

Russia's Putin and Brazil's Lula: The Relationship between Positive Leadership Strategy and Corruption

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University Honors in International Relations – Fall 2010
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Abstract

What is the relationship between good leadership and corruption? In this paper, I will compare the leadership characteristics and corruption scandals of Vladimir Putin and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to understand the role leadership and corruption played in the continuous support of the two leaders. The abundance of similarities between the economic and political conditions of the two states as well the characteristics of the two presidents make Brazil and Russia perfect selections for the comparison. While examining the state of corruption and the improvements under both leaders, I analyze their leadership strategies to explain their popularity. I conclude by arguing that, in the eyes of Russians and Brazilians, corruption is secondary to great leadership characteristics. As long as the population considers the leader fit to rule, primarily that he possesses positive leadership characteristics and produces results for the country, the public will overlook his corrupt activities and continue to elect him.

Keywords: corruption, leadership, Russia, Brazil, Putin, Lula

Introduction

Discussions about the perfect ruler, the right form of government, and the balance between freedom and authority has dominated the political dialogue for many years. Political philosophers from Plato to Rousseau discussed leadership characteristics and the faults of leaders. What is the relationship, though, between corruption and leadership? Must great leaders eradicate corruption in order for their states to function properly? Or can they rule alongside corrupt behavior and still allow their country to prosper?

This paper will discuss the tension and relationship between corruption and good leadership skills by focusing on two countries and their respective leaders. In both case studies, the two particular leaders are widely viewed as corrupt, yet at the same time loved by the people who elected them to be presidents. The following research question will be answered in the course of this paper: What do the two case studies of Brazil and Russia reveal about the characteristics required to be a good leader and does corruption play a significant role in eliminating a candidate from being considered for leadership? The paper will answer the question by arguing that in some countries' political cultures, notably in Brazil's and Russia's, corruption charges are not enough to render a president unfit to rule. As Brazil's and Russia's recent experiences reelecting corrupt presidents for a second term in office suggests, as long as the population considers a leader fit to rule, because he possesses enough positive leadership characteristics and produces

results for the country and the people, the public will overlook his corruption and continue electing him.

Before continuing to discuss corruption and leadership, the terms must be defined. The many definitions of corruption carry negative connotations by using terms such as “decay” and “dishonest” in the definitions. For example, the Oxford English Dictionary provides one such definition: “dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery.” While the above definitions of corruption carry strongly negative tones, this paper will use a more neutral definition of corruption. US AID and Transparency International define corruption as “the abuse of entrusted authority for private gain,” so the paper will adopt this definition. Although this definition is not all-encompassing, it captures the basic essence of corrupt behavior required for this paper.

Now that the paper has established the way the term corruption will be used, leadership also needs to be defined. According to James McGregor Burns, there are two types of leadership, transactional and transformational.¹ As he writes in the prologue to his book *Leadership*, too many leaders suffer from mediocrity and irresponsibility.² Transactional leaders constitute the majority of leaders, he believes, and are ones that approach leadership as a way to exchange one good for another such as jobs for votes or policy for support.³ Burns elevates the transformation leaders to a higher level and believes that they possess the more potent type of leadership skills and they are capable of true lasting change.⁴ The transformation continues long after the leader steps down. For the purpose of this paper, I will define political leadership the way Burns sees it as “a process of social influence and governorship through law creation and enforcement that impacts a large number of people.”⁵ While this definition is limited, I wanted to show that there are many different types of political leadership such as authoritarian, participatory, and democratic.

Literature Review

There are a few dominant discourses surrounding leadership and political corruption, especially focusing on good political leadership skills. Some of the most meaningful and influential discussions come from the field of political science, political philosophy, and international relations theory. The literature review will draw from three time periods and three debates about good leadership characteristics and the role corruption plays in politics.

Western philosophers and scholars have long debated the characteristics of good rulers and the merits of various governments. As early as 400 BC philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle wrote about leaders and the characteristics they need to possess to be just and successful. The ancients, as this group of philosophers is called in political philosophy, tend to view corruption in terms of lack of moral principles and virtues of the leaders and the people whom they lead.⁶

¹ James McGregor Burns. *Leadership*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 4.

² *Ibid*, p. 2.

³ *Ibid*, p. 4.

⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶ Plato. *The Republic*. (Edited by Andrea Tschemplik. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005).

Since they place a great emphasis on the purity and integrity of a human's soul, the ancient philosophers view any unjust action as a corruption of this essential element. Further, it is important to note that both Plato and Aristotle position democracy in the category of defective regimes, along with tyranny and oligarchy. Consequently, it is likely they would disapprove of most of today's world governments.⁷

Even though the ancients help situate the political debates about the right forms of government and the correct leaders, they do not produce the most influential discourses. The modern political philosophers, who wrote almost two full millennia after Aristotle and Plato, do not completely ignore or disregard the views of the ancients. They build on a few concerns, but ultimately emerge with their own views, suggesting that Aristotle and Plato's views on leadership hold some merit, but are ultimately flawed or incomplete. Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are three modern political thinkers, who have the strongest views on corruption, leadership, and power relevant to this paper.

Machiavelli's *The Prince* is one of the most widely recognized works in modern political philosophy and theory. It discusses ways for leaders to gain and retain power. Machiavelli would have little problem with corruption since one of the main purposes of his book is to give leaders a guide of how to get what they want, namely more power. Machiavelli views politics as a messy business, so bribery can be a good practice if it produces the desirable results for the ruler. While Machiavelli does not directly object to bribery, he makes a distinction between men who became princes through wickedness and those who became princes by fortune or skill.⁸ In *The Prince*, he writes that "to kill one's fellow citizens, to betray friends, to be without faith, without mercy, without religion," is one way to acquire power, but not glory.⁹ Another important aspect of Machiavelli's writings is his idea that it better for leaders to be feared than loved.¹⁰ Through his discussion of the various necessary ways rulers should acquire and keep political power, Machiavelli describes successful leaders as war-like, power-hungry, and often cruel.

Like Aristotle before him, so many years ago, Hobbes too believes that human wellbeing should be the primary concern of the ruler. He does not view leaders and corrupt behavior in terms of morality and virtue, however. Instead, like Machiavelli, Hobbes uses a secular interpretation of politics and human nature. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes argues that keeping his subjects from harm is the only job the ruler (or the "Sovereign" as Hobbes calls him) needs to perform.¹¹ Creating laws is the Sovereign's way of protecting his subjects from war, violence, and death, which are the natural fears that drive people to organize under a ruler in the first place.¹² "The Sovereign of a Common-wealth," writes Hobbes, "be it an Assembly, or one Man, is not Subject to the Civil Laws," that the Sovereign creates.¹³ Since Hobbes excuses the Sovereign from obeying his own laws, he would see no problem with a ruler receiving bribes or practicing any other type of

⁷ Plato; David C. Corbin, and Judith A. Swanson. *Aristotle's 'Politics': A Reader's Guide*. (New York: Continuum, 2009), p. 28.

⁸ Niccolò Machiavelli. *The Prince*. (in *Political Philosophy: The Key Texts*, edited by Steven M. Cahn, 256-270. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 259

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Thomas Hobbes, and J. C. A. Gaskin. *Leviathan*. (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 207.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

corrupt behavior as long as the end result does not hurt the wellbeing of the people. Only when corruption by the Sovereign violates the principle of equity and equality among his subjects and hurts the commonwealth is it wrong for the ruler to engage in such behavior.

Finally, another modern philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau departs from Hobbes' and Machiavelli's views of corruption. Even though he writes only about a hundred years after Hobbes, he rejects Hobbes' criticisms of Aristotle. In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau writes that corruption of virtue is a vice that severely damages the people's ability to treat each other as equals. While his morally driven view of leadership aligns closely with that of the ancients, unlike Aristotle and Plato, he champions democracy as the right type of government.¹⁴ Corruption, for Rousseau is an "injustice, the progress of which could bring about the ruin of the body of politic," therefore leaders or the Sovereign body should adhere to their own laws.¹⁵ Another interesting idea proposed by Rousseau is that corruption is more likely in large republics and less likely in smaller ones that are closer to the size of the ancient city-states.¹⁶ Considering both case studies in this paper (Russia and Brazil) are a few of the largest states in today's world, Rousseau's suggestion is a curious one.

Traveling forward in time to the twentieth century, a whole new discourse on leadership and corruption emerges. Max Weber and Samuel Huntington are both influential thinkers who have written about political leadership and corruption's role in government. Weber's main contribution to the discourse is his analysis of rulers and their attributes, while Huntington's is his discussion of corruption's function in a modern state.

Max Weber is best known for his book titled *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. While Weber's most influential book refers mostly to the efficiencies and benefits protestant work ethic bestows on societies such as Germany and the United States, his other writings reveal a lot about characteristics of a politician. One of his essays, "Politics as a Vocation," coins a new term "professional politician" and describes the three types of domination employed by professional politicians – charismatic, traditional and legal.¹⁷ He states that ultimately a good ruler must "marry the ethic of ultimate ends and the ethic of responsibility."¹⁸ Corruption would not be ethically acceptable to Weber, but he concedes that it often becomes the tool of the professional politician, especially in the traditional type of domination.

Even though many associate Huntington with his idea of a fault line dividing various cultures and religions of the world into groups, his other essays are also quite influential. Samuel Huntington's essay titled "Modernization and Corruption" defines corruption as "behavior of public officials which deviates from accepted norms to serve private ends."¹⁹ He argues that although all societies have to deal with corruption, countries with faster growing economies

¹⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Basic Political Writings*. (Translated and edited by Donald A Cress. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1978), p. 153.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 149.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p 151.

¹⁷ Max Weber. "Politics as a Vocation."

(http://www.ne.jp/asahi/moriyuki/abukuma/weber/lecture/politics_vocation.html)

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹ Samuel P. Huntington. "Modernization and Corruption," (*Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 59.

experience higher levels of corruptions.²⁰ According to Huntington, the positive relationship between rapid economic growth and corruption rates can be applied to all states with fast emerging economies, such as Brazil and Russia, for example. While Huntington's definition implies that corruption is negative, he maintains that in the early stages of an economy's modernization corruption actually leads to efficiency.²¹ Following his argument, corruption is not inherently bad or immoral, but simply a tool, sometimes even a necessary one, politicians use as a means to an end.

Finally, arriving at the present day, there is another helpful article that further add to the debate about corruption and leadership. In her essay titled "Defining Corruption: Implications for Actions," Laura Underkuffler maintains that corruption contains the decay of a political leader's morality at its core.²² After presenting the other definitions of, and ways to view, corruption such as the "breach of duty" definition, "corruption as inequality" model, and "public interest theories," she says that these ideas "fail to capture what composes the core of corruption."²³ While Underkuffler accepts that corruption is a combination of the above mentioned ideas, she says that the pervasion of morals is at the center of the definition. Corruption to her has a moral aspect, an economic aspect, and a political gains aspect, but the breach of morals is by far the most important of corruption's aspects. In that sense, she would align better with the moral-based arguments of Plato and Aristotle and the more contemporary authors like Rousseau.

I have identified a few gaps between the dominant arguments and schools of thought that can be breached by a closer analysis of two particular, modern-day case studies of corrupt leaders. The movement proceeds from identifying corruption as immoral to identifying it simply as accumulation of power in one person's hands, then from labeling it as a function of maintaining the current economic and political system to a combination of all these factors. These are all big leaps from one understanding of corruption to the next. Although I agree more with the assessment of leadership and corruption presented by moderns such as Machiavelli and Rousseau, the all-inclusive understanding shown by Underkuffler is very persuasive. My paper will bring that understanding from a merely conceptual and philosophical level to evidence-grounded, twenty-first century examples. By using modern-day case studies of Brazil's Lula and Russia's Putin, I will support the idea that corruption is not inherently bad or immoral and that good political leadership can negate the impacts of corruption.

I will use a qualitative research methodology to gain an in-depth insight into the relationship between leadership characteristics, corrupt behavior, and the public's choice to place one above the other. I will review previously published sources including books, journal articles, and articles from a few of the leading news organizations including the *Economist*, *The New York Times*, and the *BBC* to gather my data. I chose these media sources because they are well-respected and because they reach a wide audience worldwide. Further, the books and journal articles I selected are all from respected publishing houses including university presses and international journals.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 63.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 62.

²² Laura S. Underkuffler. "Defining Corruption: Implications for Actions." (In *Corruption, Global Security, and World Order*; edited by Rotberg, Robert I. Cambridge: World Peace Foundation, 2009), p. 30.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 29-41.

Apart from the above mentioned scholarly articles and books, I used some current findings including polls and hard statistical data gathered by international organizations. For example, I employed data from Transparency International and Committee to Protect Journalists for the corruption levels in the two countries as well as around the world. The World Bank and International Trade Center provided the statistical information needed to evaluate the two countries' economic growth and improvements. The section below will explain my selection of Brazil and Russia as my case studies.

Why Russia and Brazil?

Corruption is a serious problem in many countries around the world. Some administrations attempt to address the issue, while others simply ignore it. Two countries that rank consistently high on various corruption surveys and indicators are Russia and Brazil. Transparency International, "a global coalition against corruption," an organization that monitors, conducts research, and provides policy advice on corruption uses the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI).²⁴ The index measures the perceived level of public-sector corruption in 180 countries and territories around the world."²⁵ Transparency International describes the CPI as "a 'survey of surveys,' based on 13 different expert and business surveys."²⁶ Image 1 (shown below) displays a map of the world with each country sporting a different shade of blue. Based on their ratings, the darker the color of the country, the more corrupt it is.

The map shows that both Russia and Brazil receive low scores based on this index. Russia scores below Brazil with a 2.2. Brazil receives a score of 3.7. Although there are countries that have received lower corruption scores such as some parts of Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, Brazil and Russia have low enough scores to make them comparable to each other. Based on their scores, they also belong to the more corrupt group of countries around the world.

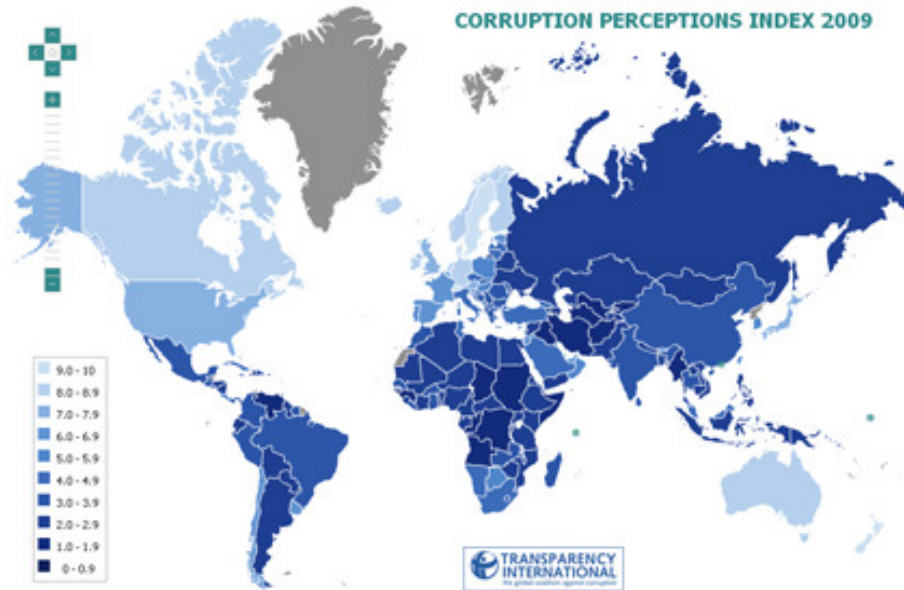
Image 1 – Corruption Perception Index: World Map²⁷

²⁴ "Corruption Perception Index." *Transparency International*. (October 21, 2010. http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2009).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*



Source: Corruption Perception Index Map, Transparency International, 2009, www.transparencyinternational.com

Numbers are not the only things that tie Brazil and Russia together. Apart from a simply numerical examination of corruption, Brazil and Russia also have their views and approaches to corruption in common. The similarities in corruption between the two countries lie chiefly in their lack of preemptive measures, politically motivated exposés of corruption, lack of effective punishment, and a general pervasive nature of corruption within the political and judicial systems.

In light of Russia's dependency "on natural resources for state revenue and the institutional legacy of Soviet rule," its vast corruption is not very surprising.²⁸ In fact, corruption has had a long history in Russia, dating back to the tsarist regime in the 1800s, which has shaped corruption into a sort of institution that many take for granted. Further, some authors such as Svetlana Barsukova suggest that Russia's transition from an oligarchic to a state-control model further raises the level of corruption.²⁹ The general characteristic of corruption in Russia is the right political environment for its flourishing. Since many government officials and public servants are guilty of some form of corruption, no one is willing to expose fellow corrupt politicians for fear of retaliation. Also, as in Brazil, Russia's political structure allows for little opportunity for the unjustly accused to clear their names.³⁰

Brazil has similar views and issues with corruption. Brazil's federal accountability institutions focus on investigating corruption scandals only when the scandals break, while not putting any emphasis on preventative measures. As Mathew Taylor argues in his essay titled "Corruption, Accountability Reforms, and Democracy in Brazil," "the result is a system with plenty of allegations of corruption, and a good number of clear revelations of corruption, but little

²⁸ Frye, p. 81.

²⁹ Svetlana Barsukova. "Corruption: Academic Debates and Russian Reality." (*Russian Politics & Law*, 2009: 8-27), p. 10.

³⁰ Matthew M. Taylor. "Corruption, Accountability Reforms, and Democracy in Brazil." (In *Corruption and Democracy in Latin America*, edited by Charles H. Blake and Stephan Morrison, 150-168. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2009), p. 156.

effective punishment of corrupt behavior.”³¹ He also explains that sanctions against corrupt politicians and government officials are usually slow to appear and often shrouded in an air of uncertainty.³² Matthew Taylor and Vinicius Buranelli’s essay “Ending Up in Pizza: Accountability as a Problem of Institutional Arrangement in Brazil” confirm that point by focusing on the cracks in Brazil’s judicial system such as some laws and loopholes that make it easy for accused and convicted public servants to continue running for office and getting reelected.³³ Further, Brazilian politicians often draw attention to corrupt behavior only as a part of a larger politically motivated battle between various opponents, which suggests a lack of preemptive measures by the institutions charged with monitoring political corruption.

More surface-level comparisons of the two states offer meaningful insights as well and provide warrants for why the two are comparable countries. For example, the countries’ size matters a lot. Russia is the largest state in the world and Brazil is the fifth largest. Since they are the largest countries in their respective continents, their size grants them a certain level of control and dominance over other regional players. Despite their size, though, both countries have to deal with strong neighbors – in Russia’s case China and in Brazil’s Argentina – to the south of their territories.

Another similarity is Brazil and Russia’s abundance of natural resources. Both countries rely heavily on exports of materials such as ores, mineral fuels, metals, wood, as well as some organic chemicals for their government revenues.³⁴ Table 1 below shows some figures from ITC’s statistics for countries’ exports from 2008 (for full data tables, see www.intracen.org).

Table 1 – Russia and Brazil: Key Exports in 2008³⁵

Industry	Brazil’s exports in value (in USD thousands)	Russia’s exports in value (in USD thousands)
Mineral fuels, oils, etc.	18,689,304	307,371,508
Iron and Steel	12,845,877	26,602,684
Ores, slag, and ash	18,726,625	2,374,814
Organic chemicals	2,830,577	3,886,390
Wood and wood charcoal	2,757,783	7,785,884

Sources: Trade Performance HS, International Trade Center, 2008, www.intracen.org

Apart from the natural resources shows in Table 1, Brazil and Russia also export a lot of food items. Brazil exports fruits and sugar products, while Russia exports large quantities of grains and cereals.³⁶ Despite the similarities in exports between the two countries it is important to note

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Matthew Taylor, and Vinicius Buranelli. “Ending Up in Pizza: Accountability as a Problem of Institutional Arrangement in Brazil.” (*Latin American Politics and Society*, 2007: 59-87).

³⁴ “Trade Performance: Brazil Exports.” (*International Trade Centre - ITC - Export Impact for Goods*. 2010. <http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_EP_CI.aspx?RP=076&YR=2008>); “Trade Performance: Russia Exports.” (*International Trade Centre - ITC - Export Impact for Goods*. 2010. <http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_EP_CI.aspx?RP=076&YR=2008>).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

that Brazil's economy is much more diversified than Russia's. Brazil has a more even distribution of exports as a share of total exports. For example, Russia's chief industry's exports (mineral fuels such as oil and gas) account for almost sixty six percent of total exports, while Brazil's chief industry's exports (ores, slag, and ash) only account for about ten percent.³⁷ Despite Brazil's diverse economy, Russia is a more dominant global economic player, due chiefly to its staggering exports of fuels. Another economic and political comparison is Brazil and Russia's membership in BRIC. BRIC refers to four countries – Brazil, Russia, India, and China – that are united by rapid economic growth and similar stages of economic development. The leaders of the four countries have met before to discuss economic and political issues and have developed closer ties with each other over the last couple of years.

Yet another point of comparison is Brazil and Russia's age of democratic government. Both countries are relatively young democracies (although many analysts are starting to question Russia's status as a democracy). Brazil gained the status of a democracy in its 1989 direct presidential elections, when Fernando Collor de Mello was elected president by popular vote.³⁸ Russia followed soon after, when Boris Yeltsin became the first popularly elected president of the Russian Federation in 1991. Before democratization, both Russia and Brazil were under dictatorial leadership with a military dictatorship in Brazil and Communism in Russia. Brazil and Russia's young democratic institutions and principles (only 20 years old) and their history of dictatorial rule make them similar countries to study and could help explain the pervasiveness of corruption in both societies.

From the above analysis, it is clear that Russia and Brazil are warranted as comparisons because of their similarities in size, age of democracy, government structure, and level of corruption. All of these characteristics undoubtedly played a role in the countries' leadership and corruption views. Why then go a step further and compare the states' rulers, Putin and Lula as well?

Firstly, by choosing two specific politicians, I can use them as lenses for broader conclusions about corruption in Brazil and Russia, while making the paper more focused in its analysis. Secondly, analyzing corruption in general is a tough task, since there are so many examples of it in both countries. Since Putin and Lula have been the faces of the two countries for eight years, it makes sense to use them as examples of corruption. If the states' leaders get involved in corruption scandals, then it is only reasonable to expect lower level politicians and public servants to embrace corrupt dealings.

Finally, Vladimir Putin and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva have both served two terms as presidents of their respective countries. Putin was replaced in 2008 by Dmitry Medvedev, while Lula will soon be replaced by the newly-elected Dilma Rousseff.³⁹ Obviously since both Putin and Lula served for two terms, they have been reelected as presidents, despite some corruption scandals surrounding both figures. It stands to reason then that both enjoyed a certain level of popular support to be reelected despite corruption allegations and accusations. Further, both Putin and Lula have initiated reforms that have brought economic prosperity, international recognition, and

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ R. M. Levine, and J. J. Crocitti. *The Brazil Reader: History, culture, politics*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 11.

³⁹ "A miss, but not by a mile." (*The Economist*. October 7, 2010).

respect for their countries. These similarities between the two leaders make them good case studies and allow for parallels to be drawn between the two countries and their administrations.

Putin & Russia

Culture of Corruption

Almost twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and ten years after the election of Vladimir Putin as president, corruption remains a problem for the Russian state. Although both Putin and his successor Medvedev have vowed to battle corruption, their policies have so far had little impact. Russia's levels of political corruption are among the highest when compared to the level of education and wealth in the country as a whole. So what makes Russia's corruption so pervasive? There are multiple reasons for little change in Russia's corruption levels, mostly because of the level of corruption's penetration into Russian economics, politics, and society.

First, let us look at the economic reasons behind Russia's political corruption. Louise Shelley writes in her essay "Crime, Organized Crime, and Corruption" that Russia "is a unique integration of licit and illicit economies."⁴⁰ Oligarchs with criminal pasts and ties to various organized crime groups control key sectors of Russia's economy such as the energy sector and natural resources.⁴¹ Apart from existing side by side (or more accurately within each other), the illicit economy simply copies the structure of the licit one, making eradication of corruption in the economic sector close to impossible because of the close ties between the two types of economies. As I mentioned earlier, Russia's economy is dependent on natural resources like oil, gas, timber, and various minerals and ores, which makes it an economy based on the natural resource model. The same can be said for the illicit economy, as exemplified by Russia's trafficking of women.⁴² By treating women as a natural resource, the organized crime groups simply use the same economic model that Russia's oligarchs use when selling off other commodities. Corruption has also seeped into the economic dealings of the country through the "heavy involvement of criminals and corrupt politicians in Russia's legitimate economy."⁴³

Other than Russia's close ties of corrupt, illicit economies to legitimate ones, political reasons also contribute to the high levels of corruption within Russia. "Corruption and Rule of Law," an essay by Timothy Frye, a professor of Post-Soviet Foreign Policy at Columbia University, attributes Russia's corruption to the weak rule of law.⁴⁴ Russia's judicial system, he writes, is characterized as a dual system. Mundane cases often receive treatment in accordance with the prevailing law, while politically charged cases that attract the attention of those in power are often mishandled and manipulated to serve the interest of the politically powerful. As Kathryn Hendley writes, in "The Law in Post-Putin Russia," "justice is possible and maybe even probable

⁴⁰ Louise Shelley. "Crime, Organized Crime, and Corruption." (In *After Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*, edited by Stephen K. Wegren and Dale R. Herspring, 183-198. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), p. 183.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁴⁴ Frye, p. 81.

[in Russia], but it cannot be guaranteed.”⁴⁵ Without devoting more money to the development and improvement of the judicial system, rule of law cannot be strengthened. Consequently, corruption levels will not go down among judicial employees and the political system in general.

Another way in which political reasons contribute to Russia’s corruption problem is the increase in bribes paid to government officials. Simon Pirani, in his book *Change in Putin’s Russia: Power, Money, and People*, sites a survey published in 2005 by Indem, an independent think-tank. The survey “showed that corruption among officials swelled substantially during the oil boom.”⁴⁶ Indem estimated that corruption by state officials has “by 2005 ballooned into a ‘market’ estimated to be worth \$315 billion, nearly ten times its level in 2001. Indem also acknowledged that this astronomical figure – two-and-a-half times larger than the state budget – could be nothing more than an educated guess.”⁴⁷ Although Indem’s figures can be questioned, the overall trend they reveal is undisputed. The amount of bribes and the average size of bribes have increased dramatically in a four year period, which further shows the politicians’ dependence on bribes from the economic sector.

Finally, corruption for a majority of Russians is simply a way to survive in the tough economic conditions. Simon Pirani writes that “the market rules that developed over two centuries in western markets simply did not exist [in Russia], and networks of personal contacts played a vital role of rebuilding the elite shattered by the Soviet collapse. This was an environment where personal, and therefore potentially corrupt, relationships thrived naturally.”⁴⁸ Life in the Soviet Union has turned bribery and interpersonal connections into an indispensable part of Russian life, which was simply carried over to the way people went about their business after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since the system of relying on personal connections and receiving better service by giving bribes proved to be successful, there was no need to replace it.

Indem’s survey also sites similar trends. According to the survey, Russians give bribes to get better medical treatment, to enter into private educational institutions such as universities, to solve problems with road police authorities and in many other areas and instances.⁴⁹ If the everyday practices of paying off officials to solve various problems and promoting interpersonal relationships do not change, there is little chance of solving corruption on the local and state level. Many Russians “feel they must play along because the system itself compels them to do so.”⁵⁰ Because of this compulsion, they are less likely to view such behavior as a form of corruption when it manifests itself in politicians and other public officials. The end result is a society of corruption where behaviors that outsiders would consider corrupt are simply a matter-of-fact way to go about life.

⁴⁵ Kathryn Hendley. “The Law in Post-Putin Russian.” (In *After Putin’s Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*, edited by Stephen K. Wegren and Dale R. Herspring, 83-108. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), p. 83.

⁴⁶ Simon Pirani. *Change in Putin’s Russia: Power, Money and People*. (London: Pluto Press, 2010), p. 120.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴⁹ “Diagnostics of Russian Corruption 2005.” (*INDEM foundation home page*. October 21, 2010. <http://www.indem.ru/en/publicat/2005diag_engV.htm>).

⁵⁰ Bruno S. Sergi. *Misinterpreting Modern Russia: Western Views of Putin and His Presidency*. (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009), p. 181.

While these three characteristics of corruption – economic, political, and societal – in Russia work separately, they also work in parallel and in sync with one another. Therefore, the whole system further perpetuates the cycle of corruption by feeding of the above described segments of Russian's lives.

Corrupt Leader

The system described above, creates very little opportunity for a leader to break the cycle of corruption or to remain outside of it. Further, the probability of a politician rising to power without some sort of knowledge or involvement in corrupt dealings is very low. Therefore, it is important that we examine Putin and corruption allegations that involve him in the context of Russia's culture of corruption.

To a casual observer, Putin looked like he was serious about fighting corruption and organized crime in his government and country. He passed presidential decrees, signed bills into laws, and made speeches about the importance of continuously fighting corrupt practices. Among the changes that Putin pushed through was the 2004 law that required all state officials to declare both their incomes and their property, making it easier to monitor sudden, unaccounted-for increases in property or incomes.⁵¹ Putin also established the Council for the Struggle against Corruption in the same year. In his second term in office, he further cracked down on corrupt practices by creating an interdepartmental working group to combat corruption. To all outsiders it appeared as if Putin's government was fighting corruption. Putin's speech from a press conference in 2008 seems to confirm the dedication to fighting corrupt practices: "There is no miracle anti-corruption tablet that the state can swallow and cure its corruption woes overnight. What are needed are legal measures... we will definitely pass an anti-corruption law."⁵²

Although during his terms in office Putin made attempts to combat corruption and mentioned the importance of dealing with the issues in his presidential addresses multiple times, he ultimately did not make any serious efforts towards eliminating corrupt practices in his government. As Holmes points out, "one of the clearest signs of complacency relating to corruption is that there is still no law [in Russia] specifically targeting corruption."⁵³ More telling is the rampant corruption that unfolded under his regime and implications of his involvement in a few well-known scandals. While no concrete evidence against Putin exist and he has never been charged with involvement in these scandals, many nevertheless implicate him, or more broadly the Kremlin, in a lot of these scandals.

One of the best-known corruption cases that got international attention was the case of a murdered Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya. Politkovskaya, who wrote for *Novoya Gazeta* (Russian for 'New Newspaper'), a weekly opposition newspaper that was brazen enough to write

⁵¹ Leslie Holmes. "Corruption and Organized Crime in Putin's Russia." (*Europe-Asia Studies*, August 2008., 1011-1031, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost) p. 1021.

⁵² Vladimir Putin. "Presidential Address."

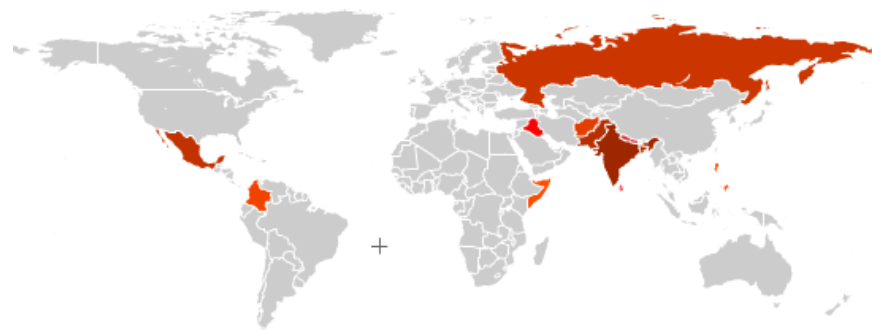
(http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/02/14/1011_types82915_160266.shtml, accessed October 10, 2010).

⁵³ Holmes, p. 1015.

about corruption in Putin's administration, was murdered by a hit-man on October 7, 2006. One of her books, *Putin's Russia*, offered harsh criticisms of the Putin administration, especially of the brutality employed by Russian forces in the Chechen war. In February 2009, "a jury acquitted three men accused of involvement in Politkovskaya's killing."⁵⁴ The case sparked outrage and led to more questions "about a trail of evidence leading to prominent politicians."⁵⁵ Some have blamed Vladimir Putin for her murder. Among those is *The Washington Post*, which pointed to "the climate of brutality that has flourished under Mr. Putin, a former KGB agent himself."⁵⁶ Of course such accusations are far from satisfactory, nor do they offer the full explanation, but they reveal Putin's lack of will to hold politicians and organized criminals accountable for such gross violations of the law.

Russia ranks eight on the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) impunity index, only behind countries such as Iraq, Somali, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Colombia and Nepal (Image 2 shows the distribution of the top 12 deadliest nations for the press).⁵⁷ CPJ's impunity index measures the amount of unpunished deadly violence against journalists.⁵⁸ These statistics demonstrate that although Putin has promised to clamp down on corruption, the media continues to suffer when journalists implicate various politicians in corruption scandals. Although it is hard to directly implicate Putin in Politkovskaya's and other journalists' murders, he is at least partly responsible through his continuous unwillingness and refusal to pursue the politicians, FSB officers and other government officials involved in many of these killings.

Image 2 – CPJ Impunity Index 2010 – World Map⁵⁹



Source: Impunity Index, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), 2010, www.cpj.org

Russian journalists, however, are not the only ones that are prone to being murdered. Alexander Litvinenko's 2006 murder is yet another high profile case that links back to the Kremlin and Putin. Litvinenko, a former FSB colonel, was mysteriously poisoned in London where he was

⁵⁴ Pirani, p. 128.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ "Getting Away With Murder - Reports." *Press Freedom Online - Committee to Protect Journalists*. (October 22, 2010. <<http://cpj.org/reports/2010/04/cpj-2010-impunity-index-getting-away-with-murder.php>>).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

living under political asylum.⁶⁰ While in London he published two books accusing Russian secret services of staging apartment bombings, creating a plot to kill Berezovsky, Putin's political opponent and staging other terrorist acts all aimed at bringing Vladimir Putin to power.⁶¹ The poison that killed Litvinenko was polonium 210, a highly radioactive substance, that is not readily available outside of nuclear power plants and laboratories. This factor created speculation about Putin's and the Kremlin's involvement in the murder. Further, soon after Politkovskaya's murder, Litvinenko publicly accused Putin of being involved in the murder of the journalist.⁶² Finally, from his deathbed, he accused Putin of murdering him.⁶³ Once again the environment under which acts of corruption such as paying off hit men to kill journalists and FSB dissidents who know too much is the relevant factor for which Putin is at least partly responsible.

Another corruption charge against Putin is the fairness and freedom of elections both in 2004 and 2008. In 2004 presidential elections Putin won with 71 percent of the vote, while his opponents only gathered small percentages of the vote.⁶⁴ His most serious opponent in the 2004 elections was Nikolai Kharitonov, who stood for the Communist Party; he won nearly 14 percent of the popular vote.⁶⁵ These numbers point toward a skewed or unfair election, since even incumbents rarely receive so much popular support. In fact, many believe that Putin "used underhand tactics to ensure a landslide victory in the March presidential elections."⁶⁶ One tactic was abandoning curtained voting booths, thus limiting privacy of voters and making voter intimidation easier.⁶⁷ Also, United Russia, Putin's Party compelled small business owners and state institutions to encourage their employees to join the party.⁶⁸ Although it looked like Putin had his re-election secured, since his approval rating leading up to the election never dipped below sixty percent, the Kremlin still decided to meddle in the elections.⁶⁹

The 2008 elections that brought Medvedev to power and placed Putin in the prime minister position reveal similar results and trends. Evidence suggests that Dmitry Medvedev's election as president was choreographed by Putin. Putin promoted Medvedev during the presidential campaign as his favorite and the one whom he would most like to become the new president of Russia. From their observation and analysis of major Russian news and media sources, Hale and Colton believe that the coverage of the elections "was asymmetrical and heavily tilted in favor of the authorities' political views. All three of the big television networks (First Channel, Rossiia, and NTV), as well as prominent newspapers like *Izvestia* and leading magazines like *Profil*, gave

⁶⁰ Sergi, p. 241.

⁶¹ Pirani, p. 131.

⁶² J. F. O. McAllister, et al. "The Spy Who Knew Too Much." (*Time* 168, no. 25 December 18, 2006: 30-38. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost), p. 34.

⁶³ Pirani, p. 131.

⁶⁴ "Putin redux." (*Economist* 370, no. 8367 (March 20, 2004): 54. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Patricia Kranz, and Jason Bush. "Putin's Game." (*BusinessWeek* no. 3886, June 7, 2004: 54-58. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost).

⁶⁷ Masha Gessen. "See No Evil." (*New Republic*, 230, no. 4, February 9, 2004: 14-17. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost), p 15.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

disproportionate and positive coverage to Putin, Medvedev, and the United Russia Party during the campaign cycle.”⁷⁰ The disproportionate coverage of the party in power, specifically Medvedev, showed the public whom it should vote for. Medvedev won the 2008 presidential election with seventy percent of the vote, almost exactly the same percentage that Putin received in 2004 (off by only one percent point). The use of television as a tool is a recurring theme in Putin’s administration.⁷¹ The media outlets that voice dissent get sanctioned, while the mainstream media that agrees with Putin’s policies gets rewarded. The deaths of journalists from newspapers that have condemned some of Putin’s corrupt practices serve as a reminder.

It is important to acknowledge and discuss corruption in the electoral process because it will become significant later on in the paper, specifically when examining just how popular Putin is with the Russian public. If the elections have indeed been tampered with, they will reveal less positive support from the public for Putin in his 2004 reelection and in support for his candidate in the 2008 elections. Despite the above mentioned flaws in the election process, which suggest some corrupt dealings, the valuable distinction to make is that the elections remained fundamentally free (although not immune from some tampering).

Unfair elections and murder allegations are some of the most serious corruption charges against Putin. They are not the only ones, though. Among other accusations worth mentioning in this section are Putin’s lack of stronger measures against organized crime like sex trafficking, corruption in the military, and lower-level, societal corruption practices such as bribes paid by private citizens “for advantage in healthcare or housing, or for resolving passport registration issues.”⁷² Although complacency about corruption does not always signal the actual corruption of the leader, it does mean that he or she fosters the right environment for corrupt practices to succeed, which is in itself culpable.

Among allegations of corruption, Putin’s image as a hard-working leader has also recently come into question. A number of classified cables between Moscow’s U.S. Embassy and State Department officials have been leaked. Among those cables is one titled, “Questioning Putin’s Work Ethic.” The cable reveals rumors circulating in the Kremlin that Putin often does not show up to work in his office and exhibits “hands-off behavior.”⁷³ Further, “there are consistent reports that Putin resents or resists the workload he carries,” preferring to work from home.⁷⁴ Such disengagement from his duties as a leader of a nation (although he is currently acting as Russia’s Prime Minister), contribute to the general atmosphere of corruption within the country.

⁷⁰ Henry E. Hale, and Timothy J. Colton. “Russians and the Putin-Medvedev ‘Tandemocracy’: A Survey-Based Portrait of the 2007-2008 Election Season.” (*Problems of Post-Communism* 57, no. 2 (March 2010): 3-20. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost, accessed October 19, 2010).

⁷¹ Maria Lipman, and Michael FcFaul. “The Media and Political Development.” (In *After Putin’s Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*, edited by Stephen K. Wegren and Dale R. Herspring, 109-130. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), p. 121.

⁷² Stephen K. Wegren, and Dale R. Herspring, editors and compilers. *After Putin’s Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), p. 194 and 273; Pirani, p. 121.

⁷³ C. J. Chivers. “Below Surface, U.S. Has Dim View of Putin and Russia.” *The New York Times*, December 1, 2010.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

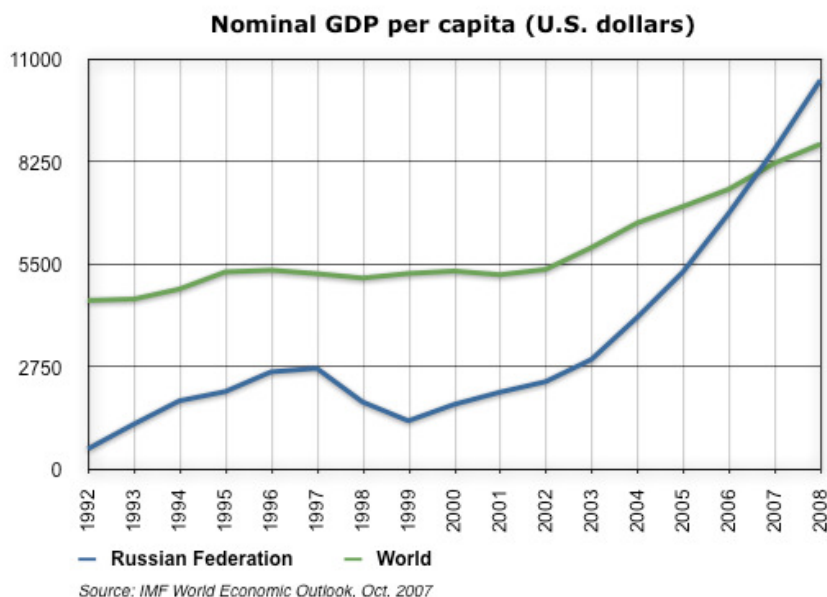
While the above examples never provide any concrete evidence that would render Putin a target of a corruption investigation, the implications are nevertheless there. Despite lack of evidence that conclusively tie Putin to these scandals, the prevalence of political promotions and appointments of those who are close to the former president or to his views and the abundance of murdered figures who openly criticized his regime speak for themselves. The rampant corruption that flourished under Putin's watch demonstrates his inability and unwillingness to crack down on the issue and perhaps even his involvement in the backhand dealings that take place inside deputies' offices and behind Kremlin's closed doors.

Improvements

Although Putin allowed for corruption to flourish under his rule, he also pulled Russia out of a decade of embarrassing economic stagnation and political insignificance. Before his arrival, Russia's place at G-8 summits and international gatherings was reserved largely due to its status as a former superpower and rival to the United States, not to its economic or political stature. Circumstances quickly changed, however, under Putin's leadership. With Putin's supervision since 2000, order has returned, the economy has flourished, and the average Russian is living better than ever before.

From 1999-2008 Russia was one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Table 2 below, from the International Monetary Fund, shows Russia's GDP growth over the last sixteen years. The graph shows a steady and rapid growth starting in 1999. In fact, Russia's GDP per capita curve is much steeper than the world's average, proving that Russia did not simply follow the pattern of other nations, but ventured beyond it.

Table 2 – Russia vs. the World: Nominal GDP Growth⁷⁵



⁷⁵ IMF World Economic Outlook, 2007. (<<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2010/01/index.htm>>.)

Factors like the increase in oil prices and devaluation of the ruble contributed to such dramatic results, but the stabilization of politics and reforms ushered in with the election of Vladimir Putin as president cannot be overlooked.⁷⁶ “The benefits of this growth,” write Guriev and Tsyvinsky, “have trickled down to all parts of Russian society.”⁷⁷ With the increase of per capita GDP, the number of people living below the poverty line also continuously declined. According to Rosstat, Russia’s federal statistics service, in 2000, 29.0% of Russians lived below the poverty line.⁷⁸ Two years later, in 2002, 24.6%; still two years later 17.6% lived below the poverty line.⁷⁹ Finally, in 2007, the number went down to 13.4%.⁸⁰ The amount of people living below the poverty line more than halved in a short period of seven years, which is a huge improvement for a nation. With the increase in oil revenues, the government was able to increase pensions. From 2000 to 2001 alone “pensions increased approximately 20 percent in real terms.”⁸¹ Further, disposable income “increased by an average of 11.25 percent” from 2002 to 2005.⁸² Since Putin came into power, the data above indicates, the standard of living has certainly showed at least some signs of improvement.

Economic improvements that created a finer life for many Russians also paved the way for a revived sense of nationalism. As Alexander Verkhovsky argues in his piece titled “The Rise of Nationalism in Putin’s Russia,” nationalism during Putin’s rule “has become ethnic [and political] nationalism.”⁸³ While some scholars believe that the rapid rise in nationalism could be problematic, because it also leads to an increase in hate crimes and has a potential to become too politicized, for Russians, a greater feeling of confidence compensated for the years of humiliation and suffering following the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁸⁴ A sense of embarrassment they often felt after Yeltsin’s internationally reported diplomatic blunders was replaced by a sense of pride in an energetic and competent leader.

Although the revival of national pride can seem like a trivial improvement under Putin, it actually represents an important shift. The realization of Russia’s inferiority or at least the inferiority of its ideology with the fall of the Berlin Wall has haunted Russians for a grueling decade. The sense of pride and national identity felt by the entire nation after the victory over fascism in WWII was destroyed and turned into resentment against the West’s unfair treatment and lack of understanding. Through economic policies and international diplomacy, Putin’s ability to recapture and channel Russia’s confidence in its economy, politics, and country, started to heal the painful wounds suffered by Russians during the 1990s.

⁷⁶ E. Gaidar. “Recovery Growth and Key Features of the Current Economic Situation.” (*Russian Social Science Review* 45, no. 2 (March 2004): 41-58. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost).

⁷⁷ Sergei Guriev, and Aleh Tsyvinski. “Challenges Facing the Russian Economy after the Crisis.” (In *Russia after the Global Economic Crisis*, edited by Anders Aslung, Sergei Guriev, and Andrew C. Kuchins. Washington: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2010), p. 9.

⁷⁸ Pirani, p. 141.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Sergi, p. 150.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Alexander Verkhovsky. “The Rise of Nationalism in Putin’s Russia.” (*Helsinki Monitor* 18, no. 2 (April 2007): 125-137. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost), p. 127.

⁸⁴ Holmes, p. 153-155.

Despite these improvements, it would not be fair to exclude Russia's GDP figures after the global economic crisis. Russia experienced the largest drop in GDP growth between 2008 and 2009 among the G-20 countries (including Brazil).⁸⁵ The difference was a drastic drop of 13.5 percentage points.⁸⁶ According to the CIA World Factbook, Russia's 2008 GDP real growth rate was 5.6 %, while a year later it fell to -7.9%.⁸⁷ The drop in oil prices and Russia's reliance on this commodity is perhaps one of the main culprits for its rapid downward spiral. As the figures demonstrate, a lot of Russia's development and progress was due to high oil and gas prices, not simply Putin's effectiveness as a leader. So while it is obvious that Putin is not the only reason that life improved for many Russians, the countries' wealth and constant GDP growth was closely associated with his rule because he was the one in control between 2000 and 2008. Fortunately for Putin, Russians now associate Putin's successor Medvedev with the reduction in GDP growth due to the crisis.

Everything from GDP per capita to pensions, from people's national pride to unemployment rates improved under Putin's leadership. Although proving that Putin is directly responsible for all of the benefits is difficult and oil prices need to be thanked as well, as the leader of the country, Putin should rightfully receive a lot of credit for these changes. Most importantly, Putin recaptured the world's interest in Russian affairs and reestablished Russia's strategic, political, geographic, and economic importance in the new world order.

Leadership Strategy

After the old, slow, and incompetent ruler, Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin felt like a breath of fresh air. "During his first term in office," writes Leslie Holmes in his essay "Corruption and Organized Crime in Putin's Russia," "Putin sought to distance himself from his predecessor, and to show his constituency and the world beyond Russia that his country was no longer headed by a weak, corrupt and often humiliating president."⁸⁸ Putin easily swept the 2000 elections with fifty two percent of the vote.⁸⁹ Opinion polls recorded that "in November 1999 Yeltsin was 'trusted' by 4 per cent of the respondents and 'distrusted' by 88 per cent, while in May 2000 Putin was 'trusted' by 41 per cent and 'distrusted' by 39 per cent" of the respondents.⁹⁰ Russians immediately gravitated toward the younger man, but why?

A lot of Putin's success and popularity with the public has to do with his image and his leadership style. Attempting to place himself in contrast with the aging and frail Yeltsin, Putin deliberately cultivated an image of a young, vital, and healthy leader, a leader whom the people would not be embarrassed to call their president. At the same time his leadership characteristics, similar to the style used by a CEO of a large company, reinforce his carefully promoted macho image. By combining the image with his actual qualities, Putin retains the high approval and

⁸⁵ Guriev and Tsyvinki, p. 17.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 18.

⁸⁷ "Russia - Economy Overview." *CIA World Factbook*. (CIA. October 29, 2010. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>>).

⁸⁸ Holmes, p. 1021.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*.

⁹⁰ Pirani, p. 121.

trust ratings that enable him to get away with otherwise unpopular policies or outright corrupt practices.

A few discourses dominate Putin's highly constructed and managed image. First, the discourse of Putin as a strong and fearless leader emerges. In the various photographs, interviews, or videos, the president is pictured with weapons and heavy machinery, which are traditionally associated with male dominance and prowess. In 2007, for example, "the Kremlin released a series of photos of him on a hunting trip; [...] in some shots he was brandishing a gigantic rifle."⁹¹ Many of the photos show Putin naked from the waist up with rippling biceps. Further, just a few months ago, although already in his role as Prime Minister, Putin flew over Russia in a helicopter extinguishing fires. The constant photo flow of hunting and fishing trips, active summer vacations, and use of heavy machinery also shows him as a man of action. Holmes points out that Putin "consciously cultivated an image of a strong, clean and dynamic leader; his penchant for martial arts and disdain for alcohol abuse were metaphors for his political image."⁹² By portraying himself as a strong, powerful, and healthy man, Putin transformed and reinforced his actual leadership abilities as well as inspired confidence and admiration from the Russian public.

Apart from Putin's PR photo shoots and stunts, his image as a trusted and effective leader is reflected in his leadership characteristics. Some authors, such as Manfred Kets de Vries, characterize Putin's leadership style as that of a CEO.⁹³ "Always taut and vigorous, active and terse, he speaks in simple terms that a broad public will be able to understand; from time to time, he 'mingles with the people,' flies in fighter jets and helicopter, and bares his muscular chest for photographers during his summer vacations, demonstrating his strength and healthy life."⁹⁴ A large part of Putin's appeal lies in his ability to radiate security, certainty and conviction. Grateful for the sense of security and economic prosperity brought about by Putin, Russians project a sense of grandiosity on their leader, making his approval ratings consistently high.

As Pirani and Kets de Vries demonstrate, Putin's image and his leadership style often reinforce each other, both shaping and being the reality that Russians see when they look at Vladimir Putin. Putin's firm and business-like, almost authoritarian approach to governance fits his image of a macho and healthy leader that is always prepared to face challenges thrown at him or his country. Both Machiavelli and Hobbes would most likely approve of Putin's authoritarian leadership qualities as well as his use of the media to cultivate his own popularity among the Russian people, because both philosophers advocate for a strong leader.

Conclusion

After reviewing the status of corruption in Russia, specific cases of corrupt behavior as well as improvements under Putin's leadership, and finally Putin's leadership strategy, the paper can conclude that there is a certain relationship between all of these aspects. Despite countless corruption scandals associated with Putin's rule, Putin was reelected for a second term in office

⁹¹ Pirani, p. 124.

⁹² Holmes, p. 1021.

⁹³ Kets de Vries, p. 79.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 80.

with 71 percent of the vote in 2004” and enjoyed high levels of approval throughout the eight years he spent in office.⁹⁵ 71 percent of the vote in a free election, even though it could have been a flawed election, means Putin maintained his high popularity despite allegations of corruption.

More importantly Russians trust Putin, despite corruption charges. In fact, the Russian people trusted him more after his first term in office than at the beginning of the first term. “The proportion that ‘totally trusted’ Putin,” writes Pirani, “[rose] from 15 per cent in 2000 to 19 per cent in 2004, and the proportion ‘inclined to trust’ him from 48 per cent to 57 per cent.”⁹⁶ These numbers suggest that Putin’s corrupt behavior had no effect on people’s trust level of Putin. Corruption allegations against the president and his failure to adequately address the issue have not alienated the Russian public from Putin. In fact, trust and approval ratings suggest that Russian voters care less about corruption if their leader accomplishes the following tasks.

First, he needs to have an image of a strong, fearless ruler with the policy and leadership skills to back it up. Some suggest that Russia needs an “authoritative (though not authoritarian) style of leadership,” because it takes a certain type of ruler to control the oligarchs and govern a country as vast as Russia.⁹⁷ “In many ways, Putin’s rule is much like that of the czars of old,” argues “Putin’s Game,” an article about the president from *BusinessWeek*, because the people trust Putin and the elites know that they better get along with the president if they want to maintain their privileged position.⁹⁸ As long as Putin maintains his image of an industrious, energetic leader with a hands-on approach and keeps the reality (as described in the leaked cables) hidden, Russians will continue to view him precisely as that kind of leader.

Second, if the country is doing well economically, the people will mostly likely support their leader since they see him as responsible for the economic well-being and prosperity associated with it. Since 2000, under Putin, order has returned, the economy has flourished, and the average Russian is living better than ever before. As Daniel Treisman argues in his essay, “Russian Politics in a Time of Economic Turmoil,” “the patterns of presidential approval [...] turn out to be closely related to the public perceptions of the state of the Russian economy.”⁹⁹ The better Russian people thought the country’s economy was faring, the higher approval rating the president received.¹⁰⁰ It is no coincidence that Putin enjoyed such high approval rating for his eight years in power, since among the many improvements during his rule were economic ones.

Third, Russia is a society where corruption is not considered a deal-breaker, so Russians forgive Putin’s transgressions easier than people would in another country, such as, for example, the United States. As illustrated above, due to the system perpetuated by the Soviet Union, Russians have developed a society and culture of corruption, where corrupt dealings are so widespread that they infiltrate the daily dealing of common people. Everything from visits to the doctor to

⁹⁵ “Putin redux.”

⁹⁶ Pirani, p. 121.

⁹⁷ Kets de Vries, p. 95.

⁹⁸ Patricia Kranz, and Jason Bush. “Putin’s Game.” (*BusinessWeek* no. 3886 (June 7, 2004): 54-58. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost).

⁹⁹ Daniel Treisman. “Russian Politics in a Time of Economic Turmoil.” (In *Russia after the Global Economic Crisis*, edited by Anders Aslung, Sergei Guriev, and Andrew C. Kuchins. Washington: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2010), p. 43-44.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

work promotions brings a certain level of implied and accepted corruption, which leads to a perception of corruption simply being the way of life.

Combined, these three reasons create a perfect environment for a corrupt politician to flourish and retain power. Positive leadership characteristics and a strong leader image, economic improvement and growth added to the culture of corruption produce a situation like the one seen in Russia under Vladimir Putin's rule, where people do not care about their leader's corruption scandals as long as leader produces positive results for the country as a whole.

Lula & Brazil

Culture of Corruption

Popular perceptions of Latin American countries include views of high corruption levels. In fact, while Latin America is not far below the average on the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, it makes appearances alongside some African, Middle Eastern, and Asian governments that post abysmal CPI ratings.¹⁰¹ Factors such as political instability, economic crises, and lack of key institutions that deal with corruption contribute to the persistence of the issue in Latin America as well as other countries with subpar corruption ratings.¹⁰² Political culture within Latin American countries deeply influences the corruption levels as well.¹⁰³ For example, "individualism is strong in Latin American political culture;" this may result in "special projects for home regions or political or business friends and individual enrichment."¹⁰⁴

Brazil is no exception to the rule. Although its corruption ratings are better than those of Venezuela, Argentina, and Guatemala, it still scores lower on the scale than most European countries, the United States, and parts of the global South. Further it shares a common history with its neighboring countries – a history of colonialism, dictatorship, military coups, and recently established democratic governments. All these factors contribute to a pervasive corruption climate that despite recent efforts is tough to eliminate, because it is so deeply-rooted in the government structure and bureaucracy. While corruption is not simply a political phenomenon in Brazil and exists on all levels, the most challenging areas involve Brazil's institutional arrangements like the judicial system and accountability bodies. Political campaign financing is another area of concern as is the corrupters' general immunity from justice.

The first reason corruption is a recurring political issue and is so pervasive in Brazil is the institutional arrangements or more specifically Brazil's judicial system that does not provide an effective framework for addressing corruption. In their article about corruption and accountability, titled "Ending Up in Pizza: Accountability as a Problem of Institutional Arrangement in Brazil," Matthew Taylor and Vinicius Buranelli reveal the cracks in Brazil's

¹⁰¹ "Corruption by country." *World Statistics, Country Comparisons*. (November 10, 2010). <http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/gov_cor-government-corruption>).

¹⁰² Charles H. Blake, and Stephan D. Morris. "Political and Analytical Challenges to Corruption in Latin America." (In *Corruption & Democracy in Latin America*, edited by Blake, Charles H. and Stephan D. Morris, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 2009), p. 11.

¹⁰³ Harry E. Vanden, and Gary Prevost. "Democracy and Authoritarianism: Latin American Political Culture." *Politics of Latin America: The Power Game*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 182.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

judicial system and its inability to efficiently deal with corrupt politicians, as well as some laws and loopholes that make it easy for accused and convicted public servants to continue running for office and getting reelected.¹⁰⁵ Often, by resigning instead of waiting to be ejected by their colleagues, the accused politicians retain the right to run for office at a future date.¹⁰⁶ For example, Fernando Collor, president from 1990 to 1992, resigned to avoid impeachment for corruption but is now back in the senate.¹⁰⁷ Further, by hiring experienced lawyers, Brazilian politicians can delay cases by ten years or longer, which leads to their ability to enjoy political appointments and influence. In many cases, the political culture of the region allows politicians to feel “immune from jurisdiction – not controlled by the law.”¹⁰⁸

While the judicial system fumbles to convict politicians in due time, accountability suffers as well. Accountability bodies, Matthew Taylor writes in another essay titled, “Corruption, Accountability Reform, and Democracy in Brazil,” are not as effective or efficient as they should be in Brazil, allowing for politicians to take advantage of the proceedings and avoid accountability all together. For example, Brazil’s Tribunal de Contas da União (TCU), an accounting body that audits government accounts competes with other institutions such as the congressional investigatory commission (CPI) for corruption cases instead of battling corruption side-by-side.¹⁰⁹ Apart from avoiding working productively, CPI rarely “produces a report that aggregates and presents all the evidence collected in a manner that could be effectively prosecuted;” only about one out of five cases receive such a report.¹¹⁰

Combined with the above mentioned failures of institutional arrangement, strict legislation associated with campaign finance often lead to politicians engaging in campaign financing fraud.¹¹¹ The agencies in charge of monitoring electoral spending and punishing illegal activities are very weak in Brazil, while the laws governing the activity have a lot of bite.¹¹² Since Brazil is such a large country, where electoral districts encompass an entire state or city, politicians need a lot of money to fund a successful campaign. The sheer size and reach of Brazil’s government creates an interest for businesses to remain on good terms with a wide variety of politicians, which, in turn, breeds a system that often leads to bribes and illegal campaign contributions.¹¹³ Apart from flatly illegal activity, wealthy individuals can give politicians large donations legally, (since the limits on individual donations are based on a percentage of one’s income), but demand preferential treatment for their companies or other illicit activity from the politician. “The high degree of competitiveness in current electoral contests” combined with tough campaign finance laws and weak electoral spending monitors breed incentives to receive illegal contributions or to promise preferential treatment in exchange for large donations.¹¹⁴ Further, the political culture of

¹⁰⁵ Taylor and Buranelli.

¹⁰⁶ Taylor, p. 154.

¹⁰⁷ “The money trail.” (*Economist* 394, no. 8671, February 27, 2010: 43.

<<http://www.economist.com/node/15580390>>.)

¹⁰⁸ Vanden and Prevost, p. 184.

¹⁰⁹ Taylor, p. 155.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Jose Antonio Cheibub. “Political Reform in Brazil: Recent Proposals, Diagnosis, and a Suggestion.” (In *Brazil under Lula: Economy, Politics and Society under the Worker President*, edited by Love, Joseph and Werner Baer, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), p. 20.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹¹³ “The money trail.”

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

the region also contributes to issues in campaign financing. Politics is seen as a “winner-take-all game” in Latin America, which often means politicians use political power to the maximum to buy votes or even close “polling places where the opposition is strong.”¹¹⁵

Although it is fair to say that there are many dirty politicians sprinkled along Brazil’s political landscape, the business community is just as guilty in exacerbating corruption in the country. Unfortunately, all too often “corruption fighting in Brazil focuses almost exclusively on the recipient, a few of the corruptors are ever targeted.”¹¹⁶ Without consequences for the corruptors, there is little incentive for businesses not to engage in illicit behavior that could prove to be beneficial to them in the future. A survey by Transparency Brazil found that 86 percent of business people believed that greater oversight and punishment of corruptors were the ways to stop businesses from engaging in corrupt dealings with politicians.¹¹⁷ Both the supply and the demand side lead to corrupt practices, so only targeting the demand side addresses just part of the problem. The lack of accountability for the corruptors is another reason corruption is so widespread in Brazil.

Finally, the overall culture that permits patron-client relationships and clientelism makes Brazil’s corruption so deeply-rooted, matter-of-fact and widespread. In their chapter on political culture in the book titled *Politics in Latin America: The Power Game*, Harry Vanden and Gary Prevost write that businesses and individuals who do not have power in the political system look for protection from people in power, namely government officials. The practice creates a patron-client relationship, “which refers to a special tie of personal loyalty and commitment that connect a powerful person with those below him.”¹¹⁸ Since the patron-client relationship “is common in politics and the governmental bureaucracy, as well as society more generally,” ordinary Brazilians are used to the practice and often rely on it themselves.¹¹⁹ “Taken one step further,” argue Vanden and Prevost, the relationship “can lead to *clientelismo*, which is the practice of filling governmental positions with one’s friends and associates to the exclusion of other, often better-qualified, job candidates.”¹²⁰

Many sections of Brazilian society – from political to economic – experience and engage in corrupt practices. Businesses find corrupt politicians and politicians seek out willing corruptors for bribes, while oversight mechanism fail to check these activities. According to a report by the *Latin Business Chronicle*, corruption costs Brazil about \$41 billion a year.¹²¹ While the factors that contribute to high corruption levels in Brazil are multifaceted, they also work with and within each other, which exasperates the issue even further. The political culture in the country as well as the rest of Latin America makes the problem of corruption even more deeply engrained in politics and society as a whole. After seeing how pervasive corruption activities are in Brazil, let us examine corruption between 2002 and 2010, when Lula took charge of the country.

¹¹⁵ Vanden and Prevost, p. 184.

¹¹⁶ Taylor, p. 167.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 217.

¹¹⁸ Vanden and Prevost, p. 188.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 189.

¹²¹ Alastair Stewart. “Brazil: Corruption Costs \$41 Billion.” (*The Latin Business Chronicle*, October 5, 2010. <<http://www.latinbusinesschronicle.com/app/article.aspx?id=4550>>).

Corrupt Leader

In the 2002 elections, millions of Brazilians with high expectations voted for Lula, hoping that he would change the corrupt political culture that favored vested interests and people in power.¹²² Only a few years after Lula's ascent to power, however, a wave of corruption scandals surfaced.¹²³ Between 2003 and 2007, 1,224 government workers have been fired as a result of corruption investigations.¹²⁴ "The parade of disgraced public figures under investigation seems endless – from government ministers to top lawmakers to members of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's family."¹²⁵ According to the World Bank's Governance report, Brazilians believed "that there is more corruption [in 2007] than there was ten years ago."¹²⁶ While some feel that corruption levels are rising, perhaps the real reason for the uncovering of the scandals is the increase in the amount of people working for the agencies in charge of identifying and rooting out government corruption.

When Lula took office in 2003, he increased the staffs of the auditor general's office and the federal police by 50 percent. These two agencies are responsible for uncovering most of the scandals that plague the government. It stands to reason then that Lula is just as serious about corruption as he was in 2002 when running for President. Although that may be the case, Lula's credibility went down in 2005 when one of the biggest corruption scandals in the country's recent history was uncovered. Rumors of the scandal began surfacing in newspapers around Brazil as early as 2004 and Lula's political party received most of the blame.

In the "mensalão" – the monthly paycheck – "the government allegedly held together its legislative alliance by buying off congressmen with monthly payments."¹²⁷ Brazil's Worker's Party or Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) paid around \$13,000 a month to congressmen from the Brazilian Labor Party or Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (PTB) to vote in line with the PT.¹²⁸ The Partido Trabalhadores suffered the biggest blow since the majority of the political casualties involved in the scandal came from the top of the party. Among the many implicated in the mensalão were José Genoíno, the president of the party, Silvío Pereira, the secretary-general, and Delúbio Soares, the PT treasurer. All three resigned. The perceived organizer of the bribe scheme, José Dirceu, who was appointed by Lula as minister for the Casa Civil, was also forced to resign because of the humiliation and public shaming.¹²⁹

Since Lula was so closely associated with the PT, – the ethical party that was somehow seen "as separate from everything in Brazilian politics that had gone on before" – the scandal affected his

¹²² "Brazil Corruption Scandal." *BBC News*. (October 4, 2007. November 14, 2010. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4676435.stm>>.)

¹²³ Hilary Wainwright. "Corruption of Hope in Brazil." (*Nation* 281, no. 16, November 14, 2005: 24-27. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost).

¹²⁴ Reel, Monte. "In Brazil a Wave of Corruption Cases." (*The Washington Post*, 14 July 2007. November 4, 2010).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Taylor, p. 151.

¹²⁸ "Brazil Corruption Scandal."

¹²⁹ Richard Bourne. *Lula of Brazil: The Story So Far*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), p. 110.

popularity and credibility too.¹³⁰ Although no one suggested that the president was personally involved in the mensalão, the scandal nevertheless affected his image. Many wondered how much Lula knew about the illicit activities since so many close allies were involved in the payoffs. If Lula did know, he was an accomplice; if he did not, he was a negligent president who failed to deliver on the promises of his campaign. In the months following the scandal, as the media, parliamentary investigators, and the federal police slowly exposed its depth and scale, Lula's approval ratings declined sharply.¹³¹ Lula's opponents seized the opportunity and widely publicized the PT's scandal in the 2006 presidential elections. Some even used the mensalão as "a new impetus to seek an overhaul of the political system."¹³²

While the mensalão may have been the largest and most publicized corruption scandal during Lula's presidency, a few other scandals also involved Lula's party and those close to him. Headlines such as "Bloodsuckers: dozens of lawmakers accused of overcharging for ambulances and pocketing the money," "Checkmate: implicated officials, including Lula's brother, making financial deals with illegal slot machine operators," and "Operation Razor: a scam implicating the energy minister and 50 other officials in embezzlement of public works funds for fraudulent projects" spread all over Brazil.¹³³ One of the larger scandals, "sanguessugas" or bloodsuckers, implicated one-eighth of the Congress members, including many PT members, in overpricing ambulances and including them in the budget in return for bribes and kickbacks.¹³⁴ By being closely associated with his political party and with some of the accused politicians, Lula often caused the media and even the public to question his involvement and his ability as a ruler to control corruption.

Other than the big two scandals – mensalão and the sanguessugas – and the abundance of other smaller-scale corruption cases, Lula's government is not the first time scandals emerged in Brazil during the democratic regime. Every one of Lula's predecessors has faced some sort of corruption scandal and Brazilians are used to it.¹³⁵ According to Jorge Hage, the government's auditor general, Brazilians "are not stupid – they know corruption has always occurred in Brazil, and it's just that more of it is being uncovered now."¹³⁶ While his approval rating fell right after the scandal, throughout the investigation and during the court proceedings, Lula's reputation floated above the dirt, even "rising with [2007] public opinion polls that indicate about two-thirds of Brazilians [were] happy with him."¹³⁷ Perhaps the reason so many Brazilians approved of Lula despite corruption scandals erupting all around him, lies in the improvements he delivered to so many people and to the country as a whole.

Improvements

As South America's largest nation and most powerful economy, Brazil has often been termed the "country of the future;" now, with its recent economic development it is poised to assume that

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Cheibub, p. 9.

¹³³ Reel.

¹³⁴ Taylor, p. 151.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Reel.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

role. With low inflation, a strengthening currency, and a soaring stock market, Brazil is enjoying a period of economic prosperity.¹³⁸ Although the recent global economic crisis slowed down Brazil for a brief time in 2009, the country quickly recovered and returned to its pre-crisis growth figures. While other factors contributed to the success, Lula's leadership and policy should receive some of the credit for these impressive economic improvements.

Policies under the Lula government led to a steady increase in the budget surplus, the appreciation of the Brazilian Real, and pay off of its existing international debts. When Lula entered into his first term as president, Brazil's primary budget surplus was 3.75 percent of the GDP.¹³⁹ Only a year later, however, it grew to 4.7 percent.¹⁴⁰ Today, the budget surplus remains high; last quarter, Brazil even posted a record high surplus. The growth of the primary budget surplus indicates a strong fiscal policy, which, in turn, allows the country to pay off foreign debts, decrease taxes, or pay for various social programs.

Apart from fiscal policy, Lula's government also employed monetary policy to promote economic growth. Brazil's Central Bank set extremely high interest rates to receive large inflow of portfolio investment into Brazil. Combined with the trade surplus, the high interest rates strengthened the Real, "which appreciated strongly against the U.S. dollar" starting in 2003.¹⁴¹ In turn, the strength of the Real allowed Lula's government to pay off its entire debt to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) thus securing Brazil's position as an independent global power.¹⁴² Further, in March 2005, *Brazil's* finance minister Antonio Palocci said Brazil would not renew its \$41.7 billion loan agreement with the International Monetary Fund when it expired that month. Brazil's fiscal responsibility and its primary budget surplus put an end to the country's dependence on IMF bailouts and strengthened its position when negotiating with international institutions.

Building off the country's economic successes through fiscal and monetary policy, Lula developed a social program as well. The Bolsa Família, which consolidated four social security programs "that had suffered major flaws in their administration," was part of Lula's campaign to end poverty.¹⁴³ Lula's program gave out "cash transfers raging from R\$15 to R\$95 per month depending on the level of the family income and the scale of previous benefits."¹⁴⁴ By 2006, 44 million Brazilians were covered by the Bolsa Família, which equals about a quarter of Brazil's entire population.¹⁴⁵ Apart from Bolsa Família, other social initiatives under Lula benefited millions of Brazil's poor. The campaigns called Luz para Todos, for example, electrified Brazil's rural areas.¹⁴⁶ On the basis of these programs, some figures estimate that about 50 to 60 million Brazilians were lifted out of poverty during the Lula administrations (Brazil defines poverty as

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Edmund Amann, and Werner Baer. "The Macroeconomic Record of the Lula Administration, the Roots of Brazil's Inequality, and Attempts to Overcome them." (In *Brazil under Lula: Economy, Politics and Society under the Worker President*, edited by Love, Joseph and Werner Baer, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), p. 35.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36; Bourne, p. 177.

¹⁴⁶ Bourne, p. 124.

living on less than a dollar a day).¹⁴⁷ In fact, the number of Brazilians living below the poverty line declined from 2009 to 2010, an impressive result when taking the global economic downturn into consideration. According to the CIA World Factbook, today 26 percent of Brazilians live below the poverty line, compared to 31 percent in 2009.¹⁴⁸ Lula's social programs contributed heavily to reducing poverty rates and helping out Brazil's poorest, and became one of the most celebrated achievements of the Lula administration.

Although Lula made some big strides by including larger chunks of the population into the social programs, some underlying issues that contribute to Brazil's poverty rates persist. One of such failures is Brazil's education system. A UNESCO survey ranks the quality of Brazil's educational system 112th out of 125 countries, which suggests the new government should pump some of its surplus funds into improving the educational system in order to redistribute the human capital.¹⁴⁹ Despite some shortcomings, though, it is important to recognize that Lula implemented policies such as mandatory school attendance for children of families receiving the Bolsa Família allowance.

The economic prosperity and social programs under Lula have also elevated Brazil to the status of a world player. It now acts as a global power on the world stage and a force to be reckoned with.¹⁵⁰ As mentioned above, paying off the IMF debts built Brazil's credibility with investors and added to the respect for Brazil from other countries around the world. Apart from economic reliability, lobbying the UN for a permanent seat on the Security Council shows Brazil's newfound confidence and another important step forward.¹⁵¹ By showing off its territorial dimension, demographic tendencies, economic importance, geopolitical location, and relative weight in Latin America, Brazil made a compelling case for an elevated position within the United Nations and for a permanent seat at the Security Council. Under Lula, writes Bourne, "a permanent seat for Brazil became a key, publicized goal."¹⁵² While Lula did not achieve that goal during his presidency, the publicity surrounding the possibility, international support for the claim, and being taken seriously at G8 meetings solidified Brazil's assertion of being a top political and economic player in the world. As Brazil's clout in the world's economic and political affairs grew, so did its national confidence and pride.

Lula's contributions to his country have been substantial and steady. Under his capable supervision and skillful policies, Brazil remained one of the fastest growing emerging markets, successfully overcame the economic crisis (dealing with it better than other countries including the United States and Russia), reduced poverty rates, and even increased its prominence in international affairs. By combining these improvements with his leadership strategy, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva captured the admiration and attention of Brazilians, as well as people abroad.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 128.

¹⁴⁸ "Population Below Poverty Line." *CIA World Factbook*. (November 14, 2010).
<<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2046.html>>.)

¹⁴⁹ "Education in Brazil." (*UNESCO Institute for Statistics*. 2008.

<http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=760>).

¹⁵⁰ Frank Braun. "Brazil Exercises the Option to Say 'No.'" (*Brown Journal of World Affairs* 15, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 239-246. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost).

¹⁵¹ Bourne, p. 112, 155, 161.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, p. 155.

Leadership Strategy

People around the future president noticed his gift for leadership early on. Lula's mother and elder brother both refer to Lula's "natural gift for leadership" ever since he was a child, which manifested itself in everything from his interactions with his siblings to playing soccer with friends.¹⁵³ Although it may be hard to know if Lula's leadership abilities are natural, developed over the course of his life, or a combination of the two, it is clear from his success and popularity as a president that he possessed a lot of these characteristics.

One of Lula's most impressive leadership characteristics is his ability to relate to and empathize with the poor, working-class Brazilians. Since Lula grew up very poor, he remembered well how much his family struggled to make a living, which gave him a lot of insight into the lives of the poor and the importance of helping those struggling families out. Coupled with Lula's economic policies, his passion for advancing the rights of the poor allowed for Brazilians to believe in Lula's honest concern and dedication to helping them. As Bourne writes, "Lula's popularity rests on a genuine empathy with the mass of Brazilians."¹⁵⁴ By referring to him as the worker president, or president operário, and as the father of the poor, pai dos pobres, Brazilians show that they see him as a leader who champions their rights.¹⁵⁵ The popular support of the president is illustrated by approval ratings, which as of August 2010 were 80.5 percent.¹⁵⁶

While showing his understanding of the problems facing Brazil's poorest by creating economic improvements and publicizing his own impoverished upbringing, Lula also allowed Brazilian working-class to identify with him by brandishing his love for soccer and his sometimes ungrammatical speeches, or use of swearwords. Due to this style, Lula comes across "as a populist nationalist but also a friend to the poor."¹⁵⁷ Instead of projecting elitism like many politicians do, Lula's simplicity and hard-working attitude won over the support of the public and created such positive approval ratings.

Apart from Lula's image as the worker president, who championed the rights of the poor, he also developed an image of a skillful diplomat. He used his love of travel, meeting people, and "eyeball diplomacy" to position "Brazil as a strong developing country, in a leadership role in Latin America."¹⁵⁸ His presence at the edges of 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006 G8 meetings was warmly received and even accompanied by talks of incorporating Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa into a G13. His confident and charismatic personality paired with his insight into the plight of the poor shone through during the decision to send a UN peacekeeping force into Haiti in 2004. Not only did Lula propose for Brazil to lead the UN force of blue helmets into Haiti, but he also sent the Brazilian soccer team on a tour of Haiti to cheer up the impoverished nation. Through these diplomatic gestures, Lula gathered international support and goodwill,

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 4, 21

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 102, 124.

¹⁵⁶ "Poll: Approval rating for Lula's administration up in August." (*Globaltimes*. November 17, 2010. <<http://world.globaltimes.cn/americas/2010-08/560683.html>>).

¹⁵⁷ Bourne, p. 111.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

while advancing Brazil's interest in the international bodies such as the United Nations and G8 or G20.

What distinguished Lula's leadership strategy from Brazil's other democratically elected presidents is his ability to connect with people or his "personalismo." Lula feels as comfortable chatting with fellow world leaders as he does talking with Brazil's poorest, which enables him to be a good diplomat as well as a good worker president. According to Vanden and Prevost, personal warmth and charisma, "are highly valued commodities" in a leader.¹⁵⁹ As Manfred Kets de Vries writes in his study on leadership qualities, charisma is one of the most important characteristics in a successful leader, because it disposes people in the leaders' favor, even when they may not exactly agree with his policies.¹⁶⁰ Charisma and personal magnetism enabled Lula to establish personal connections with world leaders, advance his country's agenda, and garner public support within Brazil and even parts of Latin America. Despite the brief period of disapproval, Lula remained an immensely popular president and his reelection in 2006 fresh after the corruption scandal confirms that claim.

Conclusion

In 2006, Lula emerged from the depths of his unpopularity during the mensalão crisis of 2005 with as much support as he enjoyed before the crisis. In a runoff ballot Lula won his second term as president of Brazil with over 60% of the vote. People saw that his economic and social policies were working not just for the country as a whole, but for the millions of poor Brazilians who benefited from Lula's initiatives. Forgetting the corruption scandal that plagued Lula's Labor Party, people once again looked to Lula as to the kind of leader they wanted to steer Brazil in the right direction. What caused such popular support, however, after a well-known and publicized scandal?

As in Putin's case, Lula's corruption problems proved to be secondary to the president's leadership strategy and characteristics. Lula's consistently high approval ratings and his reelection for a second term in office are due to three main reasons - his economic policy, his populist personality, and the improvements of Brazil's image on the world stage.

First, Lula's winning personality and charisma allow for him to connect well with the majority of Brazilians. By using his lower-class upbringing, his love of soccer, and his genuine concern for the workers and the poor, Lula was able to establish a personal connection and to appeal to a large segment of voters. It is no coincidence that Brazilians called him the worker president and the father of the poor. Lula consciously created that image, but it came naturally to him, because he was truly concerned for the wellbeing of Brazilians and the country as whole.

Second, Lula's personality also helped him establish strong diplomatic connections with leaders across the world, as well as with international institutions. In turn, his diplomatic skills positioned Brazil as a serious player on the world stage, one that no longer had to be pushed around by institutions such as the IMF or countries like the United States. Brazil's newfound importance and prestige generated even more pride from Brazilians in their charismatic president

¹⁵⁹ Vanden and Prevost, p. 185.

¹⁶⁰ Kets de Vries, p. 24.

and their country, which once again turned Lula into a hero for Brazilians who were used to often being treated as a third world country.

Finally, Lula's economic reforms contributed to Brazil's steady economic growth, added to the government's primary budget surplus, and allowed for more wealthfare programs that elevated millions of Brazilians above the poverty line. As Bourne argues, "for poorer voters, the ethics issue was less important than the availability of jobs and the welfare payments of Bolsa Família."¹⁶¹ Hunter and Power's article "Rewarding Lula: Executive Power, Social Policy, and the Brazilian Elections of 2006" also suggests that Lula had no problem winning the 2006 election because the lower-class segment of Brazil's society is easily persuaded by promises of material benefit from the candidates, which makes poorer voters more likely to ignore corruption charges.¹⁶² Further, Brazilians were used to corruption scandals erupting under any administration, so they have grown quite desensitized to corruption over the years. "In the fickle, self-seeking, and often corrupt world of Brazilian politics," writes Bourne, Lula "represented commitment and pertinacity," which other politicians all around him lacked.¹⁶³

These conditions, as in Putin's Russia, created an environment that allowed Brazilians to forget about Lula's corruption allegations and instead reward him with their support and approval. Positive leadership characteristics, economic improvement, and growth combined with international recognition and desensitization of corruption produce a similar situation in Brazil as the one seen in Russia under Vladimir Putin's rule. Brazilians and Russians do not care about their respective leaders' corruption scandals as long as leaders produce positive results for the country as a whole.

Discussion

After discussing the corruption environment, leaders' involvement in corrupt dealings, overall improvements, and leadership strategy in Brazil and Russia, what are some of the conclusions this paper can draw about Putin's and Lula's popularity? From the above findings, it is clear that both Putin and Lula remained immensely popular within their respective countries despite widespread corruption issues and outward scandals. The cases of Putin in Russia and Lula in Brazil suggest that people within certain states care less about corruption than about positive leadership characteristics and strategy. By viewing political corruption as secondary to their own needs, people within Brazil and Russia pay closer attention to their presidents' leadership abilities. These leadership abilities in both states emerge as a function of Lula and Putin's image of being capable leaders by connecting with their voters personally, successfully promoting the country's interests abroad, establishing a strong and stable economy, and assisting the poorest segments of the population.

Similarities between the conditions that led to the reelection of Putin in 2004 and Lula in 2006 despite corruption are summarized in Table 3. The parallel conditions explain the reelection of the two presidents for their second term in office, while showing that corruption rates do not play

¹⁶¹ Bourne, p. 111.

¹⁶² Wendy Hunter, and Timothy Power. "Rewarding Lula: Executive Power, Social Policy, and the Brazilian Elections of 2006." (*Latin American Politics and Society*, 2007: 1-30).

¹⁶³ Bourne, p. 102.

an integral role in their reelection. More damaging to Putin and Lula's reelection would have been the presidents' failed promises to lift millions of people out of poverty and their mismanagement of their countries' economic growth and political prominence.

Table 3 – Similar Conditions in Putin's Russia and Lula's Brazil

Similarities	Russia/ Putin	Brazil/ Lula
High approval ratings throughout presidency	√	√
Populist president	√	√
Strong personal image	√	√
Speeches –swearing, soccer references	√	√
Strong economic growth	√	√
Improvements for the poorest segments of the population	√	√
Improved international image of country	√	√

The results of the two case studies suggest that while the rhetoric of Russians and Brazilians implies that they view corruption in negative terms and even respond positively to their leaders' promises to challenge corrupt behavior, in reality, they are willing to ignore corruption in exchange for personal gain and benefit. While many people within Russia and Brazil prefer to state in various surveys and polls that they favor corruption eradicated in their countries, the results reveal a distinct difference between rhetoric and reality.

The relationship between corruption and leadership is a complex one. For example, how many positive leadership characteristics are enough to convince voters that corruption is secondary? Or which leadership characteristics are the most important? Perhaps if Lula lacked charisma and personal magnetism that are so important for Latin Americans, Brazilians would have lost "confianza" – trust – in him, which would have rendered him no longer fit to lead the country. Alternatively, for Russians, pride in their country's political and economic achievements on the world stage could have proven to be the most important factors that kept Putin's approval ratings consistently high. Without this achievement, Russians could have easily lost interest in their leader as happened with the previous president Yeltsin. The right combination of all factors ultimately established the relationship between corruption and leadership characteristics in both Russia and Brazil. Other countries with similar conditions would most likely exhibit similar results.

Probably the most important commonality between Brazil and Russia that made the comparison of the two possible and the results so similar is their political culture that normalizes corrupt behavior. Without the public's general acceptance of corruption as a way to do business or get things done, the high levels of corruption in Putin and Lula's administrations would be little tolerated by fellow government officials and the people. In contrast to Russia and Brazil, the United States has a political culture that is much less tolerant of corrupt practices and does not engage in clientelism, so the public would not forgive political corruption.

Finally, were political philosophers like Machiavelli right in assuming that the accumulation of power and influence over the subjects was the main priority of the leaders and corruption was an acceptable tactic for this purpose? Can corruption and good leadership exist side by side? The

cases of Russia and Brazil indicate that they can. By closely examining countries like Russia and Brazil, we can further discern and identify the connections between the two. While more studies on the topic need to be done before positively concluding that effective leaders within certain states are exempt from public corruption accountability, this paper is a meaningful way to start exploring the topic. Ultimately, the point is to better understand the relationship between leadership and corruption and to guide leaders from across the world to deal with corruption within their states more effectively.

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