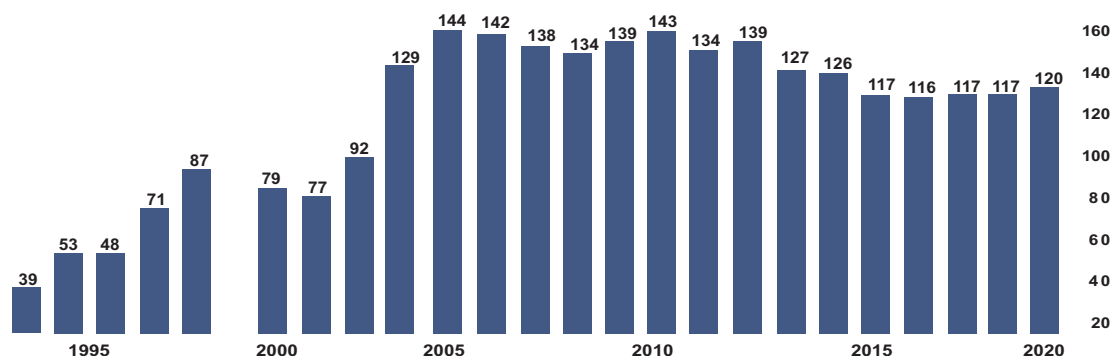


Figure 1: Pakistan Corruption Rank 1995-2019

Systematic Nature of Corruption:

Several arguments explain the failures to implement the anti-corruption reforms (Hill & Hupe, 2002) in developing countries. Because corruption in these economies is often systematic in nature. Mostly people are not corrupt by default but they become 'corruptible' (Miller (2006). In addition corruption becomes acceptable to citizens (Heidenheimer, 2002). By default, incentives and value judgments of participants persuade them towards non-compliance of anti-corruption laws (Batory, 2012). So, they tend to create more alternate opportunities (Back and Hadenius, 2008) after strict enforcement of anti-corruption law. Consequently, there is substantial increases in cost of corruption that compels people to pay higher bribes. However, these incentives cannot sustain for long if localized solutions are introduced.



Misunderstood Rankings & Succumbed Perceptions:

Another critical issue about corruption ranking is misunderstanding and lack of awareness to the real outcomes of anti-corruption drive. For instance, Corruption Perception Index (CPI) by TI is a popularly known measure of average corruption level across nations. Yet it merely accounts for the perceptions of some non-heterogenous (businessmen's) groups about corruption. But it is falsely labelled as a measure of actual corruption levels. It must be known that perception based rankings do not depict the real incidence of corruption. Cross country studies have found that corruption perceptions are influenced by different exogenous factors. So corruption in those economies is perceived to be much higher than it actual may be. It requires to develop and adopt a suitable measure of corruption.