

# Government Corruption, Politics of Prebendalism and Democratic Governance in Quebec, Canada

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**Abstract:** This paper exposes the negative consequences of government corruption and the politics of prebendalism on democratic governance in Quebec, Canada. Relevant information was obtained through a desk-based research, making use of secondary data. Moreover, by adopted the theory of prebendalism as the theoretical framework of analysis, the paper finds out that, to a great extent, top level political offices and some government institutions have simply become a route to riches for politicians in Quebec. Many stay in power 'merely to enjoy' the benefits of illicit enrichment accumulating from the political offices they occupy. It has been uncovered that government corruption carved within political parties (and other government institutions), driven by the politics of prebendalism has curtailed the development of a strong democratic governance mode that can work for both the leaders and the led. The central argument supported by the analysis in this paper is that, politicians' struggle to occupy state offices by electoral competition, with the premeditated mindset of using such offices as prebends, to be 'swiftly exploited' in a variety of formal and informal networks for person gains, produces a very 'thin' version of democracy, antithetical to the principles of democratic governance. Hence, the findings of this paper are important in our understanding of the mutually reinforcing nature of several dimensions of politico-economic behavior, motivated by a system of prebendal politics, which is socio-politically and economically destructive to democratic governance and development not only in 'emerging' but also in advanced democracies. As such, the analytical and public policy insight developed in this paper has important democratic implications not only for Quebec, Canada but also for other advanced democracies experiencing similar democratic governance challenges.

**Key Words:** Democracy, Democratic governance, government corruption, prebendalism, Quebec.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Corruption has become a growing concern in Canada in general and Quebec in particular in recent years. Corruption scandals involving high profile political leaders have increasingly erupted in the Province of Quebec as in other parts of Canada. This has resulted to wide spread media headlines and coverage, economic and reputational damage and governments commissions of inquiry (Boisvert, and Quraishi, 2014). Furthermore, Transparency International in its 2019 Corruption perception index, calls on countries such as Canada, to develop firmer anti-corruption mechanisms and to ensure stronger enforcement of corruption-related offences. "Although legislative amendments and increased enforcement have taken place to curb

these critiques, much work remains to elevate Canada's position internationally" (ibid).

This paper's focus on Quebec is inspired by Martin Patriquin's (2010) article titled: *Quebec: The most corrupt province: Why does Quebec claim so many of the nation's political scandals?* as well as the author of this paper's personal observations of the increasing manifestations of political corruption in Quebec as reported by the media between 2011 and 2014 when he was a resident of Quebec, as well as the current growing political corruption scandals. This increasing corruption no doubt, posed a real threat to democratic governance in the Province. Even though corruption exists in many developed democracies, Quebec has so far been singled out among prominent scholars and political philosophers as perhaps one of the most pronounced cases. For instance, "in 1968, referring to widespread government corruption, historian, Samuel Huntington singled out the province as perhaps the most corrupt area in Canada" (Patriquin, 2010). Nonetheless, many observers and scholars expected that with modernisation and the increasing emphasis on enhancing democratic governance in both developed and developing countries, this would have encouraged greater integrity in government in the Province of Quebec.

The increasing importance of democratic governance in public administration is well emphasised in the Canadian constitution. This relates particularly to the democratic deepening roles of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the Canadian Government. The democratic content is briefly summarised as follows:

The Legislative Branch shall represent the people and be accountable to them through periodic elections.... The executive branch shall ensure that the public's business is carried out efficiently, accountably, and in accordance with the law.... The judicial branch shall be non-partisan and free from interference by the government.... (Brooks, 2012).

In contemporary Quebec society, government corruption is perceived to have increased alongside emphasis on democratic governance and state modernization. Daily newspapers in Montreal and other cities in the Province reported 'shocking' bribery and embezzlement scandals involving political figures and senior public officials. Moreover, polls (both in Quebec and at the Federal level) reveal a declining level of voter turnout and remarkable student activism and protest against the provincial government policies. Talking about the

Canadian Society in general, Brooks (ibid), states that “today Canadians are less likely to vote than almost any time since Confederation”. This observation is echoed by the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing in this way: “Canadians appear to distrust their political leaders, the political process and political institution...” (ibid: 308). It appears, therefore, that the above issues involved in liberal democratic promotion raise crucial political and normative questions about issues of state effectiveness (strong state) and government legitimacy as perceived by the people (citizens) subject to its rule, not only in Quebec but also in Canada at large.

Although the literature analysing these developments is rich and varied, there is relatively little scholarship that systematically and empirically examines from the framework of the theory of *prebendalism*, the negative consequences of government corruption on democratic governance in contemporary Quebec. This knowledge gap is surprising, given the democratic fact that success of any form of government, whether provincial or federal, is partly dependent on the accountability and transparency measures built into the governance system. As such, the importance of disentangling the historical and socio-political legacies and current dynamics of government corruption in advanced democracies such as Quebec, Canada, is important in our understanding of the mutually reinforcing nature of several dimensions of politico-economic behavior motivated by a system of *prebendal* politics, which is socio-politically and economically destructive to democratic governance and development.

Hence, this paper investigates these issues through an examination of the politics of *prebendalism* that generates systemic political corruption considered within the broader context of the Canadian political system, and in particular the shaping effects of the federal-sovereignty debate. The aim is to have an enhanced understanding of how political corruption in Quebec powered by *prebendal* politics has influenced democratic practice in the sense of failing to develop a strong democratic governance model that works for both the political leaders and the led. This paper is organised around eight interconnected sections as follows: 1. *Introduction*; 2. *Methodology*; 3. *Conceptual Clarification*; 4. *Theoretical framework of Analysis: The Politics of Prebendalism*; 5. *The Operations of Political Parties, Government Corruption and Prebendal Politics in Quebec*; 6. *The Consequences of the Deepening Political Corruption and Prebendal Politics on Democratic Governance in Quebec*; 7. *Public Policy Implications*; and 8. *Conclusion*.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This research is theoretically and empirically constructed around a critical review of relevant literature and desk-based inquiry, adopting an essentially qualitative and exploratory research design. Hence, it makes use of secondary data from books, articles, online media and reports of international organisations. Content/thematic analysis was adopted as data

analysis strategy of relevant documents and reports. The analytical procedure involved finding, deciding, interpreting and synthesizing data contained in the documents/reports and guided by the Theory of *Prebendalism*, which enabled the author to have predetermined key concepts and themes. Analysis also involved, direct quotations of key stakeholders contained in media reports.

## III. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS.

This section deals with the conceptual clarification of key terms such as, democracy, democratic governance, government corruption, while the politics of *prebendalism* is discussed in the subsequent section under the theoretical framework.

### 3.1 Government/Political corruption.

Corruption exists everywhere in the world and it means different things to different people. As Chabal and Daloz (1999: 96) put it,

The study of corruption is beset with analytical and practical difficulties. In the first instance, it is virtually impossible to agree on a workable definition of the phenomenon. Second, there is no convenient interpretative framework, which helps explain the links between the various levels (micro and macro) of corruption. Finally, and most obviously, it is difficult, when not downright impossible, empirically to observe the phenomenon in a scientifically meaningful way

Moreover, there are different types of corruption that can mean different thing to different people. The most prominent categories are ‘grand versus petty’ corruption, ‘conventional versus unconventional corruption’ and public versus private corruption (Boisvert, et al., 2014). Other ways in which corruption has been described are ‘systemic versus individual’ or ‘isolated;’ corruption by ‘commission versus ‘omission’; corruption by the degree of coercion used to perform the illegal act; and the type of benefit provided (ibid). In addition, due to the lack of a universal definition of corruption, varieties of terms have been used to describe corruption in the Canadian and other socio-economic and political contexts. Such terms include amongst others, ‘bribery,’ ‘kick-backs,’ ‘misappropriation,’ ‘embezzlement’ etc. Moreover, corruption in all its forms is a criminal act in Canada and internationally. Even though corruption is a complex concept to define, it is however important to attempt a specific working definition of corruption as applied in this paper for the purpose of contextual analysis and proposing institutional responses to fight corrupt practices which have a detrimental effect on democratic governance for development.

The word ‘corruption’ originates from the Latin word *corruptus*, which means ‘to break.’ (Colin Nicholls et al., 2006 cited in Boisvert and Quraishi, 2014). Corruption is widely considered as “exercise of official powers without regard for the public interest” (Yingling, 2013: 263 cited in Boisvert and Quraishi, 2014). ) and the “abuse of public office for private gain” (Beare, 2003: 9). The implication is

that institutions designed to govern the state are used in the contrary, to manipulate the state office for personal enrichment and the provision of benefits to the corrupt. This definition somewhat leaves one with the impression that corruption is practiced only in the public sector. However, it is essential to note that corruption also exists in a purely private setting as well as in public-private relations. In such instances, personal interest takes precedence over institutional interest to which “the offender has been entrusted with supporting” (Boisvert and Quraishi, 2014). “The most critical difference between grand corruption and petty corruption is that the former involves the distortion or corruption of the central functions of Government, while the latter develops and exists within the context of established governance and social frameworks” (UNODC, 2004: 11).

Grand corruption, referred to in this paper as government or political corruption is the focus of this paper. As such, these terms are used interchangeably in this paper. According to Transparency International (1998), corruption “undermines good government, fundamentally distorts public policy, leads to the misallocation of resources, harms the private sector and private sector development and particularly hurts the poor.” Viewed in this way, political or government corruption as employed in this paper, involves political leaders and decision makers. Referring to the kind of political corruption observed in Quebec, it is the actions of “higher ranking government officials and elected officials who exploit opportunities that are presented through government work” (Boisvert and Quraishi, 2014). More often, it is the consequence of bribe offers or payments in connection with large-scale government projects such as infrastructure and construction projects (Igbinedion, 2009 cited in Boisvert and Quraishi, 2014).

Therefore, talking about government corruption in Quebec, we refer to the behaviour and actions of state officials and politicians who manipulate state institutions in ways that fit their self-interests and this, in disregard of the rule of law, thereby leading to institutional deterioration. Government corruption here is manifested essentially at the high political level of the political system with negative repercussions on both the macro and micro levels of society. It is when political leaders and government officials engage in the extraction of state resources by virtue of their political power for their own personal politico-economic ambitions. In this kind of system, tax exemptions are frequently granted; state officials pocket bribes and fines. Consequently, political corruption may generate a set of dark networks focused on the use of public institutions and funds for private purposes, acquisition of undue privileges, and generation of certain rules of the game that perpetuate a cycle of illegal activities, often unfiltered by the judicial system (Manzetti and Wilson 2007 cited in Van Ryzin and Lavena, 2013). Some examples of high profile government or political corruption observed in contexts such as Quebec include amongst others, circumstances whereby high ranking government officials issue government contracts to private businesses for extreme prices and arranging some form of bribes or kickbacks in advance to the benefit of

government official and the private business agent. This kind of high profile government corruption usually takes place at the contractor/sub-contractor levels (Yingling, 2013). While political corruption in most new democracies and authoritarian systems appear to be endemic and systemic it is crucial to highlight the fact that in most advanced democracies political corruption tend to be more of an incidental and occasional episodes .

Scholars have also come to depict government corruption as one of the potential causes of distrust in government and declining legitimacy of political institutions (Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Bowler and Karp 2004, cited in Van Ryzin and Lavena, 2013) which in turn has a negative impact on democratic governance for meaningful citizen participation in government affairs. According to Chafe (1994), the degree of involvement of the citizenry in the total affairs of their polity, within the standards of natural justice, determines the degree or democratic substance of a political system. Along this same line, Moen and Eriksen (2010), contend that citizens’ active involvement in governing society is a central source of state legitimacy. Taking their analysis further, they argue, “a state which is recognised as the highest political authority and has the capacity to enforce its policies is a strong state, while a state that has neither is a weak one” (ibid). One would expect a strong state that practices ‘strong politics’ with inclusionary policies that are more or less in accordance with the preferences and expectations of the citizens, to be more legitimate and effective than a weak state that practices ‘weak politics.’ Quebec, even though an advanced democracy is also depicted in this paper as practising some degree of ‘weak politics’ in the form of high profile government corruption.

Thus, democracy will certainly work best when it is understood as a mechanism to curb corruption and as a partnership between citizens and government, enabling citizens’ political empowerment. As a matter of concern, in recent years, the relationship between governance and democracy has attracted a growing awareness due to the fact that governance, public decision making and democratic performance are interconnected. This certainly necessitate a conceptual clarification of the term democracy and establishing its connection with governance, hence the term ‘democratic governance’.

### *3.2 Democracy and Democratic Governance.*

Considering the fact that the literature on the institutional dimensions of democracy and democratic governance is now quite broad, we can only attempt a selective and careful review here. This is essentially for the purpose of positioning the study in an analytic framework. Although pursuit of democracy remains one of the preoccupations of many modern societies, its definition continues to be problematic. Democracy is essentially a contested concept and many will disagree over the applicability and desirability of a particular concept of democracy. Part of the problem with defining democracy has to do with the fact that ‘real democracy’ is an ideal towards which many nations are indeed aspiring. It is not

an absolute concept. However, in arguing for democratic forms of politics, scholars are likely to define democracy by selecting among those characteristics associated with the concept which they think justify or which they expect to produce desirable outcomes. For example, what types of political institutions are most likely to enable democracy to function effectively, and under what types of circumstances? What are the characteristic problems of democratic performance that institutional designers most need to bind the system against (see Diamond and Plattner, 1996)? As a reaction to these questions, a large part of the writing on consolidation has taken the form of a discussion of the types of institutional structures, which would best facilitate democratic development. There has also been a similar concern with other aspects of the institutional structure, including the electoral system and political parties (Mainwaring 1998).

Despite the polemic nature of the concept of democracy, Carothers (1999, cited in Gaventa, 2006) argues that the democracy template which democracy promoters often start with include a standard recipe of support for elections, state institutions and civil society. According to this author, it also means that the electoral process and elections are free and fair; there are strong national parties; democratic constitutions are in place, there is an independent and effective judiciary and rule of law, competent representative legislature, responsive local government, pro-democratic military; active civil society ; politically educated citizenry; strong independent media etc. However, all these considerations should be seen as interconnected elements of a democratic system each interacting with each other and not as separate categories.

For the liberal democratic tradition, democracy is defined by the two combined principles of equal individual rights and accountability of rulers to the ruled (see Tocqueville 1961; Rawls 1989). According to this approach, democracy is not merely a question of forms and procedures; it is also a question of substance—those equal rights to individual autonomy and liberty, include equal obligations (Budge and McKay 1994). The assumption is that the territorial state is the appropriate community for democratisation (Held, 1992, Hindess, 1999). This view is so entrenched that most commentators would agree that political theory has made a profound connection between democracy and the nation state (Clark, 1999:147), which international theory and practice reinforce, placing democracy squarely within the domestic sphere (Evans, 2001:624). Even here, as we shall noticed below, the link between values and institutions remain somewhat ambiguous.

Another approach (still within the liberalist model), but more unified- ‘political pluralism’ which sprang as, a reaction to the political circumstances of liberal democracy (Robert Dahl’s ‘Polyarchy’ (1977), is an excellent example. It has its origins in the writings of Schumpeter (1943), Dahl (1971) and Huntington (1984). A major consequence of the pluralist

approach derives from the ‘elitist theory’ of democracy to which it is attached. This concerns the other basic democratic principle of accountability. This assumption places the principle of accountability at the centre of all forms of liberal democracy (Evans, 2001). Once elected, governments should be left to govern, first because they know best and secondly because they will periodically be subjected to elections, which should be enough to convince office holders that they have a stake in doing what is expected of them (Budge and McKay, 1994).

Another assumption of liberal democracy is that the democratic state act in the interest of the whole population, not in the interest of particular national or global groups (Evans, 2001). Dahl (1998) was equally quick to point out that democracy is taken to mean “the holding of elections, the existence of a multi-party political system, and a set of procedures for government”. This means that democratic elections enable people to choose who will represent their views, interests and concerns in legislatures and other public arenas (Williams, 2003). They also enable people to decide collectively who will govern them and to hold their leaders accountable (ibid). Montambeault (2011) takes the analysis of governmental accountability to citizens further. He argues that accountability rests on the capacity of citizens to evaluate politicians’ decisions and to impose sanctions on them, and *clientelistic* relationships hinder their ability to do so. Tambulasi and Kayuni (2007) describes clientelism as the existence of people in authority who have the power to disburse resources, popularly called patrons and those that are ruled who have no resources but have some kind of power that can enhance the position of the patron. As such, many have come to argue that clientelism nurtures corruption (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, 2002; Tripp, 2001) which in turn, fosters “cronyism and rent seeking, and siphons off potential state revenues (Moen, 2003: 10 cited Tambulasi and Kayuni 2007). Citing scholars such as Schedler et al. (1999), Mainwaring and Welna (2003), Montambeault notes that “deficiencies of accountability mechanisms are often visible in new democracies, challenging the development of inclusive democratic citizenship rights and thereby creating lower-quality democracies.” This understanding perhaps explains why in well-institutionalised democracies, elected officials are held accountable not only ‘vertically,’ to voters but also ‘horizontally’ to other autonomous institutions within the government that can monitor their conduct and punish wrongdoing (Diamond and Plattner, 1996).

In liberal states, mechanisms of accountability extend beyond elections and include transparency, procedural norms, auditing of public funds, free media and public political debate (Moen and Eriksen 2010). Such mechanisms as these authors contend, constitute a source of legitimacy since they provide a channel for citizens to be engaged in how the state governs (ibid). It appears therefore, that the above issues involved in liberal democratic promotion raise crucial political and normative questions about issues of state effectiveness (strong state) and legitimacy as perceived by the people



(citizens) subject to its rule. According to Moen and Eriksen, “a state which is recognised as the highest political authority and has the capacity to enforce its policies is a strong state, while a state that has neither is a weak one” (ibid). As these authors put it, “one would expect an effective state to be more legitimate than an ineffective one, provided that its policies are more or less in accordance with popular preferences and expectations” (ibid). Therefore, well-institutionalised democracies such as Quebec are expected to be more legitimate in the eyes of their citizens than new democracies such as it is the case in many parts of Africa and Asia. However, as it will become clear, the deepening crisis of democratic governance because of high profile government corruption by political leaders has worked against government legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens in that part of Canada.

The above observation leads us to the essentiality of democratic consolidation. According to Whitehead (2002:29), democratic consolidation “must reach some ultimate destination, where the spirit and letter of democratic rules are accepted by everyone.” Philip takes the analysis further by offering a more flexible fourfold list of conceptions of consolidation: (1) the acceptance of institutionalised rules; (2) the long-term survival of democracy; (3) the public acceptance of democratic attitudes, and (4) the achievement of a large proportion of democratic features. (Philip, in Burnell, 2003:201-215; Beetham et al., 2002:14-16). All these reinforce the fact that one cannot talk about meaningful democracy without talking about democratic consolidation. Hence, “with consolidation, democracy becomes routinised in social, institutional, and even psychological life, as well as in calculations for achieving success” (Linz and Stepan, 1996). The advantage of this approach over a more narrowly procedural conception is that while acknowledging the importance of procedural elements, it also specifically recognises that the mass of the populace have a part to play in a democratic polity (Gill, 2000).

Now, the question becomes: have such forms of democratic consolidation been achieved? Although everyday experience of democratisation (especially in transitional societies) reveal that some progress has been made along these lines, Philip himself hints, “deciding how much progress constitutes ‘consolidation’ is a matter of subjective judgment” (Philip, in Burnell, 2003). If minimal progress is observed, we would be closer to Schmitter’s ‘unconsolidated democracy’ where the basic rules and institutions exists, but political actors show little respect for them and frequently bend the rules in pursuit of their own partial ends (Schmitter, in Tulchin and Romero, 1995). Examples of this can be observed in both advanced and developing country contexts though more pronounced in the former (as discussed earlier). In fact, it will become more evident in the pages that follow when discussing the manifestation of government corruption in advanced democracies such as Quebec, Canada.

Based on the discourse above, in this paper we consider aspects of democracy to include: principles of rule of law,

elections to ensure peaceful transfers of power, participation by the citizenry in their government, transparency and accountability, and many other features that are important to a participatory and accountable form of government and of democratic consolidation. Put simply from the perspective of Abraham Lincoln democracy in this paper is “government of the people by the people and for the people.” Democracy in this case is conceived as a regime or a system of government in which citizens acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their representatives, hold rulers accountable for their actions in the public domain and, governance as a paradigm is shifting the role of citizens from passive to active participants in democracy. Against all this, and from a normative point of view, effective governance need the support of democracy and vice versa. Hence, governing democratically requires democratic ideals and institutions with governments assuming the responsibility “to create and support civic institutions and processes that facilitate the construction, maintenance, and development of democratic identities” (March and Olsen, 1995). This facilitates the adoption of the meaning of democratic governance provided by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) as the working definition in this paper. UNDP (1997), defines governance as the exercise of power through a country’s economic, social, and political institutions in which institutions represent the organizational rules and routines, formal laws, and informal norms that together shape the incentives of public policymakers, overseers, and providers of public services. As such, UNDP acknowledges participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision as core characteristics of democratic governance (ibid). In this way, democratic governance is, a set of values and principles that underpin state-society relations, allowing people — in particular the poor and marginalized — to have a say in how they are governed, in how decisions are made and implemented. it also means that people’s human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected, and that they can hold their leaders to account, thus aiming to make governing institutions more responsive and accountable, and respectful of international norms and principle (UNDP, 2014)

The above definition implies that countries such as Canada that respect democratic governance values and principles must also ensure that institutional mechanisms are in place to enable governmental accountability and transparency. In which case, democratic governance relies on the integrity and legitimacy of key institutions in order to carry out necessary functions, such as the provision of essential services. As such, the relationship between democracy and governance is broken when the power to make policy decisions is captured by organised vested interests (Scott, 2004). It is therefore no surprise that as important supplement to the governance of officials, through the imposition of sanction and rewards, institutional perspectives emphasise the socialisation of public officials to an ethic of administrative duty and conformity to

law (Marsh and Olsen, 1995). Actions in the service of personal values or interest are viewed as contrary to good sense, justice, efficiency, and the elementary obligations of office- so that formal bureaucratic rules of a Weberian type take precedence over informal rules rooted in

#### IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS: THE POLITICS OF PREBENDALISM.

In this paper, political corruption in Quebec is analysed from the theoretical framework of *Prebendalism*. Introduced in modern social science by Max Weber and historically rooted in feudal societies, a “prebend” is a public office procured by an individual in return for loyal service to a lord and retained for his personal use and for benefiting his own followers. (Joseph, 1987). Max Weber drew widely in his writings on patrimonial systems: “The office-holders in Weber’s decentralized patrimonial administration – feudal knights, Indian jagirdars, Egyptian Mamelukes – were able to exercise many of the powers which accrued to the patrimonial order as a whole” (Joseph, 2013). Richard A. Joseph is usually credited as the first to adapt the concept of ‘prebend’ to the forces of clientelism and (neo) patrimonialism at work in Nigerian politics. In describing prebendal politics in Nigeria, Joseph states

The term prebendal refers to patterns of political behavior which reflect as their justifying principle that the offices of the existing state may be competed for and then utilized for the benefit of the office-holders as well as that of their reference or support group. To a significant extent, the ‘state’ in such a context is perceived as a congeries of offices susceptible to individual cum communal appropriation. The statutory purposes of such offices become a matter of secondary concern, however much that purpose might have been codified in law or other regulations or even periodically cited during competitions to fill them (Joseph, 1983; 1987)

As such, “according to the theory of *prebendalism*, state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by officeholders, who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups...” (ibid). In this kind of political malpractice, where politicians compete for state offices not necessary for the sake of ‘the people’ but rather as an entry point to have access to state power and resources for personal gain, Nigeria has over the years been ranked by transparency international as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. This kind of political motivation is certainly not the preserve of Nigeria. The phenomenon is observed in many other African countries and developing nations where the forces of patrimonialism and clientelism is greatest.

In this paper, the logic of *prebendalism* has been found to operate in contemporary Quebec politics and society. As shall be better appreciated in the next section, office holders both at the provincial and municipal levels in Quebec society seem to think that their politico-administrative positions give them the unrestrained right to use state power and resources to satisfy

their personal needs of politico-economic aggrandizement as well as their network of political clients and supporters. Consequently, this kind of corrupt practice and hence, the criminalization of political leadership not only has the effect of starving the province of important revenue meant for development but also serves to delegitimize the state and trigger institutional deterioration. Therefore, even though the theory of *prebendalism* finds fertile grounds in clientelistic and (neo)patrimonial country contexts such as Nigeria, the pages below demonstrate that the struggle for ‘high’ political office for the sake of political manipulation and self-interest is quickly becoming the dominant political logic in contemporary Quebec where ‘prebendal politics’ is taking precedence over ‘democratic politics.’ Richard A. Joseph in developing the theory of *prebendalism* within the Nigerian context, certainly made a solid contribution to African social science theory and the challenges of democratisation. However, he failed to carry out a comparative analysis of the workings of *prebendalism* in other ‘new; and advanced democracies undergoing similar but not identical democratic governance challenges. Hence, Richard A. Joseph misses the possible comparative analytical power of the theory of *prebendalism* in other political context such as Quebec. The section below therefore focuses on the manifestations of government corruption, the workings of prebendal politics and their resultant consequence on democratic governance in the province of Quebec.

#### V. THE OPERATIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES, GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION AND PREBENDAL POLITICS IN QUEBEC.

Quebeckers were outraged in 2010 when *Maclean’s*, a Canadian magazine, labelled their province the most corrupt in the country. True, a Quebec-based scandal had helped to topple the federal government in 2006, and evidence was mounting of bid-rigging and kickbacks in local administration. But Quebec’s defenders claimed that the revelations simply showed their anti-corruption investigators were more vigilant than others. Months of damaging testimony to a corruption inquiry have now left even the province’s boosters short of excuses. The inquiry, headed by France Charbonneau, a justice of the Quebec Superior Court, has this month led to the resignations of Gérald Tremblay, the Mayor of Montreal and Gilles Vaillancourt, mayor of neighboring Laval. Both still vehemently maintain their innocence, yet had little choice but to go (The Economist, Nov 17, 2012)

Rightly or wrongly, the above statement nicely captures some of the dynamics and consequences of government corruption and *prebendal politics* (both at the provincial and municipal levels) on Quebec’s ‘democratic polity.’ It shows how patterns of corrupt political behavior by government officials both at the provincial and municipal level of government waxes and wanes with *prebendal politics* in Quebec. It reflects the logic of *prebendalism* as noted by Joseph (1987) in the case of Nigeria. In the case of Quebec as revealed in the

state above, corrupt political leaders (prebends) seemed to have the conviction that government office was out to be competed for and once won, it is *instrumentalised* for the personal benefits of the office holder and their support networks, at the expense of the statutory purpose of the state office they occupy.

This observation above perhaps necessitates some background information on Quebec's party politics. As such, section opens with a brief overview of the evolution of the Canadian party system and the operations of political parties, with a particular focus on its provincial dimension as it applies to Quebec, before providing a background and current dynamics of the province's experience with political corruption and *prebendal politics*.

### 5.1 The Operations of Political Parties

Over the last few decades, the Canadian party system has undergone major transformations with a regional dimension. The most recent rise of regional parties in 1993 is consistent with the unfolding of a recurring and long-term cycle of protest in Canadian electoral history that results in the regional fragmentation of the party system (Kay Lawson and Jorge Lanzaro 2010). From the late 1950s onwards, scholars have described Canada as a two-plus party system (two and one-half party system), with the Liberals and Conservatives competing for the majority of votes (Brooks, 2012, Hepburn, 2010). As such, they were the parties with realistic chance of forming a government, while the New Democratic Party (NDP) was a stable minority party on the Federal scene with particular strength in Western Canada (ibid). It is also said that during this period, the Canadian party system was "driven by parties promoting their own national agendas" (Carty et al., 2000: 5). However, the year 1993 saw the 'expiration' of this party system when the three main parties saw their votes collapse, ushering in a multi-party system at the federal level in Canada (Brooks, 2012; Hepburn 2010). New political parties emerged, including the Bloc Québécois (in Quebec) and Reform/Canadian Alliance (in Alberta), which drew support from voters opposed to the brokerage-style politics (see, Brooks, 2012: 302)<sup>1</sup>. Since 2006, Canada has experimented with a four-party system —Liberals, Conservatives, NDP and Bloc Québécois (Eagles and Carty, 2003 cited in Hepburn 2010) with strong regional support bases (see Brooks, 2012). Some have even argued that there is no one single party system in Canada, but rather "shifting, but distinct, regional party systems" that give primacy to regional interests (Carty et al., 2001). Each province has a different and highly regionalised choice of parties in federal elections

<sup>1</sup> Brokerage-style political theory makes the claim that Canada's two historically dominant political parties (the Conservatives and the Liberals) "do not appeal to specific socio-economic groupings, and they lack cohesive ideological visions (especially those based on class interest and identity); second, the parties are flexible and opportunistic because this sort of behaviour is necessary to preserve the fragile unity of the nation" (Brooks, 2012: 303).

(Gidengil et al., 1999), and in provincial elections, there is an even greater choice of parties. Yet "no other provincial party system in Canada is as distinct from the federal system as Quebec's" (Rayside, 1978: 500 cited in Hepburn 2010).

From the late 1960s during the Quiet Revolution until the 1990s Quebec has also had a two-plus party system, whereby the Quebec Liberal Party (PLQ) and the Parti Québécois (PQ) together won at least 85% of the vote in every provincial election since 1973 (Tanguay, 2004: 223). As a result, the PLQ has alternated in power with the PQ, commanding an average of 45% of the vote in provincial elections from 1960–2007 (Hepburn 2010). In its early years, the independence-seeking PQ won impressive electoral support (Petry, 2002). It held office from 1976–85, and 1994–2003, implementing a series of reforms designed to preserve Quebec's unique cultural identity and status, including two unsuccessful referendums on sovereignty-association in 1980 and 1995. Polls taken in June of 1990 showed that a majority of Québécois supported political independence (Brooks, 2012: 71) from the rest of Canada. With this background, we now move to a discourse on the dynamics of corruption by political leaders in the Province.

### 5.2 The Manifestations of Government Corruption and Prebendal Politics in Quebec

This sub-section is strongly influenced by Martin Patriquin's (2010), critical analysis of government corruption in contemporary Quebec, which labelled Quebec as the most corrupt province in Canada. Patriquin in his article titled: "*Quebec: The most corrupt province: Why does Quebec claim so many of the nation's political scandals?*" published in 2010 in Maclean's, critically reviews the question of Quebec nationalism and demonstrates how the province's political leaders have masterminded the phenomenon of Quebec as a 'distinct society,' to indulge in high profile politically corrupt practices. The 'Québécois', demanding a special status to further their own political career through the politics of *prebendalism* and neo-patrimonialism with emphasis on politico-administrative corruption. His analysis opens up important new lines of inquiry into what it means to be in democratic deficit in advanced democracies such as Quebec where the 'culture of political corruption' waxes and wanes with everyday public administration.

It therefore suffices now to borrow some of the political corruption cases unfolded by Martin Patriquin. This scholar reveals how even before the Quiet Revolution in the Province of Quebec (with premiers such as Maurice Duplessis, Bourassa and Levesque) up to the rule of Jean Charest, *prebendal* politics had been a deeply entrenched political logic in Quebec. To take the case of Maurice Duplessis for example, Patriquin (2010) declares that this long-reigning premier and nationalistic Quebec Premier "was a champion of patronage-driven government, showering favourable ridings with contracts and construction projects at the expense of those that dared vote against him" and that he reserved \$60,000 cash in his basement to reward cooperative constituents.

This resembles the kind of neopatrimonial politics of clientelism between the political leaders and the citizens observed in most fragile democratic contexts in Africa whereby those who follow and support the 'President' or again the regime in power are rewarded with wealth and privileges including opportunities for upward mobility at the expense of non-supporters and other citizens.

Linking up to the problem of vote buying, a typical case pointed out by the scholar was the rise of "Baie Comeau's prodigal son", Brian Mulroney, into power as Prime Minister of Canada. According to the author, this was facilitated by an "altogether dirty battle against Joe Clark in Quebec that saw provincial Conservative organizers solicit Montreal homeless shelters and welcome missions, promising free beer for anyone who voted for Mulroney in the leadership campaign". Meanwhile Clark's Quebec organisers, for their part, signed-up underage political supporters with promises of "booze and barbecue chicken" (ibid).

There are many other high level political corruption cases registered in Quebec in recent years such as the "sponsorship scandal in which businessmen associated with the Liberal Party of Canada siphoned off roughly \$100 million" of state funds (ibid). In connection to this, corrupt act, Auditor General Sheila Fraser, in 2004, wrote: "I am deeply disturbed that such practices were allowed to happen," (ibid). Also, related to fraudulent party financing, the above scholar points out that a study carried out by the progressive Party Québec Solidaire, found out that, "the senior management at four of Quebec's big construction and engineering firms each donated the maximum or near the maximum allowable amount to the Quebec Liberal party, to the collective tune of \$400,000 in 2008 alone." He added that the PQ and the Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ), also participated in the 'spoil' though with a lower intensity. As such, rendering the political financing law enacted by the PQ government (banning donations from unions and corporations and limiting annual individual donations to \$3,000)—nonsensical.

Patriquin's (2010) analysis also reveal that in this political market of 'give and take' (*I chop, you chop*, to use the Cameroonian pidgin English terms, which literally means *I eat you also eat*), with the regime that be, 'political patrons' (premiers, in Quebec's case) offered politically motivated contracts and loans to their clients (business men and construction firms). A typical example was the case of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien who granted loans to supporters, with impunity. In the words of Jean Chrétien "I work for my electors, that's my job," (ibid). Another case he pointed out is that of Raymond Bachand who "started his political career as a senior organizer for René Lévesque's *Yes Campaign* in 1980" and later on becoming "the Minister of Finance in Charest's staunchly federalist government." In his writings, there is also the cases of Liberal, Jean Lapierre who "was a founding member of the Bloc Québécois, only to return to Martin's Liberal cabinet in 2004." Martin Patriquin, discusses

how "many Quebec politicians never seem to leave but just change sides."

In the case of the then most recent ousted and one of the longest serving premiers in Quebec- Jean Charest (who served from April 29, 2003 to September 04, 2012), Martin Patriquin notes,

...in the past two years, the government has lurched from one scandal to the next, from political financing to favouritism in the provincial daycare system to the matter of Charest's own (long undisclosed) \$75,000 stipend, paid to him by his own party, to corruption in the construction industry (ibid).

He further notes that the liberal Quebec premier avoided repeated calls to investigate into these issues. However, the media reports have it that for two years, just about everybody in Quebec was calling for an inquiry into corruption in Quebec with a focus on Jean Charest's administration. With the mounting pressure, Jean Charest finally relented in October 2011( Riga, 2019). He launched a public inquiry to investigate 1) collusion and corruption in public construction contracts, 2) whether such crimes were linked to political party fundraising, and 3) the role organised crime played in the construction industry (ibid). With Justice France Charbonneau at the helm, its hearings were broadcast live and Quebecers were riveted to over 261 days of public testimony (ibid). The following corrupt practices amongst came to light:

Civil servants were being paid off. Above-board contractors were being harassed. Construction and engineering firms were rigging bids. In some cases, the Mafia controlled which companies won contracts, how much they would charge, and got a percentage of the take. The machinations were producing substandard infrastructure and costing taxpayers untold millions(ibid)

It took four years for the \$45-million Chabonneau Commission to publish the final report. A media commentary on CPAC website, titled: "Shocking Corruption : Quebec in the Charbonneau Era" put the outcome of the investigation in this way:

For 4 years, the province of Quebec has been plagued by corruption scandals as well as cases of fraud and collusion. On a daily basis, the media, police and the Charbonneau Commission have revealed to shocked Quebecers the scale of a system that was used for decades in the awarding of public contracts and political financing. This system has included scams involving players at the most senior levels of government and the civil service as well as the Mafia, in Montreal and Laval (ibid).

According Superior Court Justice France Charbonneau head of the inquiry commission that looked into corruption in Quebec's construction industry under the decade long reign of Jean Charest as premier of Quebec, political parties were at the centre of this political corruption and organized crime at the highest level of government and the private sector. In her words,



Witnesses revealed political financing's hidden face. They clearly demonstrated the connections between the financing of political parties and the awarding of public contracts.... As one witness mentioned, 'the machines of political parties today have become monsters and have considerable financial demands.' Other witnesses underlined how certain [government] ministers were obliged by their political parties to raise a certain amount of money. These practices rendered elected officials vulnerable to outside influences when it came to the awarding of public contracts. It is therefore necessary to cut these connections." (Patriquin, 2015).

For years now, "Quebec's anti-corruption squad, known as UPAC, has been investigating the Quebec Liberal Party's financing during the Charest period (CBC News, Jan 21, 2020). During this political corruption scandal period under Charest's administration, Quebec changed government twice. First turfing Charest in favour of Pauline Marois in September 2012 but her reign was short lived as just after 19 Months, she was defeated by Liberal Philippe Couillard. Thereafter, Legault's Coalition Avenir Quebec (CAQ), a centre-right, nationalist party that brought together federalists and sovereignists, won a decisive majority in 2018 and Legault is perhaps the most popular premier in Canada (Riga, 2019).

Connecting to the case of government corruption at the municipal level, and illegal party financing, a recent report entitled, *Montreal's Interim Mayor faces fraud charges*, Alexander Panetta and Andy Blatchford from *The Canadian Press*, state "the Montreal replacement mayor who recently took office amid a corruption scandal, and who promised to restore public trust, has now been arrested in a bribery case" (Panetta and Blatchford, 2013). This same report notes that "Applebaum is just the latest Quebec mayor to be arrested by the anti-corruption unit" and that "Gilles Vaillancourt, the former long time mayor of Laval, was arrested in a sweep last month and charged with fraud and 'gagsterism.'"

According to the provincial police (as mentioned in the news article) "the city hall Vaillancourt led was essentially a criminal organization, with officials there allegedly enriching themselves off local construction deals". The same report notes that in Laval (Quebec), the provincial government declared trusteeship after inquiry testimony that almost all council members, including the interim successor to Vaillancourt, participated in illegal financing schemes. In this dynamics of political corruption in Quebec, the report further highlights that "in Montreal the last elected Mayor, Tremblay, resigned when a witness at a corruption inquiry said he turned a blind eye to illegal financing in his now-defunct political party." Patriquin (2010), also confirms this fact. In his words: more recently, "a fundraising official with the Union Montréal, the party of Montreal Mayor Gérald Tremblay, was found to have led a scheme in which three per cent of the value of contracts was distributed to political parties, councillors and city bureaucrats." In case of the then Mayor of Laval, Alexander Panetta and Sidhartha Banerjee from the Canadian Press, say, "It was a steep fall for Gilles

Vaillancourt of Laval, who had been so electorally dominant over the course of a 23-year mayoral career that his critics would call him, 'The Monarch.'" (Panetta and Banerjee, 2012.). Michael Applebaum, who served as interim Montreal mayor between November 2012 and June 2013 was another corrupt political leader who was sentenced to one year in jail. More than three years after his June 2013 arrest Michael Applebaum, the ex-interim Montreal mayor who vowed to clean up the scandal-plagued city during his tenure, was found guilty of 8 out of the 14 corruption charges against him (Banerjee, 2017). According to an article published earlier by this same author in 2016, "Michael Applebaum was open to corruption" (Banerjee, 2016). This author also says: "a former aide to ex-Montreal Mayor Michael Applebaum says it took just several months of working with him to come to the conclusion the longtime politician was open to kickbacks." Tremblay, then a political aide, testified Applebaum told him, "we gotta make a living... I realized at that moment that Michael Applebaum was open to corruption" (ibid).

Sometimes corruption and *prebendalism* in Quebec even goes with the subtle support of the judicial system, which is expected to reinforce the anti-corruption mechanisms of the federal or provincial government. A case in point is the court ruling of the SNC-Lavalin Group (a multilateral Montreal based engineering company) with federal prosecutors over charges that the engineering company bribed Libyan government officials (Wills, 2019). In an article published on *The Globe and Mail* on December 18, 2019 Andrew Wills decried the fact that "in the four years since the RCMP and federal prosecutors launched their case against SNC-Lavalin, this scandal created political and financial carnage." The author went further to state, "there was a very real possibility that SNC-Lavalin would emerge from the process much diminished, or quit Canada. Yet on Wednesday, the Court of Quebec approved a settlement that gave all parties some of what they wanted." Andrew Wills analysed the role played by Montreal Court in this way,

Federal prosecutors got a guilty plea, on a single charge of fraud, out of an entity called SNC-Lavalin Construction. SNC-Lavalin Construction agreed to a \$280-million fine, paid over five years. That's well shy of the penalty that foreign companies have faced in similar circumstances. Documents filed in court on Wednesday show that SNC-Lavalin faced sanctions ranging from \$462-million to \$705-million if Canadian prosecutors took the same punishing approach that British and U.S. authorities have applied in the past. All charges against SNC-Lavalin, including bribery allegations that involve a \$25-million yacht and Toronto condo being handed to a dictator's son, were withdrawn... For the parent company, a conviction or guilty plea on corruption charges was expected to translate into a crippling 10-year ban on federal government contracts, and would haunt attempts to win other business. Instead, SNC-Lavalin expects to keep bidding for business from domestic and foreign customers, including an infrastructure-hungry client in Ottawa.

The above concerns about the role played by the justice system which seemed to encourage instead of discourage acts of corruption was echoed by Transparency International in its 2019 Annual report that saw Canada fall behind other least corrupt countries. In a report by *Canadian Press* published on CTV news, titled: *Canada slips in global corruption ranking in aftermath of SNC-Lavalin scandal*, it is stated: "Canada has slipped in the annual Transparency International ranking of countries considered among the least corrupt, in light of the SNC-Lavalin controversy." According to Transparency International Report, Canada now ranks 12th on the list of 180 countries assessed, behind Germany, the Netherlands and Norway. This is a decrease of three places compared to 2018. The Report points out that the "shockingly low" enforcement of foreign bribery laws among economically developed countries was reflected in the case against SNC-Lavalin, which faced criminal charges of fraud and corruption in Libya between 2001 and 2011. Transparency International also raised the concern over the fact that "Canada is becoming an increasingly popular place for money laundering or "snow-washing" through shell companies to avoid paying taxes." However, the reaction of some top federal and government officials to this case of 'grand corruption' by the Montreal based company (SNC-Lavalin) that appeared to undermine Canada's international Reputation was rather controversial as seen in the statement below by Andrew Wills:

Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who burned significant credibility trying to wrangle a deal for a home-town company, said: "We got an outcome that seems positive for everyone involved." Former Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould, who set the Prime Minister's reputation on fire and was bounced from the Liberal Party for her troubles, did a victory lap on Twitter, saying: The justice system did its work. It is time to move forward and for the company to look to its future (ibid).

The above analysis certainly points to some of the challenges faced by government in fighting corruption in Quebec, given that the government herself appears to entertain acts of corruption and even *prebendalism*. This situation is made more evident in a report by Giuseppe Valiante (Canadian Press), published on *CBC news website* on June 14, 2019. According to the report, Quebec anti-corruption unit lacks skills to investigate complex crimes. The report came amid a series of embarrassing scandals for the police force (UPAC) which was created in 2011 by the Liberals following reports of widespread fraud and corruption in the public and private sectors (ibid). Valiante captures the dilemma in this:

Still reeling from accusations its investigators' fabricated evidence, the province's once-praised anti-corruption police unit, UPAC, is again the target of criticism. The police force created to restore the public's faith in democratic institutions lacks officers with the necessary skills to conduct complex investigations into financial crimes, according to a government report published Thursday. Claude Corbo, the head of the office that monitors UPAC, recommends that the

unit hire people with university degrees who are capable of handling lengthy investigations into highly complex criminality.

The "highly complex criminality" allured to complex crimes in the form of bribery and corruption in public contracts. Reacting to the above criticism in report, Public Security Minister Geneviève Guilbault accused the previous Liberal government for creating anti-corruption unit (UPAC) without giving it the necessary resources to do its job. In her words, "The preceding Liberal government didn't have the real intention of giving itself the means to really fight against corruption in Quebec." In a counter-critic, Christine St-Pierre, Liberal critic for public security, called Guilbault's comments "low." She said, "instead of blaming the Liberals, Guilbault should ensure the recommendations in Corbo's report are followed" (ibid).

The analysis so far, demonstrates how a culture of corruption, clientelism and neopatrimonialism is quickly taking root in contemporary Quebec society, driven by the forces of *prebendalism*. This certainly has far reaching implications for democracy and governance in the province in particular and Canada as a whole. We now move to analyse the negative consequences of government corruption (powered by *prebendal politics*) on democratic governance in Quebec.

#### VI. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DEEPENING POLITICAL CORRUPTION AND PREBENDAL POLITICS ON DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN QUEBEC

In the following paragraphs, we attempt an analysis of the democratic consequences of the historical legacy of corruption and its outbreak in contemporary Quebec, reinforced by *prebendal politics*. The analysis above finds resonance with Moen and Eriksen, (2010) argument that in a corrupt and clientelistic system, "political clients may be offered positions in public administration, business licenses, property or, quite simply, money". In which case, it could be partly argued that in this clientelistic interaction, political leaders (especially, governing parties as depicted in the Quebec case) secure the support they need by using state resources to offer material rewards in return for political support. Such a political behavior is certainly powered by the *politics of prebendalism* manifested through the deployment of political tactics by political leaders and state officials who consider the government offices they occupy as instruments to advance their own selfish political ambitions in 'total disregard' of the statutory objectives of their positions and offices.

Clearly, by manipulating the electoral agendas through a clientelistic interaction with 'ordinary citizens' (especially the underprivileged) or the *political amateurs* (Stoke, 2006), ordinary citizens tend to be 'victimised,' as the only 'agentic power' available to them (the power of their vote) is bought (or taken away from them) in this 'political market' of give and take between citizens and politicians. This is very much in line with the kind of '*politics of the belly*' (to use the term of Jean-Francois Bayart, 1993) observed in many parts of

Africa. In Cameroon for example, the phenomenon is generally known as the politics of *'I chop, you chop.'* (i.e. *I eat you also eat*). In Nigeria, it is known as the politics of *'stomach infrastructure'* and *prebendalism*. In contexts such as Malawi, it is generally believed that ascension to political office is a way of redeeming oneself (and his/her family and supporters) out of poverty. Simply put, rising to political power is a way of escaping poverty. It appears therefore that just like these 'weak democracies' in parts of Africa where *clientelistic politics*, powered by a *prebendal mentality*, secrets political corruption in disregard of the rule of law, advanced democracies such as Quebec, Canada also suffer from a similar political phenomenon though with varying degrees. Hence, while it is hard to say with conviction the extent to which such a political game is at work in contemporary state-society relations in Quebec, of no doubt is the fact that some politicians often claim mandates based on 'very thin' democratic evidence. In effect, many are motivated by the *politics of prebendalism*.

The above observation is strongly echoed by other policy makers and scholars: "as politicians and experts from every facet of the political spectrum told Maclean's, the history of corruption is sufficiently long and deep in Quebec that it has bred a culture of mistrust of the political class (Patriquin, 2010). This insight from the Quebec experience with government corruption also confirms the fact that corruption goes beyond the relationship between the bribe giver and the bribe taker. "It has historical roots; it is systemic and goes beyond the individual to the structural and the institutional levels"- which poses daunting political challenges to substantive democratic progression (Fraser-Moleketi 2007). Moreover, this sort of clientelistic manifestations observed in contemporary Quebec politics gives weight to the argument among scholars that, "as an informal relationship between politicians and citizens, clientelism is not static, and could therefore, survive a transition to democracy. It can take different forms and functions, and it can adapt to the new context in which political parties become clientelistic machines" (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1981; Roniger 1994).

Therefore, it will be premature to celebrate the disappearance of patron-client relationship with state modernisation in advanced democracies such as Quebec, Canada (just as it is the case in many 'new democracies' in Africa and Asia). The fact is that, the historical and recent outbreak of corruption cases in the province, combined with 'ineffective institutional responses' stemming from weak accountability and anti-corruption mechanisms, is likely to have produced a widespread dissatisfaction and distrust not only on the part of Quebec electorates but Canadians as a whole. As analysis has demonstrated, corruption is certainly not the preserve of Quebec in the Canadian Federalism. Andrew Stark, a business ethics professor at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Business further confirms this fact in his way:

In Quebec, it is usually a case of old-fashioned graft. The state occupies a more prominent role, and people in the private

sector rely on the state for appointments or contracts, so they make political contributions to do so. In the rest of the country, it's reversed: its people in public office using public money to give themselves private-sector style perks (Patriquin, 2010).

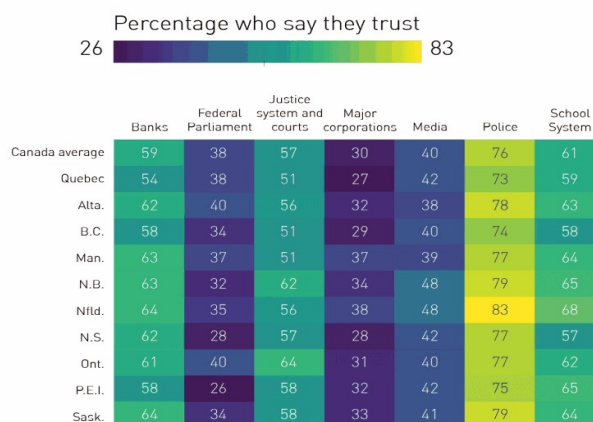
Definitely, this perception of rising corruption in the midst of modernisation of the state has in turn, worked against the popular legitimacy of elected governments both in Quebec and in Canada as noted below:

Voter turnout in federal elections declined over the last several elections until 2006, reaching the bottom at about 58 per cent of the eligible electorate in 2004 before rebounding to 65 per cent in 2006. It fell off again to only 59 per cent in 2008 and then increased marginally to 61.5 per cent in 2011. However, this overall decline in voter participation could be caused by other factors, such as generalized dissatisfaction with parties and politics, independent of any sense that one's vote may be futile because of the electoral system (Brooks, 2012).

The above observation of increasing citizens' distrust of their government institutions is buttressed further by the statistics below:

Table 1: Citizens Level of Trust of Public Institutions In Canada, 2013.

### How much Canadians trust public institutions



SOURCE: Statistics Canada

Taken from CBS News at: (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/sure-the-upac-scandal-is-labyrinthine-but-here-s-why-we-should-care-1.4531315>)

As the table above reveals, Canadians have very low level of trusts in the Federal Government with an average of 38%, followed by Major Corporations with a national average of 30%, the media, 40% and the judicial system 57%. Moreover, *Statistics Canada data* from 2013 reveals that Quebecers had the lowest levels of confidence in police, courts and other government institutions in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2013, publish on CBC News, undated)



Another problem related to citizens' disengagement from politics and implications for democratic governance is the increasing ambiguity of the role of political parties that the public have seen as soaked in fraudulent political party financing and have lost focus from their original function of implementing sound public policies and advancing democratic governance. In theory, political parties put forward policy platforms for which they seek authorisation from the voters. Yet the above broad declines in political participation suggest that political party leaders should have less confidence that votes are signaling approval or disapproval of a party's proposal policies and positions. 'Citizen participation' and 'engagement' are typically understood by administrators as one among many strategies for gaining advice, co-opting pressures, and improving services, in this way seeking to increase the legitimacy of their policies (Brown, 2006). Reasonably, a government that citizens judge to be anti-democratic (corrupt, unaccountable, unresponsive and lacking transparency) will deter them further from political participation and undermine their confidence in public administration since they lack collective agents for public purposes. As such, it could be said that in most cases, the success of most government policy programs in Quebec, simply occur by chance, since it lacks the institutional grounding that comes with the legitimacy of 'elected representatives' and citizens' authorisation of their (elected representatives) policy preferences through the 'power of their vote.'

What has become abundantly clear in this paper is that municipal government administration has also lost its democratic appeal in Quebec. Participatory democratic institutions can help erode the clientelistic, hierarchical, and undemocratic relationships that traditionally characterise access to power and resources in many 'new democracies' (Montambeault, 2011) and this issue seem to be apply in Quebec, (even though an advanced democracy). According to this author, "the municipality is seen as the ideal level to do this, since it is the closest to the population, the level at which most citizens' demands are addressed, and the institution whose responsibilities and decisions most often affect people's daily lives" (ibid).

However, as our discussion above has unfolded, elected municipal authorities (mayors in particular) in Quebec, have become highly 'distracted and confused' in their work as local representatives. They have exhausted their 'limited capacity' to act on behalf of their electorates by preferring to also participate in the neopatrimonialistic logic, impulse of power seeking and self-aggrandisement, powered by the *politics of prebendalism* like their counterparts at the provincial political level. In the process, municipal councils in the province have been transformed into battlefields for state predation and into 'empty shells' with regards to operating as loci for the formation of 'empowered democratic citizenship.'

Thus, it could be claimed here that the benefits of municipal governance have also been masterminded and captured by

political parties that are themselves anti-democratic in nature. In effect, therefore, "the ideas of liberal democracy, such as the separation between the private and the public sphere" (Moen and Eriksen, 2010: 13) suffer from serious practical shortcomings not only in emerging democracies but also in advanced democracies such as Quebec in Canada.

Delia Ferreira Rubio, Chair of Transparency International, in the the 2019 corruption perception index says, "Frustration with corruption and lack of trust in institutions speaks to a need for greater integrity. Governments must urgently address the corruption role of big money in political party financing and the undue influence it exerts on our political systems." In the same line, Patricia Moreira, Managing Director of Transparency International states in the same report, "The lack of real progress against corruption in most countries is disappointing and has profound negative effects on citizens around the world." As a way out of this predicament, she adds: "to have any chance of ending corruption and improving people's lives we must tackle the relationship between politics and big money. All citizens must be represented in decision making" she adds. The question now becomes if the struggle for political office by 'democratic means' that is through electoral politics only fosters the *prebendalising* of state-power, what other alternative are available for enhancing democratic governance? This question takes us to the policy implications of this paper.

## VII. PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In order to propose some sound policy alternatives, it is necessary to start by ascertaining what makes Quebec to be so 'distinct' within the Canadian Federalism. An alternative argument for the anti-thesis of democratic consolidation in today's Québécois politics could be that the foundation of the Province's 'culture of corruption' has not undergone a significant transformation since the Quiet Revolution. Democratic politics is still being practiced on this complex platform that harbours diverse stakeholders with different intentions and frequently clashing interests, as buttressed by Amir Khadir from Québec Solidaire MNA. In his words: "today's PQ and the Liberals are of the same political class that has governed Quebec for 40 years. The more they stay in power, the more vulnerable to corruption they become. There hasn't been any sort of renewal in decades" (Patriquin, 2010).

Clearly, it is possible to discount the present state of rising corruption in Quebec, as persistent remnants of the Province's 'oligarchic' conception of politics where private interests have always taken precedence over public interest, and the provincial state mainly serving to 'satisfy' the already powerful. However, doing so, must be done with caution, as it may limit our conceptual and theoretical understanding of Quebec's 'existential' question in Canada as well as downplay how this helps to influence the current state of Quebec's Democratic governance. Talking on the dominant issue of Quebec nationalism, Brooks (2012: 132) argues that, "Quebec separatists-reject the Canadian political community and would prefer to live under a different constitution creating an



independent Quebec.” According to this author, the problem of “Official Bilingualism and constitutional proposals that would recognize Quebec as a ‘distinct society’ within Canada have been two of the most divisive constitutional issues in recent decades’ (ibid).

The unquestionable fact is that Quebec’s continued opposition to the Constitutional Act, 1982 instigated a federal-provincial agreement in 1987 (Meech Lake Accord) that proposed a significant decentralization of power in Canadian federalism (ibid). In the process of placating Quebec’s separatists, the federal government has made a number of financial commitments to the Province. For instance, according to statistics from the Federal Department of Finance, Quebec’s share of the equalisation payments “has nearly doubled, to \$8.6 billion, far and away the biggest increase of any province”(Patriquin, 2010). With such ‘aggressive lobbying’ by the Province’s key political parties, many observers of the Province’s politics argue that Quebec’s politicians have come to mastermind the federalist-sovereignist question, for their own (short-term) political advantage. In Éric Duhaime’s words (a former ADQ candidate who recently helped launch the right-of-centre Réseau Liberté-Québec— as noted by Patriquin, 2010), “we are so obsessed by the referendum debate that we forget what a good government is, regardless if that government is for or against the independence of Quebec” (ibid). Echoing this fact, Québec Solidaire MNA Amir Khadir says: “We are caught in the prison of the national question” (ibid).

Evidently, the question of an ‘independent Quebec’ has so far occupied the dominant ‘political talk’ among the Province’s politicians to the point that, they have distracted energies away from the ideals of democratic governance that is key to working against the empowering effects of *prebendalism* on *clientelism* and *neo-patrimonialism*— that nurtures government corruption. The fact is that, any solution to the problem of *prebendalism* and democratic governance in Quebec (be it to further democratise the political system and electoral system itself ; or the judicial system and constitutional democracy as a whole) should start by first devising ways and means to go beyond the sovereignty-federalist divide that has characterised the mindset of both political leaders and followers in Quebec. For, beyond the many institutional reforms that the government of Quebec has been undertaking in recent years to fight government corruption, ways must be found to protect the state-power itself from *prebendal* politics. So the policy alternatives must be both long term and transformational as well as medium and short term measures. Moreover, the fact that corruption is not the preserve of Quebec but a structural and institutional problem in Canada like many other capitalist societies, could mean that Quebec has in place more robust anti-corruption mechanisms (than many other Canadian Provinces) that serve to expose complex acts of government corruption and organised crime. However, the fact that all these politico-administrative corruption cases are brought to the open also means that the Province needs to reinforce its anti-corruption

mechanisms to allow the principles of democratic governance flourish in the province and make democracy more meaningful to the citizens and taxpayers. Such initiatives could be pursued through long, medium, and short-term institutional measures and policies.

### 7.1 Long term policy implications: The Transformation of Quebec’s Democratic Institutions

The democratic deficiencies and peculiarity of Quebec within Canadian Federalism is consistent with the arguments for the importance of political culture in democratic growth and stability (see Kamrava, 1995). Classic political science research (e.g Almond and Verba (1963) and Pye and Verba (1965)) often regards the most indispensable element in the creation of political cultures to be the attitudes of elites, assuming that these lead and shape the attitudes of the masses. Diamond (1994) asserts that democratic consolidation, (and by extension political emancipation), requires first and foremost political institutionalisation. It is only through this institutionalisation of politics, that Quebec politicians are able to show a trustful and honest image of themselves in order to convince the electorate; thus, transforming the political sphere as it acquires a stronger symbolic power (Van Ryzin and Lavena, 2013). This supportive political culture— meaning that political actors in Quebec acknowledge the normative force of democratic procedures and institutions rather than simply accepting them as temporary expedients until they need to overturn them in the pursuit of policy ends. This constitutes an embedding of democratic principles into the collective consciousness of the system and thereby the effective institutionalisation of the system (Gill, 2000). This process of democratic renewal will certainly involve the reworking of the state through the transformation of its institutions (either creating new bodies or breathing substance into existing ones) and the opening up of mass control through institutionalised means. This is definitely where the need for a more robust ‘active civil society’ becomes indisputable, even though some may be pessimistic, considering Canadian citizens’ spirit of dependency on the government (created and nurtured by the government itself). “Canadians, it has often been argued, are more likely than Americans to look to government to meet their needs” (Brooks, 2012) and are “more likely to accept state actions that they dislike, instead of mobilizing against such policies and the governments that institute them” (ibid). The issue of ‘unethical leadership’ must also be given a centre stage in policies aimed at transforming Quebec’s democratic institutions.

Hence, in more clear terms, achieving a ‘strong’ democratic governance model that will benefit both the leaders and the led will definitely require the following long-term transformative measures:

1. Anti-corruption policies to tackle and the entrenched ‘culture of corruption’ and constrain the deepening politics of *prebendalism*;

2. 'Ethical political leadership' at both the provincial and municipal levels of government with the necessary 'political will' to device policies that will help to curtail clientelistic politics and deal decisively with the practice and consequences of *prebental* politics on democratic advancement.
3. Measures that will bring about the necessary transformation of not only the 'democratic institutions' but also 'reforming' the mindset of both political and corporate leaders for a change of attitude towards the real purpose of political power. So that political actors at all levels of society can indeed view their political offices not as *prebends* to be exploited for personal gains but as offices to advance the democratic objectives of the government and to serve the 'people' who are the voters and taxpayers and whom the political leaders are expected in governance processes.

### 7.2 Short and Medium term Measures

According to Transparency International's analysis on elections and political financial corruption, "countries in which elections and political party financing are open to undue influence from vested interest are less able to combat corruption" (Transparency International, 2020). Hence, in addition to the above long term institutional transformation policy implications, the following medium and short-term efforts can also be pursued. The key starting point is to restore trust in politics. In this way, the 2019 Transparency International Report recommends the following, which certainly applies to Quebec and which must be taken serious by the current and subsequent governments:

1. Reinforce checks and balances and promote separation of power
2. Tackle preferential treatment to ensure budgets and public services are not driven by personal connections or biased towards special interests
3. Control political financing to prevent excessive money and influence in politics
4. Empower citizens and protect activists, whistleblowers and Journalists.

In addition, sound anti-corruption policies must be put in place to ensure that the legislature and the judicial arm of government are highly functional and fulfill their justice and democratic responsibilities. With this, we move to the logical conclusion of this paper.

### VIII. CONCLUSION.

The aim of this paper has been to critically analyse the consequences of government corruption and the politics of *prebentalism* on democratic governance in Quebec, Canada. Governing democratically, we have seen, entails governing by inclusion of the citizenry in shaping the manner in which public resource are managed and executed for the provision of goods and services, while ensuring transparency,

accountability, responsiveness and respect of the rule of law. However, the analysis presented in this paper has demonstrated that in Quebec, the politics of *prebentalism* is the 'new way' in which elections have increasingly become infective in neutralizing the forces of clientelism, which in turn, feeds corruption by political leaders whose main ambitions and goals, are to amass wealth for themselves and their supporters. To a great extent, top level political offices have simply become a route to riches in Quebec, as observed in some cases in Africa, such as Nigeria and Malawi where political leaders stay in power 'merely to enjoy' the benefits of illicit enrichment accumulating from the political offices they occupy. These high government offices as observed in Quebec are not merely occupied but rather appropriated for a certain length of time but only to be quickly exploited in a variety of formal and informal networks for person gains.

This paper has demonstrated that, government corruption carved within political parties (and other government institutions), powered by the politics of *prebentalism* has curtailed the emergence of 'strong politics' necessary to transform the patron-client politics that have traditionally characterized state-society relations in Quebec. Such a 'thin' democratic polity produced by government corruption with *prebental* politics at the root has also worked against government legitimacy and institutional integrity in Quebec in particular and Canada at large. In turn, this has contributed to the deterioration of democratic institutions and to the dysfunctionality of democratic governance, further producing an unending democratisation process that fits the desires of sitting provincial regimes with a trickle down negative effects on municipal 'democratic governance.'

Thus, the central argument supported by the analysis in this paper is that, politicians' struggle to occupy state offices by electoral competition, with the premeditated mindset of using such offices as prebends, to be 'swiftly exploited' in a variety of formal and informal networks for person gains, produces a very 'thin' version of democracy, antithetical to the principles of democratic governance. This argument does not only apply to 'emerging democracies' but also to advanced democracies (such as Canada) though with varying degrees of applicability from Province to Province and from country to country. This analytical insight is certainly important for policymakers, students of government and politics, the international community and anyone interested in understanding the mutually reinforcing nature of several dimensions of politico-economic behavior motivated by a system of *prebental* politics, which is socio-politically and economically destructive to democratic governance and development. The implication is that it will be a daunting task to achieve a strong democratic governance model in Quebec in the presence of the dynamics and high intensity of *prebental* politics. Hence, any way forward in Quebec as elsewhere in Canada will have to start with a 'radical' shift of the 'political mentality', from the 'destructive politics' of *prebentalism* to a 'constructive politics' of common good. This can only come about by tackling the entrenched culture of corruption

and implementing government policies and mechanisms aimed at transforming the 'corrupt mindset' of political leaders and addressing the high intensity politics of *prebendalism*. Only then, can the development of a strong democratic governance model that works for both the leaders and the led, becomes possible.

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