

Measuring State Capture – Methodology

Methodological Framework

The methodological framework is grounded in a comprehensive definition of state capture proposed by Elizabeth Dávid-Barrett: State capture is a type of systematic corruption whereby narrow interest groups take control of the institutions and processes through which public policy is made, directing public policy away from the public interest and instead shaping it to serve their own interests.¹

The conceptualisation of the methodological framework draws on the International Anti-Corruption Academy's report *Measuring State Capture*, which presents an overview of various methodological approaches to measuring state capture and examines their respective strengths and limitations.² The framework also incorporates the insights provided by Daniel Kaufmann through the global composite state capture index.³

This methodology combines quantitative indicators (such as statistical data, enacted legislation, investigations, judicial decisions, indices and budget figures) and qualitative insights (expert panel) to document and elucidate how political clientelism facilitates systemic state capture. The focus is on identifying the prioritisation of general or private interests within the overall functioning of the system, by mapping clientelistic patterns through which power is reproduced and loyalty within clientelistic networks is rewarded through privileged access to resources (*quid pro quo*), while accountability mechanisms are rendered ineffective, thereby ensuring impunity.

The starting hypothesis posits that state capture predominantly manifests through mechanisms of political clientelism, enabling political actors to instrumentalise entrusted authority and public resources for the reproduction of power and the establishment of loyal clientelistic networks.

¹ David-Barrett, Elizabeth. 2023. "State Capture and Development: A Conceptual Framework." *Journal of International Relations and Development*, March. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41268-023-00290-6>.

² Dávid-Barrett, Elizabeth, D. Kaufmann, & J.C. Ceballos (2023) "Measuring State Capture", in *Insights Briefs Series No. 8*, IACA, Laxenburg. <https://www.iaca.int/measuring-corruption/measuring-state-capture/>

³ In Prof. Susan Rose-Ackerman (ed.) (2024): "Public Sector Performance, Corruption and State Capture in a Globalized World" (Routledge), Daniel Kaufmann: State Capture Matters: Considerations and empirics toward a worldwide measure

Methodological Guidelines for Measuring State Captivity

The methodological framework for measuring state capture is grounded in a central element of its definition, namely **the prioritisation of private interests over the general (universal) interest**. Measurement is conducted through an evaluation of the prevalence of clientelistic relationships, based on the premise that clientelism constitutes a key mechanism enabling the capture of the state and its institutions. The methodology is organised into four core dimensions, each comprising corresponding indicators, as follows:

Table: Measuring state capture across dimensions

Dimension of State Capture	Key Indicator/Criterion	Benchmark (a state that directly counteracts capture)
1. Democratic Process		<i>The democratic process is free, with equality of actors fully guaranteed.</i>
	1.1. Political Parties (internal democracy, clientelism and programmatic foundations)	Political parties operate as democratically organised entities, with a clear programme-based identity that serves as a central factor in voter mobilisation. Intra-party pluralism and genuine competition of ideas are ensured, and membership influence on key decisions is substantive rather than merely formal.
	1.2. Electoral Integrity	The electoral process demonstrates complete integrity and fairness. Campaign financing is transparent, all actors enjoy equitable access to the media, and the work of polling stations and election commissions is transparent and resistant to undue pressure. Voting procedures and voter registration are free from manipulation.
	1.3. Media Pluralism	Media ownership is transparent and the media operate in the public interest by providing citizens with objective information. There is no preferential treatment of specific political actors, propaganda outlets are marginalised and freedom of expression is fully safeguarded.
	1.4. Civil Society	Civil society organisations are free, active and play a significant role in overseeing the government, with no restrictions placed on their activities. There are effective mechanisms in place for protecting civil society activists and NGOs engaged in anti-corruption efforts.
2. Decision-making Process		<i>The decision-making process (laws and policies) is transparent, inclusive, informed by evidence and analysis, and guided exclusively by the public interest.</i>
	2.1. Legislative Process	Laws are adopted through a transparent procedure that entails meaningful consultations with experts and the wider public. No tailor-made legislation is enacted, and fast-tracked procedures are applied only in exceptional and duly justified circumstances.

2.2. Executive Decision-making Process	Executive decisions are derived from strategic documents and analytical assessments, in line with the principles of good governance. The process is transparent and accessible to public scrutiny.
2.3. Budget Process	Budgets at all levels are planned and implemented transparently. The allocation of budgetary resources, including current transfers, follows clear criteria and strategic priorities rather than political loyalty.
3. Accountability Ecosystem	<i>The accountability system is independent, proactive and effective, ensuring that no institution or individual stands above the law.</i>
3.1. Internal Controls / FMC / Internal and External Audits	Internal control mechanisms and internal/external audits are fully operational, independent and capable of effectively detecting and reporting irregularities. Auditor recommendations are consistently implemented and findings of irregularities are duly processed by prosecutors' offices, resulting in consequences for those responsible.
3.2. Anti-corruption Bodies	Anti-corruption bodies possess the independence, resources and authority necessary to prevent and combat corruption effectively, and their activities yield measurable results.
3.3. Law Enforcement Agencies	Law enforcement agencies act impartially and efficiently, free from political influence. Reports of corruption are investigated without delay.
3.4. Judiciary	The judiciary operates with full independence. The appointment and promotion of judges and prosecutors are based exclusively on merit and transparent procedures, free from political interference. This leads to a high rate of indictments and convictions, including in cases of political corruption.
4. Resource Distribution	<i>Public resources are allocated transparently, competitively and efficiently, in accordance with the principles of meritocracy and equal opportunities for all.</i>
4.1. Public Procurement	The public procurement system guarantees maximum transparency and competition. Contracts are awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous offer, without bid rigging, while direct agreements and negotiated procedures are limited to the minimum permitted by law.
4.2. Concessions	Concessions and public goods are granted through transparent and competitive procedures that are guided by the public interest and expert assessment, rather than through direct agreements that favour specific actors.
4.3. Distribution of Public Sector Positions	Recruitment, appointments and nominations in public administration, public enterprises and regulatory bodies are based exclusively on merit. Procedures are transparent, and political affiliation and nepotism are excluded as criteria.

The framework for measuring state capture, centred on clientelism as a key mechanism through which political actors subordinate the general interest to private interests and utilise public resources to retain power, comprises four dimensions, each incorporating key indicators that shape the state within that dimension.

To identify and analyse the impact of each indicator on the state within a specific dimension, and subsequently the overall state of that dimension, the measurement is conducted through a two-stage assessment system:

1. **Indicator Assessment:** Every indicator within the dimensions is scored on a 1–5 scale that evaluates the extent to which it facilitates or counteracts the capture process.
2. **Dimension Assessment:** The cumulative score for each of the four dimensions is obtained by analysing and aggregating the indicators, expressed on a 1–5 scale to reflect whether private or general interests prevail.

Level 1: Scale for the assessment of individual indicators

Each indicator is evaluated according to its impact on the process of state capture, using the following scale:

1 – Directly facilitates capture: Activities or conditions that systematically reinforce private interests and actively weaken institutional functioning (e.g. legislation tailored to specific interest groups).

2 – Indirectly facilitates capture: Omissions, inefficiencies or practices which, although not necessarily deliberate, create conditions conducive to clientelism and corruption (e.g. failure to implement audit recommendations).

3 – Neutral: The indicator shows no discernible tendency either to reinforce or to suppress capture.

4 – Indirectly counteracts capture: Mechanisms or practices exist that limit clientelism, but their application is inconsistent or their overall impact remains limited (e.g. independent anti-corruption bodies with insufficient authority).

5 – Directly counteracts capture: Strong, independent and effective mechanisms that actively advance transparency, accountability and the rule of law (e.g. public procurement processes that are fully transparent and genuinely competitive).

Level 2: Measuring Capture across Dimensions (Scale 1–5)

Based on the analysis of the indicators, each of the four dimensions is assigned an overall score on a scale from 1 to 5. This score reflects the degree of capture within that dimension. The scale for assessing the presence of clientelistic relations is as follows:

- 1 – Strong private interest: Clientelistic relations are deeply rooted and systemically dominant.
- 2 – Noticeable private interest: Clientelistic relations are present and influence decision-making, but are not entirely dominant.
- 3 – Conflicting private and general interests: Clientelistic relations are present and seriously erode the general interest, but neither side prevails decisively.
- 4 – Noticeable general interest: Clientelistic relations are largely marginal and rarely impact decision-making.
- 5 – Strong general interest: Clientelistic relations are virtually non-existent or exert no influence.

Aggregate measurement – synthesis – of state capture:

Once each indicator within every dimension has been assessed on a scale from 1 to 5, an aggregate result can be derived as follows:

1. Dimension Score: The average score of all indicators within a given dimension is calculated. For instance, if the dimension “Capturing the Democratic Process” includes two indicators scored 2 and 3, the resulting average for that dimension is 2.5.
2. Overall State Capture Score: The average of all dimension scores is then calculated. This average score represents the cumulative degree of state capture, where:
 - Close to 1: A predominantly captured state in which private interests prevail.
 - Close to 3: A state characterised by pronounced conflict between private and general interests, with shifting constellations of power determining which interest prevails in specific contexts.
 - Close to 5: A state in which the general interest predominates and the level of capture is low.

Note: In forming the final aggregate score, the expert panel may consider the relative weight of each dimension in the overall synthesis and may ultimately assign an overall score that differs from the simple average of all dimension scores.