

Administrative Corruption: Its Causes and Remedies-An Objective Study in the Light of the Noble Quran and the Honorable Sunnah

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Abstract

The phenomenon of corruption spreads rapidly, like wildfire, in many countries, with negative repercussions on the economy and development in these nations. Transparency International released its updated 2024 report on corruption, which revealed the world's failure in combating corruption, showing that over 95% of countries have seen no change in corruption levels since 2017. This is the reason behind choosing this topic. The objectives of this research are to understand the phenomenon of administrative corruption, its causes, types, and the effects it has on societies, especially Islamic ones. Present both administrative and religious solutions to combat this phenomenon. The research problem lies in defining appropriate definitions and boundaries for corruption, its types, causes, and methods of treatment as described in the Quran and the noble Sunnah. The researcher follows the inductive method to gather sufficient information on administrative corruption, then the descriptive method to outline the phenomenon and its boundaries, followed by the deductive method to derive foundational principles to reduce corruption levels in countries.

Keywords: Administrative Corruption, Noble Quran, Sunnah

Introduction

The word "(فَسَدٌ)" implies something that has "spoiled" or "become corrupt," with the verb forms indicating states of corruption or spoilage. It opposes terms related to righteousness or goodness. (Ar-Razi : 1999). And "فَسَدَ الرَّجُلُ": (The man strayed from righteousness), opposite of 'reformed'. Examples include: فسَدَ الفتى (the young man was corrupted due to poor upbringing), فسدت المرأة (the woman was corrupted), فسدت أخلاقها (her morals deteriorated)." The term also applies to things that decay or spoil, like food or agreements that become void. The Quran references corruption in various contexts, such as, "Had there been other gods

beside Allah, they would surely have become corrupted" and "If the truth had followed their desires, the heavens and the earth would have been corrupted" (Hamid, 2008).

Corruption is generally linked to unethical behavior and the misuse of authority. Definitions vary based on perspectives and dimensions. For instance, some define it as "a state where a particular decision-making tool is diverted from its intended purpose to serve private interests" (Hussein, 2003). Others view it as "an individual's attempt to illegitimately prioritize personal interests over the public interest" (Klitgaard, 1994). Another definition is "a departure from the righteousness and moderation prescribed by the Quran and Sunnah" (Diya' As-Sousi, 2003). Accordingly, corruption is a detrimental behavior that disrupts work, society, and the state, undermining the community's higher interests.

Definition of Administration

The term "administration" (إدارة) is derived from the verb "to manage" (أدار) and denotes a central authority or leadership role. For example, one might say, إدارة الكلية "the administration of the college" or مجلس الإدارة "board of administration," referring to a group of individuals responsible for managing a specific task.

"Local administration" relates to governance within a particular region, in contrast to central administration, which is concentrated in the capital. أوراق الإدارة "Administrative documents" refer to legal papers granting an individual authority to manage someone else's property. الإدارة المطلقة "Absolute administration" is a management approach where leaders make decisions with minimal input from subordinates. علم الإدارة "Administrative science" is the discipline and art of organizing, directing, and controlling activities, using sound judgment in decision-making (Hamid, 2008).

Administrative Corruption

Defining administrative corruption clearly and precisely is challenging due to several factors:

- **First:** The lack of a unified methodology for studying this phenomenon. Each scholar discusses it from their area of expertise, such as law or politics.
 - **Second:** Differences in the concept, standards, and degrees of corruption across countries and societies.
 - **Third:** The diversity of fields in which corruption can occur, including political, economic, and financial corruption.
 - **Fourth:** Variability in the scientific approach to formulating recognized definitions.
- Based on the above, several definitions of administrative corruption emerge, such as:
- "A moral deficiency in individuals that renders them incapable of upholding abstract commitments serving the public interest" (Al-Aaraji, 1995).
 - "The decline in administrative and organizational behavior below the ethical standards of public service, abandoning community values and principles to pursue personal gain over legitimate public interest" (Akaileh, 1992).

Thus, any use of office to achieve private interests constitutes administrative corruption.

Corruption in the Quran and Sunnah

Imam Ar-Razi (1999) defines corruption as "a departure of something from its beneficial state," with "corruption" as the opposite of "righteousness." Corruption on earth implies an additional negative behavior. There are two main interpretations:

1. According to Ibn Abbas and others, "corruption on earth" refers to outwardly committing disobedience to Allah.
2. It refers to hypocrites' association with disbelievers.

Al-Qurtubi (1964) explains corruption as the opposite of righteousness, essentially a deviation from the path of integrity. It is essential to understand the term "corruption" as it appears in the Quran and Sunnah. The Quran mentions corruption and its derivatives in fifty places, with meanings including:

- **Disobedience**, as in: "وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ" "And when it is said to them: "Make not mischief on the earth," they say: "We are only peace-makers." (Surat Al-Baqarah:11)
 - **Murder**, as in: "إِنَّمَا جَزَاءُ الَّذِينَ يُحَارِبُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا أَنْ يُقَتَّلُوا أَوْ يُصَلَّبُوا" "The recompense of those who wage war against Allāh and His Messenger and do mischief in the land is only that they shall be killed or crucified..." (Surat Al-Ma'idah:33)
 - **Destruction**, as in: "قَالَتْ إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوا أَعْرَآةَ أَهْلِهَا آذِلَّةً" "She said: "Verily kings, when they enter a town (country), they despoil it and make the most honourable amongst its people the lowest. And thus they do." (Surat An-Naml:34)
 - **Sorcery**, as in: "فَلَمَّا أَلْقَوْا قَالَ مُوسَىٰ مَا جِئْتُمْ بِهِ السَّحْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَابِطٌ لَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَصْلِحُ عَمَلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ" "Then, when they had cast down, Mūsā (Moses) said: "What you have brought is sorcery; Allāh will surely make it of no effect. Verily, Allāh does not set right the work of *Al-Mufsidūn* (the evil-doers, corrupters)." (Surat Yunus:81)
 - **Immorality**, as in: "فَلَوْلَا كَانَ مِنَ الْفُرُوقِ مَن قَبْلِكُمْ أُولُوا بَقِيَّةَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْفَسَادِ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّمَّنْ أَنجَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ" "If only there had been among the generations before you persons having wisdom, prohibiting (others) from *Al-Fasād* (disbelief, polytheism, and all kinds of crimes and sins) in the earth, (but there were none) — except a few of those whom We saved from among them!" (Surat Hud:116)
 - **Famine and scarcity**, as in: "ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ" "Evil (sins and disobedience to Allāh) has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned (by oppression and evil deeds)" (Surat Ar-Rum:41)
 - **Ruin**, as in: "وَلَوْ أَتَّبَعَ الْحَقُّ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَن فِيهِنَّ" "And if the truth had been in accordance with their desires, verily, the heavens and the earth, and whosoever is therein would have been corrupted!" (Surat Al-Mu'minun:71)
 - **Injustice**, as in: "وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَىٰ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ" "And when he turns away (from you "O Muḥammad"), his effort in the land is to make mischief therein and to destroy the crops and the cattle" (Surat Al-Baqarah:205)
- The term "corruption" appears frequently in the noble Sunnah, with meanings close or similar to those found in the Quran.

Causes of Corruption

Administrative corruption is a phenomenon that, despite being prevalent, is somewhat shrouded in ambiguity. The causes of this corruption can be categorized as personal, social, organizational, legal, political, or economic. The main factors contributing to corruption can be summarized as follows:

1. Party affiliations
2. Absence of regulatory organizations in the state
3. Lack of genuine and effective practice of democracy

4. Weakness of civil society institutions that represent various forms of freedom
5. Low political awareness among citizens and lack of knowledge about the mechanisms through which power is exercised
6. Complexity and length of administrative procedures, causing businesspeople to seek illegal ways to expedite their work
7. Appointing individuals based on familiarity rather than expertise in government positions
8. Failure to adhere to strict standards in employee appointments and promotions
9. Weak moral values in society and reduced religious commitment, leading employees to bring personal ethics into the administration where they work
10. State's unwillingness to promote what serves its interests, allowing officials to manipulate and accept bribes
11. Poor distribution of wealth and economic resources among the population, creating a sense of weakened loyalty among the majority of society
12. Low income levels, making it difficult for employees to meet their basic needs, which drives them toward bribery, embezzlement, and other forms of misconduct

These are some of the causes of corruption, but there are also reasons for the lack of effective anti-corruption measures, including:

1. **Hasty Legislation** – When laws are enacted quickly, they often contain flaws that make them ineffective in combating corruption.
2. **Unequal Application of the Law** – Failure to apply laws uniformly leads to immunity for those with influence, providing them ways to evade punishment.
3. **Corruption within the Judiciary** – Corrupt judges may accept bribes, favoring the highest bidder in their rulings.

Types and Categories of Corruption

Hydenheimer divided corruption into three types:

1. **Black Corruption** – This includes all behaviors that the public universally condemns and agrees must be punished.
2. **White Corruption** – This covers actions that the public tends to overlook and is less inclined to see punished, even though there are often criminal laws against these actions.
3. **Gray Corruption** – This falls between the previous two, where some members of society call for the condemnation of such acts, while others are hesitant to do so

The Effects of Administrative Corruption on Society

Corruption has detrimental effects, including a decline in government revenues, which then leads to reduced state expenditures. This reduction in spending results in either a decrease in the quality of services provided to citizens or a decrease in services overall. As a result, the state may be forced to borrow from foreign sources to meet essential needs, leading to a loss of decision-making independence and complete reliance on the lender. Consequently, citizens may feel less loyalty to their country, potentially driving talented individuals to migrate to less corrupt nations. In extreme cases, this process can lead to the collapse of the entire state.

Rose-Ackerman, an expert at the World Bank, states that "the spread of administrative corruption in any country will ultimately lead to that country's demise and its removal from the geographical map of the world, as happened with the Soviet Union, which dissolved in 1990."

Addressing Corruption from a Religious and Administrative Perspective

Section One: Approaching Corruption from a Religious Perspective

Islam has taken several steps to address administrative corruption, including instilling awareness of God's observation in all actions. One reason for corruption is preoccupation with worldly matters and disregard for God's watchfulness over us. The Qur'an and the Sunnah emphasize strengthening the sense of divine surveillance. For instance, Allah says, " *وَقُلْ أَعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَسَتُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ* " *And say (O Muhammad) "Do deeds! Allāh will see your deeds, and (so will) His Messenger and the believers. And you will be brought back to the All-Knower of the unseen and the seen. Then He will inform you of what you used to do."* (Surah At-Tawbah: 105). This verse reminds us that God is fully aware of our actions and will hold us accountable on the Day of Judgment. Another relevant verse is, " *وَكُلَّ إِنْسَانٍ أَلْزَمْنَاهُ طَلْعَهُ فِي عُنُقِهِ وَنُخْرُجُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كِتَابًا يَلْقَاهُ مَنْشُورًا* " *And We have fastened every man's deeds(1) to his neck, and on the Day of Resurrection, We shall bring out for him a book which he will find wide open.* (Surah Al-Isra: 13). Additionally, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught us a prayer to recite after each prayer that strengthens our awareness of divine observation: "Allah is with me, Allah is my Witness, Allah is my Observer, Allah is aware of my actions."

1. **Establishing the Principle of Equality and Justice:** The Qur'an emphasizes justice and equality, as in the verse, " *إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَايِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ* " *Verily, Allāh enjoins Al-'Adl (i.e. justice and worshipping none but Allāh Alone — Islāmic Monotheism) and Al-Ihsān [i.e. to be patient in performing your duties to Allāh, totally for Allāh's sake and in accordance with the Sunnah (legal ways) of the Prophet in a perfect manner], and giving (help) to kith and kin(1) (i.e. all that Allāh has ordered you to give them e.g., wealth, visiting, looking after them, or any other kind of help), and forbids Al-Fahshā' (i.e. all evil deeds, e.g. illegal sexual acts, disobedience of parents, polytheism, to tell lies, to give false witness, to kill a life without right), and Al-Munkar (i.e. all that is prohibited by Islāmic law: polytheism of every kind, disbelief and every kind of evil deeds), and Al-Baghy (i.e. all kinds of oppression). He admonishes you, that you may take heed.* (Surah An-Nahl: 90). When justice prevails in the workplace, employees are more likely to uphold the trust and responsibility entrusted to them.
2. **Commanding the Preservation and Fulfillment of Trusts:** " *إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا* " *Allah commands the fulfillment of trusts, as in the verse, "Verily, Allāh commands that you should render back the trusts to those to whom they are due."* (Surah An-Nisa: 58). When an employee preserves this trust, they will refrain from corruption and avoid engaging in it.
3. **Inspiring Employees to See Work as Worship:** Employees should understand that dedicating time to their work is also a form of worship, and that worship is not limited to places of worship but extends to all forms of work. Worship is the ultimate purpose for which we were created, as Allah says: " *وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ (56) مَا أُرِيدُ مِنْهُمْ* " *And I (Allāh) created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me (Alone). I seek not any provision from*

them (i.e. provision for themselves or for My creatures) nor do I ask that they should feed Me (i.e. feed themselves or My creatures). Verily, Allāh is the All-Provider, Owner of Power, the Most Strong. " (Surah Adh-Dhariyat: 56-58). Since Allah is the Provider and does not require us to pursue provision on His behalf, engaging in corruption to increase wealth is unnecessary and may even spoil lawful earnings.

4. **Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil:** Allah says, *وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ* "Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good (Islām), enjoining Al-Ma'rūf (i.e. Islāmic Monotheism and all that Islām orders one to do) and forbidding Al-Munkar (polytheism and disbelief and all that Islām has forbidden). And it is they who are the successful.." (Surah Al-Imran 104). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also said, "By the One in whose hand is my soul, you must enjoin good and forbid evil, or Allah will soon send upon you a punishment from Him, then you will supplicate to Him, but He will not respond to you." (At-Tirmidhi: 1975).

Approaching Corruption from an Administrative Perspective

To effectively address corruption in society, strict and clear laws are essential—laws that leave no room for misinterpretation and serve as a deterrent to anyone tempted by corruption. In addition, several measures can be taken to curb corruption, including:

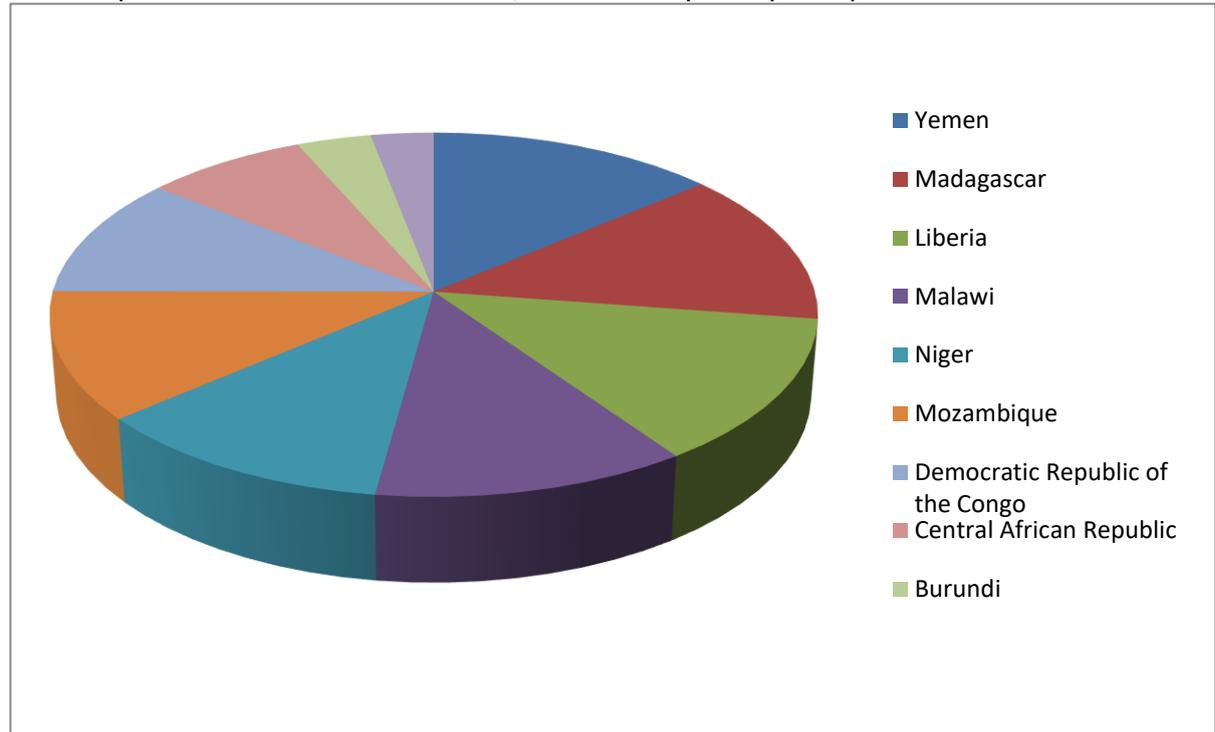
1. **Exemplary Leadership in Management:** Managers must set an example for employees by staying away from corrupt practices. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the Rightly Guided Caliphs provide excellent examples in this regard.
2. **Merit-Based Appointments:** Employment and promotions should be based on competence rather than personal connections.
3. **Managing Internal Conflict Among Employees:** This can be achieved by instilling societal values and ethics in individuals to help them respect and maintain the integrity of their work.
4. **Setting Clear Objectives:** Having clear goals enhances teamwork, promotes self-accountability, and strengthens the relationship between supervisors and subordinates.
5. **Pursuing Quality:** Continuous improvement, enhanced efficiency, and performance in the workplace reduce opportunities for administrative corruption. Allah mentions in Surah Al-Kahf, *إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ عَمَلًا* "We shall not make the reward of anyone who does his (righteous) deeds in the most perfect manner to be lost.." (Al-Kahf: 30).

These are some approaches to addressing administrative corruption from both religious and administrative perspectives. I have summarized them here for clarity and accessibility.

The Relationship between Corruption and Decline in National Output

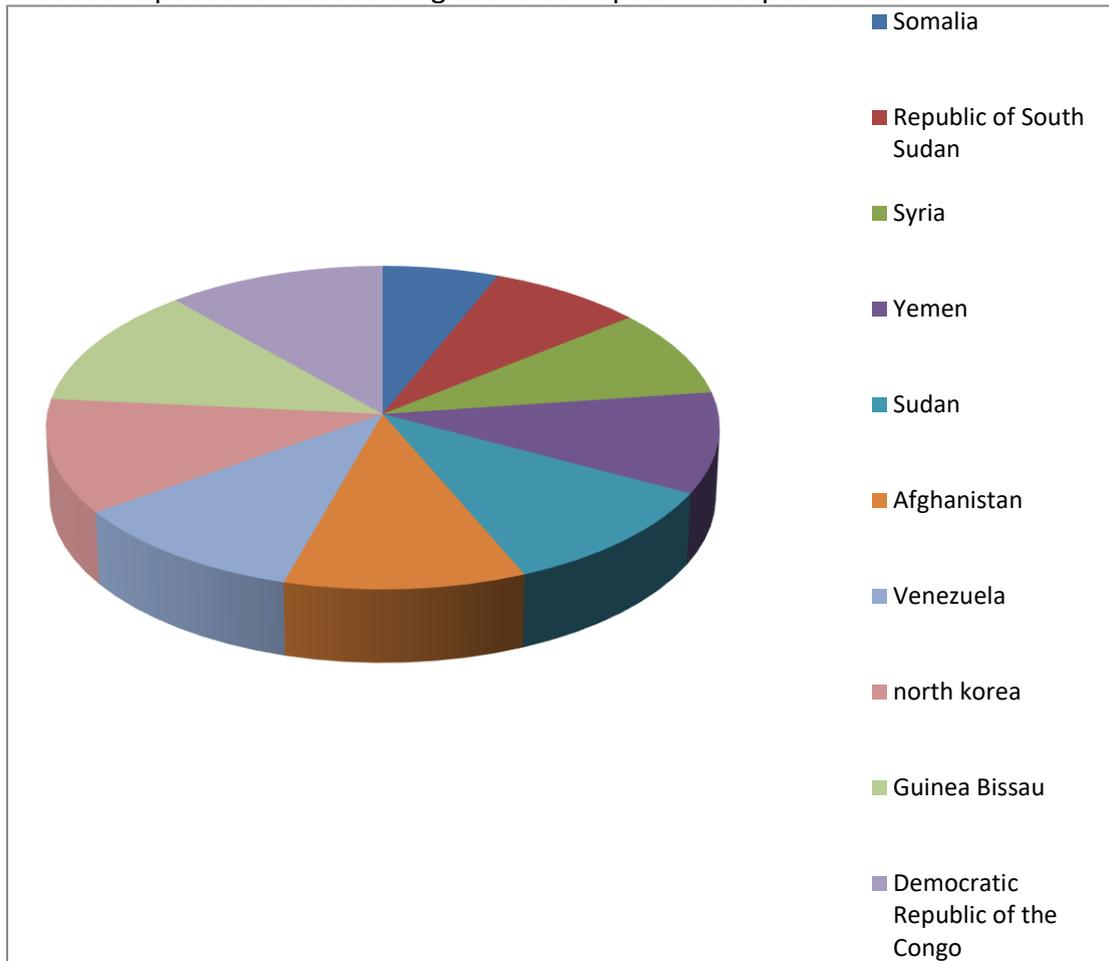
In this chapter, I will attempt to illustrate the relationship between corruption and poverty using a graph. First, I will start by listing the ten poorest countries in the world according to the International Monetary Fund's report, ranked from the least poor to the poorest. This ranking is based on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, as published in the *Times of India* magazine and posted on the Kurdistan 24 website.

The ten poorest countries in the world, measured by GDP per capita

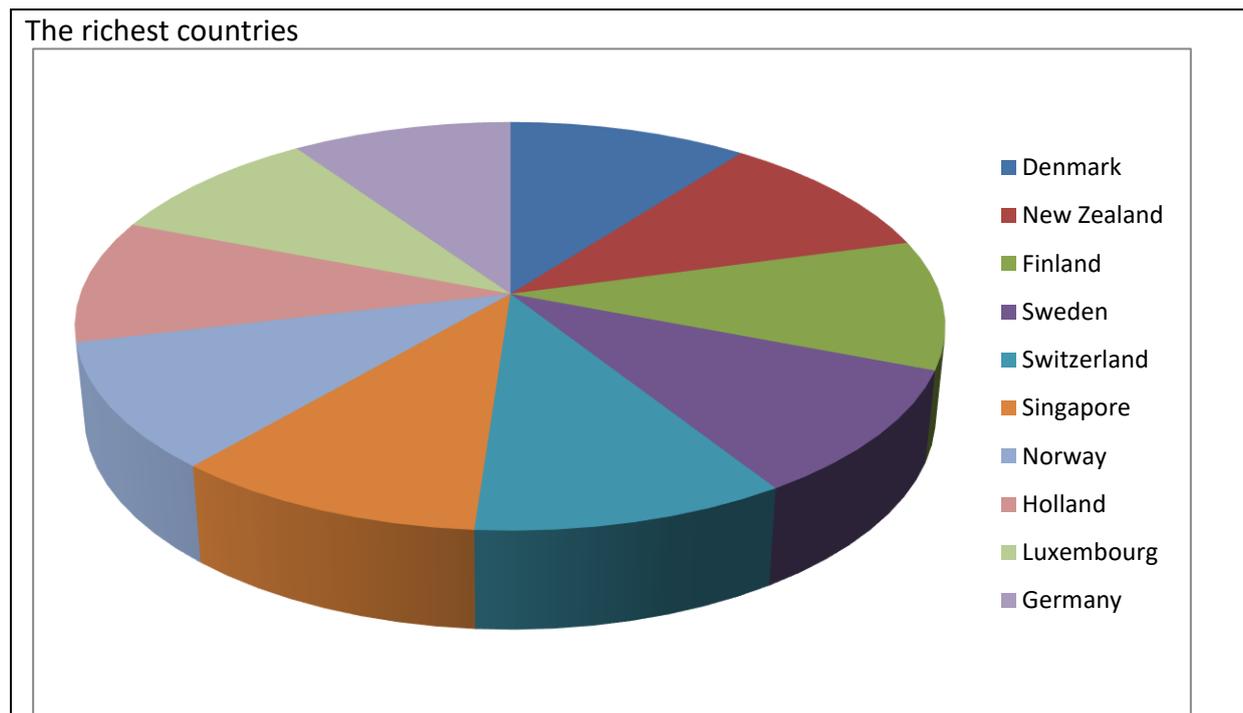


Secondly: The ten most corrupt countries in the world according to the Corruption Perception Index (CPI). This is an annual index published by Transparency International, which ranks countries based on their perceived levels of corruption in the public sector, as determined by expert evaluations.

The most corrupt countries according to the Corruption Perceptions Index



From the previous graph, it is clear that some countries are among the most corrupt due to ongoing wars, but there are other countries without wars that are still among the most corrupt. This, in turn, makes them some of the poorest nations, as shown in the previous graph. It also becomes evident that the countries most active in fighting corruption are also among the wealthiest, as I will explain in the following chart.



In this graph, it is clear that poverty and corruption are directly related: as poverty increases, so does corruption, and as poverty decreases, corruption tends to decrease as well. Unfortunately, it is disheartening to observe that none of the Islamic countries appear in the rankings of the wealthiest and most just nations.

Conclusion

Based on the previous study, the following conclusions can be drawn as the term "corruption" is mentioned several times in the Quran to highlight its danger and to warn against it. Scholars have differing definitions of corruption, which reflects the wide variety and creativity with which people have invented different forms of corruption. Islamic law has fought against corruption and highlighted its dangers to people since the beginning of the call to Islam. Religious conviction is the primary safeguard in protecting society from corrupt individuals. Clear and applicable laws must be in place to ensure that corruption is addressed across all segments of society.

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