

## **Understanding the Culture of Impunity: A Macro Perspective**

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The culture of impunity means simply the inability to hold the perpetrators of journalism's crimes accountable and as such, it is closely related to the culture of corruption. It is by definition one of the worst forms of corruption. The macro-perspective as mentioned here relies on a hierarchical theory I developed and published in 2020 under the title: "**Journalism and Corruption: Toward a Hierarchical Universal Theory of Determinants**". The purpose is to develop a grand theory that explains the culture of impunity without which the global community will be unable to identify either the forces that sustain or deter impunity or protect journalists. The grand theory is built on the systems analysis approach that considers the interaction between forces of several systems on the national level. It also considers the influence of the international system in promoting or hindering the culture of impunity.

The existence of corruption requires three elements to simultaneously coexist: first, the powerful person who has a discretionally power; second, an economic rent or political benefit linked to this authority; and third, low probability of detection by the judicial system. In a country where a culture of impunity and corruption prevail, power and public resources are more likely directed toward protecting the elite of the corrupt regime- the armed forces, the police, the executives, and other cliques of social control- as the regime seeks to perpetuate its control (Jain, 2001).

Culture of impunity and corruption imply that things, behaviors, and policies are not what they ought to be. They have been deviant from the normal and expected paths. The theory is designed in hierarchical levels in which the upper level, the macro level, is supposed to influence the lower level and so on. A macro level study

of the issue of culture of impunity and corruption examine social and political structures that exist in higher layers of the hierarchy. These levels operate hierarchically: What happens at the lower levels is determined by what occurs at higher levels to cause or deter the corruption behavior or the culture of impunity in a particular system.

As Shoemaker and Rees argue, the hierarchy of influences model is useful for research in two important respects. First, any single perspective does not offer a comprehensive view, which is possible only when all levels affecting the variables under study are considered. Second, merging multiple hierarchical levels of analysis provide distinct explanations and direct the attention to the interplay between them (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The main argument of “the hierarchical universal theory of journalism, corruption and culture of impunity determinants” as introduced here perceives corruption act or “culture of impunity” as an outcome of a continuous interaction between five hierarchical levels. They are: (1) journalistic level, (2) economic level, (3) political level, (4) cultural level, and (5) the international system level. In general, each level has many sublevels interacting with each other to bring about an effect on corruption that could be negative or positive, minor or major, and finally in one domain or multiple domains.

“The hierarchical universal theory of journalism/corruption and culture of impunity determinants” intends to accommodate the various variables and underlying relations affecting corruption organized in a continuum from macro-international to micro-journalistic or individual level. The theory intends to synthesize the main cross-border hypotheses that create linkages capable to explain corruption and culture of impunity, predict it, direct the future studies, and finally contribute to reducing it and protect journalists (Hamada, 2020).

Based on the suggested theory, the global community has to initiate different measures to fight impunity and to protect journalists. The current initiative of UN, UNESCO and many other NGOs is mainly a legal, one dimensional, micro - based approach. The missing, instead, is a journalistic, political, economic cultural and international system. A macro approach that not only deal directly with perpetrators and violators of journalism crimes but with the overall societal and global atmosphere in which such culture survives and perpetrators commit their crimes. In consistent with the macro approach, the definition of journalists’ safety has to be revisited and re- measured to cover the physical, digital, psychological and financial dimensions of this concept.

## References

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