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Corruption, Culture, and Communism

Wayne Sandholtz & Rein Taagepera

Cultural factors, as measured by the two dimensions of values identified by Inglehart, explain 75% of the variation in the Perceived Corruption Index across non-communist countries. A strong 'survival' orientation contributes twice as much as a strong 'traditional' orientation to higher levels of corruption. When controlling for these cultural variables, communism and post-communism increase the levels of corruption even further, both directly and by contributing to heavier emphasis on survival values. Communism created structural incentives for engaging in corrupt behaviors, which became such a widespread fact of life that they became rooted in the culture in these societies – that is, the social norms and practices prevailing in communist societies. The transitions toward democracy and market economies have not yet erased this culture of corruption. In addition, the process of privatization itself has opened myriad opportunities for corruption. The effects are manifest in comparisons of corruption in non-communist and (post-)communist countries in five cultural zones.

Introduction

Corruption may be the single most significant obstacle to both democratization and economic development.¹ Economists marshal convincing evidence of the toll that corruption – the misuse of public office for private gain – exacts on economic growth.² Corruption also corrodes democracy (Johnston, 1997; Rose-Ackerman, 1999), undermining the most fundamental principles of democratic governance. Corrupt practices remove government decisions from the public realm to the private, diminishing openness and accountability. Corruption provides privileged access to government for actors able to offer bribes and other payoffs, violating norms of equality (Sandholtz & Koetzle, 2000). When citizens perceive politicians and officials as devoted not to the public interest but to their own enrichment, trust in government declines. In states still trying to consolidate democratic norms and institutions, distrust of office-holders all too easily transforms into disillusionment with democracy itself.

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Democratization seems particularly vulnerable to the corrosive effects of corruption in the countries that were part of the Soviet Union or were dominated by it. Indeed, one striking feature of the ex-communist countries is that, as a group, they have markedly higher levels of perceived corruption than do non-communist countries in the same geographic and cultural regions. Indeed, it appears that among the legacies of communist rule is a propensity to high levels of corruption. In this study, we assess the influence of communism on corruption levels. The argument linking communism to corruption has two primary dimensions, one emphasizing culture, and the other relating to the structure of opportunities facing public officials (a utility-based argument). The command economies of the communist era created structural incentives for both demanding and offering illicit private payments. Indeed, corruption was such a pervasive and enduring fact of life in these societies that it became an aspect of culture, that is, of social norms and practices.

We further argue that the transition toward democratic political forms and market-oriented economies did not – indeed, could not – obliterate corruption in post-communist societies. On the one hand, cultural orientations change slowly, lagging behind even the most comprehensive political and institutional shifts. On the other hand, the process of privatization itself opened myriad opportunities for corruption, especially since the administrators of the former system frequently devised and managed the privatization schemes. For both sets of reasons – cultural inertia and structural opportunity – we expect reforming communist and post-communist countries to experience higher levels of corruption than otherwise similar countries. Empirical analysis confirms this proposition. Though some qualitative analyses link communism and post-communism to higher levels of corruption, our study adds to existing work in several ways. First, it tests the link with cross-national quantitative data. Second, it compares communist and non-communist countries so as to identify the difference that communism makes. Third, the results begin to address an important lingering question, namely: Through what channels does the communist legacy affect corruption levels? Fourth, our findings suggest that corruption is not just the product of immediate material incentives, but is also powerfully influenced by cultural orientations that are acquired through socialization in a society's historical heritage.

Opportunity Structures and Corruption

We have proposed that both structural and cultural factors lead to higher levels of corruption in post-communist societies. Students of corruption have long recognized that the incidence of corrupt practices depends on both categories of variables (see Rose-Ackerman, 1978). However, structural factors have received the bulk of the attention in empirical research. Scholars in the political economy tradition have emphasized the structure of opportunities and constraints as basic determinants of corruption (Rose-Ackerman, 1978; Klitgaard, 1987).

In general, the argument is that low levels of competition, either among bureaucrats or among those being regulated, increase the incentives for corrupt practices. For instance, companies facing few or no competitors generate high rents, which regulators will be tempted to skim by demanding bribes and kickbacks. On the other side, bureaucrats who are the sole channel for regulatory goods are well positioned to extract under-the-table payments. Under communist regimes, enterprises had few if any competitors, while bureaucrats with substantial power over the allocation of resources were subject to limited oversight and control. Given the ubiquity of shortages and bottlenecks in communist economies, bribes, kickbacks and other private payments became commonplace, if not essential for keeping the economy moving at all.

A growing number of empirical studies has deployed cross-national data to test various measures of the structural opportunities for and constraints on corrupt behaviors. One of the common findings of these studies is that higher levels of development (that is, higher incomes) are associated with lower levels of corruption (Ades & Di Tella, 1999; Sandholtz & Koetzle, 2000; Treisman, 2000). Competitive markets (Ades & Di Tella, 1999) and openness to trade (Sandholtz & Koetzle, 2000) reduce corruption by shrinking the pools of rents available to be captured by giving or taking bribes, or, put differently, by increasing the costs of corrupt actions. However, countries relying heavily on exports of fuels, minerals, and metals tend to be more corrupt, as these exports generate ready opportunities for extracting sizeable rents (Ades & Di Tella, 1999; Treisman, 2000). Democratic governance and political rights tend to increase the likelihood that corrupt acts will be detected and punished (Sandholtz & Koetzle, 2000; Treisman, 2000). Also with respect to political systems, federalism (Treisman, 2000) and presidentialism (Kunicova, 2001) have been associated with higher levels of corruption, by weakening the ability of voters to detect corruption in their elected representatives and punish it at the ballot box.³

Culture and Corruption

Culture, in contrast to opportunity structures, consists of ‘orientations to action’, or ‘general dispositions to act in certain ways in sets of situations’. People acquire orientations to action through processes of socialization; they learn about social norms and expectations regarding acceptable behavior (Eckstein, 1988, pp. 790–791). The tendency of cultural patterns to reproduce themselves through socialization leads to a general expectation of continuity. Cultures do change, of course, but they tend to change slowly, even when parts of their environment alter substantially. Thus we would expect that if various forms of corruption became widespread cultural practices under communism, these orientations would persist even after the dramatic changes in political and economic institutions that occurred in the early 1990s.

Few studies explicitly address cultural factors that might affect levels of corruption. Treisman finds that former British colonies tend to be less corrupt. One possible explanation is that the experience of British rule imprinted in these societies respect

for the rule of law and procedural propriety (Treisman, 2000) (but see also Sandholtz and Koetzle (2000) and Sandholtz and Gray (2003), who find no significant relationship). Protestantism appears in some studies to be associated with lower levels of corruption (Sandholtz & Koetzle, 2000; Treisman, 2000).⁴ However, with larger sample sizes and additional controls, the relationship between Protestantism and corruption loses significance (Sandholtz & Gray, 2003).

One of the more ambitious attempts to assess quantitatively the links between culture and corruption is a study by Lipset and Lenz. They begin with Banfield's insight that, in southern Italy and Sicily, the high value placed on family loyalty leads people to provide favors and preferential treatment to relatives (Banfield, 1958). Lipset and Lenz create a scale to measure 'familism' and then test the relationship between familism and corruption. They also build on Merton's proposition that people who face restricted access to the goods highly valued by a society – e.g., economic achievement – will seek to obtain those rewards through means that violate social norms. They derive from this argument the hypothesis that 'those cultures that stress economic success as an important goal, but nevertheless strongly restrict access to opportunities, will have higher levels of corruption' (Lipset & Lenz, 1999, p. 6). Attitudes measured in the World Values Survey are the basis for a measure of 'achievement orientation'. The data analysis shows that, controlling for income, high scores on both familism and achievement orientation are positively related to corruption levels and statistically significant (Lipset & Lenz, 1999, pp. 10–11).

In this study, we deploy measures of culture derived from the World Values Survey (Figure 1). The World Values Survey establishes a two-dimensional map of personal values.⁵ One axis ranges from traditional to secular-rational authority attitudes, which essentially contrasts traditional religious values and secularism. The other axis ranges from survival to self-expression, measuring the extent to which people are more focused on personal and economic security or on personal self-expression and quality of life. When individual responses within a country are averaged, mean country positions can be placed on a map defined by the two axes. In general, economically developed countries tend toward secular-rational authority and self-expression, while less developed countries tend toward traditional authority and survival orientations.

One interesting surprise of the values mapping (Figure 1) is that clusters emerge, which correspond to conventional cultural-religious regions: Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, East Asian, plus implicit Muslim, African animist and South Asian Hindu areas. What this suggests is that a common religion facilitates interaction and transmittal of cultural habits and values that may have nothing to do with religious dogmas as such. Hence comparatively homogeneous cultural-behavioral regions are formed that can survive even the abolition of the traditional religion, as attempted by communists across Christian, Muslim and East Asian lands.⁶

In principle, both dimensions might be correlated with corruption, with causality possibly flowing in both directions. Survival demands may force people to indulge in corrupt practices even against their preferences, while self-expression implies freedom

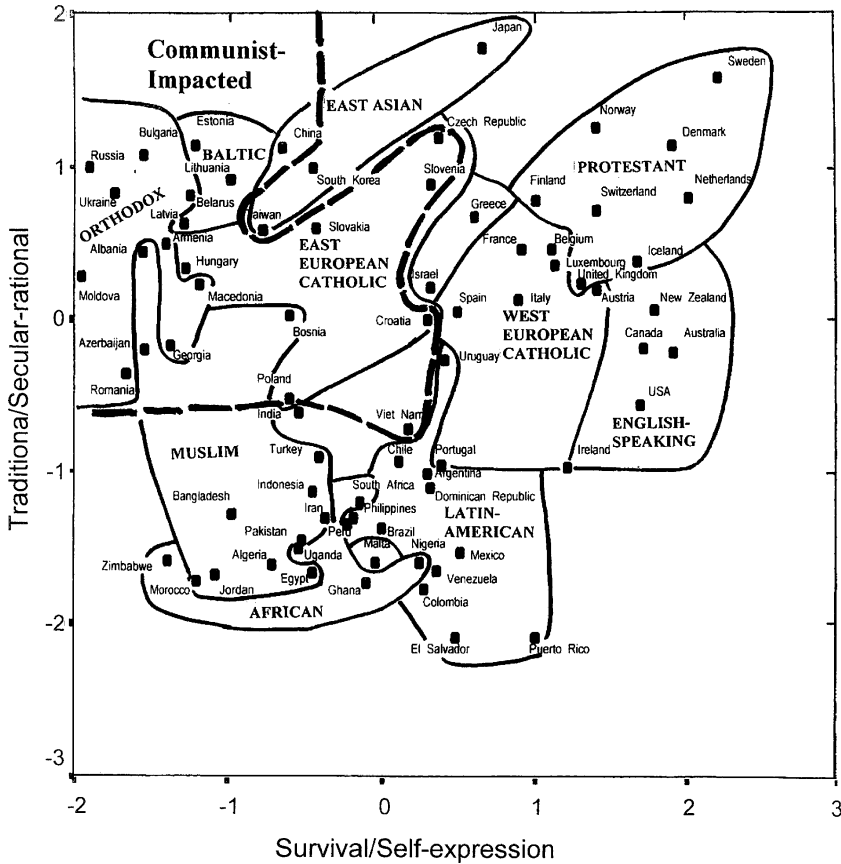


Figure 1 Cultural areas, based on the traditional/secular-rational and survival/self-expression dimensions of the World Values Survey.

from basic survival needs and hence fewer corruption pressures. In the reverse direction, if corruption hampers development, as has been argued, then it would lock people into the survival mode. Decreased corruption would enable them to develop sufficient resources to look beyond survival toward self-expression. It will be seen that empirical analysis confirms such a correlation, though not indicating to what extent causality flows in which direction.

The traditional-secular dimension corresponds with Weber's modernization thesis, in which societies move from traditional, particularistic (or familistic) values toward rational, impersonal, bureaucratic values. In many traditional societies, kinship-based special favors are expected; such favors are considered corruption in a secular-rational context. Indeed, the definition of corruption (misuse of public office for private gain) implies deviation from the impersonal bureaucratic ideal (see Sandholtz & Koetzle, 2000, p. 31). Secular-rational culture should reduce corruption. Empirical analysis shows some decrease in corruption with increasing secularization, but the impact of

the traditional-secular dimension of values is more limited than that of the survival/self-expression dimension.

Communism, Transitions, and Corruption

Scholars and political commentators alike view corruption as one of the most serious problems facing post-communist societies. As Rose puts it:

Corruption is the greatest obstacle to progress in post-communist countries. . . . [T]he longer corruption persists at the elite level, the greater the likelihood that the mass of the electorate will become indifferent to dishonesty, or decide that the only way to deal with a corrupt state is to benefit from lawbreaking oneself, whether in the form of avoiding taxes, smuggling, or corruption of civil servants and elected representatives. (Rose, 2001, p. 105)

Post-communist states are susceptible to corrupt practices both because of the heritage of economic decision-making under communist rule and because of the vulnerability of privatization schemes to corrupt influences. Rose (2001) puts the blame on the elites, but here, too, the process works in both directions. Corrupt masses will generate new corrupt elites even when the former Communist elites are forced out. Within the cultural-religious regions, we can compare the corruption levels of countries affected and not affected by communism. The empirical analysis will show consistently higher corruption levels in the post-communist countries.

Under communist regimes, the allocation of economic resources depended primarily on administrative decisions. Bribes, payoffs, and kickbacks were therefore a means of influencing those decisions. As a result, 'corruption . . . was normal in Communist regimes' (Rose *et al.*, 1998, p. 219). Corruption became endemic in communist systems because the opportunities were ubiquitous and the constraints were few: 'public ownership of the means of production and state involvement in virtually all areas of society, added to the relatively low level of answerability of public officials to the citizenry . . . means that . . . communist states were among the most susceptible to the phenomenon of corruption' (Holmes, 1993, p. 55). Furthermore, as Holmes (1993), p. 271) argues, in communist countries corruption might actually increase with economic development – the opposite of the usual relationship.

Few checks, in the form of media exposure or political competition, existed to constrain the corrupt practices. Laws lost moral authority and came to be seen as arbitrary restrictions, to be circumvented. Indeed, 'the use of connections, bribery or personal favouritism to manipulate the bureaucracy further undermined the rule of law' (Rose *et al.*, 1998, p. 219). As Holmes argues, corruption had become so pervasive in communist states that political authorities across the communist world launched anti-corruption campaigns in the 1980s in an effort to generate new bases of legitimacy for their regimes. He views the 'campaigns against such corruption . . . as one major symbol of the overall dynamics of communist politics that resulted in the 1989–91 crisis and collapse' (Holmes, 1993, pp. 10, xi).

The collapse of communist regimes altered the structure of opportunities that promoted corruption, but it could not eliminate those opportunities. New bureaucracies could not be created from scratch, so many administrative practices – and many of the personnel – carried over. ‘In post-communist countries the legacy of petty regulations and a bureaucracy unresponsive to users creates opportunities for corruption ...’ (Rose *et al.*, 1998, p. 220). Furthermore, privatization after the collapse of communism (or its quiet transformation, as in China) afforded new openings for corruption (Rose *et al.*, 1998, p. 219; Piirainen, 1997, pp. 68–74; Brucan, 1998, chapter 3). At a minimum, during the transition period, privatization created both incentives and opportunities for corruption (Kaufmann & Siegelbaum, 1997; Stiglitz, 2002). Heywood writes, ‘The introduction of new models of economic organization, which (as in the case of the former communist countries) has often been dramatic, has created new opportunity structures for engaging in political corruption’ (Heywood, 1997, p. 430). Thus, by 1993, ‘the share of crimes related to abusing position or office for private gain was 47.7 per cent of all recorded economic crimes’ (Varese, 1997, p. 590).

The World Bank carried out a detailed study of corruption in post-communist countries. The survey included interviews with company owners or managers in 22 post-communist countries. Researchers covered between 125 and 150 firms in most of these, though Poland (250), Ukraine (250) and Russia (550) had much larger samples (World Bank, 2000, p. 5). The study compiled two measures of corruption: ‘state capture’ and ‘administrative corruption’.

State capture refers to the ‘actions of individuals, groups, or firms both in the public and private sectors *to influence the formation* of laws, regulations, decrees and other government policies to their own advantage as a result of illicit and non-transparent provision of private benefits to public officials’. The state capture score assigned to countries represents the share of firms that reported a significant impact on their business from such activities.

The administrative corruption indicator reports the ‘share of their revenues that [firms] typically pay per annum in unofficial payments to public officials in order to *influence the implementation* of state policies, regulations, and laws in each country’, with scores representing country averages (World Bank, 2000, p. 7). The state capture scores range from 7 to 41 percent; the administrative corruption scores range from 1.2 to 5.7 percent of revenues. As the report notes, these scores capture only some aspects of corruption, and thus understate the real incidence of corrupt practices (World Bank, 2000, pp. 8, 13).

The rapidity of the dual transition – toward democracy and market economies – made it virtually impossible for countries to establish laws and institutions that might restrain corruption. In fact, the World Bank study found that the dual transitions removed whatever mechanisms had been in place to control corrupt behaviors (World Bank, 2000, p. 26). The report concluded that ‘the simultaneous transition processes of building new political and economic institutions in the midst of a massive redistribution of state assets have created fertile ground for state capture and

administrative corruption' (World Bank, 2000, p. xix). As state officials began to distribute state properties and enterprises to private owners, bribes and payoffs were again a ready means of channeling the allocation of the richest assets. The World Bank reported that 'numerous examples exist in all countries in transition where ownership or control of key state assets was transferred through nontransparent means to those with political influence; corruption played a key part in this process' (World Bank, 2000, p. 32). The nascent and fragile private sector was subjected to 'a predatory tax system and was led to bribe officials in order to avoid paying taxes' (Varese, 1997, p. 580). Thus both communist rule and the transition to market economy were susceptible to corruption, and we would expect their effect still to be visible.

Of course, communism also affected culture and values. Indeed, after decades of communist rule, bribes, kickbacks, and other forms of graft almost certainly became 'culturally embedded' (Hutchcroft, 1997, p. 657). The collapse of communist political regimes could not erase the cultural values and attitudes that tolerated, if not encouraged, corrupt practices. As Kneen puts it with respect to Russia, corruption 'represents the extension of the informal culture and practices of the Soviet system to the opportunities presented by emerging Russian capitalism' (Kneen, 2000, p. 349). Thus the nihilistic attitudes toward law persisted. In other words, communism left behind cultural orientations that generated higher levels of corruption.

How might communism have influenced culture, and how might that legacy affect corruption? In terms of the World Values Survey cultural dimensions, whatever the previous cultural pattern was, Communism consciously imposed a move toward secularism. Inadvertently, it also caused a move toward survival values. Communism definitely promoted secularism (though not in the most rational way), which should have diminished corruption. The links between the survival/self-expression dimension and corruption may be more direct. By hampering development, communism may have pulled some countries from self-expression toward survival concerns. Post-communist societies do in fact score highly on 'survival' as opposed to 'self-expression' in the World Values Survey, and the empirical analysis will show that the survival orientation is associated with higher corruption levels.

Empirical Analysis

Figure 1 showed country locations based on World Values Surveys conducted between 1995 and 2001. As mentioned, clusters corresponding to conventional cultural delineations emerge. Not surprisingly, poor countries where people struggle for survival within a largely pre-industrial context – Zimbabwe, Morocco, Jordan – occupy the corner corresponding to strong traditional and survival values. Not surprisingly either, wealthy, traditionally Protestant countries where survival is taken for granted – such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark – occupy the opposite corner, corresponding to strong secular-rational authority values and emphasis on self-expression.

Regardless of whether one set of attitudes is morally superior to the other, the diagonal path from Morocco through Italy to Sweden seems to correspond roughly to increasing GNP per capita. This seems to be the main axis of technological development. It suggests that belief in god and country tends to go with intolerance and feeling insecure and unhappy, while tolerance tends to go with secularism. It is somewhat surprising that the corners far away from this main axis are not quite empty. Toward one corner, Ireland and the USA combine belief in god with tolerance and feeling secure and rather happy. The opposite combination, giving up on god while still feeling insecure, unhappy and intolerant, is the realm of formerly and presently communist-ruled countries.

Now let us proceed to corruption. The one question on corruption asked by World Values Surveys did not load prominently on either axis.⁷ However, a more thorough 'Corruption Perceptions Index' (CPI) has been devised by Transparency International. It is a 'poll of polls' compiling assessments by the general public, resident and non-resident business people, and country experts. Countries receive scores on a 0–10 scale set up so that the *least* corrupt countries have the highest scores. As suggested by Welzel *et al.* (2002), this will be called the elite integrity score (EI). We have taken the average of the Transparency CPI scores for the 5-year period 1997–2001; our Elite Integrity scores thus represent average perceived levels of corruption in the late 1990s and the first years of the new millennium (for EI scores, see the Appendix). Finland comes out the least corrupt (9.8) and Bangladesh the most corrupt (0.8).⁸

Values and Corruption

Visual comparison of corruption data in the Appendix and the values mapping in Figure 1 suggests that elite integrity increases little as secularism replaces traditional attitudes. In contrast, it increases steeply when self-expression displaces survival concerns. Changes are fairly smooth, with one exception. There is a stark contrast between Ireland (EI = 8.2) and Latin America (typically around 3). These countries seem close in values and yet are worlds apart in perceived corruption. The rest of the overall pattern is quite regular.

We first consider the countries with no communist past so as to elucidate the pure impact of the scores on the survival/self-expression dimension (for brevity, Self-expression) and the traditional/secular-rational dimension (Secular-rational). The observed values of Self-expression in Figure 1 range from -1.4 (Zimbabwe) to $+2.1$ (Sweden), while those of Secular-rational range from -2.1 (El Salvador) to $+1.8$ (Japan). Thus the range is at least 3.5 units on both dimensions. Correlation analysis of the 46 non-communist countries for which Elite Integrity, Self-expression, and Secular-rational scores are available yields the results shown in Table 1.

Unstandardized coefficients produce the following average equation for Elite Integrity in non-communist countries, with an intercept of 5.14 and the standard error of the estimate being 1.37:

Table 1 Regression, Elite Integrity 1997–2001, Non-communist Countries

	Coefficient	Standard error	Significance
Constant	5.14		
Self-expression	1.73	0.293	0.000
Secular-rational authority	0.80	0.259	0.004
Adjusted R^2		0.73	
Standard error of the estimate		1.37	
N		46	

$$EI = 5.14 + (1.73 \times \text{Self-expression}) + (0.80 \times \text{Secular-rational}) \pm 1.37$$

Figure 2 shows the actual EI scores graphed against the scores predicted by this equation.⁹ The largest individual deviations (about 1.6 standard deviations) are Nigeria (more corrupt than expected by 2.3 units) and Chile (less corrupt than expected by 2.1 units).¹⁰

The sizeable standard deviation leaves plenty of room for rounding numerical values and simplifying the above equation into:

$$EI = 0.85 (2 \times \text{Self-expression} + \text{Secular-rational}) + 5,$$

which highlights two main features: (1) the center of the values plot (Self-expression = Secular-rational = 0) corresponds to the midpoint of the EI scale (0–10); and (2) the impact of Self-expression is double that of the Secular-rational dimension. Figure 3 shows equal-corruption curves superimposed on the values field,

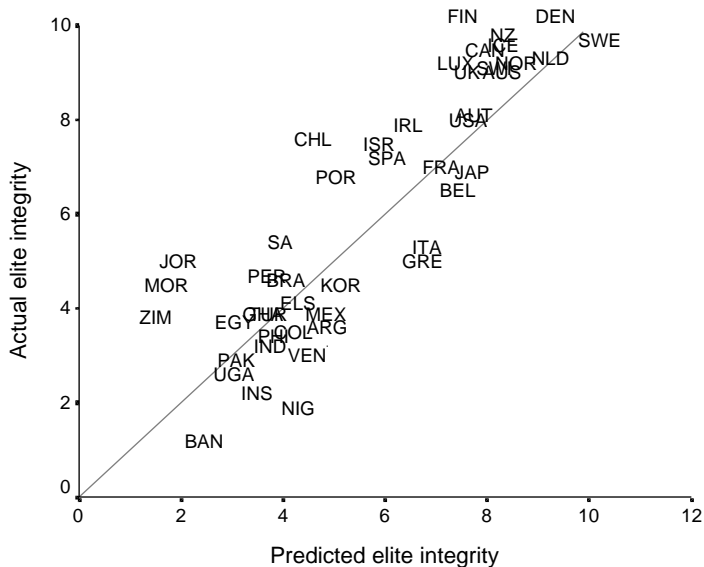


Figure 2 Actual versus predicted elite integrity, non-communist countries. *Note:* The line represents perfect correlation (45°).

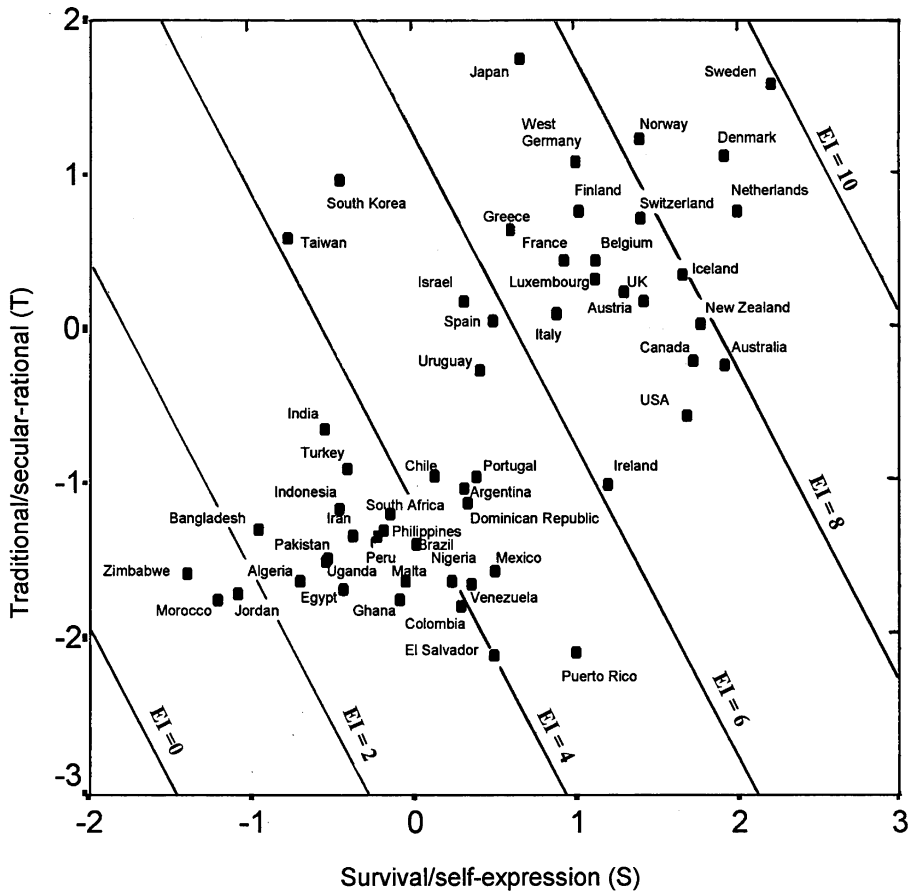


Figure 3 Cultural dimensions with equal corruption contours [$\text{Elite Integrity} = 0.85 \times (2 \times \text{Self-expression} + \text{Secular-rational}) + 5$]; non-communist countries.

which is identical to that in Figure 1, except that the communist-affected countries have been omitted. In other words, the contour lines demarcate groups of countries with similar levels of corruption. Keep in mind that individual countries can be off these average curves by up to 2 units (cf. Figure 2). Though this format may seem to suggest that values determine corruption, it actually only expresses the equilibrium between the factors. In particular, if external factors make corruption increase, it may well reinforce survival over self-expression, meaning a decrease in Self-expression values.

Communism and Corruption

Against this general background, we can now investigate the impact of communism. We first repeat the analysis above with 22 countries with a communist past. They are all fairly high on Secular-rational and low on Self-expression (meaning that values

tend toward the Survival end of the scale). Indeed, many have a lower Self-expression score than Zimbabwe, the lowest ranking non-communist country. The number of cases is much reduced, which does increase potential error.

Even more serious, the range of Self-expression and Secular-rational scores is much narrower than the 3.5 or more units observed in the non-communist set. Here Secular-rational goes from -0.7 (Vietnam) to $+1.1$ (Estonia) – a range of only 1.8 units. And Self-expression goes from -2.0 (Moldova) to $+0.4$ (Czech Republic) – a range of 2.4 units. Over such a narrow ranges, random fluctuations risk submerging any systematic pattern. This is largely the case: in the regression $R^2=0.32$ (as compared to previous 0.73), even while standard error is reduced: 0.92 units (as compared to previous 1.37). The average equation for the post-communist countries is

$$EI = 3.80 + (0.71 \times \text{Self-expression}) + (0.81 \times \text{Secular-rational}) \pm 0.92.$$

Figure 4 shows the actual EI scores graphed against the scores predicted by this equation. The largest individual deviations (over 2 standard deviations) are Estonia and Hungary, both less corrupt than expected by 2 units – like Chile among the non-communist countries. This equation could be approximated (rounding and simplifying as before) as

$$EI = 0.76 (\text{Self-expression} + \text{Secular-rational}) + 4.$$

Since we now have equations for both the non-communist and post-communist sets of countries, we can express the difference between them by combining them as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} &EI[\text{non-comm.}] - EI[\text{comm.}] \\ &= (1.02 \times \text{Self-expression}) - (0.01 \times \text{Secular-rational}) + 1.31. \end{aligned}$$

This implies that, at the same levels of Self-expression and Secular-rational, elite integrity is higher in non-communist countries, provided that Self-expression is sufficiently high. For Self-expression levels less than -1.3 , the difference becomes negative – and a good one-half of all post-communist countries do have such low Self-expression. Taken at face value, it might seem that in extremely survival-oriented countries (that is, low Self-expression), communism reduces corruption. But such a

Table 2 Regression, Elite Integrity 1997–2001, Post-Communist Countries

	Elite Integrity		
	Coefficient	Standard error	Significance
Constant	3.80		
Self-expression	0.71	0.271	0.017
Secular-rational authority	0.81	0.346	0.030
Adjusted R^2		0.32	
Standard error of the estimate		0.92	
N		22	

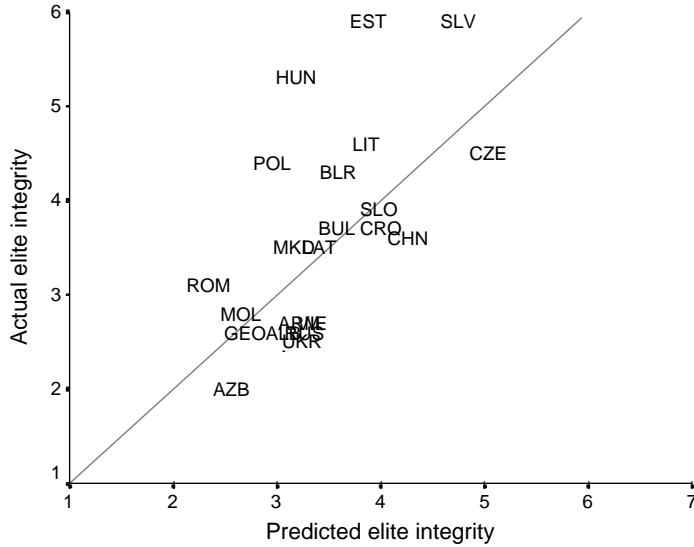


Figure 4 Actual versus predicted elite integrity, post-communist countries. *Note:* The line represents perfect correlation (45°).

conclusion would overlook the possibility that communism itself has pushed people toward adopting survival attitudes. Otherwise, why are so many communist countries more survival-bent than Zimbabwe or Bangladesh?

In principle, communism can affect elite integrity in three ways:

- 1) It can lead to emphasis on survival over self-expression, thus reducing Self-expression and hence reducing EI.
- 2) It can boost secularism over traditional, largely religious values, thus boosting Secular-rational and hence increasing EI.
- 3) It can have a direct impact on EI; the theoretical arguments summarized earlier strongly suggest a negative effect.

How can we sort out these different effects? This is what we address next.

Impact of Communism on Values and Corruption

We can attempt to test the effects of communism by comparing non-communist and communism-affected countries within the same cultural areas. Among the traditional religious-cultural areas delineated in Figure 1, five include countries formerly or presently under communist rule as well as countries never subject to such rule. We can compare their levels of Self-expression values, Secular-rational values, and lack of corruption (EI).

Can we presume that without the impact of communism these countries would have similar scores, on average? We cannot be certain. But it is a possibility to explore, in view of the relative compactness of cultural areas not affected by communism in

Figure 1.¹¹ If most cultural areas show similar differences between their non-communist and communism-affected parts, then our hypothesis and the results would gain in credibility.

Table 3 groups countries by religious-cultural areas, including only areas with some communist impact. The mean values of Self-expression and Secular-rational scores are shown separately for post-communist and non-communist subgroups, as well as the gap between the two. In all five cultural areas, the countries with a communist past are more survival-oriented, on the average. The gap is small in the Muslim area, where even the non-communist countries have a very low Self-expression score. Communist countries are 1.24 units more survival oriented than non-communist countries (the weighted mean of regional differences).

At the same time, in all but one of the cultural areas, countries with a communist past are more secular, though only by a weighted mean of 0.4 units. The gap is the most marked in the Muslim area, where the non-communist countries have very low Secular-rational scores. Even the non-communist East Asian countries have Secular-rational scores so high that they hardly can go up further, and the same goes for Greece, the sole non-communist Orthodox case.

Analogous data for elite integrity scores is shown in Table 4. In all cultural areas a communist past corresponds to a markedly lower EI score, with a weighted mean

Table 3 Values of Cultural Variables in Countries with and without a Communist Past, within the same Cultural-Religious Area

Cultural Area	No. of cases		Mean Self-expression			Mean Secular-rational		
	NC	C	NC	C	Gap (C – NC)	NC	C	Gap (C – NC)
European Catholic	8	7	0.94	–0.33	–1.27	–0.03	0.49	0.52
European Protestant	7	1	1.65	–1.20	–2.85	0.95	1.15	0.20
Orthodox	1	9	0.60	–1.55	–2.15	0.68	0.46	–0.22
Western Muslim	5	2	–0.73	–1.55	–0.82	–1.49	0.12	1.61
East Asian	2	2	0.11	–0.24	–0.35	1.39	0.21	–1.18
Weighted average					–1.24			0.40

NC, non-Communist; C, Communist-affected.

Weighted averages are based on either NC or C for each cultural area, whichever is smaller, as shown in bold. Countries included in cultural areas (for Tables 3 and 4): European Catholic: LUX, AUT, FRA, BEL, IRL, POR, SPA, ITA vs. SLN, CZE, POL, HUN, SLK, LIT, CRO. European Protestant: DEN, ICE, FIN, SWE, NET, NOR, SWI vs. EST. Protestant–Catholic Latvia and the UK are not included in either cultural area. Germany is omitted, given its amalgam of West and East Germany. Orthodox: GRE vs. BLR, MAC, ROM, BUL, RUS, UKR, MOL, ARM, GEO. Muslim: JOR, MOR, TUR, EGY, PAK vs. ALB, AZE. Muslim countries east of India (Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia) have been omitted because of their very different cultural context. East Asian: JPN, KOR vs. VIE, CHI.

Table 4 Elite Integrity in Countries with and without a Communist Past, within the same Cultural-Religious Area

Cultural Area	No. of cases		Average EI Score				
	NC	C	NC	C	Actual Gap (C – NC)	Predicted Gap	Difference
European Catholic	8	7	6.85	4.41	–2.44	–1.78	–0.66
European Protestant	7	1	9.21	5.70	–3.51	–4.77	1.26
Orthodox	1	9	4.60	2.89	–1.71	–3.90	2.19
Western Muslim	5	2	3.60	2.10	–1.50	–0.13	–1.37
East Asian	2	2	5.30	2.95	–2.35	–1.55	–0.80
Weighted average					–2.31	–2.06	–0.25

NC, non-Communist; C, Communist-affected.

Note: Expected gaps are based on the mean gaps in Self-expression and Secular-rational (from Table 3) and the changes they would produce in EI according to the equation $\Delta EI = (1.73 \times \Delta \text{Self-expression}) + (0.80 \times \Delta \text{Secular-rational})$.

difference of 2.31 units.¹² In other words: On a scale from 0 to 10, *a communist background increases the perceived corruption level by more than 2 units, compared to other countries with similar traditional cultures.*

How much of this corruption gap between non-communist and communist-affected countries is caused by shifts in values? We can calculate the gap that would be predicted on the basis of differences in Self-expression and Secular-rational scores from Table 3, using the previous equation:

$$EI = (1.73 \times \text{Self-expression}) + (0.80 \times \text{Secular-rational}) + 5.14.$$

The results are shown in Table 4, along with the difference between the expected and actual gaps. The weighted mean predicted gap in corruption (on the basis of shifts in values) is 2.06 units – slightly less than the observed mean of 2.31. The effect of reduced Self-expression is partly counterbalanced by increased Secular-rational – and more than counterbalanced in the Muslim area.

The average scores on Self-expression and Secular-rational would predict certain levels of Elite Integrity when inserted into the appropriate equation. If communist countries have lower Elite Integrity scores than the values measures would predict, then communism itself could plausibly explain the difference. Put differently, the difference between the actual increase in corruption and the one predicted on the bases of shifts in values might represent the direct impact of communism. Its weighted mean is 0.25 units on the 10-unit scale. By this time, our error margins are getting large, because the ‘gaps’ between two imprecise figures compound the error, and taking the difference between those ‘gaps’ compounds the error even more.¹³ The error ranges in Table 4 are at least ± 0.3 units for individual gaps and ± 0.5 on their differences. On weighted means it is at least ± 0.2 for gaps and ± 0.3 for the difference.

To the extent that the gaps can be ascribed to the effects of communism rather than pre-existing differences, it would seem that communism (plus the painful process of

re-marketization) increases corruption, on the average, through two mechanisms: mainly through a shift in values, and marginally in a more direct way. Together they reduce elite integrity by about 2.3 units, on a 10-point scale. This result confirms our overall analysis.

This test based on Transparency International data can be repeated with World Bank data using a different scale, ranging from -2.5 to 2.5 (Table 5). The World Bank data permit slightly larger samples in some cultural areas. The previous pattern is confirmed. *A communist background worsens the perceived corruption by about 0.8 World Bank units, compared to other countries with similar cultures.* This is about 16 percent of the total possible range of 5, which is comparable to the difference attributable to communism in the Transparency International data (23 percent of a total possible range of 10).

Finally, we can test the proposition that a communist past increases corruption levels in one more way. In a multiple regression, controlling for both cultural variables and including the full set of communist and non-communist countries for which we have data, we should observe a non-zero coefficient for a dummy variable representing communist experience. Table 6 reports the results of such a regression. The model produces an adjusted R^2 of 0.73. Both of the cultural variables have highly significant positive coefficients, with the Self-expression dimension exhibiting a somewhat stronger effect than the Secular-rational dimension (as is the case in the other models). The dummy variable for communism is also significant, with a negative coefficient (communism is associated with lower elite integrity). The size of the effect of the communism variable is about the same as that of the Secular-rational variable (approximately 1), but with the opposite sign. Taken by themselves, the regression results would not be decisive. But because the regression results are consistent with the findings using other techniques, the regression offers additional confirmation that communism does increase corruption, even controlling for the cultural variables. Figure 5 graphs the level of elite integrity predicted by the model against the actual elite integrity scores from Transparency International.

Table 5 Elite Integrity in Countries with and without a Communist Past, within the same Cultural-Religious Area, According to World Bank data

Cultural area	Number of cases		Average elite integrity		
	NC	C	NC	C	Gap
European Catholic	9	7	1.15	0.30	0.85
European Protestant	8	1	1.94	0.59	1.35
Orthodox	1	10	0.82	-0.66	1.49
Western Muslim	19	8	-0.26	-0.94	0.68
East Asian	6	4	0.37	-0.32	0.69
Weighted average					0.81

Data from Kaufmann *et al.* (1999).

Table 6 Regression, Elite Integrity 1997–2001, Communist and Non-communist Countries

	Coefficient	Standard error	Significance
Constant	5.40		
Survival/self-expression (S)	1.40	0.214	0.000
Traditional/secular-rational authority (T)	0.98	0.201	0.000
Communism (dummy)	−0.97	0.560	0.089
Adjusted R^2		0.73	
Standard error of the estimate		1.28	
N		68	

Discussion and Conclusions

We hypothesized relationships between cultural values, communism, and elite integrity. Specifically, we proposed that both high levels of Self-expression (as opposed to survival) values and high levels of Secular-rational (as opposed to traditional authority) values would be associated with higher Elite Integrity scores. We also hypothesized that communism, and transitions from communism to markets and democracy, would tend to decrease levels of Elite Integrity. On the basis of observed relationships among the cultural dimensions (survival/self-expression and traditional/secular-rational authority) and elite integrity, we distilled three possible causal relationships between communism and elite integrity:

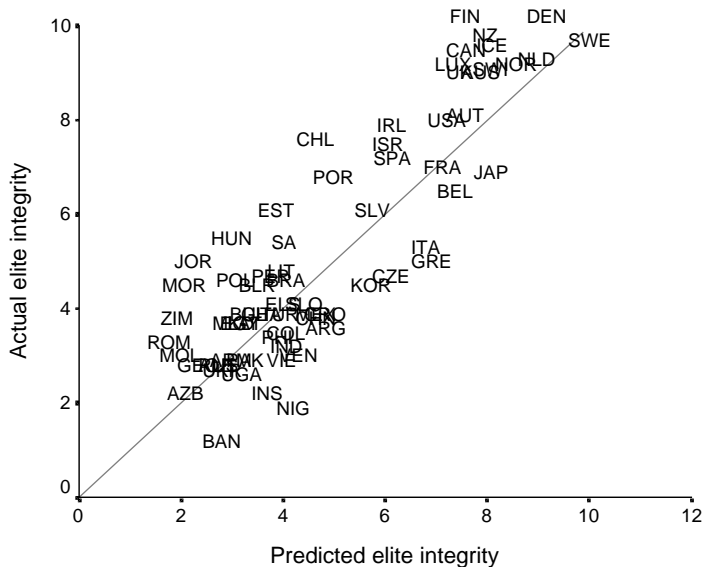


Figure 5 Predicted versus actual levels of elite integrity, communist and non-communist countries. *Note:* The line represents perfect correlation (45°).

- 1) Communism can increase the emphasis on survival over self-expression, thus reducing Self-expression values and hence diminishing Elite Integrity.
- 2) Communism can boost secularism over traditional authority values, thus increasing Secular-rational values and hence increasing Elite Integrity.
- 3) Communism can have a direct negative impact on Elite Integrity.

Empirical analysis confirmed each of these causal relationships. Regression models (both for the full set of countries and for communist and non-communist subsets) produced positive coefficients for both Self-expression and Secular-rational variables, confirming our expectation that higher values on both cultural dimensions would be associated with greater Elite Integrity. Conversely, a survival orientation and greater prevalence of traditional authority values (low Self-expression and Secular-rational scores) were linked to higher levels of corruption. Communist and ex-communist countries have very pronounced survival orientations, but high levels of secular-rational values. These results are consistent with our argument that communism affects levels of Elite Integrity indirectly, by pushing values from self-expression toward survival, and from traditional authority toward secular-rational. A stronger survival orientation increases corruption, whereas a stronger secular-rational orientation decreases it. Thus, the powerful focus on personal and economic security in communist and post-communist countries tends to counteract the effect of a strong secular-rational orientation, in terms of their influences on Elite Integrity.

To assess the proposition that communism also had a direct effect on Elite Integrity, we devised additional empirical tests. We calculated the average difference in Elite Integrity scores between non-communist and communist countries, for each of five cultural regions. In every region, countries with a communist experience had lower Elite Integrity scores than non-communist countries; the average difference was 2.31. In other words, the average regional difference attributable to communism was 2.31 more units of corruption.

To further assess the robustness of these relationships, we generated expected regional differences in Elite Integrity between non-communist and communist countries, based on average Self-expression and Secular-rational scores and using the linear equations produced at the outset. The regional differences in Elite Integrity between communist and non-communist countries, predicted by the cultural variables, closely approximated the actual regional average differences. The predicted average regional gap in Elite Integrity was 2.06; the actual average regional gap was 2.31 – additional evidence that communism negatively affected Elite Integrity, beyond the effects of the cultural variables. Though we cannot consider the results definitive (given the relatively large margins of error), they are extremely suggestive. Those results are additionally confirmed by a multiple regression analysis of the full set of communist and non-communist countries. That regression produced a significant, non-zero coefficient for the communism variable, while controlling for both of the cultural variables. We interpret that result as further evidence that communism has a direct influence on corruption.

In short, communism does appear to affect corruption, both indirectly (through its effect on cultural values, especially the survival/self-expression orientation), and directly. Pervasive corruption was practically a necessity under communist regimes, though government agencies exercised some restraining influence. The transition to democratic institutions and market economies removed the regulatory forces that had constrained corruption. The initial phases of the democratic and market transitions thus created massive opportunities to grab assets through bribes, kickbacks, payoffs, and extortion, but without new institutional and normative structures that might curtail such behaviors. Still, as this study shows, the surge in corruption in the former communist states was not just a response to immediate material incentives. Communism had produced a culture of corruption; entire populations had been socialized into norms and expectations that made corruption part of their way of life. Those cultural legacies of communism were unlikely to simply vanish with the political system that engendered them. Not surprisingly, most of the post-communist countries of central and Eastern Europe have found corruption not only to be retarding the development of market economies, but also to be undermining public trust in democratic institutions and public administration.

Of course, cultures change. But they change relatively slowly. Where cultural orientations are concerned, there are no quick fixes. The former communist countries will probably be wrestling with comparatively high levels of corruption for decades. Creating the proper incentives is crucial. But equally important, and less tractable, is the challenge of producing a citizenry that has been socialized into norms and expectations that reject and stigmatize corruption.

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Notes

- [1] See Rose-Ackerman (1999).
- [2] See, for example, Mauro (1995, 1997), Knack and Keefer (1996), Tanzi and Davoodi (1997), Rose-Ackerman (1998), Gupta *et al.* (2002).
- [3] Potential reverse effects also must be kept in mind. Do higher incomes reduce the pressure to supplement meager incomes by corrupt means, so as to feed one's family? Does low initial corruption, however induced, enable democracies to develop in the first place? Do corrupt actors push for presidentialism and federalism so as to broaden their opportunities? Correlation analysis can hope to indicate the main direction of causation only when using lagged data, but past comparable data for corruption are limited. While recognizing that

corruption itself may well be a causal factor for many other features, it is at least as much a result as a cause.

- [4] Could it be that inherently lower corruption levels encourage people to shift to Protestantism? The Protestant idea of personal responsibility would sound adverse to people who accept corruption as a way of life. Selling indulgence letters (a form of heavenly corruption?) seemed to shock northern Europeans more than the Mediterraneans.
- [5] The results of this ongoing inquiry have been presented in numerous articles and books, most prominently in Inglehart (1990, 1997). We rely here on the idea of the cultural map, as presented in Inglehart (2000), and on factor scores generously provided by Ronald Inglehart. The boundaries of the cultural areas in Figure 1 are our own.
- [6] These clusters by no means imply immutability of values. World Values Surveys themselves document generational shifts. But the ability to delineate such clusters suggests that countries in the same broad cultural areas do tend to move in parallel.
- [7] Question V213 in 1995–1998 read: ‘How widespread do you think bribe taking and corruption is in your country? (1) Almost no public officials are engaged in it. (2) A few public officials are engaged in it. (3) Most public officials are engaged in it. (4) Almost all public officials are engaged in it. (5) Don’t know.’
- [8] It may be argued that the Transparency International norms for what constitutes corruption are not universal, being based on the so-called Protestant work ethic. This ethic is now heavily embraced by Catholic Europe as well, but only marginally by Orthodox Christianity and Latin America. In other world cultures different criteria of ethic behavior may prevail. This may well be so, but then they might have to accept poverty as inherent part of their culture. Respect for Protestant criteria of elite integrity tends to coincide with greater material wealth and well being, possibly because these criteria create trust and hence synergy.
- [9] There is some correlation between Self-expression and Secular-rational in the set of non-communist countries; they have a Pearson’s correlation of 0.61. However, in the multiple regression, the variance inflation factors (VIF) for the two variables are low (1.8), indicating little danger of collinearity problems in the model.
- [10] The regression was also run to include the product of Secular-rational and Self-expression. The results:

	Coefficient	S. E.	Significance
Constant	4.79		
Self-expression	1.92	0.314	0.000
Secular-rational authority	0.58	0.296	0.059
Self-expression × Secular-rational	0.367	0.248	0.146
Adjusted R^2		0.74	
Standard error of the estimate		1.36	
N		46	

- [11] Consider these areas one hundred years ago. Given that Latin America differs from the West European Catholic area, the same could have been the case for East European Catholic countries; still, it’s debatable whether Poland and the Czech lands were markedly less traditional or survival-oriented than Spain and Austria. Marked differences between them developed only during the last 50 years. The claim of pre-communist differences becomes even more tenuous when comparing Western Muslim countries ranging from French-controlled North Africa to the Ottoman and Russian tsarist realms. The same applies to the Confucian area. The Orthodox and Protestant areas enter our analysis only marginally, since

the former has only one non-communist case (Greece) and the latter only one communist-affected case (Estonia).

- [12] The gap is around 2 units for all areas except European Protestant, for which the communist subgroup has only one case.
- [13] If the error on mean Self-expression and Secular-rational is 0.1 units, the error on the gap between two subgroups is magnified by a factor of $2^{0.5}$, leading to 0.15. Error on the predicted gap is $2^{0.5}(1.73 + 0.80)0.15/2 \approx 0.3$. If the error on mean EI is 0.2 units, the error on the actual gap between two subgroups is 0.3 units. The difference between expected and actual gaps then involves an error larger by $2^{0.5}$, meaning 0.45 units. The weighted mean for five cultural areas reduces the error again to 0.3.

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Appendix: Elite integrity scores and rankings, 68 countries

Rank	Country		Elite Integrity	Rank	Country		Elite Integrity
1	Denmark	DEN	9.8	35	Belarus	BLR	4.1
1	Finland	FIN	9.8	35	South Korea	KOR	4.1
3	New Zealand	NZ	9.4	35	Morocco	MOR	4.1
4	Sweden	SWE	9.3	38	El Salvador	ELS	3.7
5	Iceland	ICE	9.2	38	Slovakia	SLO	3.7
6	Canada	CAN	9.1	40	Bulgaria	BUL	3.5
7	Netherlands	NLD	8.9	40	Croatia	CRO	3.5
8	Luxembourg	LUX	8.8	40	Ghana	GHA	3.5
8	Norway	NOR	8.8	40	Mexico	MEX	3.5
10	Switzerland	SWI	8.7	40	Turkey	TUR	3.5
11	Australia	AUS	8.6	45	China	CHN	3.4
11	United Kingdom	UK	8.6	45	Zimbabwe	ZIM	3.4
13	Austria	AUT	7.7	47	Egypt	EGY	3.3
14	USA	USA	7.6	47	Latvia	LAT	3.3
15	Ireland	IRL	7.5	47	Macedonia	MKD	3.3
16	Chile	CHL	7.2	50	Argentina	ARG	3.2
17	Israel	ISR	7.1	51	Colombia	COL	3.1
18	Spain	SPA	6.8	52	Philippines	PHI	3
19	France	FRA	6.6	53	Romania	ROM	2.9
20	Japan	JAP	6.5	54	India	IND	2.8
21	Portugal	POR	6.4	55	Moldova	MOL	2.6
22	Belgium	BEL	6.1	55	Venezuela	VEN	2.6
23	Estonia	EST	5.7	57	Armenia	ARM	2.5
23	Slovenia	SLV	5.7	57	Pakistan	PAK	2.5
25	Hungary	HUN	5.1	57	Viet Nam	VIE	2.5
26	South Africa	SA	5	60	Albania	ALB	2.4
27	Italy	ITA	4.9	60	Georgia	GEO	2.4
28	Greece	GRE	4.6	60	Russia	RUS	2.4
28	Jordan	JOR	4.6	63	Ukraine	UKR	2.3
30	Lithuania	LIT	4.4	64	Uganda	UGA	2.2
31	Czech Republic	CZE	4.3	65	Azerbaijan	AZB	1.8
31	Peru	PER	4.3	65	Indonesia	INS	1.8
33	Brazil	BRA	4.2	67	Nigeria	NIG	1.5
33	Poland	POL	4.2	68	Bangladesh	BAN	0.8

Note: Elite integrity figures are averages of available annual scores for the period 1997–2001.

Source: Transparency International (2003).