Ensemble*

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It's an honor to be part of this book celebrating winners of the Anti-Corruption Excellence Award. Being asked to write an essay about yourself and your work is flattering. Yet one might reasonably ask, "Who really cares?" If people want to know about your work, they can read it—or nowadays, simply ask ChatGPT. And if they want to know about you, well, as a wit once said, "Wanting to know the author because you like his writing is like wanting to know the goose because you like the pâté de foie gras."

But here goes. The editors asked me to reflect on how I've worked against corruption and share my vision for the future. The title of this essay, "Ensemble," might seem abstract at first glance, but it captures something central to my journey and, I believe, to the future of fighting corruption.

First, "ensemble" evokes the interplay of theory and practice. Economics provides powerful theoretical insights into corruption; real-world case studies reveal successes we can emulate and failures we must avoid. Combining theory and cases gives us practical wisdom.

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Second, “ensemble” points to the convening of diverse insights. Corruption is too complex for any single expert, discipline, or culture. Success comes when local knowledge meets global expertise, when policymakers and citizens think and work together.

Finally, “ensemble” symbolizes the emerging partnership between human intelligence and artificial intelligence—what we might call co-intelligence. Generative AI has transformative potential when thoughtfully harnessed in collaboration with human judgment.

In this essay, then, you’ll see these three kinds of ensembles at work. Together, they offer a powerful way forward in making systemic corruption not only punishable but eventually unimaginable.

My own journey into this ensemble of ideas and practices began shortly after earning my PhD, when I became a Visiting Research Professor at the Applied Economics Research Centre at the University of Karachi. There, corruption revealed itself vividly—not just as a theoretical curiosity but as a crushing reality that blocked opportunities and stifled the ambitions of my students. Yet at the time, many experts shrugged it off. To them, corruption was merely another clever workaround—a kind of unofficial national pastime, somewhat like cricket but with fewer rules and more hidden fees.

These views troubled me deeply. I wanted to understand corruption not merely as a moral failing or an unavoidable part of life, but as a solvable problem.

In this essay, I’ll guide you through what I learned, how I learned it, and—most importantly—how you can apply these lessons yourself. You’ll discover how economic analysis provides insight, how convening diverse perspectives sparks practical solutions, and how GenAI can magnify our collective efforts. I’ll even suggest that GenAI might help fulfill a striking

prediction made decades ago by John T. Noonan, Jr.: that systemic corruption could soon become as unthinkable as slavery.

Yes, that's suspense. You can skip to the ending any time.

But for now, let's go a bit further back in time, because I want to introduce you to some professors who inspired me and whose lessons, I hope, can also inspire you in your efforts to take on big issues like corruption.

As a graduate student at Harvard, I had the good fortune to study with Howard Raiffa, one of the founders of decision analysis. Beyond Bayesian estimators and averaging-out-and-folding-back, he also taught an advanced course on multi-attribute utility functions. Part of the task was to figure out with decisionmakers what those multiple objectives and their weights might be. To listen to them, not dictate to them.

I also studied with and was a teaching assistant for Frederick Mosteller, one of the world's most eminent statisticians. Beyond mathematical probability and optimal estimators, he also taught an advanced course on what was then the new field of exploratory data analysis (EDA). I remember the thrill of reading an epic treatise by him and John Tukey called "Data Analysis, Including Statistics." In contrast to my econometrics courses—where you use economic theory to generate testable hypotheses—EDA lets the data speak. (Mosteller once said, "Although we often hear that data speak for themselves, their voices can be soft and sly.") EDA emphasizes visualizing data. "The greatest value of a picture," Tukey said, "is when it forces us to notice what we never expected to see."

Let policymakers speak, said Raiffa. Let data speak, said Mosteller and Tukey. Use analysis to help them do so.

Then there was Thomas C. Schelling, an eventual Nobel laureate in economics. “Game theory clarifies real-world problems but doesn’t solve them. Take theory as a guide to situational complexity, not a toy replacement for it.” That’s a paraphrase: here’s the man himself: “In my own thinking, they have never been separate. Motivation for the purer theory came almost exclusively from preoccupation with (and fascination with) ‘applied’ problems; and the clarification of theoretical ideas was absolutely dependent on an identification of live examples.”

And Richard Neustadt and Graham Allison, two political scientists whose courses eschewed political science and instead embraced the case method of the Harvard Business School. With their help, we students took apart an array of real-world examples of policy analysis and management making a difference. We got used to the idea that “success” is always partial and locally defined. We gleaned from real examples of progress both hope and worldliness.

So, when I returned from Pakistan to the Harvard Kennedy School as their fortunate faculty colleague, I took their lessons to heart. In the case of corruption, I tried to combine:

- Theory, mostly from the economics of imperfect information and game theory.
- Success stories.
- Checklists based on theory and tested by real-world cases, which can help policymakers work systematically through goals and alternatives.

I had the privilege and pleasure of developing these ideas in the field: summers in Indonesia and in the Philippines, two years in Equatorial Guinea, many visits to Bolivia, and many shorter stints in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

These ideas appeared in *Controlling Corruption* and soon seemed to take off. Various countries and cities, as well as many international institutions, invited me to help them develop new strategies. It was my pleasure to be involved in the creation of Transparency International.

What people seemed to find refreshing in my work was the idea that corruption is more a problem of bad systems than of bad people. That corruption is a crime of calculation, where both givers and receivers of bribes are affected by the risks and rewards, which in turn can be changed by policies. That a stylized formula can help us rethink causes and possible cures: Corruption = Monopoly + Discretion – Accountability. That the private sector and civil society have crucial roles in fighting corruption. That a leader can take on corruption without committing political suicide.

And people loved the concrete examples of progress. The opening line of *Corrupt Cities* put it simply: "Preventing corruption helps to raise city revenues, improve service delivery, stimulate public confidence and participation, and win elections."

My work also met with resistance. "Corruption is not about economics! It's really and always about [what my field emphasizes: insert here politics, management, culture, sociology, history, class and ethnicity, or . . .]." Despite my best efforts to show how economics can illuminate structural problems and suggests real-world solutions, some skeptics remained unconvinced—even when presented with vivid case studies and humble but eye-opening conclusions.

So, let me now sound the GenAI trumpet. To help skeptics—and you, dear reader—better evaluate how economics can help us understand and deal with concrete instances of corruption, I've created a GenAI library of prompts called "Learning About the Economic Approach to

Corruption and Anti-Corruption." You can freely access it through the ROLACC website and at https://robertklitgaard.com.

For now, just the headings:

Topic 1. Corruption as a crime of calculation.

Topic 2. Applying the principal-agent-client model

Topic 3. Corruption = Monopoly + Discretion – Accountability

Topic 4. Negative externalities and corruption

Topic 5. Systemic corruption

Topic 6. The economics of anti-corruption—costs and optimal efforts

Topic 7. GenAI and anti-corruption: an example

Creative Problem Solving, Together

Writing books is one thing. Enabling people to adapt ideas to their unique setting is another. And I learned that I can't do that last step alone.

Back to graduate school again for this story. In the summer after my first year, I worked in Peru's Institute of National Planning. The revolutionary government wanted to evaluate the foreign aid it received. Over 200 aid projects were underway. They ranged from rural roads to immunization to environmental protection to the development of the fishing industry.

The Minister of Planning explained what he was seeking. "We want to tell the donors what *we* want and need, not just take what they are giving. We need evidence to be able to say, 'This kind of project works well, this kind doesn't—and given our national plan, here's what we'd like you donors to do.' Can you help me with this?"

Fresh from courses in economics, statistics, and modeling, I imagined addressing the Minister's question this way. Imagine an equation with each project's benefit-cost ratio on the

left-hand side and, on the right-hand side, each project's characteristics, such as sector, donor, budget, degree of popular participation, and so forth. With that dream equation, you could estimate what kinds of projects were most socially beneficial, given Peru's objectives.

So, I told the Minister of Planning, "Can do" and went looking for the National Plan and for the evaluations of each of the 200-plus projects.

The Peruvian National Plan had just been published. Over the weekend, I devoured it. Lots of lofty goals, but nothing at all about a social welfare function. The next week I met the Minister of Planning and asked him about the social welfare function.

"Our social welfare *what*?" he replied.

Two assistants and I examined the Ministry's files on each project. There were evaluations but only in terms of "this happened then" or "this money went there." We found almost no data on social benefits and costs. After a couple of weeks, I realized my dream equation to answer the Minister's question was a nightmare.

And so, I wrote to Professor Mosteller. I described the analytical task and its impossibility, and I implicitly blamed what he and the other professors had been teaching.

He wrote back, in effect: "People can never agree in the abstract on social benefits and costs. But they can and do agree on specific examples of outrageous success and outrageous failure. Find the outrageous successes among your projects. Study them. Compare them. Share your results and learn some more."

We followed Professor Mosteller's advice. My Peruvian colleagues and I went from ministry to ministry, asking their leaders to name aid projects that had succeeded. (We left aside outrageous failures.) We did case studies of six of the projects. We also assembled for the first

time a quantitative depiction of all the foreign aid Peru was receiving—how much, from whom, going where.

Toward the end of my stay, the Minister of Planning convened a meeting. He invited the cabinet ministers and the donors. He asked me to facilitate. We summarized the descriptive data on Peru's aid projects. The participants had received in advance synopses of the six successful projects, which we quickly reviewed. Then I asked the participants, "Why do you think these projects succeeded?"

One of the ministers said local participation was key. But another minister cited a project that had failed despite participation. One of the donors related his experiences in other countries with citizen participation of various kinds.

Soon they were in an animated discussion of what works where and why, and what "success" might mean. Peruvian wisdom and experience were evoked, and so was international knowledge. A few strategically posed questions got them to discuss something like the components of Peru's social welfare function. And together, they worked through some of those right-hand-side variables—what kinds of projects seemed to make the most difference to which social objectives in these particular contexts? By the end of the session, their shared wisdom had catalyzed creative next steps for development assistance to Peru.

Frederick Mosteller's advice succeeded. One minister called it the best cabinet meeting ever. The donors were impressed. The French representative cabled home that the Peruvians had their act together and deserved more slack in deciding what projects would be funded and how the projects should be structured. After the meeting, the ministers subsequently worked better with the donors and better with each other.

Professor Mosteller's wisdom and the Peruvians' creativity provided me two big aha's. One was his insight that even when people can't define "success"—and they usually can't—they can agree on examples of "outrageous success."

Another was a "both/and" insight. Yes, I still appreciated the models and metaphors of economics, but I realized that no country possessed a social welfare function (and perhaps none ever would). I enjoyed and used statistics and econometrics, but as I have learned since, the perfect equation is an illusion. But a big insight was that a well-structured discussion among diverse experts—the ministers and the donors—could explicate a kind of social welfare function and could qualitatively estimate a model of what works where. These knowledgeable participants in effect filled out the dream equation—and this led to their owning that knowledge and applying it together in new ways.

Participatory processes come in many varieties; the ones I have emphasized in my work include data, examples of success, and frameworks for policy analysis based on analytical models. Let me share two examples.

Colombia

In Colombia in 1998, President Andrés Pastrana took office amid economic recession, civil unrest, cocaine trafficking galore, and widespread corruption. Earlier, in 1993, Pastrana had invited me to Colombia to help with a forum of Latin American leaders concerned about corruption. Based on that event he put together a book and titled it after an expression of mine he liked: *El Principio del Pez Gordo* (The Principle of the Big Fish), meaning that if you want to do something about a culture of impunity, you have to fry big fish.

Once elected, Pastrana invited me back to help with Plan Colombia. His reforms had notable features and measurable success. Pastrana involved the private sector, including naming

a businessperson the head of his anti-corruption efforts. He reduced monopoly power through decentralization, limited discretion through streamlining and simplifying processes, and improved accountability, including citizens' groups called *veedurías*. And yes, he immediately identified and removed from office some *peces gordos*.

I want to underscore a big success: subverting corrupt systems. In practice, how do corrupt systems really work? What are their weaknesses, and how can these weaknesses be exploited to bring the corrupt system down?

In Colombia, I helped teams analyze procurement in public works and in public health. The process can be generalized—and has been used in other countries with everything from judges to tax collectors to police. First, conduct confidential, one-on-one interviews with leaders of companies active in these corrupt systems. Ask them not to name names but to analyze how the corrupt system works. Do the same thing with some key government officials. It is a remarkable truth that people speaking confidentially and one-on-one will explain how corrupt systems work—and suggest ways to make the preventive measures work better.

On the basis of many such interviews, create a preliminary diagnosis of the corrupt system. Share it with the interviewees and the government, then revise it with their comments. The next step is to organize a workshop in which the relevant government agencies and private sector consider the results of the study and design together practical corrective measures.

Pastrana's efforts yielded notable results. In 1998, Colombia was at the 6th percentile among countries ranked in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. By 2005, Colombia had risen to the 65th percentile. Aid and private investment surged, and economic growth was faster than in its South American peers.

The Philippines

In July 2010, Benigno Aquino III won a landslide victory. In his inaugural address, the new president spoke forcefully:

> During the campaign, we said, "If no one is corrupt, no one will be poor." That is no mere slogan for posters – it is the defining principle that will serve as the foundation of our administration. Our foremost duty is to lift the nation from poverty through honest and effective governance . . . No more influence-peddling, no more patronage politics, no more stealing. No more sirens, no more short cuts, no more bribes.

Several weeks after Aquino took office, I facilitated an all-day convening in Malacañang Palace. The participants were the new cabinet secretaries, as well as the heads of the Central Bank, the Customs Bureau, and the Bureau of Internal Revenue. Their goal was to develop a practical strategy across the ministries and, indeed, across the public-private divide.

During that Saturday, the participants studied data about the extent and social costs of various kinds of corruption in the Philippines and elsewhere. In the style of a two-part business school case, they analyzed a country that had successfully reduced corruption. They worked through economic models of corruption and a framework for policy analysis.

Thus stimulated, they analyzed the situation of their own country. The problems of corruption are complex; the Philippines' setting is unique. And yet, the data, the case study, and the models became, with these participants in this process, a catalyst for creative problem-solving. By eight o'clock that evening, they had devised an outline of a national strategy, which three of the secretaries developed on Sunday and Monday and briefed to the President on Tuesday. A plan of action followed.

As President Aquino's intrepid anti-corruption campaign developed, it included identifying and punishing some major offenders, forging new partnerships with business and civil society to analyze corrupt systems and improve accountability, using citizen scorecards to gauge the performance of government agencies, implementing radical reforms in bottom-up budgeting and evaluation, enhancing coordination across key government agencies, and more. International donors and lenders played key roles in supporting many of these initiatives.

The results were remarkable:

- In September 2014, the World Economic Forum called the Philippines the "most improved country overall" in terms of global competitiveness over the previous four years. The country's progress on both the Corruption Perceptions Index and Doing Business were also among the best in the world.
- President Aquino's popularity and citizens' satisfaction with the government were unprecedented compared with other Filipino presidents at similar times in their terms of office.
- Investment rose from 16.6 percent of GDP in 2009 to 22.5 percent in 2016. Foreign direct investment in rose from $1.85 billion in 2011 to $7.9 billion in 2016.
- Unemployment hit a record low of 5.7 percent in 2015, and inflation dropped to 1.6 percent.
- From 2015–17, growth in GDP averaged 6.5 percent.

The Philippines still had a long way to go, but the progress under President Aquino was tangible.

Convening

The Philippines example is an instance of a particular method I call "convening." This process has these stages:

1. "We have a problem here." Data that help participants "get on the same page" about the problems they face.
2. "It can be done." A case study of success on a similar problem, which spotlights what was done and how.
3. "Here's how." A checklist or framework for policy analysis helps participants work through goals, alternatives, if-then relationships, and their strategic interdependence.
4. "Imagine success." An imaginary news story of success five years hence. Participants read it aloud, then ponder what steps could lead from now to then. The imaginary news story stimulates creative problem-solving.

I have seen this particular convening method succeed with national cabinets and city governments, as well as leaders in police forces, procurement offices, customs and tax agencies, and courts. It has helped launch public-private-citizen partnerships. The process doesn't always work, of course. But when it does, participants often feel surprised and energized. "We've identified our challenges clearly," they say. "We've learned from others' success and found new ways to approach our own realities." Convening can clear the way for change.

If you're inspired to organize a convening yourself, how might you begin? Successful convenings depend on careful listening and thoughtful preparation. What exactly are the challenges your participants face? How can you conceptualize those challenges? What data will

help participants grasp the issues best? Which success stories can illuminate fresh perspectives? And finally, which policy frameworks might help everyone rethink the issues constructively?

To help you design and carry out your own convening, I've harnessed the power of Generative AI in "How to Create a Convening." In a series of prompts for GenAI, you'll see how to identify the facts and data that can help locate the challenges. How to create part A-part B Harvard-Business-School-style teaching cases. And then how to plan a convening step by step. You can freely access these prompts on the ROLACC website and at https://robertklitgaard.com.

Backsliding

In October 2024, I visited the Philippines at the invitation of the Management Association of the Philippines. These business leaders lamented backsliding on corruption. Not just under Aquino's successor, Rodrigo Duterte—who as I write is detained by the International Criminal Court—but also under the administration of Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. Institutions like the Ombuds office, the courts, and the economic departments were perceived to be undercut by influence peddling and corruption.

Backsliding happened in Colombia, too. From 2005 to 2018, Colombia retrogressed on the Corruption Perceptions Index from the 65th percentile to the 45th percentile. In 2019, the World Economic Forum ranked Colombia 80th of 141 countries in "incidence of corruption." In June 2017, the head of the anti-corruption unit in the office of the Attorney General was arrested for bribery and money laundering. His cooperation led to indictments against three Supreme Court justices as well as multiple legislators and officials.

In neither case did new leaders openly declare, "Hey, bribery is back!" Instead, corruption quietly returned, slowly undoing past progress. Anti-corruption gains are fragile. Vigilance must be continuous.

Why does backsliding occur? Often, short-term thinking prevails: new leaders chase easy popularity or quick profits by turning back to favors, handouts, or ignoring corruption, trading the future health of institutions for immediate gains. Meanwhile, even minor shifts in leadership or political incentives can quietly undermine previously strong watchdog agencies—independent courts, anti-corruption bodies, and oversight groups gradually lose strength, piece by piece. Ironically, past success itself can fuel complacency. Governments, civil groups, and citizens might assume corruption is solved for good rather than just temporarily contained. Finally, cynicism takes hold when corruption reappears. Many citizens become disillusioned, concluding nothing ever really changes. This attitude weakens collective resolve, facilitating corruption's subtle return.

What to do? Backsliding is, alas, a perennial problem—in politics, business, and our own lives. I've written about it recently in *Prevail: How to Face Upheavals and Make Big Choices with the Help of Heroes*. There are no magic wands, but again, convening can be a powerful tool. For example, assemble leaders once more and begin by examining the evidence on institutional erosion and re-corruption. Then study countries that successfully recovered from setbacks. Consider anew how monopolies can be challenged by reintroducing competition, transparency, and citizen oversight. How official discretion can be clarified and carefully constrained. How accountability can be enhanced through strong independent institutions, active citizen participation, clear incentives, and transparent flows of information. Sometimes, renewing the fight against corruption also means bringing in new principals and agents, replacing those who have grown weary or discouraged.

Generative Artificial Intelligence

Let's return to GenAI. It can help us fight corruption and prevent backsliding.

Generative Artificial Intelligence refers to AI that can be a thinking partner and problem solver. Together, you and the AI can achieve what neither could alone—a process called "co-intelligence." Since ChatGPT emerged on November 30, 2022, I've been actively exploring, teaching, and collaborating with it in precisely this co-intelligent way.

In February 2025, when ChatGPT added "Deep Research," I worked with it to produce *Co-Intelligence Applied: Thirteen Examples of How Generative AI Is Transforming Our World—and Ourselves.* You can freely access this anthology at https://robertklitgaard.com.

Two key points stand out. First, GenAI is advancing so rapidly and powerfully that it will reshape our economies and political institutions profoundly. We stand on the threshold of superintelligent agents that can help us become healthier, wealthier, and better educated. Some experts foresee unprecedented abundance—I share their optimism.

But second, these transformations also carry risks. Two of the chapters in *Co-Intelligence Applied* are "Generative AI, Democracy, and Civic Engagement – Opportunities, Risks, and Implementation Strategies" and "Generative AI and the Future of Anti-Corruption in Developing Countries (2025–2030)." The good news is that GenAI can bolster civic participation and dramatically reduce waste, fraud, and corruption. But in the wrong hands, GenAI could threaten democracy and amplify corruption by creating new monopolies, expanding unchecked discretion, and undermining accountability.

Consider the positive side. AI can powerfully target the three key factors in our formula: monopoly, discretion, and accountability. Box 1 provides some examples from *Co-Intelligence Applied*.

Box 1. Examples of How AI Will Reduce Corruption

From Reactive Punishment to Proactive Prevention

AI-driven risk assessment will shift anti-corruption efforts from reacting after the fact to proactively preventing corruption. By systematically mapping vulnerabilities—guided by frameworks like Monopoly plus Discretion minus Accountability—AI will accurately predict where corruption risks are highest. In Brazil, machine-learning predictions have already improved audit targeting; similar AI systems elsewhere will proactively focus resources, significantly increasing corruption detection.

Prevention by Design and Citizen Empowerment

GenAI tools will reduce bribery and extortion by making government services more accessible, transparent, and automated. AI will help governments create systems resistant to bribery, while empowering citizens with direct, easy-to-use channels to resist corrupt demands. With widespread mobile access and intuitive AI chatbots, even villagers in remote areas will obtain official information without costly travel or informal fees, sharply reducing opportunities for corruption.

Reducing Everyday Bribery

GenAI conversational interfaces will enable citizens to complete public-service requests transparently online—from clarifying eligibility questions to submitting necessary documents—while automatically receiving updates such as, “Your application is now with Officer X; expected processing in 3 days.” This transparency will prevent officials from delaying services to solicit bribes. Clear communication via AI chatbots and voice assistants will remove corrupt officials’ informational advantage.

Empowering Citizens and Civil Society

AI platforms will allow citizens to upload evidence—such as photos of public works or reports of bribe demands—and integrate it with official data to pinpoint corruption hotspots. Natural language processing and network analysis will identify patterns and trouble spots, empowering communities and nonprofits to engage actively in oversight. These advanced tools will democratize anti-corruption accountability.

Enhancing Accountability through Performance Analytics

AI will strengthen accountability loops by collecting detailed performance data, identifying discrepancies, and presenting findings clearly to citizens and civil society. This transparency will foster a governance culture that is results-driven and responsive. If governments fail to act on AI-highlighted corruption, journalists and watchdogs using the same data can exert additional pressure, creating a robust, multi-angle deterrent against misconduct.

Yet there's also a darker side. In the wrong hands, GenAI can concentrate power, cloak discretionary decisions behind opaque algorithms, and mass-produce convincing deepfakes. To prevent such abuses, governments, businesses, and citizens must collaborate to address three key areas:

- **Monopoly**. The availability of diverse GenAI platforms—developed and maintained by different companies, countries, and organizations—makes it harder for any single actor to manipulate or monopolize data and outcomes.
- **Discretion**. AI tools used to combat corruption must clearly demonstrate how decisions are made, with no hidden or secret algorithms. AI applications must operate within well-

defined legal and ethical guidelines to prevent misuse. Legislation should address broader abuses of citizen privacy or arbitrary enforcement.

- **Transparency and accountability**. Transparency means AI methods should be explainable to the public and independently auditable, as exemplified by Singapore's AI Verify toolkit, which tests algorithms for fairness and clarity, reducing the risk of misuse or misunderstanding. Accountability mechanisms must extend to the AI systems themselves, with robust oversight from independent bodies, citizens, and civil society. Practical measures include regular algorithmic audits by independent agencies, open channels for citizen complaints about AI misuse, and transparent reporting of AI-generated decisions. By sharing AI outputs publicly (excluding sensitive data), governments empower journalists, watchdogs, and citizens to collectively ensure integrity, creating multiple layers of scrutiny that deter corruption.

Given these stakes, shouldn't the transformative potential of GenAI be at the top of our agenda in the fight against corruption?

Toward a World Without Corruption

The best book ever written about corruption is John T. Noonan's *Bribes*. This remarkable volume traces bribery from the Code of Hammurabi to the Lockheed Affair. Noonan's meticulous scholarship—the translations from Dante are his own—combines with engaging prose to illuminate "the work bribery does" in politics, business, and everyday life.

At the end of his book, Judge Noonan offers a surprising analogy and an inspiring prediction. Corruption is like slavery. "As slavery was once a way of life and now has become obsolete and incomprehensible, so the practice of bribery . . . will become obsolete."

Forty years later, the achievements of the Anti-Corruption Excellence Award laureates suggest that his prediction is more than courtroom rhetoric. From open-contracting systems that curb procurement graft to citizen-audit networks exposing local kleptocracies, these leaders have converted moral outrage into practical progress. Their successes, spread across many cultures and diverse conditions, prove that systemic corruption is neither inevitable nor culturally predetermined.

Generative AI is capable of turbocharging this progress. Models capable of composing poems or mapping proteins can rapidly analyze millions of invoices, translate whistleblower complaints instantly into multiple languages, and spotlight subtle transaction patterns auditors once missed. When civil-society organizations pair local insights with large-scale analytical power, the secrecy protecting corruption becomes costly, and transparency increasingly becomes the norm. GenAI thus becomes not merely another tool in reformers' hands but a powerful amplifier of Noonan's vision, turning isolated episodes of accountability into deeply entrenched norms.

But as we've noted, this technological revolution is not inherently virtuous. In the wrong hands, the same GenAI tools could concentrate control, conceal discretionary power within proprietary algorithms, or mass-produce convincing falsehoods. Effective guardrails—open standards, algorithmic audits, and secure channels for dissent—are vital to ensure GenAI serves accountability rather than undermines it.

Ultimately, our task is clear: combine GenAI's analytic power with these laureates' ethical vision and institutional resolve. Achieving this will require interdisciplinary collaboration, vigilant oversight, and grassroots activism commensurate with the scale of the technology itself. Crucially, it will also depend on continued leadership from international

institutions like the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Center, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the many dedicated organizations these laureates represent around the world.

The potential reward is historic. If earlier generations could render chattel slavery morally inconceivable, we too—armed with resolute ethical standards, proven anti-corruption strategies, and a revolution in Generative AI—can bend the arc of governance even further, making systemic corruption not just punishable but unimaginable.