

Transplanting Sweden's Anticorruption Reforms into the Brazilian Legal Framework: A Viability Analysis

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Abstract

Corruption is a global problem that affects several countries, leading developed countries to adopt anti-corruption reforms to combat it. However, the application of these reforms in developing countries is a controversial issue due to the particularities of these countries. This article aims to analyze the feasibility of anti-corruption reforms adopted by developed countries, such as Sweden, in the context of developing countries, such as Brazil. To achieve this objective, bibliographic and documentary research was carried out to identify the main anti-corruption reforms adopted by Sweden and their possible adaptations to be used in the socio-cultural context of Brazil. Attempts to combat corruption in Brazil were also evaluated, and it was concluded that the application of anti-corruption reforms in developing countries is a complex task, as it involves considering the cultural, economic, and political differences between countries. However, several measures can be identified and applied based on the successful experiences of developed countries, such as strengthening control and oversight institutions, creating reporting channels, and raising awareness in society about the importance of combating corruption.

Keywords

Reforms, Corruption, Transparency, Engagement, Geopolitics

1. Introduction

It is clear that various tools are used to measure the level of development of different nations around the world, but not all of these tools accurately reflect reality. Often, this occurs due to a political-ideological bias or even because of biased data collection. However, it is important to highlight that some of these mechanisms

are better known than others for various reasons, and in this context, one of the indices that stands out the most is the Human Development Index (HDI), developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This index measures factors such as education, health, and income and converts them into numbers that range from 0 to 1, where the closer to 1, the higher the development of the country in question.

For this study, Brazil was used as a representative of developing countries, since this country has faced several challenges in its recent history in combating corruption in various sectors of government and the economy. In addition to these challenges, Brazil is also an important global player, especially as one of the largest economies in Latin America and frequently considered a regional leader. Thus, studying Brazil as a representative of developing countries in the fight against corruption can provide valuable data on measures already taken in its recent trajectory. Especially because in this fight against corruption, there has already been the imprisonment of several politicians and businessmen from various sectors, and there has been a maturation of the theme, which can contribute significantly to the present study, bringing concrete measures to address this problem.

In this same logic, Sweden was used as a representative of developed countries, as it is considered an example to be followed in the fight against corruption for various reasons, including its tradition of transparency and accountability, which generates greater public trust in government and public institutions.

Sweden has a culture of valuing integrity and ethics, which can be observed in the requirement for public authorities and politicians to declare their assets and in the restriction of private financing in election campaigns. In addition, the Swedish judicial system is considered very effective in punishing cases of corruption.

Therefore, studying Sweden as a representative of developed countries can bring a greater understanding of public policies on transparency, ethics, and accountability, as well as an example of an effective judicial system in punishing corrupt acts.

It is important to analyze the numbers with caution, taking into account the entire context in which they are inserted for better understanding (Ackerman & Palifka, 2020). The HDI assigned to countries is categorized into four levels: very high, high, medium, and low. Considering that 191 countries were evaluated, a lot of information can be extracted from these data. In the last data collection in 2021 and with revision in 2022, Brazil was used as a representative of developing countries, while Sweden represented developed countries for purely illustrative purposes, obtaining 0.754 and 0.947 points, respectively. It is necessary to emphasize that Sweden improved by 0.005, while Brazil worsened by 0.004 points in relation to the previous index in 2020.

Beyond the numbers, it is important to consider factors such as the numerical trend of each country and the improvement of internal policies, as well as other elements that may influence the improvement or worsening of the index. In the case of Brazil, the decrease in the index is concerning since an overall improvement in development is expected. However, different elected leaders around the

world and internal socio-economic movements can generate a change in this index up or down.

Based on this general analysis of the topic, it is important to note that different categories of HDI are assigned to different countries, which can help to better understand their development. Countries with a very high HDI are those with an index between 0.800 and 1, with 66 countries in this category. Countries with a high HDI have an index between 0.700 and 0.799, with a total of 53 countries. Countries with medium development have an index between 0.555 and 0.699, and there are 37 countries in this category. Finally, countries with low development have an index lower than 0.555, with a total of 33 countries in 2022.

Sweden has a very high HDI, with 0.947 points, which reflects the effort of its public administration over the years to promote social welfare in different fields evaluated by the UNDP. This number represents a high degree of human development in the country.

Brazil, on the other hand, has a high HDI, with 0.754 points. Although this number may be considered modest compared to other countries, it is surprising in relation to the pessimistic expectations of many. The fact that Brazil is among the countries with a high HDI indicates that there are efforts to improve the quality of life of the population in different areas.

However, it is important to note that there is still room for improvement. Of the 191 countries studied, Brazil ranks 87th on the HDI scale, placing it in an intermediate position. On the other hand, Sweden ranks 7th, much closer to the top of the ranking. Although it is not a race to come in the first place, it is important that countries continue to strive to progress and deliver increasingly better results for their populations.

2. Human Development Index—Developed Countries vs Developing Countries

Taking into account the low level of corruption in currently developed countries compared to developing countries, it is evident that there has been prior work to achieve such disparate indexes. In many cases, this has happened because of political will for progress or because of little emphasis on governance mechanisms and corruption control promotion within institutions (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015).

Continuing the analysis, Sweden and Brazil are representative of each group, as Sweden has a well-studied and successful process for combating corruption, while Brazil has been struggling against corruption on different political and legal fronts with considerable progress and setbacks. Both countries are democratic, indicating that democracy is fundamental in the fight against corruption, as public participation, contestation, and reform are paramount (Johnston, 2014).

Historically, in Sweden, military positions were occupied by the nobility without any practical qualification (Rothstein, 2011a). Therefore, for a thorough analysis of the different processes by which Sweden became a country with a very low level of corruption and, consequently, of greater human development, it was vital

to use data based on the population's perception of corruption levels in the country. However, the perception of the Human Development Index (HDI) alone does not provide a context about the policies and reforms undertaken in the country over the years.

The HDI is important for positioning Sweden on a scale of development and outcome, but it is necessary to detail all the work developed in the country in political, normative, economic, and social spheres, taking into consideration also all the approaches of capabilities and human well-being provided by this index (Sen, 1999).

Corruption is a social fact, and to be understood, it is necessary to create a method (Durkheim, 2001). Therefore, it is essential to highlight the importance of these indexes; in this sense, data from the two main corruption-related indexes were thoroughly evaluated: the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) and the Control of Corruption Indicator (CCI). It is necessary to establish criteria to quantify the level of corruption, and the exposure of opinions from major scholars of the subject is important, but not sufficient on its own, since the measurement of these data offers greater clarity to this phenomenon and better visualization of the theme, which facilitates the development of mechanisms that can inhibit this practice.

One of the most recognized corruption indexes is the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), which is generated by the non-profit anti-corruption organization Transparency International, based in Berlin, Germany, and published since 1995 on its website to allow a global comparison of the positioning of different countries in relation to corruption (Ackerman & Palifka, 2020). This index is widely used in developing countries, such as Brazil, to deal with problems related to corruption, inequality, violence, and political crisis (Pinheiro, 2019).

Another major indicator mentioned by the authors is the Control of Corruption Indicator (CCI), published by the World Bank, a financial institution that provides loans to its member countries and also acts as an observer of the United Nations Development Group and several other global forums. (Ackerman & Palifka, 2020).

With the background set about the different indexes, the subject can be addressed with a more reliable metric, since if the data were provided by the governments of each country, there would probably be very different values. This is because high levels of corruption can lead to low popularity of local governments. Despite the different metrics adopted by the indexes, their results are very close to each other, demonstrating the seriousness and reliability of data collection and analysis. This highlights the importance of indexes and statistics in economic and legal analyses (Cooter, 2016).

Many studies emphasize the accountability of political agents regarding cases of corruption, demanding practical solutions to this problem, but often overlook the bureaucratic institutions that are at the center of the issue and need reforms (Dahlström, Lapuente, & Teorell, 2009).

The core of this study is the analysis of Sweden's social evolution, which has a favorable human development scenario, making it difficult to imagine that social

problems such as corruption were an issue in the past. This evolution can be evidenced and adapted to the South American country, the focus of this study, through prevention, detection, and repression measures (Sundström, 2003).

Despite the numbers not being considered bad, it is undeniable that several social problems are more common in Brazilian society than in Swedish society, such as health, education, housing, unemployment, basic sanitation, social inequality, child labor, hunger, deforestation, and racial inequality, which are topics that make headlines around the world, portraying the catastrophic situation in which these issues are treated in the country, due to the disregard of some authorities in fighting for a reversal of the situation (Taylor, 2008).

To achieve better results in the fight against corruption, it is necessary to conduct a political and bureaucratic study (Dahlström, Lapuente, & Teorell, 2009). Additionally, the 80-point difference in the human development index between countries may seem greater when considering typical factors of developing countries in Brazil. This highlights the need for social reforms in addition to a focus on the economy (Souza, 2017).

Some countries are among the largest economies on the planet and yet still face structural problems such as hunger, as is the case in Brazil (Furtado, 2018). In this sense, all the data collected are important and reflect very peculiar aspects of nations. However, the perception of reality from the perspective of the population is essential to reduce the gap between common and critical-scientific thinking.

Based on this context, the mentioned corruption indices are relevant to many scholars on the subject. However, all social variables and political contexts in which countries are inserted are important to evaluate the political feasibility of reforms and the correction of specific flaws.

3. The Fight against Corruption in Developing Countries

Throughout the history of Brazil, corruption has been present in various aspects and levels (Teixeira, 2018). From the early years, when the smuggling of goods, especially gold, was identified, corruption exceeded the limits of the nobility, reaching even the clergy through the so-called “hollow saints,” used by religious leaders to escape taxation by the Portuguese Crown. This practice harmed the country’s various economic relationships.

According to Furtado (2018), the country was built without any moral or ideological commitment to forming a great nation. However, it is possible to find those who have a more Rousseauian view of Brazil’s first immigrants, which can lead to a sense of hope and encouragement.

Given this peculiar historical outline, it is not surprising that corruption is deeply rooted in various levels of Brazilian society. However, there are possible solutions, such as formal education within educational or religious institutions, the view of sin and the performance of good deeds, or even state coercion through fines in milder cases or by applying the law to different public agents and actors of civil or military society. Based on this, preventive measures are less burdensome for both

the Public Administration and organized civil society.

There are dichotomies in the sociology and historiography of Brazil, such as Iberian and Saxon, European and indigenous, rural and urban, and master and slave, with a common feature of the figure of the cordial man who created the Brazilian way of getting around rules (Hollanda, 1995). Although this deterministic view of the Brazilian people is misguided, corruption can be combated through coordinated and serious reforms recommended by corruption experts (Souza, 2017).

When studying the existing structural corruption in Brazil, caution is necessary, focusing on points that have a greater practical impact and can be combated in a less complex way (Radbruch, 1932). It is important to analyze the causes or vulnerable points existing in the legislation, administrative structures, and control agencies, as well as the administrative and judicial measures adopted by public authorities to correct these failures. The effectiveness of these measures should be taken into account, and the legal measures adopted in ongoing cases should be evaluated to make the fight against corruption more effective (Furtado, 2018).

The first point suggests that by identifying possible vulnerable points in legislation (Bobbio, 1995), it is possible to seek legislative changes or create mechanisms that inhibit corruption. As is common in scientific studies, it is necessary to have an object or social fact to be studied to then take measures on its political, economic, and social impact.

It is common to see corruption spread to the highest levels of public administration (Foucault, 1977), which makes it even more difficult to combat. In this sense, oversight bodies must monitor these public managers and ensure that everyone at the base of this pyramid acts with integrity.

Regarding ongoing actions, it is necessary for the Public Power, in partnership with civil society, to evaluate which measures have been taken in the past in cases of corruption and, if they were not effective (Radbruch, 1932), it is necessary to change the strategy through new approaches within the existing normative framework or by creating new laws that directly address the aspirations of combating corruption.

The study of corruption in Brazil has been addressed in various sectors, from sociology to perceptions of public spending (Furtado, 2018). Before being studied in a technical and political way, the phenomenon was approached philosophically. Until the 1980s, the study of corruption in Brazil was more present in sociology, and only then were its economic impacts considered (Furtado, 2018).

Corruption has become a global concern, having been discussed in different world conventions and international organizations such as the UN and the OAS. Several initiatives have been adopted to combat the phenomenon, such as the approval of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in 1989 and the Inter-American Convention against Corruption in the OAS in 1996. In 2000, the Palermo Convention (UN) on transnational organized crime was approved, and in 2003, the Mérida Convention (UN) on corruption (Elliott, 1997).

In Brazil, there are several emblematic cases of corruption, whose disclosure by

the media (McChesney, 1999) often occurred due to the large amounts of money diverted, other times due to including members of the judiciary who, at times, surprise with corruption scandals, and still due to the delay in conviction, which led many crimes to expire (Furtado, 2018). In any case, these scandals occurred on national territory and brought to light the discussion about corruption, which is one of the structural evils of the Brazilian nation.

The media's highlighting of these issues is very important, as it is a segment of society independent of the powers, and only because there is no censorship could such excesses reach the social debate (McChesney, 1999).

4. The Fight against Corruption in Developed Countries

In the first half of the 19th century, the Swedish State transitioned from a patrimonial and corrupt state to a more professionalized and Weberian bureaucracy, closer to the current democratic model (Johnston, 2014). It is important to study the measures that were adopted, the time needed to observe the first results of this restructuring, and whether it can be replicated in developing countries.

In Sweden, representatives from different societal groups of the time met to discuss actions to combat corruption. Among these groups were nobles, clergy, bourgeoisie, and peasants who gathered at the "Ständsriksdagen" to assess corruption and related issues (Teorell & Rothstein, 2020). Meetings with members of different groups allowed for the observation of the same problem from different perspectives, identifying the central problem of the Swedish State at that time and the actions that could be taken to correct it.

To combat corruption in the Swedish Public Administration, three factors were important: a functional legal system, motivation for change after the loss of the war with Russia in 1808-1809, and the rise of liberalism (Teorell & Rothstein, 2020).

A very common example of corruption at the time was the informal payment for public office when the holders retired. Those interested in occupying the same position had to pay those who were leaving, making the negotiation of public goods commonplace in Swedish society (Teorell & Rothstein, 2020). It was as if public officials owned these positions, and their "sale" was normalized, even if not regulated and accepted by society at the time.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the selection of public officials was not based on merit or competence to work in the public sphere. The Public Administration suffered from constant usurpations of what was public, harming the very machinery of the state, since the lack of technical knowledge could lead to a low-quality service.

There was also the possibility in Sweden for a public official to hold multiple positions, accumulating several of them. However, third parties were the ones who actually performed these services (Teorell & Rothstein, 2020).

Furthermore, public officials did not receive salaries for their work, but benefits of all kinds that ranged from availability of housing so that they could live without housing costs to unregulated taxation on other sectors of society that the Swedish

State itself did not collect, leading to illicit enrichment based on the collection of non-existent taxes or fees, leaving these sectors harmed in detriment to possible retaliations from other public officials who were colluding with them.

In addition to all this, the normative system was very weak and undefined when it came to issues such as malfeasance. There was a need for legislative changes arising from the discussion among the aforementioned societal entities. As the subject was refined within Swedish society, the typicality of crimes also became more specialized to ensure the correct punishment of possible offenders.

It was necessary to standardize the entire judicial and policing structure for the coercion and punishment of offenders. Misconducts committed by public officials, such as tardiness, embezzlement, and misappropriation of public funds, were criminalized. However, bribery was only provided for judges, so the standardization of procedures required adjustments.

5. Challenges of Developing Countries

The idea of impunity in corruption cases in developing countries is common (Buscaglia, 2001). In this sense, to illustrate this perception held by the general population, emblematic cases that occurred in Brazil will be presented, along with possible failures and outcomes of these cases, highlighting the fundamental role that the media played in monitoring these cases (McChesney, 1999).

The chosen cases are: Social Security Fraud, São Paulo Labor Court Construction Scandal, and the Mensalão Scandal. They represent different types of embezzlement of public resources with distinct modus operandi and differentiated outcomes.

The first case to be highlighted is the Social Security Fraud (Jorgina de Freitas Case), discovered in March 1991, with a diversion of \$114 million by a public agent alone. To understand the embezzlement well, after examining Brazilian legislation, the Joint Parliamentary Inquiry Commission (CPMI) concluded that there was concealment of deliberate or negligent errors facilitated by the “labyrinth of legal provisions,” calculation rules, qualifications, exams, and normative acts.

The “São Paulo Labor Court Construction Scandal” is an emblematic example of corruption in which approximately BRL 250 million was diverted from the construction of the courthouse between 1994 and 1998. The report of the Federal Senate’s Joint Parliamentary Inquiry Commission pointed out fraud in the bidding notice, payments without counterpart in services, money laundering (Pieth & Aiolfi, 2004), improper payments to public agents, and fraud in the supervision of the work. The lack of transparency and precise regulation in the bidding process is often linked to corruption in public procurement (Lambsdorff, 2002).

Failures in the procedure for choosing the company for the work, including money laundering (Pieth & Aiolfi, 2004), and the participation of public agents, including members of the judiciary (Pinheiro, 2019), were responsible for irregularities in the “São Paulo Labor Court Construction Scandal.” The main failures were the absence or insufficiency of prior or concomitant control of the bidding

procedure, imprecise bidding notice, inadequate and obscure object definition, lack of concomitant supervision of the work with improper early payments, failures in the control of remittances of foreign exchange abroad, and impossibility of access by TCU to information protected by secrecy, including bank statements (Furtado, 2018).

Although the involved were arrested, politicians' mandates were revoked, and part of the embezzled amount was recovered, no significant administrative measures were adopted to inhibit similar corrupt actions (Furtado, 2018).

The last case to be analyzed is the "Mensalão Scandal" discovered in 2005, in which funds obtained illicitly were passed on to parliamentarians to obtain support for the government's propositions and postulations to the National Congress (Furtado, 2018), involving several public agents, including politicians and leaders of the direct and indirect federal Public Administration, as well as financial institutions and private companies.

There were structural failures and discretion in the choice of companies contracted for advertising, as well as widespread corruption in political articulation (Furtado, 2018). The lack of adequate legislation and oversight, as well as defects in the Brazilian political organization, contributed to corruption in government advertising (Pinheiro, 2019).

The challenges faced in this case include the possibility of corruption in the approval of laws, which may compromise the law itself and endanger the democratic system (Pinheiro, 2019). Although 25 defendants were convicted, the recommendations offered by the Congressional Inquiry Committee on the Postal Service to improve legislation were not converted into law (Furtado, 2018). Among the recommendations are: limiting expenses on advertising, revising and updating the Anti-Money Laundering Law (Pieth & Aiolfi, 2004), amending the Law on Administrative Impropriety, reducing discretion in bids, reducing the number of positions in commission and positions of trust, creating specific judicial chambers and courts to try crimes against public administration, creating the National System to Combat Corruption (SNCC) and reformulating the Brazilian System for the Protection of Classified Information.

The outcome of the Brazilian case was not favorable in legislative terms, since the recommendations of the Congressional Inquiry Committee on the Postal Service were not followed or transformed into laws, and the political structure itself remained in the same model.

After reform attempts, the cultural aspect of corruption is not a problem exclusive to Brazil; it is also evident in developing countries like Liberia, where an investigative reporter was arrested in 2013 after failing to pay for a court judgment in a defamation case filed by a politician who had been dismissed for bribery. In some Latin American countries, defamation is still treated as a criminal offense rather than a civil one, but this has changed in some, such as Mexico, which abolished the criminalization of defamation in 2007. The chief advisor to Fujimori in Peru was caught recording payments to congressmen, judges, and the

media (Ackerman & Palifka, 2020).

6. Reasons for the Success of Developed Countries

The success of developed countries, such as Sweden, in overcoming systemic corruption that lasted for centuries, was achieved through a profound reform that did not happen overnight; however, the commitment to changing the scenario is remarkable (Teorell & Rothstein, 2020). Among some of the measures adopted, one of the most effective is the selection of Public Administration agents based on criteria primarily related to education and merit instead of being based on political indications.

Another very important item to be taken into consideration is that the agreement system, in which an agent who was about to retire sold their position, was finally abolished, eliminating the possibility of negotiating positions within the state apparatus (Teorell & Rothstein, 2020). Additionally, Sweden's quite peculiar system, which was payment based on various benefits, was replaced by the salary system, since no more privileges were admissible for a state agent, and unofficial practices were prohibited.

Another point that had a significant impact on reducing corruption was the institution of a new criminal code containing a complete chapter on the various forms of malfeasance in 1864. In the 1860s, the possibility of aristocracy privileges for selection and promotion in the civil and military service was abolished.

These measures taken together had very positive effects (Mello, 2016) and are not commonly observed in the same package in world history. Nevertheless, Sweden itself was inspired by models from other countries that also worked, such as Spain and the Netherlands, which in the 16th and 17th centuries developed a fiscal-military state.

It can be noted that over this period, there were two peaks of appeals in cases of malfeasance; coincidentally, both peaks occurred in the periods of the greatest political changes of the studied period (Teorell & Rothstein, 2020). In 1798, the rise of the absolutist monarchy, together with the inauguration of the Supreme Court and the revolution of 1809, brought a new system of power balance to the country, a new king from abroad (João Batista Bernadotte from France), and the reinforcement of judicial independence.

Legally, there was a great advance once it sought to align all as equals before the law, including several public agents who previously had privileges in their trials, now being judged according to the law. A very severe legal system, with the most varied possible penalties, as well as the seriousness with which cases were judged, and the possibility of members of the judiciary and mayors also being convicted, made the scenario less fertile for the maturation of corrupt patterns, and the chances of acquittal in corruption cases decreased over time.

To illustrate the Swedes' concern with the issue of corruption, some emblematic cases were mentioned. Below is a very brief presentation of the relationship between the crime committed and the penalty assigned in three of these cases:

In the case of Elf Nordström, district secretary of the county of Älvsborg, accused of stealing corn from the Crown, the Crown decided to suspend him from his activities. This decision was considered an innovative stance, as it had not been observed in previous cases involving public agents of this level (Teorell & Rothstein, 2020).

In the case of the court officer Westhén, from the county of Västernorrland, who practiced bribery—more commonly extortion, he was suspended from his activities and obliged to return the improperly collected resources after the peasants had started to participate actively in meetings about the fight against corruption (Teorell & Rothstein, 2020).

Finally, in the case of Anders Carlsson, a postal assistant in the village of Nohl, he was sentenced to death for opening mail and stealing money. Later, the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment (Teorell & Rothstein, 2020). It is important to remember that these cases were mentioned only as didactic examples and that the severity of each crime and the respective sentence assigned must be analyzed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the historical, social, and legal context in which they occurred.

A crime considered not very serious, with a somewhat more lenient penalty, is forgery and fraud. A Stafferberg chancellery employee in the city of Stockholm was convicted of falsifying tax documents for a farmer to pocket his profits. He was sentenced to stay in the stocks and serve 12 days of bread and water imprisonment. However, his sentence was commuted to 14 days of imprisonment (Teorell & Rothstein, 2020).

Regarding embezzlement, wars impacted the Swedish economy, making the State's assets vulnerable to corrupt actions by public agents. During the Swedish Diet period between 1809 and 1858, there was a rise of liberalism in the country (Teorell & Rothstein, 2020). A government bill proposed to remove the leniency agreement benefit given to thieves of public coffers who returned the money, which was criticized by the clergy.

Another point discussed was the system of agreements mainly between military personnel for promotion, which is believed to have harmed Sweden during the war with Russia. Bills were drafted to prohibit this practice, but none were approved until the 1870s, when a pension system for civil and military servants was negotiated.

Public perception is a critical factor in the success of anti-corruption measures, as seen in Sweden, where a strong culture of transparency and civic engagement has strengthened institutional integrity. The rise of social media and advanced media platforms can serve as powerful tools in fostering public awareness, demanding accountability, and promoting ethical governance.

The fight against corruption must be collective and not just punctual. Corruption affects society socially, economically, and administratively, making political-judicial reform essential to change the situation of countries that suffer from this evil (Teorell & Rothstein, 2020). Corrupt practices become internalized in society

over time, leading to the maxim that if others do it, there is nothing wrong with doing the same.

7. Applicability of the Developed Countries Model in Developing Countries

Although there are cultural differences among countries, other aspects need to be evaluated when it comes to developed and developing countries. How society perceives the political class is very important (Lessig, 2011), as the political class in Brazil has faced discrediting due to corruption scandals that frequently appear in the media (McChesney, 1999), resulting in impunity. In the United States, for instance, the publication of the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index on the front page of the New York Times in 1994, along with several other newspapers, caused a sensation and significantly increased public awareness of corruption (Pieth & Aiolfi, 2004).

Public good governance, which acts through impartiality, should be the beacon that guides all actions aimed at fighting corruption (Rothstein, 2011b). This results in the well-being of Swedes, who have a reality in which the minimum infrastructure already exists, while in Brazil, corruption is one of several problems encountered in the country. Nonetheless, there are reasons to believe in a better future, as throughout history, mechanisms to combat corruption within public administration have been noticed, as well as the creation of laws that inhibit these practices and punish them rigorously. Perhaps the greatest detail is in the speed of the restructuring of this process.

There are several types and levels of corruption, and although it is difficult to reduce and perhaps utopian to eliminate, it must be fought against (Karklins, 2015). Despite the significant differences between countries, it is still possible to apply what has been improved in Sweden to Brazil, with the necessary adaptations, since both seek political models that aim at social well-being and respect for the law.

It is possible to notice that the discrediting of institutions that existed in Sweden in the past is still a current Brazilian reality. Local and national governments have a fundamental role in bringing together groups of society interested in change to outline the institutions (Ostrom, 1990). From there, it is important that these groups, even if they have antagonistic interests, democratically discuss, always seeking the improvement of the common good at the expense of their personal needs. Despite the various existing problems, a portion of the Brazilian population still believes in democratic institutions and, therefore, believes that it is possible to improve the management of public resources to make institutions less vulnerable to public agents who act criminally.

By analyzing Sweden's administrative history and the results obtained through the implemented reforms, it is possible to believe that political-social will lead to success in combating corruption (Lessig, 2011). It is important to highlight that reforms must be implemented in an orderly manner so that the State, through its

agencies, can act in a dynamic and focused manner on its social objectives, without forgetting that combating corruption is essential for the maintenance of the State itself.

The fight against corruption must be a continuous activity, and specific investigations can be useful, provided they are considered as additional mechanisms of the process of maintaining institutions. The public perception of the fight against corruption is as important as the fight itself. The general population needs to feel that the protection of the State's assets is a constant. The more information the population has access to, the better the evaluation of the supervision of the resources used by public agents. As oversight increases, the interpretation of this data also becomes more refined.

Often, anti-corruption reforms fail because both the population and the political elite tend to perpetuate corruption in their midst (Persson, Rothstein, & Teorell, 2012). Due to this internalization of corruption, technology plays a fundamental role, as if this thinking is present in political elites and different media (McChesney, 1999), together with technology, keep information alive about the need for structural reforms.

The advancement of current technology provides a deeper analysis of reality and decision-making, allowing for a more effective fight against corruption in Brazil. Unlike Sweden, which did not have this technological and media apparatus (McChesney, 1999), popular participation is greater, allowing different organized social groups to participate in the debate. This brings people into the democratic process who previously only obeyed the laws and did not indirectly participate in its creation (Johnston, 2014). Cyber Forensics has ushered in a digital revolution by transforming vast amounts of data into more accessible information through processes such as data mining and cleaning. Additionally, at a Bar Association meeting in 2013, a panel of prosecutors from Switzerland, Italy, and the United States discussed their success in prosecuting foreign bribery cases, highlighting how the Internet has made it easier to locate incriminating documents (Pieth & Aiolfi, 2004).

In addition to sociological factors, it is important to consider geopolitical factors (Lessig, 2011), such as the geographical location of countries, the regional influence they have and receive from their neighbors, as well as the population profile, which may require specific adaptations. The credibility of Brazilian democracy (Pinheiro, 2019), considering the period of military dictatorship and political neglect towards the population, contributes to a specific perception of Brazilians regarding their political body, different from the perception of Swedes.

Another important geopolitical factor is the territorial extent of Brazil, which is much larger than Sweden's, meaning that anti-corruption reform would cover a much larger area and have to take into account the regional peculiarities of the country (Pinheiro, 2019). In this sense, it would be necessary to evaluate administrative decentralization or regionalization so that the reform can be adapted to local specificities and have practical effects (Radbruch, 1932).

8. Social and Economic Impasses

Despite the fact that developing countries have their specificities (Buscaglia, 2001), several studies have shown that there is a solution to corruption. Although many people may feel hopeless about their country's situation, studies in countries with cultures strongly marked by corruption show that improvements can still be achieved when measures are taken to combat it.

Reforms can occur in various ways: economically, culturally, and politically (Ackerman & Palifka, 2020). When corruption is observed as a social and economic fact, the damage caused to the country is evident when corruption is intrinsically linked to administrative acts. The country's economy suffers, and the consequences of these acts harm the fulfillment of commitments made between society and the state through the social contract. This makes the relationship conflictive, since even if the population is not directly involved in corrupt acts, they may suffer direct impacts, such as deficits in public accounts, which affect sectors such as education, health, and security.

When state resources are scarce, the country's infrastructure is compromised, as investments are reduced and the solution of social problems is further hampered by the lack of resources. Corrupt practices by public officials can be very harmful to a country's economy, and it is not uncommon for nations to suffer from problems such as income inequality, lack of basic sanitation, and compromised education due to corruption.

These reforms are necessary, but they should aim for a comprehensive solution to corruption rather than implementing isolated changes that, in some cases, have led to greater instability. This is evident in other developing countries, such as Bulgaria, where corruption remains a deeply entrenched issue, due to weak institutions, lack of transparency, and limited oversight. In the mid-1990s, civil servants at the Ministry of Finance's central headquarters were more inclined to protect their colleagues in customs offices rather than initiate serious inquiries into apparent corrupt practices by customs officials (Ackerman & Palifka, 2020).

Countries with good economic conditions can be affected by energy, climate, social, and political crises, making the economy vulnerable to corruption, especially in democratic states (Johnston, 2014). In times of economic difficulties, it is common for the population to look for those responsible, including sectors of civil society, military, or political.

Cultural evolution can generate debates and changes in the understanding of what corruption is, as in the case of the acceptance of gifts by public officials (Ackerman & Palifka, 2020). However, institutional setbacks are still possible, especially when public officials do not apply the law for their own benefit. In cultures that accept patronage and nepotism, the risk of corruption is greater than in cultures that do not accept these practices (Mello, 2016). Limiting the discretion of public officials through legal systems can help combat corruption.

In cultures where public officials need to pay to be promoted or where it is required that they be members of a specific ethnic, technical, political, or religious

group, discussions need to be established to verify the possibility of legislative change to adapt local customs to legality.

There is an international movement to change paradigms, such as the need to declare assets invested in other countries to internal agencies or organizations. This makes many countries that have adopted the values of the current international community feel obliged to conform to the practices of their peers (Ackerman & Palifka, 2020). If a country is not interested in conforming to international standards for combating corruption, it can be considered a pariah and have its exports or foreign relations boycotted in various ways.

Cultures are dynamic, and therefore, it is necessary to verify the ability of each country to adapt to the desires of the international community. If fraud is not subject to condemnation in a certain state, it is necessary to bring this issue to the discussion so that the leaders of that country realize the harm of ignoring an internationally recognized crime.

Ultimately, there is a political issue, as corruption is often the cause of disagreements or disputes. Politics is based on discussion and legislative modification for the orderly development of the country. The desires of different layers of society and groups must be considered since discussion is part of the political game (Lessig, 2011). This was very evident during the tension created by corruption in the Brazilian political field during times of crisis (Ungaro, 2020).

A charismatic and politically well-intentioned leader can collaborate greatly to combat corruption and usually benefits from the fight against corruption (Ackerman & Palifka, 2020). The leadership of a head of state or government defines what is acceptable or not based on criteria established in the country's legal system.

In the field of politics, potential risks that may lead to corrupt acts in society should be minimized, as this is part of the public manager's responsibilities. Agents, in theory, may succumb to the evils of criminal behavior within their functions, depending on the degree of discretion in which they find themselves.

In times of global crisis, when nations come together to overcome challenges (Pinheiro, 2019), there are still people who engage in corruption (Ungaro, 2020). This creates a great dilemma, as different countries, when in recession, have to reflect on whether they should invest in programs that curb corruption or save their resources to combat the recession. It is very complex for the public manager to make a decision on prioritizing investments in corruption prevention or saving resources to combat the recession. And even in all this chaos, some agents use this global vulnerability to commit crimes.

The economic instability of Brazil is a fact to be taken into consideration (Pinheiro, 2019), as the country has faced several recessions due to elaborate economic plans or political-party decisions that aimed only at favoring specific groups (Furtado, 2018). Even so, it can be said that, in South America, Brazil is one of the most solid economies, considering the entire region's history. As the main country of Mercosur, Brazil plays the role of protagonist in the bloc, although it does not have the same solidity as European countries, the United States, or Asian coun-

tries.

A major impasse may stem from the fact that what has worked in one country is often not considered adaptable to another, even when adjusted to the necessary proportions. Moreover, low self-esteem frequently hinders the mindset of developing countries. The key lies in the willingness to change and take the first step, as victimization and conformity can be significant obstacles to progress.

Some adjustments are required to adapt the reforms implemented in developed countries, such as Sweden, through specialized commissions responsible for contextualizing these measures within the Brazilian legal and institutional framework. These commissions should consider the available resources, ensure compliance with domestic legislation, and tailor the reforms to align with the country's socio-political reality. While cultural and administrative differences between Brazil and Sweden are significant, they should not constitute an insurmountable obstacle, particularly given the urgency of addressing Brazil's high corruption levels. A strategic approach to overcoming these challenges could begin with educational initiatives aimed at fostering a culture of integrity in key sectors, including educational institutions and corporations, thereby promoting long-term institutional change.

9. Conclusion

In light of the analysis, it is evident that Sweden's anti-corruption reforms can be adapted to the Brazilian legal framework, provided that local geopolitical factors and the current economic situation are carefully considered. However, it is essential to recognize that Brazil's historical and socio-political context, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing political transitions, presents unique challenges that must be addressed. Some changes in the legal framework could include judicial efficiency and anti-impunity measures by reducing procedural laws to reduce excessive delays in corruption cases and ensure that legal loopholes do not allow high-profile individuals to evade justice. These adjustments could accommodate the successful transfer of developed countries' reforms to countries like Brazil.

Given Brazil's historical and political volatility, long-term sustainability and effectiveness will require increased autonomy for agencies investigating corruption, expanded and enforced whistleblower protection laws, and stricter oversight of government contracts, including digital tracking of public spending.

The rise of social media and advanced media platforms can play a pivotal role in fostering transparency and accountability, thereby facilitating the successful implementation of these reforms. For such measures to be effective, the Brazilian population must perceive corruption as a significant issue and support reforms that penetrate various levels of society. Aligning public perception with anti-corruption efforts requires a multifaceted approach, including educational campaigns to highlight the tangible impacts of corruption, increased access to information on governmental actions, and mechanisms that encourage civic participation. En-

ensuring that the population acknowledges corruption as a systematic issue and actively supports reforms is critical for their long-term success.

Moreover, achieving meaningful progress requires moving beyond victimization narratives and deterministic theories that misrepresent the average citizen's role in combating corruption. Patience and persistence are crucial, as progress may unfold more gradually in certain contexts. Additionally, the success of Sweden's reforms was partly due to the active engagement of civil society and the oversight provided by institutions like Transparency International and the World Bank. Therefore, similar collaboration and vigilance will be vital for Brazil to achieve comparable results.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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