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The Causes of Police Corruption and Working towards Prevention in Conflict-Stricken States

Danny Singh 

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Teesside University, Middlesbrough TS1 3BX, UK; d.singh@tees.ac.uk

Abstract: The police are the initial faces of law enforcement and commence the criminal justice process and thus hold significant responsibility for functioning law and order. As key representatives of the state, the integrity of the police in all societies is pivotal to retain public trust in the rule of law and the preservation of internal security. When police corruption is exposed or is perceived by the public to be prevalent, confidence in and communal relations with the police force become disjointed. Poor credibility of the police also negatively impacts on the legitimacy of the government. Negative public perceptions of both the police and government are particularly troublesome in violently divided societies or states undergoing armed conflict. The article focuses on the main causes and consequences of police corruption in hostile environments to introduce a range of prevention strategies to combat it and restore public confidence in policing and governance. The article suggests that a holistic anticorruption strategy, rather than a linear one, has the potential to raise awareness, increase pay to deter petty forms of corruption, install independent anticorruption agencies, and periodically rotate police officers to increase police integrity and loyalty for the host country. It is recommended that these multifaceted prevention strategies are needed within a police force that is faced with a violently divided society to reaffirm public support and deter support for armed anti-governmental oppositional groups.

Keywords: police corruption; police reform; rule of law; anticorruption; state capture; armed conflict



Citation: Singh, Danny. 2022. The Causes of Police Corruption and Working towards Prevention in Conflict-Stricken States. *Laws* 11: 69. <https://doi.org/10.3390/laws11050069>

Academic Editor: Stuart S. Yeh

Received: 14 July 2022

Accepted: 26 August 2022

Published: 30 August 2022

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1. Introduction

In any given society, policing is fundamental for both law enforcement and criminal justice. The police have a wide-ranging mandate to protect internal security, control riots, and engage with communities to reinforce friendly relations and public trust. Alongside this broad mandate, the respect of human rights, communal relations, and upholding the rule of law are key policing values. Even in highly industrialised societies, human rights abuses, police brutality, police malfeasance, and police corruption and criminality can still exist and hinder the credibility of police departments when exposed. Weak accountability measures constitute the central cause of corruption. When police officers are investigated or punished for their misdeeds, police corruption can be reduced. In contrast, when police officers are not held accountable for malfeasance or other misbehaviour, then corruption intensifies. This is evident in both modern democracies and conflict-stricken states. However, in post-conflict settings or states engaged in armed conflict, police violations can become prevalent. As principal state representatives and law enforcers, police malfeasance attributes weak public confidence to the illegitimacy of the police force and government.

The purpose of this article is to introduce how and why police malfeasance intensifies in states undergoing armed conflict or states that have just ceased war and what prevention strategies can be put in place to curtail the high risk of gross police misconduct in hostile environments. This is significant because in violently divided societies, police corruption and criminality can exacerbate a populace supporting armed anti-opposition groups and an insurgency that in turn adds to the deterioration of law enforcement, criminal justice,

and state legitimacy. To deal with the problems of police malfeasance, principally in hostile societies, the donor community and global financial institutions have led policy reforms to improve the administration, management, and oversight regarding the police sector. Policy reforms may include raising pay, the regulation of police training, and investigative units to curb petty forms of corruption and grand corruption.

This article addresses a key question, *what are the main causes and consequences of police corruption within volatile environments and what prevention strategies can be promoted?* The structure of the paper is arranged into four main parts. The initial section provides the definitions of police corruption and its main practices that range from petty corruption, protection rackets, and adding and planting evidence and is broadened to consider integrity violations. The subsequent parts focus on the main causes and consequences of police corruption. This will be reached with a thematic discussion about the contexts relevant to police malfeasance within volatile settings. The principal causes and practices range from low pay, nepotism and patronage relations, state capture from drug-related criminal groups, bribery and roadside extortion, and disloyalty with the state. The predominant consequences include public dissatisfaction with the police and government, an increased likelihood of supporting an anti-governmental group, encouragement to seek alternative modes of non-state security, and a reduction in funding from the donor community. The final section provides an overview of policy reform initiatives to combat police corruption. This includes commissions of inquiry, meritocratic recruitment and pay reform that have initially derived from public administration reform and civil service reform, the role of independent anticorruption agencies, rotation strategy, and enhancing accountability. The conclusion will respond to the research question by identifying the main causes and consequences of police corruption in volatile environments and effective prevention measures to curb it. As a potential solution to strengthen accountability, the creation of independent international institutions and international inspectors is made. Both entities have the authority to conduct independent investigations and transfer cases to courts for prosecution where judges and prosecutors have been independently screened.

2. Defining Police Corruption and Outlining Its Main Practices

To understand police corruption, a background of what can loosely be defined as corruption is needed. The word 'corruption' originates from the Latin term 'corruptus,' meaning to disrupt, break, spoil, or contaminate (Nicholls et al. 2006, p. 1). In very narrow terms, corruption constitutes the misuse of power for private gain (Kurer 2015, p. 31). If starting from this slender definition, there are multiple practices that meet the requirements of corruption. Corruption is often thought of as bribery, covering the abuse of power and authority of position for individual advantage, but the benefit does not have to be financial (von Alemann 1989, p. 858). Transparency International (2021) has also adopted the definition of corruption constituting the 'abuse of entrusted power for private gain.' It is the intent of public officials abusing their authority to seek individual gain, even if the returns are not attained (Clark 1993, p. 8). Therefore, an individual within a position of authority abusing their power for individual advantage can be identified as the core facet of corruption.

This narrow definition of corruption rests on individual gain, but other advantages may be sought from the office holder. For instance, a public official may seek familial, clique, or status gains and private payoffs that are exchanged for material benefits, as clientelism, to retain support from family (nepotism) and/or an ethnic or tribal group (Heidenheimer and Johnston 2002, p. 6). Loyal supporters, clients, are appeased with the reallocation of state resources and public expenditure by political elites and upper classes (King 2009, p. 29). The abuse of power may also be to attain political support rather than solely individual gain.

Bearing the narrow and political definitions of corruption in mind, police corruption can now be addressed. From a legalistic perspective, police corruption can be identified when a police officer knowingly breaks a rule by performing an action to attain financial

and material advantage (Punch 2009, p. 18). When acknowledging this legalistic definition, a police officer may be assured a significant advantage or an additional return for executing a duty or failing to perform a duty (Punch 1985). For almost all approaches to police corruption, an officer accepting a bribe or stealing from a crime scene would qualify as police corruption, but police deviance expands to further wrongful practices when officers evade acceptable norms, values, ethics, laws, and standards without direct victimisation (Gaines and Kappeler 2015, p. 416). The work of Stevens (2009, p. 476) has expanded police deviance to also cover nepotism, favouritism, or assisting a close friend to avoid a speeding ticket.

As well as police deviance, misconduct and corruption may have different conceptions but can be overlapping. Ivković (2005, p. 17) identifies that police misconduct concerns the execution or omission of an act performed by a police officer or whole department that violates legal rules (such as criminal and federal codes or internal rules). For instance, a wrongful act performed by a police officer or department includes planting evidence and taking a bribe in exchange for a motorist avoiding a speeding ticket for skipping a red light is an omission (Ivković 2014, p. 304). Hence, police corruption, deviance, and misconduct cover illicit activities, inappropriate practices, or the contravention of internal rules during working hours and official duties. These misbehaviours meet the requirements of police malfeasance.

There are broader concepts of police corruption that can be brought to attention. This can include smaller abuses of police authority for minimal gain. This is illustrated by McMullan's (1961, pp. 183–84) earlier work on corruption, stretching to minor privileges, minor kickbacks, gratuities, and performing working duties in expectation of an additional treat. Rather than linearly thinking of police corruption constituting bribery, personal advantage, and minor perks, a police officer can also abuse their position with the intent of departmental, rather than solely individual, gain (Kleinig 1996, p. 166). Advancing departmental advantage may be justified as noble cause *corruption* that can include a police officer falsifying evidence or using excessive force to attain an arrest (Pyman et al. 2012, p. 27).

In terms of the main practices of police corruption, there are several typologies that identify nine activities (that also overlap with police deviance and misconduct):

1. Corruption of authority—attaining perks without contravening the law, such as receiving free meals, beverages, and services.
2. Kickbacks—money, services, or goods obtained for business referrals promoting a company or individual.
3. Opportunistic theft—stealing from people who have been arrested, engaged in accidents, or from victims or deceased persons.
4. Turning a blind eye—bribes undertaken for omitting a felony, arrest, or seizure of property.
5. Protection of illegal activities—protecting criminal groups or individuals engaged in illegal practices, such as protection rackets (drugs, gambling, and prostitution rings) in vice areas.
6. Fixing—undermining criminal investigation or deliberately losing traffic or speeding tickets.
7. Direct criminal activities—engaging in a crime against an individual or property to attain individual advantage.
8. Internal payoffs—when promotions, annual leave, and shift allocations are bought, traded, and vended.
9. Adding or planting of evidence—when evidence is planted to frame an individual or group, which is usually within drug cases (Roebuck and Barker 1974; Punch 1985; Carter 1990; Sayed and Bruce 1998; Barker 2006).

These nine practices of police corruption serve as a typology and are hierarchical, with one being the least serious form of police corruption and nine being the most. There has been a debate regarding the severity of police corruption that intensifies over time during a

police officer's career (Kleinig 1996, pp. 163–67). Sherman (1985) has adopted the slippery slope analogy to argue that police officers may begin accepting minor gratuities, such as free coffee or discounted meals, near the outset of their career and gradually engage in more serious forms of police corruption. In other words, new recruits internalise values from their experienced partner or trainer and adopt the similar habits that intensify with time.

Despite the literature on the activities, typologies, and the socialisation of police corruption, the motives and objectives of police malfeasance also need to be understood. The work of Newburn (1999) suggests that analysing the motives and potential outcomes of police behaviour may be reinforced and even fortified as acceptable behaviour within a police department. A variety of studies on police misconduct have found that profit-driven crime is the main practice of police malfeasance. In a study conducted with the New York City Police Department (NYPD), Kane and White (2013, p. 73) found that bribe-taking constituted the highest profit-motivated cases of 387 NYPD officer's 'career-ending police misconduct.' In a US nationwide study, Stinson et al. (2018) focus on 'profit-motivated police crime' concerning 1,396 police officers misusing their authority when perpetrating crime for personal advantage. Most perpetrators of police-related profit-driven crime were patrol officers 'while on-duty' that also included drug-, violence-, sex-, and alcohol-related crimes (Stinson et al. 2018, p. 319). In a six-fold survey and nine focus groups on policing in Russia by Gerber and Mendelson (2008), policing was predatory where officers abused their authority to pursue personal material interests rather than preserve internal security or protect elitist interests that undermined public trust in policing and the courts. This finding of reducing public confidence in law enforcement and the judiciary is similar to the United States when police corruption is unravelled. Yet, in the Russian context, predatory policing also hinders democratic reform.

Although police corruption is largely associated with individual advantage, and even departmental when considering noble cause corruption and perjury, Bayley and Perito (2011, p. 3) expand to include the violation of rules without financial advantage, such as abusing prisoners, racism, and sexual misconduct. Huberts (1998, pp. 28–30) has presented integrity violations that include police corruption, theft and fraud, uncertain promises and gifts, moonlighting (working in non-declared secondary jobs), misusing information, intimidating citizens and colleagues, the misuse of power for the justified good (noble cause corruption), abusing and wasting resources, and violating the law outside of working hours and duty. Although these listed integrity violations intertwine police corruption, deviance, misconduct, and ethics, they are harmful to any police force (Singh 2020a, p. 26).

3. Main Causes of Police Corruption

Now that the definitions and the main practices and typologies of police corruption have been discussed, this section analyses the predominant causes and activities of police corruption.

The underlying reasons behind police corruption are multifaceted. There are notable constant and variable factors. In relation to the constant factors, discretion can be exercised with licit and illicit cores; managerial absence of visibility; secrecy of managers preserving police culture even if corruption prone; low salary and status issues; and affiliation with criminals that hinders the performance of police duties (Newburn 1999, pp. 16–17). Low wages can exacerbate bribery and extortion, especially when living costs are high for large families (Van Reenen 1997). Even if police officers are well salaried, they may believe that they are not remunerated to match their responsibilities and thus can still encourage corrupt practices (Newburn 1999, p. 20). From a Durkheimian perspective, relative deprivation theory forms anomie, and when individuals cannot attain what they believe to be part of distributive fairness, then social deviance, such as corruption, can emerge (Kulik et al. 2008). Police officers can become prey to lucrative ventures of criminal groups to turn a blind eye so that they can continue their illegal businesses (Punch 1994). In hostile settings, organised criminal networks permeate police units to act within their narrow, and profit-

making, interests by averting detection, investigative processes, and sanctions (Manning and Redlinger 1979, p. 356; Buscaglia and González-Ruiz 2006, pp. 293–94). Criminal groups pay off police officers that corrupt law enforcement in high drug cultivating, dealing, and trafficking areas (Maas 1997). Police officers may be engaged in a drug trade for profitable gain and personal use (Newburn 1999, pp. 26–27).

In relation to variable features that encourage corruption, legal openings to participate in corrupt activities when there are no victims can result in the exploitation of minor traffic, construction, and licensing offences (Newburn 1999, p. 17). When considering organisational structures, if a police force fails to promote adequate pay, career development, and professionalism, then systemic corruption can occur (Wood 1997, p. 32). A community may also tolerate minor practices of corruption and thus a police department may encourage petty corruption as legitimate (Sherman 1978a, p. 32). The protection of a police department or the Interior Ministry from corruption investigations can taint efforts to control and curtail police corruption (Mollen 1994, pp. 2–3).

In relation to the constant and variable factors, a central cause of police corruption is weak accountability. When police officers are not punished for corruption, corrupt activity increases and becomes embedded within a police force. Prenzler (2009, p. 80) has similarly identified that good policing is seriously undermined by ‘safety from punishment provided by’ supervisors and authorities ‘to errant police’ officers ‘and the lack of accountability.’ Anassi (2004, p. 39) noted that ‘police corruption always reflects a lack of institutional accountability.’ For instance, in Kenya, police officers saw ‘themselves as the law’ (Anassi 2004, p. 39). In Latin America, accountability for police corruption is severely hindered by ‘institutional structures lacking resources’ (Banks 2009, p. 59). In Costa Rica, holding police officers accountable is deemed as undermining police work (Banks 2009, p. 59). Therefore, weak accountability has been demonstrated in developing and hostile states. However, debilitated accountability for police corruption is also discernible in modern democracies.

Based on the constant and variable factors of police corruption, low wages and affiliation with criminal networks engage police officers in illicit and lucrative ventures, including the drug and prostitution trades, that infiltrate police practices and law enforcement to act within private narrow interests. This form of state capture seriously undermines the rule of law and security. The rule of law promotes the equality of everyone before law by ensuring that no one, including rulers or other private individuals, is above the law that functions with accountability, transparency of an open government, just laws, and accessible and fair justice (Hobson 1996, p. 57). State capture can be identified when a police force, an ethnic majority group, or a political party intercepts institutional functionality to act in the interests of criminal networks by advancing and protecting their (usually illicit) profit-making agenda (Karklins 2005, p. 30). At the same time, petty corruption can become a cultural form of acceptable everyday practice and thus systemic corruption (in which state capture operates) and petty corruption are interconnected.

When police officers are lowly remunerated and greedy political elites coordinate with a drug mafia, parts of the state are seized to undermine policing functions and protect the profit made by the drug trade. In Mexico and Albania, police administrators and chiefs profit handsomely with predatory tactics on low-ranked police officers to participate in bribery and avoid pursuing drug offenders (United States Committee on Government Reform 2000, p. 20; Horvitz and Catherwood 2006, p. 10). Corruption can be constant when pay is low and there are vice areas and private illicit interests at stake and it can be variable when minor gratuities, and petty bribes, are deemed legitimate by a police department and corruption probes are cascaded. A range of studies from the 1990s do indicate that raising wages helps to combat petty corruption. By way of illustration, Van Rijckeghem and Weder (1997, p. 8) hypothesise that low wages result in civil servants supplementing wages by corrupt or illicit means, while high wages equate to higher losses if the civil servant is caught and namely dismissed. Yet, the study finds ‘a close negative association between relative civil service wages and corruption across the’ 28 ‘developing countries in’ the ‘data-set’ and ‘relative wages are closely related to measures of the quality of the

bureaucracy and of the rule of law' (Van Rijckeghem and Weder 1997, p. 31). The results indicate that increasing wages does not always help curb petty corruption alone. This is particularly evident in countries facing high inflation and where opportunities to engage in corrupt activity exist.

Many other scholars are also critical of the low wage hypothesis. For example, the work of Uslaner (2008, p. 38) contends that if law enforcement and public sector employees are salaried higher, they may incessantly engage in corrupt activities due to greediness rather than economic need. Gong and Wu (2012, p. 194) similarly contend that corruption can be driven by greed and is more prevalent with high-paid officials in senior posts because they do not rely on bribery for economic need. Based on this premise, high wages endeavouring to increase the cost of losing jobs fails to eradicate corruption from greedy officials. Rauch and Evans (2000) also found that there is no robust evidence to advocate that the levels of public servant's salaries influence corruption. This in turn presents the null hypothesis of increasing wages to significantly reduce corruption. In another study conducted by Van Rijckeghem and Weder (2001), it was found that increasing public sector salaries, namely civil servants (relative to private sector wages), has a negative correlation to corruption due to bribery dominating total income. While higher wages in the public service increase 'the opportunity cost of losing one's job' to debatably reduce corruption, Dowell-Jones (2004, p. 94) argues that this may be very expensive for a government and the raised wages 'may lead to demands for higher bribes' by people 'who continue to engage in corruption.' Wei (1999) previously demonstrated that even if a government has the funds to raise public sector salaries, increasing the wages of civil servants higher than the private sector would probably result in severe equity issues. In a later study on statistics in China, Gong and Wu (2012, p. 200) have shown that increasing the wages of the civil service is tenuous and does not necessarily control corruption. Similarly, Lambsdorff's (1999, p. 12) review of empirical studies finds that 'the role of wages is ambiguous.'

If civil servants are remunerated higher salaries than the private sector, then prospective public sector candidates will pay bribes to be designated for these posts and thus increasing pay alone will not significantly reduce public sector corruption (Toma 2009, p. 28). Shah (2007, p. 245) highlights that public positions are frequently purchased in corrupt states by borrowing money from family and friends. Based on this argument, it can be contended that increasing public sector salaries will simply raise the buying price, resulting in further corrupt activity that is needed to repay the money loaned. The aforementioned literature undermines the low wage leading to corruption hypothesis and it is contentious whether wages alone would pointedly reduce corruption.

However, an example of successful elimination in petty corruption is evident in Georgia during Mikheil Saakashvili's administration (2003–2007 reform) which increased the police salary by 15 times and also introduced a merit-based recruitment system (World Bank 2012). The World Bank (2012, p. 60) found that experienced staff and loyal officials 'were retained to run divisions', and young energetic staff were appointed that increased the average wages of public officials, for instance, in construction licensing, 'by a factor of 20' to further undermine incentives of soliciting or accepting bribes. Therefore, the literature on pay reform, and namely increasing wages, has sketchy findings on eliminating petty corruption and can only have a higher chance of success if the government at hand supports a radical pay rise (such as 5–20 times). The reduction in petty corruption is unlikely when the argument and strategy rests solely on salary.

4. Consequences of Police Corruption in Developing and Volatile Environments

The principal causes and practices of police corruption in hostile societies seriously undermines the rule of law, security, and state effectiveness. This section addresses the main repercussions of police corruption in unstable settings.

Corruption hinders the state and threatens the rule of law that can result in the channelling of state resources from public use to private groups that distorts the duties of police officers to act in these interests (Voorhoeve 2007, p. 113). For example, in Pakistan, the rule

of law is eroded from weak accountability mechanisms of corrupt practices (Mahmood 2007, p. 118). ‘Police corruption and extrajudicial killings’ remain as problems in Pakistan, and the police are politically influenced, which includes the appointments and transferring of ‘officers for political gain’ (Waseem 2022). Pakistani civilians in Lahore, Punjab, frequently fear the police force, are prone to police bribery and blackmail, and crime and corruption remain high (Jackson et al. 2014). In neighbouring India, motorists regularly pay bribes to police officers at checkpoints to avert delays and further harassment as a form of everyday business interactions (Bayley and Perito 2011, pp. 5–6). Indian truckers pay an estimated USD 4.5 billion per annum in bribes and the police claim 45 per cent of these bribes with forced stoppages on roads amounting to 11 hours per day (Robinson 2017, p. 277).

In drug-fuelled states, corruption permeates governmental and law enforcement functions that place citizens at an increased risk of poverty (Leiken 1996, p. 46). For instance, in Zambia, the drug industry entices government officials to pocket money in exchange for omitting drug-related offences (Ihonvbere 2003, p. 69). McIntyre (2008, p. 102) stresses that Zambian traffic police engage in daily bribery. The Zambian public deem their police officers as highly corrupt due to the demand of the largest amounts of bribes within all institutions; corruption commences in 80 per cent of all interactions with the police; and officers are poorly trained and receive low wages (Eke 2018, p. 85). Police corruption impacts on poorer Zambian households who are forced to pay a higher slice of their household incomes (Shamapande 2007, p. 55). Extortion at roadblocks is commonplace practice when interacting with Zambian police officers (Eke 2018, p. 85). Due to prevalent police corruption, the Zambian police force is publicly perceived as one of the most corrupt institutions in the country (Kajoba 2021). Once national institutions have been captured by criminal entities, and often their black-market enterprises, domestic criminal justice actors, and their processes, cannot uphold accountability.

In another narco-state, but also engaged in armed conflict for three decades, Afghanistan was within Transparency International’s Global Corruption Index as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. After the Taliban were ousted from power in late 2001, international state builders, and namely the Bonn Agreement, placed Hamid Karzai as the Chair of the Afghan Transitional Administration (Eichenwald 2012, p. 201; McDonald 2016, p. 255). Karzai and his political cronies engaged in prevalent forms of systemic and drug-related corruption, due to state capture from insurgent and criminal groups and former warlords within the presidential cabinet who were pardoned from a parliamentary 2007 Amnesty Blanket Immunity Law (Human Rights Watch 2010). During both presidential tenures of Karzai, endemic corruption within the Afghan police force, government, and judiciary resulted in the 2006 and 2010 Taliban codes of conduct (*Lahya*) to fight the corrupt and irreligious police force and seek public support with alternative modes of security and dispute resolution processes (Singh 2014, p. 627). Hence, pervasive police corruption resulted in further Taliban remobilisation as a response to combat state corruption.

In a nationwide survey conducted by Integrity Watch Afghanistan (2010, p. 11) across all 34 Afghan provinces, half of the respondents believed that corruption, principally corruption within the Interior Ministry and Afghan National Police (ANP), fuelled support for the Taliban and the insurgency were fighting the corrupt administration. In another countrywide survey conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), a quarter of the sampled Afghan respondents stressed that they paid at least one bribe averaging USD 100–200 to the ANP and local officials in 2009 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2010, p. 4). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) also found that many ANP officers: abused their position, used weapons and equipment when off-duty, were engaged in the drug trade, extorted bribes from vehicles and farmers, and demanded recurrent protection fees from shop vendors (United Nations Development Programme 2009, pp. 5–6, 20). At the senior level, the Ministry of Interior Affairs sold police chief positions at up to USD 200,000 and fetched further money if within a high drug cultivating province (Isaqzadeh and Giustozzi 2015, p. 29; Singh 2020a, pp. 127–28). Therefore, corruption was prevalent in the majority of the Afghan ministries and principally the

Interior Ministry (Achakzai 2010, p. 2). Despite corruption being perceived as a dirty act, the payment of bribes is often considered as a social norm by the public, where nepotism and gift giving and paying bribes to civil servants are not deemed offensive because the act benefits the giver (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2010, pp. 34–35). Azami (2009) has similarly contended that corruption was functional and accepted in Afghanistan to get things done by speeding up transactions with officials.

As a consequence of daily frustrations with police corruption, young angry men supported and joined the Taliban (Shelley 2014, p. 71). The Taliban utilised its agenda fighting police corruption for its shadow governance to seek further support. This demonstrates that police corruption can entice public support for an insurgency to eventually topple a government, as evident in August 2021. A report by Bolle and Røst (2021) identifies that despite more than USD 100 billion spent on the Afghan police force, endemic police corruption within the senior and lower ranks attributed to undermine police and state legitimacy. Bolle and Røst (2021) further argued that the entire Afghan 'system was corrupt' which applied to the police force, but corruption could not be fought due to presidents Hamid Karzai and subsequently Ashraf Ghani relying on corrupt patronage networks to remain in power. Systemic corruption from the senior levels had trickled to most ministries, including the Interior, meaning that police corruption became institutionalised within the ANP.

There are some similarities to report in Latin American states. The work of Windsor (2006, p. 60) has suggested that prevalent police corruption in Latin America seriously undermines security. For instance, in Mexico and Colombia, the police are often intimidated to take bribes from drug cartels to protect clans (Buckman 2007, p. 113; Marcy 2010, p. 53). In failed states, criminal and armed groups influence illegal trading networks by seizing, intimidating, and bribing government, police, and judicial personnel to serve narcotics and diamond and human trafficking (Naím 2005, pp. 27–29; Patrick 2011, p. 141). These contexts demonstrate that once primary institutions of the national criminal justice system have been captured by criminal groups, their functionality to uphold accountability is undermined. This is common in conflict-stricken environments. In the context of Sierra Leone, the civil war included the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council targeting the corrupt Sierra Leone Police by systematically demolishing police communications, records, and infrastructure (Pratt 2003, p. 84). A combination of corruption, patronage, and predatory elites favouring foreigners to engage in exploiting diamonds, illicit diamond mining and smuggling, high unemployment, and poverty and public dissatisfaction gave rise to the RUF and the conflict (Zulu and Wilson 2009, p. 1109). During the civil war, most aid powered the RUF rather than reaching civilians (Ngomba-Roth 2007, p. 79). The civil war resulted in economic collapse due to the formation of a 'shadow state' for greedy political elites managing patronage networks to regulate an illicit and informal economy for pervasive corruption to benefit themselves (Reno 1995, p. 1). As Newcombe (2011, p. 167) argues, it can be inferred that dire socioeconomic scenarios, political corruption, and police corruption breeds conflict and support for armed anti-opposition groups. Taking these cases into consideration, it can be contended that insecurity and the breakdown of the rule of law is more severe in less developed, and particularly volatile, settings than in stable democratic countries. This further impacts on the quality of policing and unstable environment(s) that in turn intensifies police corruption and protracts conflict.

The work of Le Billon (2008) is useful to stress that the majority of conflict-stricken states are the most corrupt in the world, and corruption is often reported by the local populace and international aid agencies during efforts transitioning to peace. With a study on corruption perception indexes of 22 countries between 1990 and 2006, Le Billon (2008, p. 345) convincingly argues that liberal peacebuilding intends to promote democracies and free markets to consolidate peace, but these policies also cultivate higher levels of corruption by institutionalising it with the 'lack of transparency', accountability, and tax avoidance. Mac Ginty (2007, pp. 457–58) has similarly contended that the liberal peace

provides great resources that appear attractive for conflict-stricken countries, but these Western aspirations are ‘marked by its increasingly formulaic, top-down and ethnocentric nature’ without considering local needs. Therefore, the basic forms of curbing police corruption are presented in this paper rather than intertwining liberal democratic and economic reforms that are open to scrutiny.

Despite this criticism, political science research and notably post-conflict reconstruction experts have identified that the rule of law, instability, accountability, and predatory neopatrimonial politics are severe in conflict-stricken states that greatly undermine policy reforms to curtail corruption. Within neopatrimonial systems, the ruler blends private and public interests to distribute resources, benefits, and privileges to anticipated loyal clients, factions, or supporters to maintain economic and political interests while satisfying private and communal ends (Dibua 2006, p. 6). Amundsen (2000, p. 55) identifies that neopatrimonialism hinders formal rules and institutions—even with liberal peacebuilding efforts that may intensify corruption—to form further opportunities and incentives for grand/political and administrative corruption. In other words, the conditions of grand/political and administrative corruption are far higher in conflict-stricken countries and can be exacerbated, and inadvertently institutionalised, with liberal peacebuilding reforms (Paris 2004, pp. 106–7; Chandler 2010, p. 39).

5. Prevention Strategies to Curb Police Corruption in Hostile States

This paper has so far considered the problems that police corruption brings within hostile societies, which also protracts conflict and undermines the legitimacy of law enforcement and the host government. The purpose of this section is to introduce a variety of efforts that can attempt to fight police corruption in volatile settings.

A study conducted by Transparency International on 10 country case studies found that the risks for corruption involving the police display notable similarities across jurisdictions and countries (Pyman et al. 2012, pp. 29–73). Several recommendations propose structural changes, increasing salaries, forming a vetted recruitment process, incorporating ethics and integrity in training, internal and external monitoring, creating an investigative anticorruption unit, changing organisational culture, promoting civil society involvement and oversight, and wider reforms (Neild 2007, p. 17; Bayley and Perito 2011, p. 11; Pyman et al. 2012, p. 74).

Despite these useful large-scale recommendations, Bayley and Perito (2011, pp. 12–13) are pessimistic about curbing police corruption in conflict-stricken states because they comprise insecurity, untrustworthy staff, and flawed institutions, and police corruption is fostered by social attitudes and cultural structures encapsulated in local life. Indeed, insecurity, the breakdown of the rule of law, predatory neopatrimonial politics, and social practices encouraging corruption as part of business relations and the social fabric are further obstacles when attempting to fight police corruption in volatile environments.

At this stage of describing reforms and recommendations to reduce police corruption, petty corruption and grand/political corruption can be distinguished as each produces different incentives, objectives, consequences, and politics. Administrative corruption is the misuse of power, roles, or resources of non-elected officials within public bureaucracies and is often exercised by bribery, extortion, kickbacks, or favouritism (Philp 2008, p. 319; Rose-Ackerman 2008, p. 336). The incentives of administrative corruption rest on extra or supplementary income with the objective of performing a public duty or service that should be free of cost (United States Agency for International Development 2009). The consequences include poorer people paying a higher slice of their household incomes that in turn protracts poverty (Askari et al. 2010, p. 70; World Bank 2021).

Grand/political corruption involves the entirety of a ‘bureaucratic hierarchy, electoral system, or governmental structure from top to bottom’ that is entrenched with corruption in which state resources are tapped by senior, and ruling, political elites (Rose-Ackerman 2008, p. 330). The objectives are for political elites and police chiefs to encourage and manage bribery to the lower levels to organise corrupt systems by collaborating with

organised criminal groups, public utilities, lotteries, and tax collectors and contracting with private firms (Rose-Ackerman 2008, pp. 331–32). The consequences rest on further corrupt and weak judiciaries that have frail established rules in namely war-torn countries that are prevalent with private firms encouraging rent-seeking behaviour, kickbacks, and the bribery of public officials for contracts (Vargas-Hernández 2010, pp. 143–44). Taking these incentives, objectives, and consequences into consideration, even though grand/political corruption very much exists in strong Western democratic states, it is more severe in conflict states that have a weak rule of law. The political instability, weakness in fragile states, is different compared to very similar behaviours occurring in some non-conflict and developed states insofar that the political, economic, and social structures differ. A political economy approach can explain such differentiation in conflict states. There is a heightened risk of insecurity, the judiciaries take bribes due to fear and intimidation from organised criminal networks that retain immunity from prosecution, favouritism is based on tribal ties as part of a ‘moral economy’, and patronage intensifies with political elites satisfying clients with jobs, resources, and privileges in exchange for votes (Olivier de Sardan 1999, p. 26; Dziedzic and Hawley 2005, p. 12; Burgan 2013, p. 26).

Now that a variety of international strategies on curbing police corruption and the impacts of both administrative and grand/political corruption have been provided, the remainder of this section covers several aspects of the mentioned policy reforms. This includes commissions of inquiry, meritocratic appointments and pay reform (as part of public administration and civil service reforms), anticorruption commissions, rotating police officers on a periodical basis, and strengthening accountability.

Although commissions of inquiry result in further negative public perceptions of a police department by exposing police corruption, they are important to disclose police corruption, and the verdicts provided help to identify the main causes, practices, and typologies of misconduct (Pyman et al. 2012, p. 74). For instance, the famous Knapp (1972) revealed police corruption within the New York Police Department and made recommendations for commanders to face accountability for the actions of their subordinates and file periodic reports on important characteristics that would promote corruption. Blaming a few bad apples who undermine the reputation of a police department does not deal with corruption at the institutional level (Knapp 1972, pp. 6–7). As a result, the Commission also provided a typology on grass-eating and meat-eating corruption and stressed that commanders using the few bad apples excuse was unjustifiable as a rotten orchard, systemic corruption, was extensive (Knapp 1972, p. 61). Grass-eating corruption describes police officers who receive perks, solicit small payments from gamblers and contractors, that is learned from other officers each day and is promoted for proving loyalty to a precinct. Meat-eating corruption designates more aggressive opportunities that can be exploited for financial advantage, which includes shakedowns of pimps and drug dealers, and is justified to punish perilous criminals of society (Knapp 1972). When analysing 32 commissions of inquiry, Bayley and Perito (2011, p. 6) found that police commanders regularly argued that a few bad apples attributed to prevalent corruption instead of acknowledging the corrupt behaviour and actions they permitted. Acknowledging systemic failure and the role of police commanders rather than blaming a few bad apples can promote a change in leadership attitudes and work on recovering broken relationships with the populace.

There are a range of other anticorruption strategies that have been financed heavily by both the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank. USAID focuses on fighting corruption for better development and promoting states to ratify the United Nations Convention against Corruption and better defining corruption to also include lower officials engaging in the demand of smaller bribes (Lho and Cabuay 2005, p. 81; Miller 2007, p. 162; Seidler 2008, p. 37). The World Bank has also focused on Public Administration Reform and Civil Service Reform by enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the public sector to avoid the overlapping of duties, installing fair and openly competitive meritocratic procedures, and promoting the oversight of watchdog groups, such as civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (World

Bank 2000a, p. 58; 2000b, p. 21; Mussari and Cepiku 2007, p. 355). Meritocracy is a strategy to recruit and promote governmental workers based on skills and competencies that can be aligned with pay reform to reduce patronage, nepotism, and corruption (Kaufmann and Dininio 2006, p. 18). Raising awareness and promoting education of corruption is pivotal for transition or post-war states that can be promoted by CSOs and the dissemination of civil society reports (World Bank 2000a, pp. 64, 77; 2006, p. 187). These recommendations, where implemented, have made a difference in combatting corruption. The World Bank funds projects to assist an independent Sanctions System and supported oversight to investigate accusations of corruption and fraud with integrated ‘public complaint mechanisms’ (World Bank 2021). The World Bank (2021) has prohibited over 1000 firms and people, and in 2020, ‘49 firms and individuals’ were punished to encourage better ‘internal compliance’ programmes as part of their penalty. Similarly, United States Agency for International Development (2021) has reported success ‘working with journalists and’ supporting ‘civil society advocacy’ together with multilateral cooperation.

Alongside merit-based recruitment, pay and grading structures have been placed within public administration reform (Lister 2006, p. 6). As part of the public administration reform, pay reform has been prescribed as part of an anticorruption strategy to avoid hindering the efficiency of the public sector and civil service. Police forces have also adopted pay reform to avert petty forms of corruption by increasing accountability measures, meaning that the sanctions outweigh the benefits of engaging in corrupt activity to avert ‘low-risk, high-reward activity’ (Quah 2011, p. 14). Imposing a strict penalty system can fight police corruption to promote better police behaviour. As Sherman (1978b, p. 203) argues, dismissals of police officers deter police corruption insofar that other officers will face similar punishment if engaged in corrupt or criminal activity. Rose-Ackerman (1999, pp. 71–73) refers to reducing the incentives of state employees participating in corruption activity as a ‘survival strategy’ when faced with poverty due to low wages. Pilapitiya (2004) similarly contends that corruption can be driven by ‘need’ when severely underpaid low-level officials take bribes as payments for basic economic necessities, such as school fees or food for their children.

By way of illustration, in Malaysia, meritocracy replaced patronage-based recruitment by installing open competitive examinations, oversight, disciplinary measures for malpractice, performance reviews, and raising ethical standards with pay levels in parallel with the private sector (Newfarmer and Nunberg 2000, p. 108). This public administration reform initiative reduced brain drain in the public sector, but low wages in the Malaysian police force resulted in corruption, and thus the then former Inspector General, Tun Hanif Omar, proposed a 10–20 per cent wage increase (Peletz 2002, p. 221). Leiken (1997, p. 68) has argued that the provision of higher salaries to a police force that is notoriously corrupt can deter corrupt activities because better pay purchases insulation against bribery and patronage.

Prior to the recent Taliban takeover, in Afghanistan, the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service implemented a meritocratic appointment structure with grade 1 civil servants’ salaries raised from USD 39.50 to USD 55.64 and grade 10 from USD 37.63 to USD 42.60 monthly (World Bank 2005, pp. 53–54). Pay reform then entered the Afghan armed and police forces, respectively. However, low pay within the ANP remained an issue that could not align with rising living costs, which resulted in bribery and roadside extortion to cater for large families (Singh 2020b, pp. 369–73). Therefore, meritocratic recruitment and pay reform have the potential to reduce both patronage-based appointments and petty corruption within police forces, but salaries must be reformed in line with rising living costs. Even after pay reform, low pay was indeed a precursor of petty corruption, but internal controls, penalties, and sanctions for police corruption—including the misuse and theft of police equipment—remained weak in the Afghan police force (Wilder 2007, p. 36).

Independent anticorruption commissions are other initiatives that can promote greater transparency, the opportunity for anonymous whistleblowing, and accountability. These have had success stories in Singapore and Hong Kong (Singh 2021). Yet, in hostile settings

that contain the influence of cartels and other criminal networks engaged in a drugs trade, independent anticorruption agencies can be undermined by bribery, threats and intimidation, and state capture. In Colombia, although the Álvaro Uribe Vélez administration tried to curtail corruption under the Presidential Programme of Modernisation, Efficiency, Transparency and Fight against Corruption that was replaced a few times, drug cartels have imposed bribes and intimidated judges and police officers at municipal levels (Kelly et al. 2008, p. 215; Transparency for Colombia 2009, p. 3). Similarly, Mexico struggled to establish an independent anticorruption agency until its Coordination Committee, but it remains permeated with rival drug cartels to maintain major drug trafficking organisations and immunity from prosecution (Beittel 2011). Efforts to campaign against drug trafficking organisations has been met with violence, and from December 2006 to July 2010, over 28,000 people died at the hands of drug trafficking violence (Beittel 2011, pp. 18–20). State capture remains an issue in volatile environments. Powerful criminal networks remain protected by political elites that hinder the roles of anticorruption agencies, and the primary national institutions of the criminal justice system cannot uphold accountability. Moreover, police forces are undermined by engaging in drug-related corruption or turning a blind eye due to fear and intimidation.

To deal with the smuggling of drugs, national agencies to fight drug-related corruption and crime have been established. In Nigeria, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency has engaged with American-led ‘training in intelligence analysis,’ drug-related investigations, and prosecutions, but ‘poorly patrolled borders’ result in traffickers still transporting narcotics with air cargo and express mail services in large shipments ‘in and out of the country’ (Ettang and Leeke 2019, p. 135). Therefore, even with an anticorruption and allied drug interdiction policy that includes the role of independent agencies, state capture, bribery, and the lack of a workforce remain impediments to fighting corruption within hostile states. The predominant facets of curbing corruption in hostile states are to promote public administration reform, civil service reform, and pay reform to interchangeably reduce staff size, avert overlapping duties, and screen and appoint the best candidates with meritocracy. This can raise the efficiency of public employees and the police force with adequate salaries to prevent petty corruption as a means of economic necessity.

Another initiative to combat corruption more specifically within the police force is rotation strategy. When police officers work for sustained periods within a territory, they can develop corrupt opportunities with organised criminals or establish corrupt webs (Prenzler 2002, p. 20). The periodical rotation of police officers in vice areas or drug squads from one unit to another can undermine closely knit relationships and corrupt associations (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2017, p. 63). Preventing clientelistic relationships and ties with close friends can challenge corrupt and bribery networks (Singh 2020a, p. 38). This worked well in Singapore for police officers in vulnerable posts, such as gambling clampdown officers, investigators, and ‘field intelligence officers,’ stationed in different locations or units every three years to decrease corrupt opportunities (Quah 2006, p. 63). Germany and Russia have recommended the same strategy to reduce corruption within their police forces (Holmes 2022). However, a random assignment to combat corrupt and patronage networks can be counterproductive. In Afghanistan, rotated police officers found it hard to cater for living costs within their stationed distant provinces due to fewer breadwinners per household, resulting in bribery and roadside extortion for economic survival (Singh 2014, pp. 643–44). It can be inferred that a linear anticorruption strategy, such as pay reform and/or raising salaries, cannot successfully curb police corruption alone.

There have been recent strategies suggested and put in place to strengthen accountability in fighting corruption. As identified in this article so far, when national institutions of the criminal justice system are seized by criminal groups and their enterprises, the accountability of law enforcement actors, political elites, and (protected) criminal groups is eroded. In these situations, independent investigations are needed from self-regulating international institutions to refer cases to courts. Under this strategy, the judges and prose-

cutors are independently vetted. Yeh (2021, p. 2) has provided a specific model to create international inspectors comprising a body of United Nations inspectors and dedicated courts to fight corruption by investigating and prosecuting a range of financial crimes and allegations of corruption with the authority to transfer cases to national anticorruption courts. An example of an independent court is Ukraine's High Anti-Corruption Court. It was established on 26 June 2018 by the controversially corrupt president, and oligarch, Petro Poroshenko (Yeh 2022, p. 261). An assembly of non-Ukrainian global experts vetted the appointments of judges for the High Anti-Corruption Court to protect it from criminal and political manipulation (Zabokrytsky 2020). The strategy of independent inspectors and dedicated national anticorruption courts can challenge state capture. Wages are paid by the international institution rather than national governments, because the latter can be manipulated by criminal groups. This model would make it harder to bribe prosecutors and judges of the national courts vetted by international experts.

USAID and Transparency International have provided studies on police corruption that compare relatively stable countries with conflict-stricken countries undergoing transitions to peace. In a study conducted by USAID, there are a variety of anticorruption mechanisms to minimise police corruption that include conflict-stricken countries (Neild 2007). In particular, the mechanisms include rules and standards with a code of ethics, enhancing transparency by publishing police statistics and protecting whistle-blowers, internal accountability with a disciplinary system, regular auditing, and personal financial asset declarations (Neild 2007, pp. 15–16). Moreover, external oversight with a prosecution and court system and roles of parliamentary and civilian oversight and improving pay and service conditions by providing a living wage, implementing a probationary stage, and merit-based standards for all career posts are part of the anticorruption strategy (Neild 2007, pp. 15–16). The USAID report provides detail on conflict-stricken countries. It infers that police corruption further erodes public trust and criminal investigation and detection; channels resources unfairly; maintains organised crime and protracts poor conditions for vulnerable people, such as refugees and human trafficking; and links support for terrorists (Neild 2007). Police corruption in conflict-stricken settings are unlikely to build 'public safety conditions' to sustain 'peace without addressing police corruption' (Neild 2007, p. 17).

In a further study conducted by Transparency International on 10 countries (including both stable and volatile settings), the public ranked police corruption as a top concern; reform attempts are hindered by weak independent external monitoring; and civil society is limited in police corruption reform (Pyman et al. 2012). The report, like with USAID, identifies that salary increases, ethics and integrity incorporated into recruitment and training, and internal and external monitoring and transparency are useful, but an independent agency with 'coercive powers' should be established to investigate police corruption (Pyman et al. 2012, pp. 74, 77). The report conducted by Transparency International also indicates that there are further dangers of prejudices in post-conflict states, such as in Serbia and Afghanistan, which have resulted from fighting between ethnic groups and factions and thus recruitment and training processes need to challenge 'discriminatory corruption in law enforcement' from the outset 'of their careers' (Pyman et al. 2012, p. 75). Hence, the severity and dangers that police corruption attribute to instability and the erosion of the rule of law are greater in conflict-stricken countries.

6. Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to introduce police corruption, the forms it takes, and the severity of hindering security and the rule of law in volatile settings. In response to the research question, police corruption has multifaceted forms and can overlap with criminal conduct, misconduct, and theft. There are a variety of typologies that are useful to frame practices that constitute police corruption. The causes of police corruption include discretion, the absence of managers, superiors concealing malfeasance, low wages (resulting in bribery and extortion), high opportunities and low-risk penalties, noble cause motives,

moonlighting, abusing information, and threatening citizens (Huberts 1998, pp. 28–30; Newburn 1999, pp. 16–20). Once police corruption becomes pervasive, it plagues law enforcement. In hostile and conflict-stricken countries, police corruption also heightens anti-governmental groups that attain further public support.

This article has demonstrated that corruption undermines state effectiveness, security, and the rule of law, which is more evident in conflict-stricken and volatile states. Within such states, institutions are fragile and thus prone to the permeation of a criminal network's narrow profit-making interests within an illicit trade. In narco-states, political elites and criminal networks engaged in drug-related corruption hold immunity from prosecution (Buxton 2006, p. 129). State capture intercepts state functionality and the police and other law enforcement actors act within the interests of greedy kleptocrats, political elites, and affiliated criminal networks. This entices the police force to engage in corrupt activities, protect vice areas, and form protection rackets. Once corruption enters state institutions, such as a police unit, it becomes culturally and then systemically embedded from the senior to lower levels (Lodge 2009, p. 404; Yadav 2011, p. 133). When law enforcement is seriously undermined and accountability for malfeasance is weak, the deterrence for participating in corruption bolsters a culture of corruption (Nketiah 2011, p. 8). This can make fighting police corruption an enormous task that is faced with superiors concealing corruption and blaming a few individuals (bad apples) rather than tackling systemic problems (a rotten orchard) (Gottschalk 2009, p. 146). Moreover, police corruption may commence with new recruits accepting minor gratuities and engaging in petty bribery, but it can be socialised to become more predatory and severe over time.

The consequences of police corruption are more severe in hostile states. This article has illustrated within the context of Afghanistan that police corruption incited the Taliban insurgency to eventually topple the government by defeating the ANP and national armed forces within one week when American and international troops withdrew in August 2021. Curbing police corruption is greatly important to avoid a populace seeking alternative security and supporting a growing insurgency that is hazardous in conflict-stricken settings.

To curb systemic corruption, prevention strategies have been presented in this article. Commissions of inquiries—such as the Knapp (1972)—have been established to underline the types of police corruption (grass and meat eaters) and strategies advocated for senior personnel (accountability measures for failing to correct the malpractice of subordinates). Other strategies to combat police corruption have been attempted. This includes public administrative reform and civil service reform to clean-up the public sector by enhancing efficiency, avoiding overlapping duties, implementing pay reform, and installing meritocratic appointments. High incentives, such as promotion and pay increments for hard work and good behaviour, function as disincentives for corrupt behaviour. This has trickled to police sectors to combat patronage, nepotism, and transactions of posts. Pay reform attempts to prevent bribery and roadside extortion as forms of economic necessity, but as the literature cited at the close of Section 3 underlines, increasing salaries is expensive, may increase the demand for higher bribes, and accountability for police malfeasance may remain weak. To prevent police officers establishing networks with criminal groups and influential non-state actors, a periodical rotation strategy has been adopted to avert engagement in vice areas, protection rackets, and defending illicit lucrative practices. A rotation strategy worked well in Singapore and Germany, but it inadvertently exacerbated bribery and roadside extortion in Afghanistan due to further impoverishing police officers with fewer breadwinners per household in remote provinces. State capture undermines primary national institutions of the criminal justice system that are manipulated to protect criminal groups and their illicit markets. To combat state capture, accountability can be strengthened from independent international institutions and independent inspectors to isolate investigations and refer cases to dedicated national anticorruption courts.

Taking these prevention strategies into consideration, a holistic anticorruption strategy is needed to fight police corruption. This can combine commissions of inquiries, meritocratic appointments, pay reform, a rotation strategy, and strengthening account-

ability. Although every country comprises its original history, conflict(s), culture, ethical traditions, political and economic system, and social development, lessons learned can be recommended for other states (Huberts et al. 2008, p. 244). Strong political will is needed. However, the provision of a template for combatting corruption is difficult to accomplish in volatile narco-states. This was evident with Afghanistan, Colombia, Mexico, and Nigeria. The police function as the frontline of law enforcement and police corruption hinders their credibility, and corruption is more likely to become pervasive in high vice areas, drug-producing countries, and volatile settings. Hence, prevention strategies are required because police corruption negatively impacts on security, the rule of law, and state legitimacy that are all further undermined in conflict-stricken societies.

Funding: This study received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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