

Political Corruption: First principles

Michael Johnston
Colgate University
Hamilton, NY USA

mjohnston@mail.colgate.edu

Every country has corruption...

- Corruption problems are **embedded**
- They differ from one society to another
- Nobody has all the answers
- We need to listen to each other

Significant corruption does not explain all that is bad in a society...

...nor does it negate all that is good

Indonesia's role is critical...

- The progress of recent years
- The complexity of the current situation
- Setting a workable agenda
- Assessing progress
- **Indonesia's voice** in a worldwide conversation

Reform is not just “being good”...

- Reforms that work well in one place may do harm elsewhere
- Reform works best when it comes *from within*
- Reform must engage, mobilize *lasting interests* in society

Reform faces many problems:

- Corruption, and those who benefit from it, can be deeply entrenched
- Those who suffer from it may be poor, scattered, politically weak
- Reformers have “free rider” problems
- Thus, reform cannot be pursued only as a public good

Civil society, politics are critical...

- Many incentives and appeals are needed
- Groups need not emphasize only good government
- Parties, political groups are not “public utilities”
- Self-interest can energize reform
- “Good politics is good government”
--Richard J. Daley