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Cleaning up politics – the search for integrity in democratic governance

For forms of government let fools contest; Whate'er is best administer'd is best. Alexander Pope. Essay on Man. Epistle iii. Line 303.

Introduction

When an angry mob coaxed by a desperate departing president attacked the U.S. Capitol on January 6th 2021 an objective lesson was provided in what happens when a political leader refuses to abide by the rules of democratic governance. It was also a culmination of a period of illegitimate leadership in which Donald Trump continually violated public trust systems through brazenly promoting his own business interests, interfering in the Justice Department, rejecting congressional oversight, insulting judges, harassing the media and failing to concede his election loss.¹ It would be easy to demonise Trump at this point and use him as a barometer for all the integrity challenges that liberal democracies are presently confronting but public perceptions that standards of conduct in public life are in decline and distrust of societal institutions and leaders is widely shared across liberal democracies.² Moreover the sense among citizens that the political system and wider society is corrupt and driven by sectional interests has been seen as a key driver of public distrust for some time and contributed to the rise of Trump himself.³

Transparency International's *2019 Corruption Perceptions Index* reveals that the majority of countries are showing "little to no improvement" in tackling corruption and corruption is generally more widespread in countries where large political donations can flow freely in electoral campaigns and where governments are influenced by powerful sectional interests. As Transparency International observes:

*The index ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, according to experts and business people. It uses a scale of zero to 100, where zero is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean. More than two-thirds of countries score below 50, with an average score of just 43.*⁴

¹ J.D. Long (2021), 'Why Trump's challenges to democracy will be a big problem for Biden', *The Conversation*, 11 January 2021.

² See: Edelman Trust Barometer 2021 retrieved 9 March 2021 from: <https://www.edelman.com/trust/2021-trust-barometer>. According to Edelman and Democracy 2025 (2021b&c), Australia is currently bucking the trend due to positive perceptions of the Federal Government's management of Covid-19.

³ See Rothstein, 2011; Clausen et al., 2011; and Evans, Jennings and Stoker, 2020. Although it is important to note that there is strong evidence to demonstrate that a higher prevalence of postmaterialist values induces more corruption disapproval, and especially among postmaterialists themselves. See Maria Kravtsova, Aleksey Oshchepkov and Christian Welzel (2017), 'Values and Corruption: Do Postmaterialists Justify Bribery?' *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, February 2017, DOI: 10.1177/0022022116677579.

⁴ See: <https://www.transparency.org/en/news/cpi-2019-global-highlights>. Retrieved 14 December 2020.

In the last eight years, only 22 countries significantly improved their CPI scores, while 21 countries significantly decreased their scores, including Canada and Australia. In the remaining 137 countries, the levels of corruption show little to no change.⁵

We have already argued in his book that it is the quality of democratic governance which counts. This chapter argues that improving the quality of democratic governance requires the establishment of integrity in public governance as a democratic value, proactive integrity agencies and a set of measures for ensuring that elected and non-elected public officials exercise their powers with integrity and remain accountable for their actions. It further argues that the design of effective national integrity systems entails a broad understanding of the obstacles to the achievement of integrity in democratic governance, the options for integrity reform and the appropriate strategic framework for implementing them.

It observes, however, that the achievement of integrity in democratic governance is as much a behavioural challenge as a problem of institutional design or regulation. Over the past three decades at least there has been a fascination with responding to integrity problems either through structural reform and the proliferation of integrity policies and processes to reinforce workplace integrity or by creating new integrity institutions. These are often layered over existing institutions without due reflection on roles, responsibilities and agency creating a crowded and inefficient policy and operational environment. Public organisations consequently spend a great deal of time, energy and resources on meeting compliance obligations rather than embedding integrity values in the hearts, minds and practices of elected and non-elected public officials. The removal of this integrity paradox remains the central challenge for integrity reform.⁶

This chapter maps the integrity reform agenda in three parts. It begins by identifying an ideal type national integrity system and the values that should underpin it. Part two explores the key ethical dilemmas confronting politicians in liberal democracies. In response, part three introduces a set of measures for ensuring that politicians remain accountable for their actions through the use of a behavioural change model for embedding norms and values in democratic practice.

1. The role of national integrity systems in democratic governance

As the OECD notes,

Integrity is a cornerstone of good governance. It is a pre-condition for legitimacy of government activities and – more generally – for trust in government. That is why

⁵ Amongst the established democracies, New Zealand (87) and Denmark (87), followed by Finland (86), Singapore (85), Sweden (85), Switzerland (85), Norway (84), and Germany (80) come in the top tier. Australia (77), Canada (77), the United Kingdom (77), United States of America (69), France 69, and Spain (62), occupy spots in the second tier. With a score of 53, Italy increased by 11 points since 2012, while Greece (48) increased by 12 points during the same period. Both countries experienced institutional improvements, including the passage of anti-corruption laws and the creation of anti-corruption agencies in both countries.

⁶ For a discussion see Nicholas Allen (2008), 'A New Ethical World of British MPs?', *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 14, 3, pp. 297-314, DOI: [10.1080/13572330802259475](https://doi.org/10.1080/13572330802259475)

*integrity management has been a growing concern for countries around the globe for over a decade.*⁷

Integrity refers to:

*...principles and standards of right conduct...not only with distinguishing right from wrong and good from bad but also with the commitment to do what is right or what is good.*⁸

The OECD identifies eight important integrity measures to inform democratic governance or what it terms the ‘ethics infrastructure’: (1) political commitment to integrity; (2) an effective legal framework; (3) efficient accountability mechanisms; (4) workable codes of conduct; (5) professional socialisation of staff; (6) supportive public service conditions (for example, good working conditions, professionalisation and independence); (7) an ethics co-ordinating body; and (8), an active civil society performing a watchdog role.

There have been four main drivers underpinning practice-based thinking on integrity and democratic governance: the search for aid accountability in the developing world; the need to adapt the changing norms and values of public services due to the application of new public management (NPM) and its emphasis on value for-money and commercial business practices; the need to respond to various integrity crises which have beset advanced liberal democracies; and, declining public trust in government.⁹

All four drivers have precipitated an obsession with structural reform aimed at creating new integrity systems rather than focusing on reforms with direct behavioural impacts. It is notable that since the end of the Cold War international developments in integrity thinking have set the nation state agenda in this regard. We can identify at least three generations of international discursive thinking about the concept of good governance: good governance as a methodology of market and political reform in the era of structural adjustment; the rise of ‘good enough governance’ in the era of poverty reduction; and, the present era of ‘integrity in democratic governance’ as a normative project for realising ‘good enough governance’.¹⁰

Integrity systems are designed to give effect to the values of democratic governance delivered through a diverse range of agencies. The most well-known is the National Integrity System, coined by Jeremy Pope and adopted by Transparency International (see Figure 1). The metaphor used by Pope is that of a Greek temple, where all the institutional ‘pillars’ involved in the control of accountability and corruption in a country hold the National Integrity. These pillars include the specialized integrity agencies, such as the auditors-general, ombudsman and watchdog agencies, which are complemented by independent oversight functions within the branches of government, as well as civil society, media and businesses. We could also add conservation commissioners, data protection agencies, public prosecution, electoral

⁷ See the *OECD Integrity Framework*, retrieved 27 January 2021 from: <http://www.oecd.org/gov/44462729.pdf>.

⁸ Kernaghan, K. (1993), “Promoting public service ethics: the codification option”. In *Ethics in public service*, edited by Richard Chapman, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, p. 16.

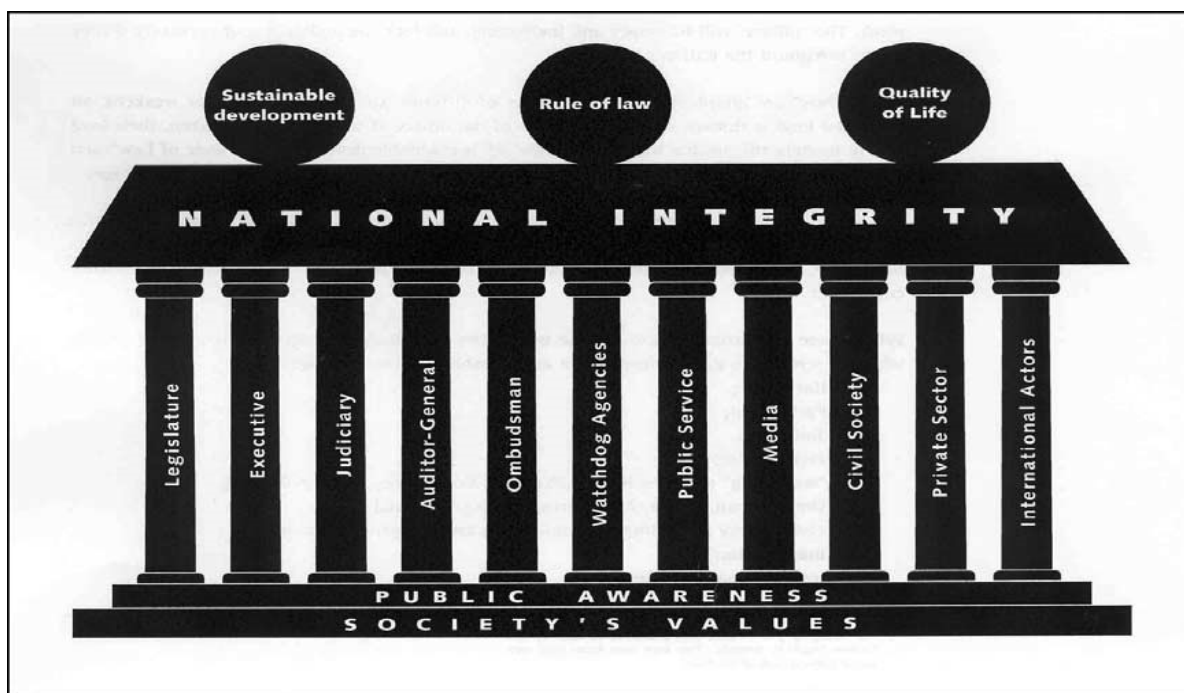
⁹ For a discussion see and Mark Evans (2012), ‘Beyond the integrity paradox – towards ‘good enough’ governance?’. *Policy Studies* 33(1), pp. 97–113.

¹⁰ See: Merrilee Grindle (2004), ‘Good enough governance: poverty reduction and reform in developing countries’. *Governance*, 17(4), p. 52.

commissioners, ethic commissioners and human rights commissioners.¹¹ Integrity Action adds the importance of collaborative methods to empower citizens to fix and resolve problems that affect their local communities and to monitor integrity.¹²

A.J. Brown and John Uhr remind us out that “the main lesson is that no single law or institution is likely to provide a magic bullet against corruption. Rather, multiple institutions and reforms are needed to achieve and support a desired integrity ‘balance’, the value of the whole being greater than the mere sum of the parts”.¹³ In most instances integrity agencies are statutory bodies set up to perform a monitoring role on governmental activity. By implication they should not be agencies of government but should be financially and legally independent from government to perform their function: “structured and equipped to relate well to the legislature...at some distance from the government”.¹⁴

Figure 1. Transparency International’s institutional pillars of a model national integrity system



Source: TI Sourcebook 2000.¹⁵

¹¹ See: Brian Head, B.W. (2012), ‘The Contribution of Integrity Agencies to Good Governance’, *Policy Studies*, 33 (1), pp. 7–20; A.J. Brown, and John Uhr (2004), ‘Integrity Systems: Conceiving, Describing, Assessing’. Australasian Political Studies Association Conference. Retrieved 28 January 2021 from: <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.572.1745&rep=rep1&type=pdf>; and, Ian Thynne (2012), ‘Institutional Maturity and Challenges for Integrity Bodies’, *Policy Studies*, 33(1), pp. 37–47.

¹² Retrieved 3 March 2021 from: <http://integrityaction.org/corruption>

¹³ A.J. Brown, and John Uhr, 2004, op.cit , p.3.

¹⁴ Ian Thynne 2012, op. cit., p. 37.

¹⁵ The Transparency International Source Book. Retrieved 28 January 2021 from <https://bsahely.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/the-ti-source-book-20001.pdf>

Integrity agencies are increasingly required to play three roles in democratic governance. Firstly, they play a moral role as guardians of the good society safeguarding the principles of public life and the sanctity of the liberal democratic system of government. Secondly, they play a prudential role in monitoring, evaluating and reporting on risks to the system government brought about by maladministration. The third and probably most contested and underdeveloped role for Integrity agencies lies in their educative function. In keeping with John Dewey’s argument that the key measure of the quality of a democracy lies in its capacity to develop a ‘fully formed public opinion’, integrity agencies should play a fundamental role in enhancing the political literacy of the citizenry.¹⁶ These roles require political independence, the support of elected politicians, and appropriate legal, financial and human resources.

It is worth pausing here to consider the first role in more detail, noting that the seven principles of public life enunciated by the Nolan Committee have become the gold standard for public conduct and in some parts of corporate life.¹⁷ In 1994, in response to several high profile abuses of public office, the UK government established a Committee on Standards in Public Life which is still with us today.¹⁸ The committee was chaired by Lord Nolan, and was tasked with making recommendations to improve standards of behaviour in public life. What became known as the “Nolan principles” are outlined in Box 1 below:

Box 1. The Nolan principles

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

¹⁶ John Dewey (1916), *Democracy and Education. An introduction to the philosophy of education*, 1966 ed, New York: Free Press.

¹⁷ Retrieved 3 March 2021 from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>

¹⁸ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-committee-on-standards-in-public-life>, retrieved 3 March 2021.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

You would be hard pushed to find anyone to argue against such noble values, but are they enough in and of themselves to ensure good behaviour in public life?

2. Ethical dilemmas

Politicians inhabit a unique ethical position, both in terms of deploying public power within liberal democratic institutions and more broadly in the social and economic system. The core idea of representative democracy is that citizens delegate power to politicians whom they believe will best use that power to serve their interests. Political parties play a key role in aggregating interests and formulating policy agendas which they believe can be exercised for the good of the community they serve, and they present these agendas to the electorate for legitimisation in elections, and then seek to deliver on the promises they make if they achieve power. However, politicians are constantly confronted with ethical choices about the way in which they exercise public power. Harold Lasswell's seminal definition of politics as the study of "who gets what, when, how" highlights the role of politicians (depending on their political capital) as the key agents of resource distribution and redistribution within a political system.¹⁹

This role inexorably involves ongoing ethical dilemmas, sometimes in areas of uncertainty, where there are no hard and fast rules but simply a moral imperative to do the right thing. However, most of these choices are now governed by formal codes of conduct and regulations which are openly flouted by elected and non-elected officials if it is politically expedient for them to do so.

These ethical dilemmas – where integrity principles point one way but personal or pecuniary interests potentially point in the other – include issues surrounding the acceptance of political donations; responding to the interests of lobbyists; the provision of public information about

¹⁹ Harold D. Lasswell (1936), *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*, New York, Whittlesey House, pp. ix and 264. See also David Easton (1965), *A Framework for Political Analysis*, Prentice Hall, NJ: Eaglewood Cliffs. For a contemporary application see Rein Taagepera and Matt Qvortrup (2012), 'Who Gets What, When, How – Through Which Electoral System?' *European Political Science* 11, pp. 244–258. <https://doi.org/10.1057/eps.2011.35>

how policy is made; the use of procedural fairness in privatisation or outsourcing decisions; the establishment of ethical relationships with media and business interests; among others.

Three main sources of ethical disquiet require discussion here.

The interactions between democratic governance and market institutions

High levels of economic inequality lead to imbalances in political power as those at the top use their economic weight to shape our politics in ways that give them more economic power (Joseph Stiglitz, 2012, p. 3).²⁰

Policing the boundaries between the market and democracy is a fundamental problem in liberal democracies committed to democratic and market principles. This first source of ethical disquiet is often viewed as inevitable given that we live in a capitalist system but arguably this tension has become more acute in contemporary governance systems dominated by NPM. The marketization of public service production is integral to the practice of NPM because it involves the distribution and redistribution of public resources to non-accountable third parties to manage and deliver public programmes and services. An integrity paradox often emerges in which the quest for ‘economy’, ‘efficiency’ and ‘effectiveness’ through NPM, and risk management instruments, increases rather than reduces the scope for maladministration or corruption.²¹ Indeed many academics such as Mark Bevir identify the interactions between democratic governance and market institutions as the key source of the liberal democratic deficit.²²

There is another important facet to this interplay between politics and markets that requires understanding. The general dynamic of the professionalisation of parties and their reliance on state and other non-membership sources of funding is known in political science as the ‘cartel party thesis’.²³ Broadly speaking, instead of being rooted in civil society and taking citizens’ views to government, parties have increasingly become part of the machinery of governance, an indispensable mechanism for organising elections and choosing political leaders, and in many instances are funded and supported by government. However, political parties have also become a conduit for protecting and advancing special interests which has called into question the legitimacy of their role.

²⁰ Joseph Stiglitz (2012), *The Price of Inequality: How Today’s Divided Society Endangers Our Future*, W.W. Norton and Co.

²¹ See: Gratto, A., Preston, B. and Snilsberg (2002), *Mitigating Corruption in New Public Management. Privatization and Devolution*. Retrieved 3 March 2021 from: <http://s3.amazonaws.com/mildredwarner.org/attachments/000/000/318/original/b0c039c239111fc1728c18b7b3e685f1> and Mauricio Vasconcellos Leão Lyrio, Rogério João Lunkes & Emma Teresa Castelló Taliani (2018), *Thirty Years of Studies on Transparency, Accountability, and Corruption in the Public Sector: The State of the Art and Opportunities for Future Research*, *Public Integrity*, 20, 5, pp. 512–533, DOI: 10.1080/10999922.2017.1416537.

²² Mark Bevir (2010), *Democratic Governance*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

²³ Richard. S. Katz and Peter Mair (2014), ‘Changing models of party organisation and party democracy: the emergence of the cartel party’, *Party Politics*, 1, pp. 5–18.

The professionalisation of politics and the rise of the career politician

All the current generation of politicians, myself included, typically came up through the back offices. We're the professional politician generation, aren't we? (Andy Burnham, UK MP, 2013).²⁴

This quotation reflects broader academic and popular concern with the professionalisation of politics – the idea that politicians are increasingly drawn from a small group of individuals, many of whom have worked in politics in other capacities prior to running for elected office.²⁵

There are three ethical dimensions to this issue that require elaboration. The first is that career politicians are, of necessity, seeking power and by implication the profession will attract those who desire power; although they may seek to exercise it in different ways. Power is intrinsically neither good nor evil, but its user can make it so. Some may exercise it in the public interest and according to the values and interests articulated by the electorate. Others may exercise it on behalf of the electorate but in contradiction with the values and interests articulated by the electorate but for the broader public good as a trustee or steward of the public interest. And then there are others that exercise power purely through self-regard and interest.

The second ethical dimension to the problem of the career politician is the increasing evidence that the political class has become isolated from the people it represents and this is reflected in terms of what citizens perceive to be the key characteristics of the good politician. Over the past three years we have conducted 46 focus groups with different groups of Australians with the aim of exploring how they would characterize the good politician. Within these focus groups, we asked participants to describe the characteristics of their ideal politician. They were fairly uniform in emphasising the importance of:

Integrity – described as “honesty”, “transparency”, “someone who does what they say” and “consistently fair”.

Empathy – described as a person who is “approachable and accessible”, “listens”, “cares”, and, “understands”.

Delivery – described as a person who “keeps promises”, “explains if they change their mind”, “follows up” and “delivers”.

Loyalty – described as a person who “has their back”, and “looks after them”.

These features of a good politician reflect the centrality of the community linkage and integrity roles to building and maintaining public trust but are not deemed to be very common in the age of the career politician. As the following quotations from Australian citizens testify:

At the moment a lot of politicians go into politics for advancement rather than service. Turning out clones of media-savvy people with sound bites and platitudes, not genuine

²⁴ See: <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2013/aug/09/andy-burnham-interview-thinking-bigger>

²⁵ See: Soeren Henn (2018), ‘The further rise of the career politician’, *British Politics*, 13, pp. 524–553, DOI:10.1057/s41293-017-0061-9.

responses. It feels like they're manufactured (Baby Boomer, regional and rural Australian).

Keeping your word. That's a big thing with me. Don't tell me you're going to do something and then don't do it because I'll never trust you again (Builder, urban Australian).

To trust a politician would mean they were approachable, reliable and consistent and that their words lined up with their actions: You're going to laugh at this from a male's point of view. When I shake hands with another male, I will know by his handshake whether or not I'm going to trust him. They look you in the eye (Generation X, rural Australian).

The third ethical dimension to the problem of the career politician is reflected in the failure of political parties to champion liberal democratic values and strengthen democratic practice as an ongoing mission. As we observed in Chapter x, in theory political parties and by implication politicians perform three sets of overlapping and reinforcing functions in a democratic political system – governance, community linkage and integrity roles. The third role is of crucial relevance to this chapter. The “integrity” role emphasises that political parties should be considered guardians of liberal democratic norms and values with a public expectation to uphold the highest standards of conduct in public life. This crucial role is not only important in linking national and local politics and maintaining trust between government and citizen but has heightened significance in a period where democracy is on the retreat globally and there are now more authoritarian regimes than full democracies.²⁶

These observations in part explain why independents that play the community-linkage role effectively can be successful. The rising minor party vote features in many liberal democracies as some voters search for alternatives to the mainstream. If existing political parties are replaced by others that better reflect the popular will and public interest, then democracy is working. The rising minor party vote, properly understood, may also encourage existing major parties to enact reforms in their own long-term self-interest that would also be in the public interest.²⁷

Integrity as a behavioural challenge

Although the establishment of efficient and effective integrity agencies is an important component of integrity reform, the achievement of integrity in democratic governance is primarily a behavioural challenge in which integrity values are embedded in the hearts, minds and practices of elected and non-elected public officials.

So why do integrity reforms so often fail? Behavioural research provides us with strong clues to the answer to this question. Integrity policies are based on a rational decision-making model driven by the assumption that people will exploit an opportunity for misconduct if the benefits outweigh the costs:

²⁶ Kellogg, *Varieties of Democracy Project* retrieved 4 March 2021 from: <https://www.v-dem.net/en/about/>
²⁷ See: Alonso, S, J Keane & W Merkel (eds) (2011), *The Future of Representative Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; Faucher, F. (2015), ‘New forms of political participation. Changing demands or changing opportunities to participate in political parties,’ *Comparative European Politics*, 13, pp. 405-429; and, Gerbaudo, P. (2019), *The Digital Party*, Pluto books.

*Individuals are assumed to weigh the probability of getting caught (i.e. the strictness of internal and external control and detection mechanisms) and the ensuing sanctions against the undue gain they could obtain through action or inaction.*²⁸

Evidence from three decades of behavioural science experiments highlight the range of social and psychological factors that influence decision-making. This has led to the award of two Nobel prizes. In 2002, Princeton University psychologist Daniel Kahneman, PhD, was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for his ground-breaking work in applying psychological insights to economic theory, focusing on how individuals make decisions under uncertainty. Then in 2017, Chicago University economist Richard Thaler was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for "contributions that have built a bridge between the economic and psychological analyses of individual decision-making".²⁹

Alongside traditional policy instruments such as tax, spend, regulate and penalise, there is growing interest in how behavioural insights (BI) can be used to improve policy outcomes.³⁰ BI drawn from experiments in behavioural economics and psychology have increasingly been used in public policy design to tackle issues that require change in human behaviour such as climate change, obesity, saving for the future through private pension schemes, tax avoidance, dangerous driving, engaging in corrupt practices, among others.³¹ BI has also been used to improve public compliance with Covid-19 suppression measures.³²

The core insight is to work with, rather than against, the grain of human behaviour. To make no assumptions about how people behave (as in the case of formal economic modelling) but to use experiments to find out how they behave in the real world of decision-making and how they might behave with a different choice architecture.

BI is not about asking citizens what they think. It isn't about public consultation and participation. It is about shifting the way government does things to give it more of a chance to see like a citizen. Seeing the world through the eyes of the citizen and responding to that vision. Most importantly, it provides a different way of thinking about implementation. A timely corrective to the dominance of "top-down", "government knows best" approaches to policy design which have struggled to achieve strong outcomes for the citizenry.³³

In the context of safeguarding public integrity, BI can be used to ensure that the good or ethical choice is the easiest choice. In this context, it is important to see like a politician rather than a citizen. Recent field research has sought to explain how corrupt networks

²⁸ OECD (2018), *Behavioural Insights for Public Integrity: Harnessing the Human Factor to Counter Corruption. The dynamics of moral decision-making*, retrieved 5 March 2021 from: <https://www.oecd.org/gov/ethics/behavioural-insights-for-public-integrity-9789264297067-en.htm>

²⁹ See: Daniel Kahneman (2011), *Thinking, fast and slow*, New York, Macmillan and Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein (2008), *Nudge: Improving decisions about health, wealth, and happiness*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press.

³⁰ See Peter John (2018), *How Far to Nudge?: Assessing Behavioural Public Policy*, London, Edward Elgar.

³¹ Brigitte C. Madrian (2014), 'Applying Insights from Behavioural Economics to Policy Design'. *Annual Review of Economics*, 6, pp. 663–688.

³² Hume, S. and John, P. and Sanders, M. and Stockdale, E., (2020), *Nudge in the Time of Coronavirus: The Compliance to Behavioural Messages during Crisis*, available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3644165> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3644165>

³³ Halpern, David and Michael Sanders (2016), 'Nudging by government: Progress, impact, & lessons learned', *Behavioral Science & Policy*, 2, 2, pp. 52-65. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/bsp.2016.0015

function and how they might react to incentives provided by integrity measures.³⁴ There are seven important lessons that we can draw from the main findings for integrity reform:

1. Ethical choices are not made in isolation, but in the context of social interaction. What others think and do matters.
2. Expect ethical failures from everyone.
3. Raise and emphasize moral reference points and encourage ethical reflection at key moments in the policy process.
4. Guilt is less when shared hence spreading the burden of responsibility over too many people can create an integrity risk.
5. Over-strict control can have adverse effects. Excessive monitoring of a trust-based rule might drive people to disregard the rule, and create an entry-point for severe misconduct.
6. Provide actionable training and commitment.
7. Anticipate where politicians will fail and build integrity systems around the pressure points.³⁵

The OECD therefore recommends the deployment of incentives, training and nudges to combat poor behaviour:

All three should be included in an integrity system: decision makers need to be clearly incentivised to be objective and shielded from subtle conflicts of interests. They should be trained to know and identify biased behaviour. And the way in which they are presented with choices should be designed to favour objectivity, for example, through smart default setting or reframing questions.³⁶

We can therefore derive from this research and the work of the Behavioural Insights Unit a set of behavioural insights that can be used to design and pilot integrity interventions.³⁷ These are set out below in Box 2.

3. Taking an integrated approach to building an integrity culture

There is no single ‘magic formula’ that has been discovered for resolving the complex ethical dilemmas politicians face. However, the evidence clearly suggests that building an integrity culture requires behavioural change and influencing behaviour is most effective when measures are combined from across four broad categories of policy tools that regulate, enable, encourage and co-govern change (see Figure 2). This observation reflects the importance of shifting integrity policies from a narrow focus on deterrence and enforcement towards promoting values-based decision making.

³⁴ See: OECD (2017), *Behavioural Insights and Public Policy: Lessons from Around the World*, OECD Publishing, Paris and OECD (2018), *Behavioural Insights for Public Integrity: Harnessing the Human Factor to Counter Corruption. The dynamics of moral decision-making*, retrieved 5 March 2021 from: <https://www.oecd.org/gov/ethics/behavioural-insights-for-public-integrity-9789264297067-en.htm>

³⁵ Retrieved 9 March 2021 from: <https://oecdonthellevel.com/2018/03/12/a-nudge-in-the-right-direction-applying-behavioural-insights-to-public-integrity/>

³⁶ OECD (2018), Executive summary, op. cit.

³⁷ See David Halpern (2015), *Inside the Nudge Unit*, London, Penguin Random House.

Box 2. Behavioural insights for integrity reform

Behavioural insight
Who is the right messenger of integrity reform? <i>Politicians are heavily influenced by their national party leadership, local elites and constituents</i>
What incentives need to be created to prompt good behaviour? <i>The response of politicians to incentives are likely to be shaped by predictable mental shortcuts such as strongly avoiding losses</i>
What integrity norms will lead to appropriate behaviours? <i>As with others, politicians are strongly influenced by what others do and the norms they share</i>
How should integrity reform be presented? <i>As with others, politicians will “go with the flow” of pre-set options but require some choice to feel valued</i>
What integrity issues matter? <i>As with others, the attention of politicians is drawn to what is novel and seems relevant and pressing</i>
What integrity values drive the behaviour of politicians? <i>As with others, our emotional associations can powerfully shape our actions</i>
How can we ensure that politicians remain accountable for their actions? <i>Politicians seek to be consistent with their public promises, and reciprocate acts</i>
Ego <i>Politicians act in ways that make them feel better about themselves</i>
Convenience <i>How do we make the ethical choice the easiest choice for politicians?</i>

Source: adapted from MINDSPACE³⁸

Enabling behavioural change is about building the capacity of politicians to perform their duties with integrity. In keeping with contemporary workplaces this should involve mandated integrity training, coaching and mentoring. However, personal development plans should be co-designed with the target group to provide actionable training and commitment underpinned by appropriate behavioural insights. Structured spaces should be designed within the workplan to enable ethical reflection and learning.

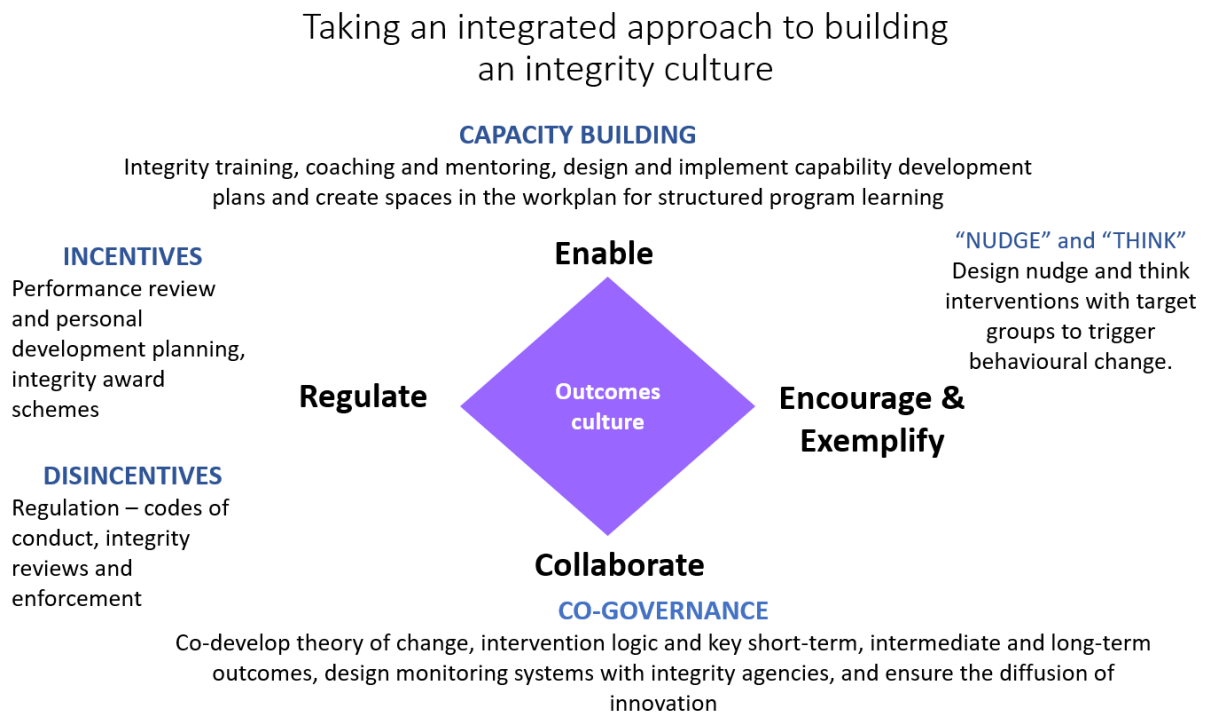
Regulating behavioural change requires establishing the right incentives/disincentives to prompt good behaviour. In keeping with the modernisation of contemporary workplaces, incentives should include performance review processes governed by codes of conduct and underpinned by personal development planning processes monitored by an integrity panel including party and community representation. The power of recall should be available to electorates in the event of poor performance or parliamentary petition. Parliamentary integrity award schemes should be introduced to celebrate exemplary behaviour.

³⁸ Behavioural Insights Team, Mindspace, retrieved 9 March 2021 from: <https://www.bi.team/publications/mindspace/>

Behavioural change should be encouraged through “nudge” (e.g. direct messaging to parliamentarians to emphasize moral reference points) and “think” interventions (e.g. cyclical public deliberations to assess the outcomes of integrity reviews and suggest remedial action) with parliamentarians aimed at embedding behavioural change.

Co-governing behavioural change reflects the importance of establishing broad ownership of the change process. A Parliamentary Integrity Committee should be created comprised of senior parliamentary integrity champions, directors of appropriate integrity agencies and a

Figure 2. Building an integrity culture



random sample of lay citizens. The purpose of the committee is to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of integrity reform. This will require the co-development of a theory of change, intervention logic and desired outcomes and ensure the diffusion of innovation.

Sound ethical decision making is maximised when politicians’ decisions are made in an appropriately designed, transparent and accountable integrity system. Integrity reform along the lines suggested above should be welcomed by those wishing to strengthen ethical practice in democratic politics.

In conclusion: it is the mix that matters

The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that the capacity of liberal democracies for saving democracy, is potentially undermined by a fundamental democratic paradox – a cognitive dissonance between integrity reform and individual and organisational absorption of integrity norms and values. Public organisations consequently spend a great deal of time, energy and resources on building integrity systems and meeting compliance obligations rather

than transforming individual behaviour. Hence the removal of this integrity paradox remains the central challenge for integrity reform. We have discovered that building an integrity culture requires behavioural change and that influencing behaviour is most effective when measures are combined from across four broad categories of policy tools that regulate, enable, encourage and co-govern change. It is the mix that matters and it is important to find space for both “nudge” and “think” interventions with target groups to reinforce regulatory change. At the same time it is essential to use integrity values to guide policy choices and to deploy evidence to inform those choices.