CHAPTER TWO
CORRUPTION: DEFINITIONS AND PERSPECTIVES
CHAPTER II

CORRUPTION: DEFINITIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

2.1 THE ISSUE OF DEFINITIONS

2.1.1 The Literal Definitions of Corruption

2.1.2 The Legal and Bureaucratic Definitions of Corruption

2.1.3 The Economic Definitions of Corruption

2.1.4 The Socio-Political Definitions of Corruption

2.2 SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES TO THE STUDY OF CORRUPTION

2.2.1 Functionalism

2.2.2 Conflict Theory

2.2.3 Symbolic Interactionism

2.2.4 A Tentative Islamic Approach to Corruption
2.1 THE ISSUE OF DEFINITIONS

2.1.1 Introduction

With regard to the definition of "CORRUPTION", it is interesting to note that there is a great variety of definitions. This can probably be attributed to the different backgrounds of the definers such as sociologists, political scientists, economists, legal scientists, bureaucrats etc. Moreover, one of the problems surrounding the issue of corruption is that many people in the societies, including those in public office, neither fully understand its meaning nor appreciate the penalties and the efforts to reduce its effects. In addition to this, corruption has been attributed incorrectly as normally occurring in developing nations only, whereas there is overwhelming evidence that corruption occurs in wealthy societies and mature democracies, e.g. the United States of America, Britain, France, Germany, Japan etc. In view of the never-ending history of defining corruption, an attempt to summarize and systemize the various definitions and investigate its multi-faceted dimensions is relevant in order to provide a perspective for a comprehensive sociological understanding. Therefore, the literal, legal, bureaucratic, economic and socio-political aspects that are related to the issues of the definition of corruption, as bad behavior, are going to be systematically discussed.

2.1.2 The Literal Definitions of Corruption

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the definition of corruption includes moral deterioration infected with evil and perversion of a person's integrity in performance, especially of their official duties. The Dictionary also identifies nine meanings of corruption. Theobald roughly grouped them into three with the first
referring to the process of physical decay, disintegration and decomposition with associates of unwholesomeness and putrefaction. Secondly, he signifies corruption, as moral determination and decay: a loss of innocence or decline from a condition of purity. His third general meaning of corruption relates specifically to the sphere of government and administration, to the discharge of public duties by bribery of favor; the use of existence of corrupt practices, especially in a state or public corporation.¹

In general agreement with this, is the definition to be found in the Collins English Dictionary: “Corrupt: Lacking in integrity; open to or involving practices or other dishonest practices; morally deprived”, “Corruption: The act of corrupting or state of being corrupt; moral perversion, depravity; dishonest.” The Harper Collins Dictionary of sociology defines corruption as “the abandonment of expected standards of behavior by those in authority for the sake of unsanctioned personal advantage.”² The Encyclopedia Americana defines corruption as “a general term for the misuse of public position of trust for private gain. Its specific definition and application vary according to time, place and culture...political corruption concerns the illegal pursuit or misuse of public office.”³

In a general comment on the above mentioned definitions, Thomas stated that these words do not raise the complex issue of the relationship between morality and law, a troubled and troublesome relationship as lawyers well know, but in more popular terms questions the legal meaning of corruption as compared with the understanding of the public at large, or business community or politicians themselves. Therefore, depending on who is asked to define corruption, then

---

different and possibly contradictory answers will be given. Simply, competing realities produce competing responses. It is necessary to notice in this concern that the definition of corruption is not available in some dictionaries and encyclopedias.

The literal definitions could be summarized as the misuse of position of trust for private gain.

2.1.3 The Legal and Bureaucratic Definitions of Corruption

In view of the fact that the bureaucratic definition of corruption is obviously rooted in the legalistic definition, an elaboration on both of them is desirable.

Corruption from a legalistic viewpoint is “all illegal or unethical use of governmental authority as a result of considerations of personal or political gain.” Corruption can also be described as a “behavior, which deviates from the formal duties of a public role (elective or appointive) because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) wealth or status gains or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence.”

Theobald quoted several definitions in this context; “corruption is behavior of public officials which deviates from accepted norms in order to serve private ends.” “Corruption is the misuse of public power for private profit.”, corruption is “the practice of using the power of the office for making private gain in breach of laws and regulations nominally in force.” Such definitions obviously depend upon the existence of a public domain, which is recognizably separate from the private sphere.

---

5 The definition of corruption is not available in the following references: The Encyclopedia Britannica, The Encyclopedia of Governments and Politics by Mary Hawkes Worth & Maurice Kogan, and in A Dictionary of Modern Politics by David Robertson.
So far as social scientists are concerned, any conception of public office is strongly influenced by Max Weber's ideal-type of rational-legal bureaucracy.⁷

Rogow and Lasswell assert that: "a corrupt act violates responsibility towards at least one system of public or civic order and is in fact incompatible with (destructive of) any such system. A system of public or civic order exalts common interest over special interest; violations of the common interest for special advantage are corrupt."⁸ This definition turns on the meaning of responsibility, which is understood by Rogow and Lasswell in terms of the individual citizen striving to protect the fundamental institutions and the basic pattern of value distribution within the commonwealth.⁹

It is clear that most legal and bureaucratic definitions of the term corruption stress the idea of the violation of rules and regulations for unlawful private interest. In other words, corruption is a deviation from the formal duties of public role because of private interest at the public expense. Such behavior is categorized as deviant because it violates legal norms which prevail, or which are thought to prevail in society. These definitions, therefore, seem to pay little attention to the general interest of the public or to the extent to which corrupt practices violate the norms of society. Moreover, many researchers point out the incongruities between the folk norms and the legal norms. Based on this ground, "there is a need to replace those definitions of corruption that are based upon purely legal norms with a concept that

---

can be used to identify and to distinguish activities that undermine a constitutional system of law and justice."\(^{10}\)

2.1.4 The Economic Definitions of Corruption

The economic approach to corruption would prove incomplete, inadequate and problematic because of its lack of concentration on the overall impact on society and it represents a challenge for the legal conclusion of corruption. In the middle of the 1950's, Jacob van Klaveren delivered lectures to the students of Economics at the University of Munich, Germany and treated the concept of corruption in the economic context. He said: “In everyday life corruption means that a civil servant abuses his authority in order to obtain an extra income from the public.”\(^{11}\) After criticizing the general understanding of corruption that this conception expresses a value judgment that is altogether temporal and did not always exist, he defined corruption in the context of exploitation of the public: “Provisionally it can be said that corruption is always an exploitation of the public, which can occur only because the civil servants occupy a constitutionally independent position vis-à-vis the public.”\(^{12}\) The abuse of economic power takes the form of exploitation of the powerless (the public). Based on the above definition of corruption, we shall always think only of the systematic forms of corruption that are rooted in the Constitution. This will bring us back to the legalistic view with its complexity and problems.

The World Bank’s Procurement Guidelines, taking a functional perspective, define corrupt practice as “the offering, giving, receiving or soliciting of anything of


\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 39.
value to influence the action of public officials in the procurement process or in contract execution.13 According to the World Bank quoted from Rose-Ackerman, “Corruption is an illegal payment to a public agent to obtain benefit that may or may not be deserved in the absence of payoffs.”14 In a quotation from the O.E.C.D.15 Working Group, corruption is “The promise or giving of any undue payment or other advantaged whether directly or through intermediaries to or for the benefit of a public official to the influence the official to act or refrain from acting in the performance of his or her official duties in order to obtain or retain business.”16

In another statement the World Bank defined corruption as the abuse of public office for private gain. The public office is abused for private gain when an official accepts, solicits or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. Public office can be abused for personal benefit even if no bribery occurs, through patronage and nepotism, theft of state assets, or the diversion of state revenues.17 This definition seems to be simple and sufficiently broad to cover the overlooked aspects of corruption. It can also circumscribe most of the corruption that the bank encounters, and generally it is widely used in the economic literature on corruption.

The discussion of the relationship of corruption to development had urged Nye to argue that corruption can be beneficial for economic development. He said:

15 It is the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, established in 1994 and consists of 27 countries. One of its main interests is to combat transnational bribery.
17 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
"one can argue that corruption can be beneficial for economic development, as here defined, by contributing to the solution of three major problems involved: economic development, national integration and governmental capacity. If corruption helps promote economic development which is generally necessary to maintain a capacity to preserve legitimacy in the face of social change, then it is beneficial for political development."\textsuperscript{18} This means that in order to maintain legitimacy a regime must be able to cope with the three major spheres mentioned above. Therefore, corruption may serve these ends and thus benefits society.

Theobald argued that a number of writers\textsuperscript{19} have maintained that certain forms of corruption can actually have beneficial consequences for a society such as promoting economic growth or fostering political stability. This seems to be suggesting that corruption could serve the public interest, which, if true, creates difficulties for the defining of corruption, which demands that it cannot serve.\textsuperscript{20}

The other aspect of the economic view of corruption is that: "most acts we call corrupt are transactions in which one party exchanges wealth or more durable assets, such as kinship or friendship, for influence over the decision of government. When we say that influence is corrupt we imply that, without the special consideration of kinship, bribery and friendship, the public official could not have made the same decision."\textsuperscript{21} The term "Transaction" in the above definition could be taken in this context from its economic dimension, that is exchange of wealth by


\textsuperscript{19} In the same line as Nye's view, Girling argued that corruption is functional when it overcomes the rigidities of an over-regulated economy, where it allows ethnic or other minority business communities to bypass politically imposed obstacles and where it provides welfare services to clients subject to inadequate or oppressive political regimes. Thus corruption is functional in promoting economic development against political and bureaucratic obstacles. See: John Girling, 1997. Corruption, Capitalism and Democracy, London, UK, Routledge, pp. 24-30.

\textsuperscript{20} Theobald, Corruption: Development and Under Development, op. cit., p. 6.

\textsuperscript{21} Scott, Comparative Political Corruption, op. cit., p. 21.
pricing, offering, selling and enriching, and not from its sociological dimension, that is interaction and social relation. In line with the same elaboration, Le Vine said:

"The term transaction relationship" initially designates the various means by which political resources and goods are used for purposes other than those for which they were originally intended. A politically corrupt transaction, in its simplest form, involves at least two people, at least one of them acting in an official or quasi-official capacity, in an exchange in which a political good is passed in at least one direction and at least one of the parties knows that the disposition of the political good is unscheduled, illegal, or unsanctioned."22

Finally, we can say that a strictly economic view of corruption would prove incomplete, hence inadequate, because its focus on corruption is in fact within a model of rational individual choice, with little emphasis on its overall negative effects. It is also because of the negative implications on the social institutions and society at large. The discipline of Economics, in a similar manner to other academic disciplines such as Public Administration and Political Science, has, to some extent, largely neglected a systematic investigation of the subject of 'corruption', let alone proposed effective solutions, as it would be discussed in chapter four of this study.

2.1.5 The Socio-Political Definitions of Corruption

The Socio-political interpretative approach requires a synthesis of the theoretical and the systematic explanation of the various definitions of corruption. The purpose of this discussion and presentation is an attempt to develop a higher degree of conceptualization and classification of corruption.

Heidenheimer attempted to summarize and systemize the variety of definitions. He identified three major categories: (1) market-centered orientation. (2)

public interest-centered approach, and (3) public office-centered perspective. The market-centered approach is basically concerned with the progress of exchange and the balance between supply and demand. From this aspect, a corrupt officer is just like a businessman who tends to use his office as a device for maximizing his own profit. The size of his profit depends upon the market situation. However, the main criticism that could be directed to this view is that it is limited as there are corrupt practices that are not related to resource allocation or an imbalance between supply and demand. Furthermore, in the above context, Heidenheimer defines corruption mainly in terms of its cause, rather than the corrupt act itself. The public interest-centered approach defines corruption primarily in terms of its consequences. In this context corruption is an act of an officer who favors one special section of the public who gives the reward not legally provided for, thus damaging the common general public interest. Like the market-centered orientation, this view does not define corruption in terms of its intrinsic quality. Moreover, this perspective faces great difficulty in defining 'public interest' especially in complex and in multi-cultural societies, where there is not just one type but wide range of publics each with its own interest. Thus, the general public in a highly differentiated and pluralistic society is far from being homogeneous. This is because there are numerous groups with ethnic, religious, occupational, political affiliations and other characteristics, thus having different values and interests. A particular corrupt act, whatever it is, may be functional for one group and dysfunctional for another. It may also be functional in some ways and dysfunctional in other ways for the same group of people due to the factor of time or under specific circumstances or other causes. Generally, under such

---

circumstances the public interest tends to be appropriated by politically dominant
groups and used to protect their position. This will often entail restricting the flow of
information or the liberties of individuals or groups who are seen to be subverting the
'public' or 'national' interest. In the name of public or national interest basic rights
have been denied, repressed and even the physical extermination of minorities and
sometimes majorities has been practiced\textsuperscript{24} for example in South Africa, in Burundi,
in Bosnia, in Kosovo etc. It seems that the reason behind this perspective is not to
properly define corruption but rather to sensitize the students of corruption and the
public opinion at large to the dysfunctional consequences of corruption. Thus, this
refutes the claim of those who see that corruption has some positive aspects.

The public office-centered approach defines corruption as an act, which
violates, or deviates from the formal rules of public office because of private-
regarding gains. This view is too broad, as it takes into consideration not only one
motivation or consequence of corruption, that is personal gains, but also the very
nature of corruption, which is the deviation from the formal norms. Generally, in any
society, the people, relative to the existing norms, share right and wrong.
Accordingly, an act, whatever it is, may be corrupt in one society, but the same act
may be normal in another society or in the same society at another time. Hence, it is
the existing norms that determine whether or not an act is corrupt at a particular time
and place. The question is, in a complex society, whose norms should be used in
defining corruption? The public office-centered definition focuses on the formal
rules of public office; it thus chooses the legal norms as a baseline for evaluating
whether an act is corrupt or not. This view is also limited in a sense that it takes the

\textsuperscript{24} Theobald, Corruption: Development and Under Development, op. cit., p. 6.
government definition but it ignores the divergent folk norms (beliefs and the related emotion) of corruption in the society.

The theoretical and methodological difficulties in defining corruption and the pitfalls in some attempts to summarize and classify the various definitions urged the researcher to present some contemporary views ranging from the 1960’s up to the 1990’s. Sociologists, political scientists, politicians, economists and international organizations have expressed these views. This attempt has been made in order to approach the subject matter of the issue in question from another perspective, and also to update our knowledge through other alternatives. In the early 1960’s, Brasz defined corruption as perversion of power and asserted that it merits a place in the sociology of power. He, in fact, associated the definition of corruption with the definition of power as Van Doorn presents it; power is the possibility, in pursuance of the purposes of a person or group, of restricting the alternative choices of behavior of other persons or groups. Brasz argued that the most essential characteristic of corruption is the furtive exercise of formal authority and power under the pretence of legality. The real purpose for which power and authority are abused is always kept secret. Brasz came to the conclusion that, for the sociologist, the interesting question is: under what circumstances is a certain act called corrupt? Is it when the public interest is being sacrificed for the benefit of personal interest? He believes that sociology cannot answer these questions since corruption is usually practiced in an unseen manner and camouflaged. Brasz’s approach to corruption seems to be grounded in Lord Acton’s well-known aphorism; “Power tends to corrupt, and

---
absolute power corrupts absolutely,” and to be influenced by the approach of Van Doorm in his article ‘Sociology and the Problem of Power, 1962’.

Regardless of his positive view towards corruption, Nye had worked out a definition that covers many respects of the corrupt practices. He said:

“Corruption is behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding; personal, close family, private clique, pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence. This includes such behavior as bribery; use of a reward to prevent the judgment of a person in a position of trust, nepotism; bestowal of patronage by reason of inscriptive relationship rather than merit, and misappropriation; illegal appropriation of public resources for private-regarding uses.”

Nye himself criticized this definition in that it excludes much behavior that might be regarded as offensive to moral standards, and it also excludes any consideration of whether the behavior is in the public interest. This will make the analysis of the relationship between corruption and development difficult. This is in order for him to introduce his view of the possible benefits of corruption especially in political development. Furthermore, Nye’s definition excludes any mention of the public interest.

In the late 1960’s Alatas adopted Wertheim’s definition of corruption: “we call corrupt a public servant who accepts gifts bestowed by a private person with the object of inducing him to give special consideration to the interests of the donor… the term is sometimes also applied to officials who use the public funds they administer for their own benefit.” It seems that Alatas found out that this definition requires other characteristics to be operational. These characteristics, as identified by

---

27 Ibid., p. 567.
Alatas, are: (a) Corruption always involves more than one person. (b) Corruption on the whole involves secrecy, except where it has become so rampant and so deeply rooted that some powerful individuals or those under their protection would not bother to hide their activity. (c) Corruption involves an element of mutual obligation and mutual benefit. (d) Those who practice corrupt methods usually attempt to camouflage their activities by resorting to some form of lawful justification; they avoid any open clash with the law. (e) Those who are involved in corruption are those who want definite decisions and those who are able to influence those decisions. (f) Any act of corruption involves deception, usually of the public body or society at large. (g) Any form of corruption is a betrayal of trust. (h) Any form of corruption involves a contradictory dual function of those who are committing the act. (i) A corrupt act violates the norms of duty and responsibility within the civic order.29

The above list of characteristics of corruption could be extended by giving more emphasis to the criteria related to the corrupt act itself, and also by intensifying the deduction of the social reality surrounding the corrupt acts and the corrupt social actors as well. Then the above definition and all deducted characteristics would help identify a corrupt person and classify a corrupt act.

In his comparative study of corruption in several nations in the early 1970’s, Scott acknowledged the difficulties associated with a formal legalistic definition. Therefore he asserted that: “corruption like violence, must be understood as a regular, repetitive, integral part of the operation of most political systems. In practice, this simply means that an analysis of who in a society gets what, when, where and how that relies exclusively upon an examination of those political acts

open to public view would seldom provide an acuter of political reality."30 In addition to the above, he argued that: "in a more general sense, our conception of corruption does not cover political systems that are, in Aristotelian terms, 'corrupt' in that they systematically serve the interests of special groups or sectors. A given regime may be biased and repressive: it may consistently favor the interests, say, of the aristocracy, big business, a single ethnic group, or a single region while it represses other demands, but it is not ipso facto corrupt unless the ends are accomplished by breaching the formal norms of office."31

Scott, then, explained that: "the accounts of corruption that focus on values often use the anthropological literature to show that much of what is considered corruption is, in fact, a continuation of the traditional gift-giving practices. In the traditional context, the giving of a gift was obligatory in many circumstances and was embedded in an elaborate network of social alliances and status differences."32 It should be noticed here that Scott’s definition is broader than Nye’s definition of corruption and more applicable to the socio-political reality.

In the middle of the 1970's, Le Vine defined political corruption as: the unsanctioned unscheduled use of public political resources and/or goods for private -non-public- ends. The definition rests on three assumptions: that there is a distinction between political and non-political corruption, there is a distinction between political corruption and corruption of process, and that corruption is a social process. Political corruption is, however, a pattern of acts relating at least to actors who occupy positions in the formal polity.33

30 Scott, Comparative Political Corruption, op. cit., p. viii.
31 Ibid., p. 5.
32 Ibid., p. 10.
In the middle of the 1980’s, and after a long experience as a politician Dato’ Sri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, defines corruption as a “practice, which enables someone to obtain remuneration through illegitimate means. For instance, an official who receives regular remuneration for performing certain duties may accept a gift from a person for performing one of those duties. Though this act can be interpreted as corruption, at first it may not bring any undesirable consequences. The giver may have given freely, and the official will perform the same duty for others who do not offer gifts. But once a gift is given, the next time there is bound to be some preference for the giver. This means that those who do not offer gifts are served less promptly.”\(^{34}\) Afterwards, Dato’ Sri Dr. Mahathir summarizes his view on corruption. He said: “Generally, corruption is understood as giving something to someone with power so that he will abuse his power and act favoring the giver. Misuse of government funds is definitely to be considered corruption, as is misuse of power.”\(^{35}\) This definition pays little attention to other forms of corruption such as nepotism, fraud and graft. It solely focuses on bribery and the embezzlement of government funds. It is not necessary that every corrupt practice must be followed by what he called remuneration such as acting in favor of one of his relatives or clique etc.

In the middle of the 1990’s, Alemann discussed the classical conception of corruption in order to work out his own definition. He said: “The classical conception of corruption since Aristotle, but especially in Machiavellian, thought corruption to be a decline of moral standards in society or, literally speaking, a

---


\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 148.
breakdown of political virtues. This corresponds to the Latin meaning of the word.16 Historically, the notion of corruption goes back to Aristotle’s distinction between political constitutions which are ‘right’ or ‘just’ because they are in the common interest, and those which are ‘wrong’ or ‘perversions of the right forms’, because they consider only the personal interest of rulers.17 Corruption is defined as behavior that violates and undermines the norms of the system of political order, which is deemed indispensable for the maintenance of political democracy.18 He noted that corruption is conceived as an undermining of political values. He added that this definition only appears to be universal in time and place. The question here is: which political values; are they those of the ruling party or those of the opposition? Which values are undermined in a complex society? How can this definition be universal in time and place whereas societies are different and change over time and place?

Alemann, then, discussed corruption as a matter of trust and explained its mechanism. He said:

“Corruption is, therefore, a matter of trust. It prospers in an informal exchange of give and take requiring mutual trust and confidence. There aren’t any contracts that could stand up in court. People trust one another by producing a unilateral benefit whose reward cannot be enforced. This is why corruption is prospering well in established networks of clientelism. These networks have to be controlled more intensively. Preventive measures have to be taken in order to control areas susceptible to corruption.”19

Adopting the same methodology as Alatas, Alemann pointed out that corruption can be conceptualized as a model of a cycle of at least seven steps; (1) The buyer (the person offering the bribe: the corrupter) wants (2) a rare good (an

17 Girling, Corruption, Capitalism and Democracy, op. cit., p. 2.
19 Ibid., p. 10.
order, license, or position) which (3) the seller (the person to be bribed: the corruptible) can assign. The later receives (4) an additional incentive (money or payment in kind) for the assignment above the moral price. The corruptible, thereby (5) violates generally accepted moral standards and (6) damages the interest of a third party or competitor and/or the public interest. (7) Therefore, corruption is hidden and concealed.  

Finally, according to the Council of Europe, corruption is: “The intentional promise, or offer of gift by any person, directly, of an advantage of any kind whatsoever to a person, as undue consideration for themselves, or for anyone else, to act or refrain from acting in the exercise of their functions, or the intentional request or receipt by a person, directly or indirectly, of an undue advantage of any kind whatsoever, for themselves or for anyone else, or the acceptance of offers or promises of such advantages to act or refrain from acting in the exercise of their functions.  

The socio-political definitions of corruption most often stress the idea of violation-for personal purposes- of social, cultural, and political standards set by a given society to protect its public interest.

As a conclusion of this review of the various disciplinary perspectives concerning the definition of corruption, it should be acknowledged that corruption, like many other forms of behavior, when placed in the light of the social science lens, proves to be an elusive and complex phenomenon. In fact, the more one examines it, the more difficult it becomes to separate corruption from other forms of social exchange. The answer to what is meant by corruption varies principally as a function of the inquiry discipline. It is agreed that corruption involves a deviation from certain

40 ibid., p. 6.
41 Thomas, Political Corruption and the Law in the United Kingdom, op. cit., p. 16.
standards of behavior admitted by the society. These standards must be regarded as means to protect the public interest, public opinion, folk and legal norms.

2.2 SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES TO THE STUDY OF CORRUPTION

2.2.1 Introduction

Modern sociology, the systematic approach to examining social life, is composed of several different theoretical perspectives. Each of these perspectives has been influenced by the European founding theorists as well as by pioneering American sociologists, and by various events that happened during the twentieth century. Social thinkers and sociologists were sharply divided in their views on how society should be analyzed. These views are conventionally divided into three theories: functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism. These three theories are viewed as the most influential theoretical perspectives in sociology. The three theoretical perspectives offer a lens through which to view the social reality including corruption. In this part of the chapter an attempt has been made to present the different insights into corruption provided by these theories. In addition to that, a fundamental approach towards an Islamic perspective of corruption will be discussed.

2.2.2 Functionalism

The basis of the functionalist perspective was established by Auguste Comte (1798-1857) who coined the term “sociology” in 1838, and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) who was an outstanding evolutionary theorist. Comte and Spencer have observed the similarities between biological organisms and societies and social
groups. Biological organisms such as the human body are composed of a variety of structures, or organs that serve different functions, which enable the whole organism to maintain equilibrium and a balanced state of health. Societies also have a variety of structures, or institutions, that serve various interrelated functions necessary for maintaining a balanced society. This idea is the basis of functionalism and was first proposed in the nineteenth century by Comte and Spencer. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) occupies a central place in the development of sociology. He is considered one of the founders of functionalism. The massive body of scholarship produced by Durkheim was perhaps the most influential analysis of social order. In Durkheim’s version of functionalism, society is a system of interdependent units or parts, each of which plays an important role in helping maintain the total social system. Durkheim distinguishes between two types of societies: traditional or tribal societies and modern industrial societies. In traditional societies the social system/order is based on shared beliefs and values. In contrast, in modern societies social solidarity is based more on the interdependence among people than on their similarity.42

Functionalism was revived, developed and pioneered by American sociologists notably Talcot Parsons and Robert K. Merton. Parsons was an influential functionalist whose theoretical work was influenced by Durkheim. Parsons suggested that societies develop institutions or structures to serve certain functions that are essential to society’s survival. For instance political institutions establish societal goals and develop policies to reach those goals.

Parsons argued that the modern nuclear family, which comprised parents and children only, has two main functions: socialization of the children into the larger

society and the stabilization of adult personalities. Parsons sees the family contributing to social stability. Parsons has clearly left his mark on the functional analysis of society with probably his major contribution being his insistence that sociological analysis focus on the whole social system in which each kind of institution has important consequences or functions for society, and all are interrelated.  

Merton, a functionalist sociologist who was influenced by Durkheim’s original concept of functionalism and by the works of Parsons maintained that sociological inquiry should focus on the social consequences rather than the origins of phenomena. The major contribution of Merton to the social theory lies in his distinction between “manifest” and “latent” functions. According to Merton, social institutions sometimes have dysfunction or consequences that fail to serve the well-being of society, and thus disrupt societal equilibrium and balance. Merton’s version of functional analysis implies that the researcher should seek to determine the “latent”, unanticipated, as well as the “manifest” anticipated consequences of social behavior, and should determine whether these consequences are functional or dysfunctional in a given context and society.  

It is generally admitted that functionalism is the theoretical perspective that sees each structure or institution as serving a certain function for society. It tries to explain social institutions, such as the family, religion, education, etc. in terms of the

---


role they play within a given society rather than explaining them by externally given
divine or natural factors.\textsuperscript{45}

Functionalism has been criticized by sociologists such as Wright Mills and
Anthony Giddens and the followers of Karl Marx. The focus of criticism was that
functionalism tends to emphasize harmony and stability, which lead to support the
existing social system, or the status quo, and thereby minimizes the importance of
conflict and change. Moreover, to determine whether an institution is functional or
dysfunctional depends on the sociologist's values and preferences: conservative or
liberal.\textsuperscript{46}

Due to the critique of functionalism an approach called "Neofunctionalism"
has emerged. Neofunctionalism is derived from Parson's functionalism and has
stirred interest among social theorists. The revision of functionalism was influenced
by the work of Jeffry C. Alexander and others. Neofunctionalism shares with
functionalism, on the one hand, an interest in topics that have been discussed in
traditional analysis such as the state, social cohesion, social differentiation, and on
the other hand, its focus on social conflict and change. Sherman and Wood criticized
Neofunctionalism and pointed out that it is "simply old wine in new bottles"\textsuperscript{47}, which
means to them that the issues of functional analysis continue to be debated in
sociology and the efforts made by Neofunctionalists are unsatisfactory.

The application of Functionalism requires an attempt to look at the way that
functionalists would analyze corruption in society. Functionalism is, perhaps the
theoretical approach taken by most social scientists studying corruption. Sociologists

\textsuperscript{45} Sherman and Wood, Sociology: Traditional and Radical Perspectives, op. cit., p. 18; Conklin,

\textsuperscript{46} Sherman and Wood, Sociology: Traditional and Radical Perspectives, op. cit., p. 20; Conklin,
Sociology an Introduction, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

\textsuperscript{47} Sherman and Wood, Sociology: Traditional and Radical Perspectives, op. cit., pp. 16, 24.
taking the functionalist perspective use the functionalist methods, techniques and concepts, developed and pioneered by Parsons and Merton to explain why and how corruption exists. They would also explore the consequences of corruption for the rest of society. From a functionalist viewpoint corruption, according to most recent theorists, was determined as a process by which members of a society can manipulate the political system, which is unable to cope with the demands made upon it. Corrupt practices are therefore "seen as means of circumventing those formalized procedures which are the product of a rigid, coercive political system Consequently the system is viewed as unworkable without the existence of corruption."48 Thus corruption plays the role of keeping the political system workable. Similarly, Simpson mentioned that Bell suggested that criminal behavior, including corruption of public officials, could be considered a substitute avenue of achievement and social mobility for disadvantaged immigrant groups.49 Corruption is functional in some post-colonial African societies because it provides one means for minimizing the conflict between systems: bureaucratic and tribal systems. For instance, in 1961 McMullan examined the corrupt practices in post-colonial West Africa and suggested that a high level of corruption serves to minimize conflict and lessen friction between the bureaucrats holding political power and tribal leaders controlling wealth. The individual in this society has no alternative but to be involved in corruption in order for him to minimize the negative consequences of these two overlapping and potentially conflicting value systems.50 In this situation, the function of corruption is to minimize or avoid conflicts between two or more

49 Ibid.  
groups or systems and help the individual to satisfy his needs peacefully. However, there are not the only works that have viewed corruption as functional. Chapter 11 in Heidenheimer's collection of readings in political corruption included ten articles, eight of which posited that corruption has positive consequences on the development of post-colonial states\textsuperscript{51} without denying its harmful effects.\textsuperscript{52}

In view of the eight articles, corruption can be a tonic to the development of a country as it renders more flexible the rigidity of the bureaucracy toward more humanistic consideration, provides means by which the non-elite can penetrate and manipulate the political and bureaucratic systems, and thus contributes to social and political stability. For instance, Nye has discussed the relationship between corruption and development and maintained that corruption may serve the economic development, national integration and government capacity. He said: "one can argue that corruption can be beneficial to political development by contributing to the solution of three major problems involved: economic development, national integration and government capacity."\textsuperscript{53} Up to this point of analysis, one may think that theoretical views of corruption as functional were limited to the post-colonial period. However, some recent works on corruption especially within a Third World context suggest that corruption is functional. Perhaps the most recent approach in this concern was the attempt of Girling to produce an evaluation of corruption in Southeast Asia with an emphasis on the cases of Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. Girling maintained that corruption is functional to development in the three selected Southeast Asian countries. He sees that the outstanding records of

\textsuperscript{51} There are other terms that have been used to name the post-colonial states, or societies or countries such as: New States, Modernizing Economies, Less Developed or Underdeveloped Countries, Developing Countries and Third World Countries.

\textsuperscript{52} Heidenheimer, Political Corruption: Readings in Comparative Analysis, op. cit., pp. 479-578.

\textsuperscript{53} Nye, Corruption and Political Development: A Cost-Benefit Analysis, op. cit., p. 567.
economic growth, especially in Thailand and Indonesia, can be attributed to the role of corruption in overcoming institutional rigidities generated by the emergent capitalism that sweeps aside traditional ways and cultural norms imposing its own rules. Girling’s thesis emphasizes that corruption in those societies appears in the form of collusion between what he called “Democracy” which is the elite, the group in power, the ruling party, the technocrats or the military leaders, and what he termed as “Capitalism” which refers to the alien businessmen, especially the Chinese entrepreneurs who have wealth and do not have political power to guarantee economic privileges and protect the development of their wealth. Girling maintained that in both Indonesia and Thailand collusion between “alien wealth” and “indigenous power” is corruption because basically it involves bribery and some forms of graft, but it is functional to economic development. Nevertheless, Girling noticed that some awareness of the dysfunctional costs of corruption is growing, not only among the technocrats, but also among the general public in those countries (Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines) and particularly among the students who are the most vocal and influential elements of civil society.56

Under the light of the same methodology and framework of functionalism, Girling maintained that corruption is dysfunctional in developed countries. He considers France in the nineteenth and early twentieth century as a good example where “excessive” form of corruption symbolizing a wider social malaise. Furthermore, Girling pointed out that corruption has been shaking French society since the mid-1980s and has played a vital role in the crisis of the political system.

54 The term ‘Alien Wealth’ refers to Chinese businessmen who have benefited materially from Dutch colonial rulers in Indonesia and from the ruling elite in the post-colonial era.
55 The term ‘Indigenous Power’ refers to the ruling Thai elite in Thailand, and the Malay ruling elite in Indonesia.
and affected its legitimacy. That crisis was considered as the social fracture of France, which was condemned by Jack Chirac during his 1995 presidential campaign. In contrast with the Southeast Asian cases, the collusion between the political elite (Democracy) and the big businessmen or the economic decision-makers (Capitalism) in France in the form of intervening in the cause of time of close and often ambiguous relations between political and economic decision-makers was viewed as more serious and frequent than buying up of market or a definite public decisions. Therefore, Girling concludes that corrupt affairs are the unacceptable face of such an unusually collusive economic-political system. Consequently, the decline in social responsibility leads to the decline in political legitimacy and thus destabilized politics.⁵⁷

The functional analysis of corruption may take another form, for instance a functionalist might interpret corruption as being functional for society in several ways; e.g., providing jobs for larger number of workers such as policemen, judges, anti-corruption agents, etc. and avoiding conflict. Indeed, a detailed functionalists analysis of corruption would find a variety of functions and dysfunctions. However, a careful investigation into the matter would suggest that some functionalist found functional effects from corruption because they were focusing on the individual type rather than the more pervasive systemic corruption, and they did not assess corrupt behavior in the public interest. Moreover, in the proper definition of the term “development” all forms of positive alterations caused by corruption should be excluded. In addition, as de Leon pointed out: “It is highly unlikely that society in

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 86-114.
general or even the specific users benefit from the illicit activities facilitated by corruption.\textsuperscript{58}

Theoretical views of corruption as dysfunctional and a general disease especially of the political and economic institutions seems to be of wide acceptance among social scientists whose works are included in Heindenheimer’s collections of Political Corruption: Readings in Comparative Analysis, such as the historical studies of corruption by Zeldin, King, Guyn and Erschenberg, whereas others like Alatas, Scott and Theobald support the above thesis. For instance, Alatas maintained that so far no trend encouraging and promoting corruption as an ideal has emerged among social scientists. Even those who claimed to see some positive aspect of corruption have not recommended it for development but only tolerated it.\textsuperscript{59} Besides all these arguments, it is necessary to note that corruption in almost all legislation is considered as a crime that deserves a penalty. The public often describes crime as dysfunctional, even though some functionalists who are influenced by Durkheim have claimed that crime is normal and has positive consequences for society. However, the dysfunction of crime or corruption outweighs any positive consequences. This is in case we accept the above supposition that corruption has some positive implications in society.

2.2.3 Conflict Theory

The conflict perspective encompasses several approaches to the study of society. These approaches can be classified into three main perspectives that are the Marxist, the Weberian and the Modern conflict perspectives. All of these stress


\textsuperscript{59} Alatas, The Sociology of Corruption, op. cit., p. 17.
conflict and competition among groups of people for scarce resources such as wealth, power and prestige.

These perspectives see society as being in a continuous state of flux and emphasize the sources of change, rather than the bases of order in all societies. Conflict theory suggests that groups will act on the basis of self-interest and may even resort to force to achieve their goals.60

A. The Marxist Perspective

Karl Marx (1818-1883), like many other social philosophers and sociologists of his time made many important contributions to social philosophy, sociology and other social sciences. Marx was one of the earliest and most important exponents of conflict theory. He studied past and contemporary societies and claimed that the economic system is the ultimate source of social institutions and social behavior. He believed that conflict among groups is the main source of social change. Marx observed that control over the means of production (the sources, technology, factories, and labor used to produce goods and services) led some groups to oppress and exploit others. The exploited group comes to recognize its exploitation and consciously revolts to overthrow those in power who own the means of production and establish the exploitation-less, conflict-less and classless society where private ownership of the means of production disappears. Marx made a series of proposals to enhance the establishment of the classless society among which were the abolition of private ownership of land, confiscation of the property of emigrants and rebels, centralization of credit and communication and transportation by the state. But experience has shown that this strategy can only mean total rule by the communist

60 Wallace and Wolf, Contemporary Sociological Theory, op. cit., pp. 76-78; Conklin, Sociology an Introduction, op. cit., p. 19.
party, which justifies its exploitation of the masses by invoking the common good.\textsuperscript{61} According to Marx, the focus of sociology should be on how people influence and are influenced by their material condition. Their different locations dictate that classes have opposing interests and, therefore, class conflict is unavoidable. The emphasis on class conflict that persuades Marx’s writings constitute the fundamental study of how rates of behavior among aggregates of people are influenced by their location in the society. This implies that the individual action is usually avoided in Marx’s approach.\textsuperscript{62} Marx contributed to contemporary sociology and especially to modern conflict theories in many ways. He worked out the guiding assumptions of conflict theory upon which most conflict theorists base their approach to studying society especially the study of inequalities that led to various forms of conflict and social change. “In Marx’s work the guiding assumptions of conflict theory include: (1) All social systems reveal inequalities in the distribution of scarce and valuable resources. (2) Such inequalities inevitably and inexorably create conflicts of interests among system units. (3) Such a conflict of interest will, over time, generate overt conflict among those who possess, and those who do not possess, valuable resources, and (4) These conflicts will result in reorganization of the social system. creating new patterns of inequality that will serve as the next fulcrum for conflict and change.”\textsuperscript{63}

B. The Weberian Perspective of Conflict Theory

Max Weber (1864-1920), a German sociologist, was another social scientist, who had profoundly influenced the development of conflict theory. Weber’s view of class struggle goes beyond Marx’s view; class conflict as based on the ownership of


\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., pp. 124, 147.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., p. 473.
the means of production, he focused on the struggle to control various markets, such as money and credit, land, industry and labor skills. Weber also expanded the examination of class conflict to the cultural and political spheres in addition to the economic sphere. This reflects Weber’s argument that economic factors are not always the major determinants of people’s lives and power. He pointed out that racial-ethnic and religious groups often engage in conflict generated by differences in life styles and worldviews. Weber suggested that some forms of conflict, such as the conflict among political parties for control of the state could be analyzed independently of both economic and cultural aspects. In addition to this, Weber was very much concerned with power and with the ways in which some people secure domination over others either by Charismatic, Traditional or Rational-legal authority. Furthermore, Weber sees that the conflicts are permanent features of human society, and modern society tends not towards a communist status, as Marx argues, but towards a bureaucratic society inimical to human freedom.64

C. The Modern Conflict Perspective

Modern conflict theories deal with conflict among groups that are defined by class, race and ethnicity, religious beliefs, political allegiances, sex, age and lifestyle. Ralf Dahrendorf (b.1929), one important modern conflict theorist, sees conflicts as intrinsic to any social organization in which there is an accepted difference in authority between groups. Thus, he sees conflict as the great creative force of human history. For example, there may be conflict between secretaries and managers in a corporation, even though neither group owns the means of production. The term “class” in Dahrendorf’s thesis signifies conflict groups that are generated by the differential distribution of authority in imperatively coordinated associations:

that is dichotomous: you have it or you do not, and your interests are formed accordingly. Dahrendorf provides an illuminating account of the close and permanent relationship between power, or authority and conflict.

Lewis Coser (b.1913) is another modern conflict theorist who incorporates elements of both functionalism and conflict theory. His writings namely, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, have always reflected his concern with politics and the links between ideas and the nature of society. Coser treats conflict as a pervasive aspect of life in all societies, and he examines both the functions and dysfunctions of conflict for society. He shows how conflict between two groups can increase the internal cohesion of each group. For instance, two juvenile gangs that had previously engaged in conflict might unite in the face of a common enemy. Coser pays far more attention than do most conflict theorists to the role played by people's emotions. This means that there are aggressive or hostile "impulses" in people. Moreover, he points out that conflict and disagreement are internal parts of people's relationships. The major importance of Coser's conflict theory lies in his demonstration that conflict can neither be socially divisive nor a source of change.65

The application of the conflict theory perspective on corruption implies an attempt to explore some ideas and concepts to show that this perspective can address the problem of corruption.

The conflict theory focuses on the way that corrupt practices are influenced by the economic system. In this context, groups will act on the basis of self-interest and not on the basis of public or common interest. The self-interest, which is usually generated from self-love, love of wealth, love of prestige and power, can be considered as the main cause of corruption. Individuals or groups whose behavior is

---

65 Wallace and Wolf, Contemporary Sociological Theory, op. cit., pp. 143-161.
dominated by self-interest most often disregard the rules, regulations and ethics of their job, and thus, for example give and accept bribery, steal government funds, use government offices or power to promote their private (individual or group) interest, etc. It is true, as the conflict theory states, that some groups resort to force to achieve their goals or to protect their interest all within the context of corruption. For example, in Thailand’s political history the military coup which brought the “National Peacekeeping Council” to power in February 1991, aimed apparently at maintaining democratic rule, reform Thai society and fight corruption. However, the real reason behind the recourse to force to overthrow the Chatichai government was the new Prime Minister’s policies that had threatened military interests from various aspects.66

Another form of corrupt group behavior influenced by the economic condition and the position of such a group in society to protect the group interest can be seen, for example, in all corrupt means especially bribery practiced by the powerless, economically under-privileged groups, such as immigrants, groups of criminals; drug traffickers for example, or an ethnic minority, each of which can be considered as a class in a society. The Chinese group in Indonesia, for example, usually resort to corrupt practices; bribing those in power to protect their private interests. This form of corrupt practice was termed by Girling as collusion between the Chinese economically active group and the Malay elite in power.67

In another level of elaboration on the conflict theory and the study of corruption, one can notice that some aspects of corruption, notably extortive bribery and using the government budget for private interest or for political finance, etc. can be viewed as clear forms of exploitation of public property and exploitation of the

---

66 Girling, Corruption, Capitalism and Democracy, op. cit., p. 68.
67 Ibid., pp. 42-72.
masses that have no power, or no ownership or control over the means of production. The Weberian perspective of conflict theory together with the modern conflict perspective provides some insights into the issue of corruption in the context of exploitation. Exploitation can be seen in the form of officials extorting their clients to pay for goods or services that normally should be considered as their duties that should be performed free of charge. This group of officials has power and controls the means of production and maybe, more properly, they have control over the decisions, whereas the clients are powerless and divorced from the realm of decision-making and thus are subject to exploitation by those superior to them.

Similarly, the elite in power usually tries to promote their position, preserve their superiority and protect their interest by exploiting the masses. Modern capitalism has devised various techniques to extract profit for the capitalist class. The most basic source of profit is the exploitation of human labor power. Exploitation falls under the rubric of corruption and can be an important factor of revolution to change the existing situation, as the conflict theory suggests. However, as far as modern history is concerned, no revolution has occurred because of exploitation or corruption. Moreover, the reality proves that in many countries the source of social change was not the exploited group. For instance, in most developing countries social and political change is motivated and manipulated by either a military group, or political elite, or technocrats or other privileged groups. Social change in the Western countries that are following the democratic system is generated from other sources such as demographics, cultural, political, technological factors, etc. and not from the exploited group. Therefore, it seems difficult to treat exploitation, as a result of unequal power or different social and political position of groups or classes, in conjunction with revolution that leads to social change. Nevertheless, exploitation
can be at the same time a form and a cause of corruption. Exploitation can be a conducive atmosphere for corrupt behavior, where exploited people who are generally less privileged and less powerful than their chiefs, whether in the public or private sector, may resort to some form of corruption to satisfy their needs, to protect and promote their interests, to improve their income, and then to take revenge on the chiefs because they are not able to change the situation by force and revolution. So to avoid conflict and minimize the damage and danger, everybody is doing business in an unclean manner; bribery, extortion, swindling government money, embezzling public funds and the like.

In view of the fact that the majority of social scientists would agree that corruption is toxic; has negative consequences for the bureaucracy and for society at large, several recommendations were made for change. It is obvious that in many respects, whether at the national or the international level, combating corruption and enhancing accountability and transparency became one of the most urgent needs. It is in this regard that the conflict theory seems to be primarily concerned with change. Reformist approaches to corruption aiming to establish transparent bureaucracy and society can be circumscribed in the idea of change, which is stressed by the conflict theory. However, the agents of this change are not necessarily the exploited group, as has been discussed earlier, and the expected result is not a change in the social structure (classless society) but a change in the people’s behavior and attitude and a change in the legal system to be comprehensive, fair and strict. This is because, from a conflict theory’s perspective, the class influences penalty for a crime including corruption to which the executive of the enforcement and enactment of the law belongs. For instance, a poor person who is found guilty of an offence of corruption is more likely to be punished by imprisonment or a fine or both. Whereas, offences
of corruption committed by members of the ruling class or the economically privileged group are more likely to be covered or tolerated.

Although conflict theory provides some ideas and concepts that seem to be of considerable value in the analysis of corruption, many critics have emerged among the functionalists as well as radical sociologists. For instance, most radical sociologists believe that Marx was not perfect; he did not ask important questions in sociology, and he did not give all the answers. Moreover, Marx had a utopian vision of a classless society within which people acted cooperatively for the common good, and his vision of the transition from capitalism to communism is not applicable in many capitalist countries. Furthermore, in those countries that have experienced the communist regime, the individual became subordinate to the state and the elite in power was strictly controlling all aspects of life, exploiting the masses and abusing power, in a modern totalitarian form. In addition to the above criticism, functionalists have criticized conflict theorists in many respects, especially for paying too little attention to the stability and cohesiveness of societies, and for paying too much attention to conflict and change. Other critics claim that conflict theorists have made little use of modern research methods, such as statistical data and evidence and computer analysis. Conflict theorists studying corruption may respond that corrupt actions are too complex to be quantitatively measured and transferred into statistics because they are most often practiced in an unseen manner, therefore, the chance of collecting statistical data is very slim.

---

69 Turner et. al., The Emergence of Sociological Theory, op. cit., p. 163.
2.2.4 Symbolic Interactionism

George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) was the first sociologist to emphasize the importance of symbolic communication for understanding human interaction. However, it was Herbert Blumer who developed Mead’s approach to the interactionist perspective. In his article written in Man and Society on social psychology, Blumer coined the term “Symbolic Interactionism” in an attempt to clarify how social psychologists differed in their views of human nature. Blumer identifies the cornerstone of symbolic interactionism, as a common set of symbols and understanding possessed by people in a group. Symbolic interactionism primary focuses on the interaction between a person’s internal thoughts and emotions and his social behavior. Individuals are viewed as active constructors of their own conduct who interpret, evaluate, define and map out their own action, rather than passive beings, which are impinged upon by outside forces. Symbolic interactionism also stresses the processes by which the individual makes decisions and form opinions.\textsuperscript{70}

Max Weber (1864-1920) is widely recognized as one of the contributors to the development of “Symbolic Interactionism”. For in his definition of sociology, Weber emphasized the importance of the interpretive understanding of social action in order to explain its causes and effects. Weber’s action theory with an emphasis on the individual’s interpretation of a situation or symbols, as a means of expressing and communicating values and beliefs within a group, was influential in the emergence of the Symbolic Interactionism perspective. Weber’s theory of social action involves four central concepts: (1) The concept of understanding; (2) The concept of interpretive understanding; (3) The concept of subjective meaning; and (4) The

\textsuperscript{70} Wallace & Wolf, Contemporary Sociological Theory, op. cit., pp. 182-183.
concept of social action. Besides Mead, Blumer, and Weber, the forerunners of and
direct contributors to the symbolic interactionist perspective includes, George
Nevertheless, all types of interactionist theorizing stress the following assumptions.
(1) Macro or large-scale patterns of social organizing are all ultimately constructed
and sustained by face to face interaction among individuals. (2) Such face-to-face
interaction revolves around individuals' capacities to use and read gestures
[symbols], to interpret others' dispositions, to define a situation, to see oneself as an
object in a situation to construct joint lines of conduct, and to reassess, redefine, and
reconstruct their joint conduct. (3) Therefore, human organization can only be
understood by concepts and prepositions that explain how people interact in micro-
face-to-face contexts. 

Contemporary sociologists find that the interactionist perspective is a
valuable approach because, among other things, it helps understand and interpret the
everyday interaction of people as they relate with others in the context of family,
friendship or any other social situation. In addition, the interactionist perspective puts
the social change and understanding the processes of socialization in the human
grasp. Within this theoretical framework, many forms of corrupt behavior especially
bribery, and nepotism can, to some extent, be systematically explained. For instance,
in everyday interaction, an officer may favor his family members or friends with
goods or services and neglect the rules and regulations of his job. This nepotistic act
that manifests itself in the interaction between an officer and members of his family
or friends shows that the decision made by the officer is deeply influenced by family

Sage Publications Ltd., p. 274.
72 Turner et. al., The Emergence of Sociological Theory, op. cit., p. 477.
and friendship ties. In the case of bribery, most often, bribe givers and bribe receivers are socialized in a way to interact smoothly in the process of giving and taking bribery. They know how and what to give or take as bribery, they know how to interpret the symbols and act accordingly, and they know how to protect themselves from any danger. In this regard symbolic interactionism plays a vital role in examining the way that participants in corruption choose and agree on the meaning of symbols, the mode of exchange, and the means and tools of action.

Both Mead and Cooley examined society as the product of the interactions of people who learned how to interpret a variety of symbols, such as words, sounds, gestures, objects that have a shared meaning among them. Alatas argues that culture and language are among the important factors with which the sociologist studying the phenomenon of corruption has to be fully conversant.\textsuperscript{73}

Due to the fact that corrupt practices are full of symbols and modes of interaction between individuals and groups, social scientists studying corruption could not neglect this fact in their works and, therefore, they used to give some account to the study of corruption from a symbolic interactionist perspective. However, Simpson maintains that: "interactionist approaches have tried to explain corruption as a phenomenon occurring during continuing contact between an individual and a reference group which accepts corruption as a norm. Attempts are not made to explain in terms of interactionist theory alone; just why a particular reference group will adopt this norm. This theory is concerned with the individual in society; it does not attempt to analyze the norms of any subculture in that society in functionalist terms."\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{74} Simpson, The Literature of Police Corruption, op. cit., p. 119.
As a final note regarding the symbolic interactionist perspective and the study of corruption, a sociologist should not forget that understanding the nature and meaning of human social conduct or social actions should be his principal task. In view of the fact that corruption is usually intentional which, in other words, means that it has some sort of meaning or purpose to the actors, in this context the Weberian theory of action\textsuperscript{75} seems to be of value in explaining corrupt actions. For instance, nepotism can be classified in the type “effectual action”, where a social actor, e.g., an officer, is directly motivated by an emotional response dictated by the state of mind.\textsuperscript{76} This act of nepotism is, therefore, not oriented to a specific goal or values but is an expression of the emotional state of the actor in a given circumstance. Other forms of corruption such as bribery and graft can be classified and studied as what Weber terms “instrumentally rational action” in its broader scope, where the ends and means of the action are rationally taken into account. When corrupt actions become a part of the social fabric, and certain forms of corruption become a custom in the people’s daily practice, then they can be classified as what Weber terms “traditional action”. In traditional action the actor reacts automatically to a habitual stimulus, which guides the behavior in a course, which has been repeatedly followed. The ends and means of the action are fixed by custom.\textsuperscript{77}

Similarly to the other sociological perspectives, symbolic interactionists have been criticized for paying too little attention to entire societies and large institutions. This has, in fact, affected their contributions to the study of societies and institutions and their understanding of the process of social change. Nonetheless, symbolic


\textsuperscript{76} Morrison, Marx, Durkheim, Weber: Formation of Modern Social Thought, op. cit., p. 280.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., pp. 279-280.
interactionism does complement functionalism and conflict theory in important ways by examining the actual way in which people interact.

2.2.5 A Tentative Islamic Approach To Corruption

In addition to the three options discussed earlier; functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism, this attempt is designated to draw the social scientists' attention to the pertinent insights into corruption provided by the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah.78

The Qur'an and Sunnah are theoretically considered as sources of knowledge by Muslims. However, in practice, some Muslims regard them as sources of religious knowledge only. This is due to the fact that this category of Muslims cannot render the insight into a cohesive outlook on the universe and life, which the Qur'an and Sunnah possess. It can also be attributed to the strong domination of the theories of Western human and social sciences upon the Muslim mind.

Addressing the problem of corruption in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah implies a careful investigation into the concepts, ideas, methods, models and contexts within which corruption is explained.

Literally, the Arabic word Fasad is used to refer to the English word corruption in its general sense. In the Qur'an, the term Fasad and its derivatives have been used forty-seven times, distributed in twenty-two “Surah” among the one

---

78 The Qur’an can be defined as: “the speech of Allah (the Arabic name of God) sent down to the last Prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel, in its precise meaning and precise wording, transmitted to us (Muslims) by numerous persons (Tawatur) both verbally and in writing, inimitable and unique, protected by Allah from Corruption.” See: Ahmad Von Denfer. 1991. Ulum al-Qur’an: An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur’an, 3rd edn., Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, A. S. Noordeen, p. 17.

79 The term ‘Sunnah’ is used here to refer to the tradition of the prophet Muhammad –peace be upon him-in its general sense. It is also used as a synonym of the term ‘Hadith’, which refers to the sayings, doings and silent approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) that have been recorded and written down in the famous Hadith Books of Imam Malik, b. Anas, Ahmad b. Hanbal, al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidhi, al- Nasae, and Ibn Majeh.
hundred and fourteen "Surah" of the Qur'an. Among the Qur'anic verses\(^{80}\) that deal with corruption - Fasad - directly: \{"When it is said to them: "Make not mischief (corruption), on the earth" They say: "Why, we only want to make peace!",\}\(^{81}\); \{"Then is it to be expected of you, if ye were put in authority, that ye will do mischief (corruption) in the land and break your ties of kith and kin.\}\(^{82}\) In the Sunnah, the term Fasad and its derivatives have been used in eighty-two Hadiths recorded in the Hadith books of Imam Malck bin Anas, Ahmad bin Hanbal, Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Al-Tirmidhi, Al-Nasae, Ibn Majeh and Al-Darami. For instance, Al-Imam Al-Bukhari singled out a chapter entitled "what is allowed as regards backbiting wicked (corrupt) and suspicious people."\(^{83}\)

The term Fasad (corruption) has been used broadly in both sources: the Qur'an and Sunnah, to cover a wide range of meanings. It signifies, mischief, exploitation, wrong doings, all forms of injustice, anarchy, disorder, disturbance, a state of destruction or annihilation, waste, and ruin. It also connotes war, genocide, ethnic cleansing, and the domination of an individual or a group over others or over mankind, widespread moral decay, and pollution. The following translated verse of the Qur'an illustrates some of the abovementioned meanings. \{"Truly Pharaoh elated himself in the land and broke up its people into sections, depressing a small group among them: their sons he slew, but he kept alive their females: For he was indeed a maker of mischief (corruption),\}\(^{84}\) The term Fasad / corruption has other meanings such as deviance from the path of God, acting wickedly on earth, depriving people of

\(^{80}\) All translations of the Qur'anic verses under our discussion are quoted from: Abdullah Yusuf Ali. 1989. The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary, Brentwood, Maryland, USA, Amana Corporation.

\(^{81}\) The Holy Qur'an, 2:11.

\(^{82}\) Ibid., 47:22.


\(^{84}\) The Holy Qur'an, 28:4.
what is rightfully theirs, etc. For example, the meaning of the verse 85 from Surah 11 (Hud) is {And O my people give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due, commit not evil in the land with intent to do mischief.}^{85}

It is noticeable, however, that neither the Qur’an nor Sunnah give an exact definition of corruption- Fasad. Muslim scholars give several definitions of corruption, among which: “corruption is the opposite of integrity and righteousness.”^{86} It also signifies “deviance of something from moderateness, whether little or much, and opposes righteousness.”^{87} Among the commentators of the Qur’an, Ibn Ashur defines corruption- Fasad- as: “every act dispraised by the Shari’ah (Islamic law) or by those minded people.”^{88} In the dictionary of Qur’anic terms and concepts the term “Fasad” connotes mischief, corruption, exploitation, wrong, all forms of injustice, anarchy and chaos.^{89}

An investigation into the issue of corruption according to the Qur’an and Sunnah shows that references to corruption are not always restricted to the term Fasad and its derivatives. Corruption has been presented in the Qur’an and Sunnah within other contexts, such as the context of righteousness (Salah), reformation (Islah), integrity (Istiqamah), and trustworthiness (Amanah). Besides this, the Qur’an and Sunnah have extensively addressed the major forms of corruption such as bribery and extortion, nepotism and graft, and give several instances of corrupt acts at the individual as well as at the societal level. They have also provided and

---

^{85} ibid., 11:85.
described the good examples at the individual and societal level as well that should be taken as role models. Indeed, a careful investigation into the matter would suggest that corruption cannot be systematically studied according to the Qur'an and Sunnah unless all verses of the Qur'an and all texts of Hadith that have any relation or connotation, directly or indirectly with corruption-fasad- in its meaning, scope, forms, types, causes and solutions, are to be collected and explained properly. According to my humble efforts and with consideration of the above general guideline in dealing with the issue of corruption, and as far as this part of the research is concerned it seems to me that the basic assumptions upon which the Islamic theoretical approach to corruption is erected are as follows:

First, the universe has been created by Allah (God) in the best of conditions and has been set in order for man, who has also been created in the best of moulds, to live in it and do good. Therefore, the objective of both creations is righteousness (Salah) and not corruption-fasad-. The following are some translated Qur'anic verses that support the above assumption. {Do not mischief on the earth. After it hath been set in order, but call on Him with fear and longing (in your hearts): For the mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good}^{90}, {When he turns his back, his aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle. But Allah loveth not mischief;}^{91} Allah does not love corrupt people and corruption as well. {...but do thou good as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not (Occasions for) mischief in the land: For Allah loves not those who do mischief.}^{92}

Second, corruption-fasad- is exclusively related to man, whether a Muslim or otherwise, and his actions at any particular period of history or place of life.

---

90 The Holy Qur'an, 7:56.
91 Ibid., 2:205.
92 Ibid., 28:77.
"Mischief (corruption) has appeared on the land and sea because of (the need) that the hands of men have earned. That Allah may give them a taste of some of their Deeds in order that they may turn back (from Evil)."93 It is clear that Allah's creation was pure and good in itself. All the mischief or corruption was introduced by men, which means that corruption is the outcome of what men’s hands have wrought. Ali concludes that “The consequences of Evil must be evil, and this should be shown in such partial punishment as "the hands of men have earned", so that it may be a warning for the future and invitation to enter the door of repentance."94 When Allah created man, He addressed the angels saying that, {I will create a vicegerent on earth.} They replied: {Will thou place therein one who will make mischief (spread corruption) therein and shed blood.}95 The claim of the angels that man would spread corruption on earth and shed blood therein which God did not reject but merely said {I know what ye know not,}96, shows that the angels' claim and concern were not unfounded.

Spreading corruption on earth could be attributed to various reasons, among which are that man follows his emotions and does not follow revelation. man’s limited knowledge if he is not assisted by the revelation, the misuse or abuse of his free will by choosing the wrong options and intentionally resorting to corruption, and as a human being his choices or actions could still be influenced either by outside forces such as the family and society, or by inside forces; instincts and desires of wealth, prestige and power, that are always commanding self-interest, or both of these forces.

93 Ibid., 30:41.
95 The Holy Qur’an, 2:30.
96 Ibid.
Third, corruption is toxic and has negative implications at the individual, societal and universal levels. Corruption, therefore, can be changed, and corrupt people can always be checked and repelled. The Qur'an maintains that Allah has forbidden corruption, does not love corrupt people and has threatened them with a heavy punishment if they do not repent. For instance, Allah said: {But those who break the Covenant of Allah, after having plighted their word thereto, and cut asunder those things Allah has commanded to be joined, and work mischief in the land – on them is the Curse; for them is the terrible Home.}97 The Qur'an also states that Allah has sent down his prophets to educate people, guide them to the right path, fight corruption-fasad- in its general sense, and be good examples. For instance, the Prophet Shuaib said: {O my people! see ye whether I have a clear (sign) from my Lord, and He hath given me sustenance (pure and) good as from himself I wish not. In opposition to you, to do that which I forbid you to do. I only desire your betterment (Islah-reformation and righteousness-) to the best of my power and my success (in my task) can only come from Allah. In Him I trust and unto Him I look.}98 It is, therefore, argued that among the major interests and tasks of the Messengers of God is to fight corruption and to enhance transparency, righteousness, trustworthiness, accountability, good character, etc.

The Islamic revelation maintains that the individuals, elite and groups or communities must check corruption; otherwise corruption would surely overwhelm societies. Allah said: {And did not Allah check one set of people by means of another the earth would indeed be full of mischief-corruption.}99 The Qur'an also states that had corruption remained unchecked social institutions such as the religious

---

97 Ibid., 13:25; see also: 2:205; 28:77; 7:56;30:41.
98 Ibid., 11:88.
99 Ibid., 2:251.
institution would have been destroyed. {Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another there would surely have been pulled down Monasteries, Churches, Synagogues and Mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated...} Thus checking and repelling corruption has not only a function of saving the places of worship of different religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam from having been destroyed, but also the religious institution and the social system as a whole. This is due to the fact that social institutions are interrelated and functioning in such a way as to maintain the social order. In view of this, it is proven that corruption has negative consequences on both the individual and society. Therefore, it is dysfunctional and needs a systematic effort to be changed. Changing the corrupt situation and the corrupt behavior, however, does not necessarily mean war or conflict. It can be through an advising system where the righteous politicians, intellectual elite and the religious scholars play a vital role. This is because the essence of checking or changing corruption is to counter aggression, oppression, injustice if committed against an individual or a group, and will ultimately reinstate righteousness (Salah), justice and order in the position they deserve in society and defeat corruption. Allah said: {Why do not the Rabbis and the Doctors of law forbid them from their (habit of) uttering sinful words and eating things forbidden.} Evil indeed is their Works.} In addition, the Qur'an stresses the role of the intellectuals and kind people in preventing society from corruption, and saving the nation from disaster by standing firm to virtue. Allah said: {Why were there not among the

100 Ibid., 22:40.
101 Eating things forbidden is the translation of the Qur'anic concept "Suht", which involves taking bribery, extortion, swindling, blackmail, fraud, exploitation etc.
102 The Holy Qur'an, 5:63.
generations before you, persons possessed of balanced Good sense (Ulu Baqiyah). If corruption, as a wrong and evil, is practiced widely in a society and tolerated by the community, it is considered as a sign of deviance from the path of God, and thus that specific society or group deserves punishment. Allah says: {Curses were pronounced on those among the children of Israel who rejected faith, by the tongue of David and of Jesus, the son of Mary because they disobeyed and persisted in excesses nor did they (usually) forbid one another the inequities which they committed, evil indeed were the deeds which they did.} In order for a group or a society to be transparent, forbidding one another from corruption must be a common practice among the social actors. Allah says: {Ye are (Muslims) the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong and believing in Allah.} It is unfortunate to see contemporary Muslim societies leading the list of corrupt societies. Certainly, one of the reasons is that Muslims, whether individuals or groups leaders of political, intellectual or religious groups do not follow the system of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong.

In the light of the above-discussed assumptions, major forms of corruption notably, bribery, extortion, graft and nepotism are going to be highlighted.

The Holy Qur’an uses general terms to refer to bribery, extortion and some forms of graft such as swindling, blackmail and fraud. Meanwhile, the Sunnah provides some details on those forms of corruption and also uses specific concepts:

---

103 The Qur’anic concept “Ulu Baqiyah” refers to those who possess balanced good sense, who stand firm to virtue and transparency.
105 Ibid., 5:78-79.
106 Ibid., 3:110.
107 This system is known as al-Amr bi-Ma’ruf wa al-Nahy an al-Munkar (to commend to do good and forbid to do evil).
such as "Rashwah" to refer to bribery, "Rashy" to refer to the bribe giver and "Murtashy" to refer to the bribe receiver. The Qur’an uses the term “Suht” on three occasions to refer to the above forms of corruption. For instance, Allah says: {(They are fond of) listening to falsehood, of devouring anything forbidden}^{108}, and also says: {Many of them dost thou see, racing each other in sin and transgression and their eating of things forbidden (Suht). Evil indeed is the things that they do.}^{109} The Qur’an describes the corrupt behavior of two types of communities that are the Jews and the Hypocrites during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) who were eating “Suht”. The term “Suht” is used to refer to “all kinds of illegal income or money that have negative implications on both the individual and the society.”^{110} In other words, Suht refers to unlawful income and the damage that results from it to either side. Devouring anything forbidden or the eating of things forbidden certainly involves corruption. Ali pointed out that “devouring anything forbidden both in a literal and in a figurative sense. In the figurative sense, it would be: the taking of usury (interest) or bribes, or taking undue advantage of people’s weak position or their own judiciary powers to add to their own wealth. Eating of things forbidden referring to their fraudulent misappropriation of other people’s property or trust property.”^{111} Suht also involves all kinds of income coming from exploitation because it was reported in the Sunnah that Allah would be an opponent to three types of people on the day of Resurrection, one of them, who employs a laborer and takes full work from him but does not pay him for his labor.^{112} Besides this, the Holy Qur’an gives a special emphasis on the nature and purpose of bribery. Allah says:

---

^{108} The Holy Qur’an, 5:42.
^{109} Ibid., 5:62.
{And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities, nor use it as bait (to induce and influence) for the judges, with intent that ye may eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of (other) people’s property.} The Qur’an maintains that bribery is practiced intentionally and knowingly to influence a trustee (e.g. a judge) aiming at getting more wealth or to promote self interest on the account of other people’s interest (public interest). The above Qur’anic verse highlights the greed of wealth and property in society and insists that it should be restrained. Ali gave an interesting comment on the above verse. He said:

“Ordinarily honest men are content if they refrain from robbery, theft or embezzlement. Two more subtle forms of the greed are mentioned here. One is where one uses one’s own property for corrupting others-judges or those in authority- so as to obtain some material gain even under the cover and protection of law. A still more a subtle form is where we use out our own property or property under our control – “among yourselves” in the text – for vain or frivolous uses. Under the Islamic standard this is also greed. Property carries with it its own responsibilities.”

Human greed and love of wealth as it shall be explained in the following chapter, are, indeed, among the major causes of corruption. In the Sunnah, several texts have dealt with the issue of illegal appropriation of money especially through bribery. The Sunnah considers bribery a serious offense and deals with all those who are involved in its process with a high degree of severity. Among the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) in this concern are: “Allah curses the giver and the receiver of bribes.” This is probably what had urged the scholars of Hadith-Sunnah- to stress the severity of bribery. For instance, Ibn Majeh designated a chapter in his book entitled “Al-Taghildh fi al-Hayf wa al-Rashwha”, (The severity

113 The Holy Qur’an, 2:188.
115 Nine texts of Hadith related to bribery have been found in several books of Hadith, namely, by Ibn Hanbal, al- Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, al-Nasaie, al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majeh, and al-Tabarani.
in injustice and bribery).\textsuperscript{117} Apart from this, the practice of gift giving is encouraged in Islam to spread love and cooperation among Muslims and to strengthen their social relations. However, the practice of gift giving among Muslims had deviated from its noble objective; strengthening the social bonds and creating a strong and stable society. Some Muslims, unfortunately, tend to give gifts with the intention of influencing the gift receiver to favor them in goods or services or both. Therefore, the gift is no more a gift but a bribe. An incident was recorded during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) when a man from the tribe of 
\textit{Azd}, called Ibn Utbiyya was appointed to collect \textit{Zakat} (alms tax), when he returned he said: "This (Zakat) is for you (The Prophet Muhammad) and this has been given to me as a present. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) said: "Why hadn’t he stayed in his father’s or mother’s house to see whether he would be given presents or not?"\textsuperscript{118}

In other words, if Ibn Utbiyya had not held the position of ‘tax officer’ he would not have received those presents. In this context, it is clear that gifts have been offered in return for services. Therefore, tax officers are most often the target of bribery, and thus influenced to act in favor of the bribe giver. The comment of the Prophet on the incident shows that the context of the event is corruption although apparently it is a gift-giving practice. A few decades after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) the phenomenon of giving gifts as bribes became obvious. By the end of the 1\textsuperscript{st} Century A.H (i.e. the beginning of the 8\textsuperscript{th} Century AD) the 5\textsuperscript{th} Caliph, Umar bin Abdul Aziz, witnessed the phenomenon and accordingly made a strict statement. He said: "A gift was a gift during the lifetime of Allah’s Apostle, but today it is bribe."\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., p. 38.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p. 463.
Yet, in contemporary Muslim societies it is quite difficult in some contexts to distinguish between a gift and a bribe. Nevertheless, as Alatas pointed out, a gift differs sharply from corruption because, at least, (a) it was not committed in secrecy, (b) it was not a violation of duty or the rights of the public, (c) it was a form of revenue in which the government benefited. Because of this, the government was assisted in remunerating the officers. (d) It was not an embezzlement of government funds or public extortion.\(^{120}\)

In addition to the issue of bribery and graft, the Qur'an and Sunnah provide several texts within which some insights on nepotism, favoritism and cronyism can be analyzed. It is obvious that both the Qur'an and Sunnah gave great importance to family and kinship ties. In twenty-two (22) verses, the Qur'an deals with the issue of kinship and maintains that it should be strengthened by cooperation, assistance, respect, and avoidance of any kind of behavior that can break up kinship ties. Allah says: {And render to the kindred their due rights.}\(^{121}\) This means that all types of assistance, love, respect and cooperation among relatives is an obligation and, therefore, all of them are bounded by it. Similarly, the Sunnah enhances the same tendency, for example, the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) said: "The person who severs the bond of kinship will not enter paradise."\(^{122}\) This Hadith is just an example quoted from Kitab al-Adab (the Book of Manners) by Al-Bukhari, which provides a clear account of strengthening the blood relationships and doing good to relatives. Obviously, the Qur'an and Sunnah urge Muslims to do good to their fellow human beings, whether Muslims or non-Muslims. However, the priority should be given to the family and kinship members. Allah says: {Serve Allah, join not any partners with Him: And do

\(^{120}\) Alatas, The Problem of Corruption, op. cit., p. 43.

\(^{121}\) The Holy Qur'an, 17:26.

\(^{122}\) Khan, The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari, op. cit., Vol. 8, p. 11.
good to parents, kinfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet)...\textsuperscript{123} All these groups deserve not only sentimental service but most importantly practical help. Allocating a part of the inheritance to kinship members is a clear example of the practical service rendered. Allah says: \{And those who accept Faith subsequently, and adopt exile, and fight for the faith in your company – They are of you. But kindred by blood have prior rights against each other in the Book of Allah. Verily Allah is well-acquainted with all things.\}\textsuperscript{124} It seems that the problem of nepotistic behavior among Muslims is caused by the misinterpretation of the meaning and scope of the directives of the Qur'an and Sunnah towards enhancing kinship ties. Some Muslims may think that appointing a family member or a friend in a position, or granting him some privileges on the account of others or on the account of the public interest, or favoring him with goods or services and the like, is a duty and not corruption. In fact, it is clear that the concept of doing favors to family members, friends, neighbors, countrymen, etc. must not be on the account of others and must not be by using public offices or a position of power, or by disregarding or leaving behind the rules and regulations of the bureaucracy and the job ethics, or being unjust in any form. Generally, a job should be given based on merit and qualification so that the officer or the worker will carry out his duties efficiently and honestly. Allah says: \{Truly the best of men for thee to employ is the (man) who is strong and trusty.\}\textsuperscript{125} Al-Bukhari as a scholar of Hadith devoted a book in his compilation entitled: \textit{Kitab Al-Ejarah} (The Book of Hiring), where he gathered all texts of Hadith related to this issue. Among the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad

\textsuperscript{123} The Holy Qur'an, 4:36.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 8:75.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 28:26; 12:55.
(p.b.u.h.) concerning the appointment of a transparent officer; e.g. a treasurer, is:

"The honest treasurer who gives willingly what he is ordered to give. Is one of the two charitable persons (the second being the owner)." In other words, the best treasurer (officer) is he who works efficiently and follows the rules and regulations willingly, for this he is trustworthy. It is clear in the Qur'an that a heavy punishment will be put on those who are found guilty of doing mischief and corruption and abusing their authority. The Qur'an maintains that: {Such are the men whom Allah has cursed for He has made them deaf and blinded their sight.} The Sunnah declares that there are three types of judges, two of whom will enter Hell and only one will enter paradise. A just and learned judge will enter paradise, whereas an ignorant judge together with a learned but unjust judge will enter hell. Learned judges who do injustice because of being bribed or influenced by those who are in power, or for being pressured by kinship ties, will certainly enter hell. What the higher moral law, as it is clearly stated in the Qur'an, requires is that everybody should uphold justice and act righteously in all conditions and towards whomsoever, even against their own interests. Allah says: {O ye who believe! stand out firmly for Justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it is (against) rich or poor for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do.} The extreme level of justice is to stand firm for justice even if it is detrimental to our own interests or to those who are near and dear to us, and even to those who hate us, or

---

127 The Curse is the opposite of the Bliss. Those who are involved in any form of corruption will be cursed; deprived of Allah's Grace, and for them is the terrible Home.
128 The Holy Qur'an, 47:23.
130 The Holy Qur'an, 4:135.
those who are alien. Favoring the rich because of their wealth or because of something; e.g., bribe that is expected from him is corruption. Similarly, favoring the poor because they are generally helpless is also corruption and injustice. Partiality in any case against ourselves, parents, family members, rich and poor people, can be attributed to two major factors that are fear and favor. However, the Qur’an maintains that: “both the rich and the poor are under Allah’s protection as far as their legitimate interests are concerned, but they cannot expect to be favored at the expense of others. And Allah can protect their interests far better than any man.” \(^{111}\)

Being just, without fear or favor, believing and doing good deeds are requirements for a great reward. Allah says: [To those who believe and do deeds of righteousness hath Allah promised forgiveness and a great reward.] \(^{132}\)

As a final note in exploring the Islamic theoretical approach to corruption, it is to be understood that the researcher is exclusively concerned with treating the issue in depth from within the texts of the Qur’an and Sunnah. This attempt has been made to enrich the sociological perspectives’ approaches to corruption, and to make right the concepts, ideas, assumptions provided by the Qur’an and Sunnah, that have been left behind, misinterpreted or superficially and naively implemented. However, at another level of discussing the issue of corruption from an Islamic perspective, the contributions made by the Islamic Caliphs, scholars, judges, political leadership throughout history should be the subject of a systematic investigation to come out with other insights, which can be added to the above Islamic theoretical approach. Indeed, Alatas has undertaken a part of the investigation on Muslim scholars and judges’ contributions to understand and eliminate corruption, such as, among others,

---


\(^{132}\) The Holy Qur’an, 5:9.
Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (AD 780-855), the founder of one of the great schools of thought in Islam, who was well known for his uncompromising attitude towards corruption, and the abuse of power\textsuperscript{133} and Abdul Rahman Ibn Khaldun (AD 1332-1406), who is well known not only as the discoverer of scientific history and sociology, but also as a student of corruption. Regardless of his failure in eliminating corruption and bribery, Ibn Khaldun’s insight into the matter, especially his explanation of the causes of corruption and his evaluation of the solutions made by the reformers, is very interesting.\textsuperscript{134} Ibn Khaldun’s attempt is available in his work “Al-Muqaddimah” especially in volume number two (2). The three assumptions that have been discussed earlier together with concepts such as Fasad, Salah, Suht, Rashwah and Adl (Justice), in addition to other ideas and factors, which have been previously explained, would so far be taken as an important theoretical foundation upon which an “Islamic Sociology of Corruption” could be established. This attempt can be considered as a positive response to the noble call of Alatas to emphasize the aspects of the teachings of the sacral personalities, like the Prophet Muhammad, touching upon corruption. He said:

“It was sacral personalities like Mahavira, Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, Nanak, Kabir, Ramakrishnan and numerous others who inspired the scholars and sages to increasingly maintain ideals of rectitude, it would be a great mistake to ignore their contribution and their relevance to contemporary problems of restraining corruption in underdeveloped countries. Those aspects of their teachings touching upon corruption should be emphasized if the governments of the underdeveloped countries are really concerned with the problem of eliminating corruption and employing all means at their disposal against it.”\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{133} Alatas, The Problem of Corruption, op. cit., pp. 46-49.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., pp. 7-8.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., p. 62.
The outcome of the Islamic perspective is that Islam considers corruption as a human invention. It rejects corruption at the principal level, and does not tolerate it no matter how small or insignificant it may be. All forms of corruption are encompassed by the single concept of *Sihht*. The eradication of corruption is compulsory on every human being, and it should be carried out peacefully.

As a final note regarding the functionalist, conflict and symbolic interactionist perspectives, it should be stressed that although many sociologists prefer one of these three theoretical perspectives, and although a particular perspective may be well suited and more efficient for the explanation of corruption as a social phenomenon, so far, no one of these perspectives is clearly the best for an understanding of all facets of corruption as a human social behavior. Therefore, it is not necessary to choose among them, because each perspective provides us with somewhat important concepts, and methods of looking at and understanding corruption. Moreover, each perspective has advantages and disadvantages. It seems that corruption is one of the social phenomena that is best understood by examining it from more than one perspective. Thus, a complete understanding of corruption requires a careful consideration of all views. At some point in the future, someone might integrate these three perspectives into a single sociological perspective in studying corruption. Moreover, the Islamic theoretical approach to corruption may be of academic value that can also be taken by some social scientists as a theoretical perspective to treat corruption systematically, at least in Muslim societies and according to Islamic standards, and ultimately drive back its danger. In view of the fact that corruption does not lend itself to any single perspective, the present study adopts a multidimensional approach where, in a way or another, knowledge is grasped from all sociological perspectives.