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"Does 'Grease Money' Speed Up the Wheels of Commerce?"

Daniel Kaufmann and Shang-Jin Wei

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"Does 'Grease Money' Speed Up the Wheels of Commerce?"

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Abstract

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In a general equilibrium in which bribe-extracting bureaucrats can endogenously choose regulatory burden and delay, the effective (not just nominal) red tape and bribery can be positively correlated across firms. Using data from three worldwide firm surveys, this paper finds evidence consistent with this hypothesis. Firms that pay more in bribes are also likely to spend more, not less, management time with bureaucrats in negotiating regulations. They also face a higher, not lower, cost of capital.

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I. INTRODUCTION

United States' Foreign Corrupt Practice Act (FCPA) of 1977 has made it a crime for American firms to bribe foreign government officials. In December 1997, the OECD member countries signed a convention that also criminalizes bribery of foreign officials by firms from the member countries.[2] Would laws of this kind reduce the incidence of bribery by multinational firms? Do they promote economic efficiency?

Over 30 years ago, rather elegantly, the respected political scientist Samuel P. Huntington (1968, p. 386) stated that ". . .in terms of economic growth, the only thing worse than a society with a rigid, overcentralized, dishonest bureaucracy is one with a rigid, overcentralized, and honest bureaucracy." To paraphrase, excessive taxes and regulation on the books (nominal red tape) would remain excessive without bribery; but with the possibility of bribery, they may be transformed to less "real" red tape (i.e., officials not enforcing all the rules and regulations in exchange for bribes). In other words, bribery is tantamount to deregulation.

That view has not been an exception, and political scientists have not been alone over the past three decades in pointing out that, ethical considerations aside, corruption may in fact improve efficiency, particularly in developing countries. Indeed, some well-respected scholars have published in academic journals, theories that see some economic efficiency virtues in corruption. Nathaniel H. Leff (1964, p. 11) stated in unequivocal terms, ". . .if the government has erred in its decision, the course made possible by corruption may well be the better one." A rigorous economic model published in the Journal of Political Economy (Lui, 1985) demonstrated the efficiency-enhancing role of corruption: in a queuing model, the size of bribes by different economic agents could reflect their different opportunity cost. Better firms are more able/willing to buy lower effective red tape. Hence, like an auction, a license or contract awarded on the basis of bribe size could achieve Pareto-optimal allocation.

We label the theory that bribery leads to lower effective red tape as the "efficient grease" hypothesis. If bribes "grease the wheels of commerce," then campaigns by governments or international organizations to combat corruption in the international arena, such as the United States, FCPA, or the OECD antibribery convention, would be counterproductive. We argue that this "efficient grease" theory rests on a crucial assumption that should not be taken for granted. The assumption is that the red tape/regulatory burden (tax, licenses, delay, and so on) can be taken as exogenous, independent of the incentive for officials to take bribes. Because of the assumption, the theory is partial equilibrium in nature and may not hold in a general equilibrium.

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[2] The OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions. It still needs to be ratified by the individual parliaments of the signatory countries.

This point is not new. In sharp contrast to the views of Huntington, Leff, and others at the time, Myrdal in his epic *Asian Drama* (1968) suggested already a possible perverse relationship between bureaucratic regulations and bribery. More recently Banerjee (1997) has formalized certain aspects of that relationship, while Bardhan (1997) in his excellent survey paper on corruption, states:

> *"In the second-best case made above, it is usually presumed that a given set of distortions are mitigated or circumvented by the effects of corruption; but quite often these distortions and corruption are caused or at least preserved or aggravated by the same factors. The distortions are not exogenous to the system and are instead often part of the built-in corrupt practices of a patron-client political system."*

There is already a considerable literature on the consequences of corruption. On theoretical ground, Susan Rose-Ackerman (1975 and 1978), Krueger (1974), Shleifer and Vishny (1993 and 1994), and Bliss and Di Tella (1997), among others, have modeled problems of corruption. In particular, Shleifer and Vishny also make the point that a country's regulatory burden may be endogenously exploited by corruption-prone officials for the purpose of extracting bribes. We extend their argument one step further, arguing that even within a country, because the bureaucrats have discretionary power with a given regulation, corruption-prone officials can often "customize" the nature and amount of harassment on firms to extract maximum bribes possible. In other words, they would charge according to "ability to pay." In equilibrium, firms that pay more bribes could still face higher, not lower, effective red tape.

On empirical ground Mauro (1995), Hines (1995), Kaufmann (1997a and 1997b), Wei (1997 and 2000a), Johnson, Kaufmann and Shleifer (1997), and Tanzi (1998) have shown the negative effects of corruption on economic growth, on business development, on driving firms to the unofficial economy, on public expenditures, and on domestic and foreign investment.

There are several nontechnical work and/or survey papers on corruption, including Klitgaard (1990), Andvig (1991), Bardhan (1997), Ades and Di Tella (1997), Elliott (1997), Rose-Ackerman (1998), and Wei (2000b).

In this paper, we first develop a simple model that builds on the insight that bureaucratic harassment may be endogenous. In addition, the model also stresses the role of firms' different commitment ability (not to tolerate certain levels of bribery request) as a function of their characteristics. We then turn to some statistical evidence. The empirical literature has generally employed selective country-level corruption perception index and investigated its consequence on various measures of economic performances for the overall economies. This paper uses data from three firm-level surveys, focusing on the interaction at the microlevel between the firms and the public officials.

The organization of the paper is as follows: Section II presents a model, which challenges the "efficient grease" theory; Section III describes the data set; Sections IV–V discuss various empirical results; and Section VII concludes the paper.

II. SIMPLE MODEL

Our simple model is a Stackleberg game between a rent-seeking government official and a representative firm k. The official moves first to choose harassment or bureaucratic delay in order to maximize bribe intake, and the firms which is a price taker moves next to choose the bribe payment in order to maximize the after-bribe profit.

We solve for the equilibrium levels of bribe and red tape by backward induction. Consider first the problem faced by the firm.

Firm: Suppose b_k is the amount of bribery firm k has to pay to a corruption-prone government official and π_k is the profit the firm would have attained without any harassment from government officials. Let h_k be the (nominal) harassment that the official imposes on the firm, which could be tax assessment, fire safety standard on the book, or the published number of days that a given license application can take. We make the nominal harassment firm specific to emphasize that the official has discretion over the actual implementation of a given regulation. In other words, red tape can be customized (to some extent).

We make a distinction between effective or "real" harassment—the red tape that firm actually faces after paying a bribe and the nominal harassment—the red tape announced by the bureaucrat or "on the book" before the firm pays the bribe. Let r_k be the "real" or effective harassment—the red tape the firm actually faces after making a bribe payment.

$$r_k = h_k - s(b_k)$$

where s(.) is a function describing how bribe payment helps to reduce effective harassment. We assume $s_b > 0$ and $s_{bb} < 0$. In other words, holding the nominal harassment, h, constant, more bribery leads to lower effective red tape but there is a decreasing returns to paying bribes. Notice here that a narrow version of "efficient grease" hypothesis—if nominal harassment is constant, then bribery and effective harassment are negatively correlated—holds by assumption.

To simplify the story, we assume that the prebribery profit, π_k, is predetermined. The representative firm's objective is to maximize its postbribe and postharassment profit, which is given by

$$\Pi_{k,a} = g(r_k)\Pi_k - b_k$$

The first order condition yields an implicit function that relates the optimal amount of bribe firm k would pay (if without any constraint on the maximum bribe) and the nominal rate of harassment, h:

$$-g_r(h_k, b_k)\,\Pi_k\, s_b(b_k) = 1$$

This defines an optimal bribery schedule:

$$b_k = B(h_k)$$

Totally differentiating the first-order condition, we can see that the bribery schedule is upward sloping:

$$\frac{db_k}{dh_k} = \frac{g_{rr}\, s_b}{g_{rr}\, s_b^2 - g_r\, s_{bb}} > 0$$

In other words, the higher the nominal harassment, the more bribe the firm finds optimal to give. The above bribery schedule assumes that the firm has to tolerate any level of harassment and give bribes accordingly. We now consider the more relevant case that every firm has an exit option and therefore a maximum amount of harassment it is willing to tolerate. Suppose h_k* denote the maximum harassment that firm k would tolerate (at which point is different between exiting or not). That is, it can commit not to tolerate anything above h_k* because of the characteristics of the firm, the industry it is in, or the source country it is from. With this commitment, the firm will no longer solve the above-unconstrained problem. Consequently, the actual bribe the firm will be willing to pay is:

$$b_k = min\ \{B(h_k^*), B(h_k)\}$$

Bureaucrat: For now, let us assume that the bureaucrat sets the harassment rate, h_k (e.g., tax, license, regulation, and delay) solely for the purpose of extracting bribe payment. Assuming that the bureaucrat's utility is an increasing function of briber intake, she would choose to impose the maximum amount of harassment that the firm would tolerate, namely, h^*. In equilibrium, the firm would pay exactly $b^* = B(h^*)$. This implies that nominal harassment and bribery are positively correlated across firms.

That is not the end of the story. We can examine the relationship between the **effective** rate of harassment and the bribery in equilibrium:

$$\frac{dr_k^*}{db_k^*} = \frac{dh_k^*}{db_k^*} - s_b(b_k^*) = -\frac{g_r s_{bb}}{g_n s_b} > 0.$$

Therefore, in this model, those firms that pay more bribes not only face higher nominal rate of harassment in equilibrium, but also have to deal with higher effective rate of harassment. This is in sharp contrast with the "efficient grease" hypothesis.

To sum up, if one allows regulation, tax, and bureaucratic red tape and their discretionary enforcement to be endogenously chosen by rent-seeking officials, the officials may charge according to the firms' "ability to pay" by raising the nominal harassment sufficiently. In terms of empirical prediction, we may observe a positive, rather than a negative, correlation between the "effective" red tape and bribe in equilibrium across firms.

III. DATA

In the empirical part of the paper, we examine the relationship between bribe payment and some measures of effective bureaucratic harassment. There are many types of harassment one can think of. Our primary focus will be a proxy for the (actual) time senior managers of firms have to spend negotiating with bureaucrats on regulations, but we will also look at proxies for effective regulatory burden and extent of regulatory discretion and the (reported effective) cost of capital as other measures of effective harassment.

We will explore data from three different surveys: (1) Survey for the 1997 Global Competitiveness Report (GCR97), (2) that for the 1996 Global Competitiveness Report (GCR96), and (3) that for the 1997 World Development Report (WDR97).

The two GCR surveys were conducted in late 1995 and 1996, respectively, under the auspices of the Geneva-based World Economic Forum (WEF) and the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID). The 1997 report surveyed 2,827 firms in 58 countries, of which 2,381 firms responded both to the questions on corruption and on time spent by firm managers with bureaucrats. The publicly released GCR report publishes the country average of the survey responses to all the survey questions. For our study, we largely use the unpublished individual firm level responses. Further, we also use the data from the GCR96, where 1,537 firms (1,503 nonmissing observations for the questions of our interest) were surveyed in 48 countries. Both survey instruments differ in terms of some of the questions covered and we find that for our purposes there are some relevant questions in each survey.

The WDR97 survey was conducted by the World Bank in 3,866 firms covering 73 countries in preparation of its Annual Report in 1997.

There are three main reasons for using these three surveys. First, these surveys have differences in coverage in terms of countries surveyed and questions asked. For example, the GCR97 survey covers 10 more countries than GCR96 and contains 26 countries not in the WDR97 survey, whereas the WDR97 survey contains 41 countries that are not covered by GCR97. Second, because some of the key variables such as corruption are perception-based subjective measures, we would like to see if our basic findings can be corroborated across different, independently conducted surveys. Finally, the characteristics of respondents are

different between the GCR surveys and the WDR survey. The GCR surveys are distributed among member firms of the WEF which tend to be large, sometimes multinational, firms. The WDR survey, on the other hand, may have more medium and even small-sized firms in the sample.

We now turn to an explanation of the key variables we attempt to measure.

A. Corruption

The GCR97 does not ask directly for the magnitudes of bribe payment made by the respondents. All questions in that survey are on the variable ratings by the respondent on a scale of 1 to 7. Specifically, for corruption, the survey asks the respondents, in question 8.02, to rate the level of corruption, on a 1 to 7 scale, according to the extent of "irregular, additional payments connected with imports and exports permits, business licenses, exchange controls, tax assessments, policy protection, or loan applications." To check the reliability of this indicator, we correlated the country means of that variable in the GCR survey with the corruption rankings in Business International and Transparency International. The pairwise correlations are 0.77 and 0.83, respectively, indicating a broad agreement on corruption ranking across countries among different sources. This was similarly the case for the variable rating corruption in the GCR96.

For the empirical work, we make the assumption that individual firm's rating is correlated with their individual experience in bribery payment. Hence, firms that give a worse rating on their reported perceived incidence of bribery in the survey do indeed find themselves in a position to have to pay more bribes in their business operation. This assumption will be maintained for much of the statistical work. We will discuss the implication of relaxing it later in the paper.

In the WDR97 Private Sector Survey of 3,700 firms, question 14 asks: "Is it common for firms in my line of business to have to pay some irregular, 'additional' payments to get things done?" The respondent is asked to rate corruption on a 1 to 6 scale with 1 meaning "always" and 6 "never."

B. Time Spent by Managers with Bureaucrats

The GCR97 survey asks the respondents, in question 2.06, on a 1 to 7 scale, whether the "senior management of your company" spends more or less than "30 percent of its time dealing with government bureaucracy." An answer of "4" (on the scale of 1 to 7) is calibrated to mean that senior management has spent roughly 30 percent of its time. We use answers to this question to measure the time senior management of the firm has wasted in dealing with regulation, negotiating tax relief, and so on. This question was not asked in GCR96.

In the WDR97 Private Sector Survey, question 21 asked, "what percentage of senior management time is spent on negotiation with officials about changes and interpretations of laws and regulations? (1) less than 5 percent, (2) 5–15 percent, (3) 15–25 percent, (4) 25–

50 percent, (5) 50–75 percent, and (6) more than 75 percent." In our regressions, we recode the answer (1) to 2 percent; from (2) to (5), we use the midpoint; and for (6), we use 80 percent.

C. Unpredictability

Unpredictability index is based on the answers to three questions (15, 16, and 17) in the WDR97 Private Sector Survey. Question 15 asked respondents how much they agree to the statement that, "firms in my line of business usually know in advance about how much this 'additional payment' is." question 16 was on the extent of agreement with the statement that, "even if a firm has to make an 'additional payment' it always has to fear that it will be asked for more, for example, by other officials." question 17 asked the extent of agreement to the statement that, "if a firm pays the required 'additional payment' the service is usually also delivered as agreed." All three questions were answered on a 1 to 6 scale.

D. Cost of capital

Only in GCR96 there was a question (4.09) which asked firms to rate on a scale of 1 to 6 whether the cost of capital was too high/does not hinder competitive business development. For purposes of comparability with the estimations of the regressions using the GCR97 data we rescaled this variable to a scale ranging between 1 to 7.

E. Regulation

We extract two aspects of government regulations from the GCR97 survey. The first one, which we label as "regulatory burden," is derived from question 2.02, which asks the respondents to rate on a 1 to 7 basis the degree to which "government regulations impose a heavy burden on business competitiveness."

The second one, which we label as "regulatory discretion," is derived from question 2.08, which asks the respondents to rate on a 1 to 7 scale the degree to which the "government regulations are vague and lax."

IV. Evidence from the Firm Surveys for the Global Competitiveness Reports

A. Corruption and Bureaucratic Harassment

Using the data from the two GCR surveys, we now examine the empirical relationship between corruption payment and effective bureaucratic harassment. There are many types of bureaucratic harassment we can imagine. Many are not in the surveys. We focus as our primary measure of effective harassment the time cost that the firms' management has to incur with government official negotiating interpretations of regulations. The "efficient grease" hypothesis would suggest a negative correlation between bribes and the effective wasted time: firms that pay more bribes to buy savings in terms of the time in getting the

officials to certify compliance with the (nominal) regulations and/or in securing licenses. That is why many of the "grease payments" are also called "speed money."

In addition, we will also look into regulatory burden and cost of capital as alternative measures of the effective harassment.

Let us start with a cross-country comparison between average time wasted and average bribery tendency, on the basis of the GCR97 data (Table 1). A simple scatter plot for country means reveal a positive and significant correlation between bribery and management time wasted with public officials. When we regress country-level time wasted on level of bribery (and a constant), the slope coefficient is 0.29 and statistically significant at the 5 percent level (not reported). Therefore, countries that allow corruption and bribery to flourish are, on average, also those in which the firms in the country waste more, not less, time with government officials haggling over regulations.

Table 1. Time Wasted and Bribery, Country Averages in GCR97 Survey

Dependent Variable: Queuing Time Index 1-7	GCR97 Country Averages		
Prevalence of bribes	.29* (.09)	.16* (.09)	.06 (.11)
Regulations		.56* (.16)	.51* (.16)
GDP per capita (log)	-.12 (.09)		-.14# (.09)
Adj R^2	.46	.54	.64
Number of observations	53	58	53

Source: Authors' calculations.

Notes: GDP variable in logs, other variables in step ratings between 1 and 7. Time costs (dependent variable), bribes and regulation variables are from GCR97; standard deviation in parenthesis; * denotes statistically significant at 5 percent; and # denotes statistically significant at 10 percent.

Of course, cross-country graphs or regressions based on average indices can have serious drawbacks, both masking the richness of individual observations and also potentially biasing the results. For instance, there may be differences in country characteristics (e.g., the extent of regulation) that may be correlated both with corruption and wasted time.

Thus, we turn next to examine if, within a country, there is any association at the firm level between time-wasted and bribe burden (as measured by firm-specific bribery level). Table 2

Table 2. Time Wasted and Bribery, Firm Level Evidence from the GCR97 Survey

(Country fixed effects, sector dummies)

Dependent Variable	Time Wasted		Regulatory Intervention		Regulatory Discretion		Time Wasted	Time Wasted	Time Wasted
								High Bribery Countries	High Regulatory Intervention
Bribery	.33* (.02)	.27* (.02)	.22* (.02)	.21* (.02)	.26* (.02)	.26* (.02)	.17* (.05)	.17*	.25*
Regulatory Interventions							.23* (.02)	.19* (.04)	.35* (.12)
Regulatory Discretion							.21* (.02)		
Firm Size (large = 1)				.01 (.08)		.00 (.07)	-.13# (.08)	-.11 (.37)	-.08 (.18)
Foreign Investor				-.04 (.06)		-.05 (.05)	-.14* (.07)	-.50## (.38)	-.01 (.18)
Country Fixed Effects	No	Yes (58)	Yes (58)	Yes (58)	Yes (58)	Yes(58)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sector Dummies	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	2,761	2,761	2,765	2,765	2,768	2,756	2,748	1,103	590
Adj R^2	.12	.12	.06	.06	.30	.31	.21	.05	.19

Source: Authors' calculations.

Note: Constant term not shown; standard deviation in parenthesis; #: significant at 10 percent; and *: 5 percent. The question on bribery to over 2,760 firms in the GCR97 survey was: "Irregular, additional payments connected with import and export permits, business licenses, exchange controls, tax assessments, police protection or loan applications are common/not common" (scale of 1 to 7); question on the time spent by management (dependent variable) was: "Senior management of your company spends over/less than 30 percent of its time dealing with government bureaucracy" (scale of 1 to 7). Sectoral dummies: agriculture; natural resources; construction and real estate; manufacturing; utilities; and social services.

reports on a basic set of regressions of the determinants of time spent by the firm's management with public officials. Column 1 reports the most basic regression without the country-fixed effects, based on all 2,761 firms in the GCR97 survey. The coefficient (0.33) is positive and statistically significant. Once we control for the country-fixed effects (Column 2), the point coefficient declines to 0.27, but remains to be positive and statistically significant. This is consistent with our model but inconsistent with the "efficient grease" hypothesis.

As a check of robustness, we also look at two alternative measures of effective red tape: the degree of effective regulatory burden and regulatory discretion from the same survey. Here, we regard the cross-firm differences in these measures as true differences in regulation that

firm's experience. The possibility that the reported difference is just difference in firms' perception will be examined in a later section.

Columns 3–6 in Table 2 report regressions with effective regulatory burden and effective regulatory discretion as the dependent variables, respectively. We see again that there is a clear positive relationship between bribery and effective red tape the firms face.

In Column 7, we go back to focusing on time wasted as the dependent variable. In addition to country and sector fixed effects, we also control for the relationship between regulations and bribery and we also add two other firm characteristics (whether the firm is large and whether it is a foreign investor). There is some evidence that a large or foreign firm, on average, experiences less time wasted with government officials. Most crucial to our discussion, we see that the coefficient on bribery declines (relative to Column 2) to 0.17 but remains positive and statistically significant. In Columns 8 and 9, we perform the regression on two subsamples of countries (those with high average bribery, and those with high average effective regulatory burden). Again, we see that firms that pay more bribes, in equilibrium, experience more, not less, time wasted with the officials on matters related to regulations. Overall, there is no evidence that would support the "efficient grease" hypothesis.

B. Asian Exceptionalism?

Some writers have long conjectured that—even if it is shown that overall bribery and corruption is inimical to growth and business development—the Asian experience suggest that there is something special about that region, where in fact the "grease" argument may have had more currency and validity. One often hears the view that corruption has been part of the Asian culture for a long time and does not seem to hamper the business there.

In Table 3, we undertake an explicit examination of the Asian exceptionalism hypothesis. Focusing on the subsample of the Asian countries, we replicate the key regressions in Table 2 and report the results in Table 4. We see that bribery is positively correlated with all three measures of effective red tape. If anything, the slope coefficient tends to be bigger for the Asian subsample than for all countries together. Thus, the evidence rejects overwhelmingly the Asian exceptionalism hypothesis.

C. Corruption and Cost-of-Capital

As another check on the relationship between bribery and effective red tape, we now look at a measure of (firm-specific) cost of capital from the 1996 GCR survey.[3] Government officials may have discretionary power over to which firm to allocate subsidized loans and at

[3] The GCR96 survey did not ask the question on time spent with government officials, whereas the GCR97 survey did not ask the question on the cost of capital.

Table 3. East Asian Exceptionalism

Dependent Variable	Regulatory Intervention		Regulatory Discretion		Time Wasted		
Bribery	.25* (.05)	.25* (.05)	.35* (.05)	.35* (.05)	.35* (.05)	.36* (.05)	.25* (.05)
Regulatory interventions							14* (.05)
Regulatory discretion							24* (.05)
Firm Size: (large = 1)		.30## (.21)	.24 (.21)		-.06 (.23		-.15 (.22)
Foreign investor		-.08 (.14)	-.17 (.14)		-.18 (.16)		-.11 (.15)
Country dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sector Dummies	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
N	479	479	484	484	483	483	478
Adj R^2	.02	.04	.24	.25	.16	.14	.19

Source: Authors' calculations.

Notes: GDP variable in logs, other variables in step ratings between 1 and 7. Time costs (dependent variable), bribes, and regulation variables are from GCR97; standard deviation in parenthesis; * denotes statistically significant at 5 percent, and # denotes statistically significant at 10 percent.

Table 4. Bribery and Time Wasted, Firm-level Evidence from the WDR Survey

					Time Wasted		
Dependent Variable Time Spent by Management with Bureaucrat	Regulatory Burden				Foreign Participation Sample		Domestic Firms Sample
Bribery	.11*	.12*	.023*	.019*	.020*	.016*	0.23*
	(.01)	(.01)	(.002)	(.003)	(.003)	(.006)	(.004)
Unpredictability				.014*	.015*	.008	.018*
				(.005)	(.005)	(.009)	(.007)
Regulatory burden				.018* (.003)	.018* (.003)	.016* (.005)	.019* (.004)
Large firm	.04 (.04)				.008 (.007)		
Foreign participation	.06 (.04)				-.012# (.007)		
Country fixed effects	Yes(73)	Yes	Yes(73)	Yes(73)	Yes(73)	Yes(71)	Yes(73)
Sector fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
# obs	3642	3498	3564	2993	2932	1048	1897
Adj. R^2	.05	.05	.082	.102	.105	.127	.087

Source: Authors' calculations.

Notes: GDP variable in logs, other variables in step ratings between 1 and 7. Time costs (dependent variable), bribes, and regulation variables are from GCR97; Standard deviation in parenthesis; * denotes statistically significant at 5 percent, and # denotes statistically significant at 10 percent.

what terms. The "efficient grease" hypothesis would suggest that those firms, which pay more bribes should have better access to cheaper credit and hence have a lower cost of capital. Table 5 presents the regressions of the cost of capital on bribery. Column 1 presents a simple regression where corruption is the only regressor (other than the intercept). The coefficient on bribery is positive and significant. In later columns where different specifications and subsamples are experimented, we always obtain the same qualitative result. Therefore, firms that have paid more bribes also have higher, not lower, cost of capital. This is inconsistent with the "efficient grease" hypothesis.

Table 5. Cost of Capital and Bribery

Dependent Variable:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cost of Capital	All Sample			East Asia	Low-Income Countries	High Bureaucracy
Bribery	.22* (.03)	.14* (.03)	.12* (.05)	.29* (.14)	.27* (.06)	.22* (.03)
Bureaucracy		.21* (.03)				
Dummy high bureaucracy			.37*	.65		
(DBH)			(.17)	(.75)		
DBH X bribery			.07 (.05)	-.05 (.16)		
Country fixed effects	Yes (48)	Yes (48)	Yes (48)	Yes (9)	Yes	Yes
N	1503	1494	1503	237	393	942
Adj R^2	.27	.27	.27	.17	.05	.20

Source: Authors' calculations.

Notes: Data on cost of capital, bribery, and bureaucracy are from GCR96 survey.

V. Evidence from the Firm Survey for the 1997 World Development Report

The time-wasted variable in the GCR97 survey is a qualitative measure. In comparison, the same variable in the WDR97 survey asks for more precise, quantitative questions. The two surveys are also different in terms of country coverage and methodology. So, in this section, we examine the link between bribery and effective red tape based on the data from the WDR97 survey.

Table 6 reexamines the relationship between corruption frequencies and effective red tape. The first two columns look at the extent of regulatory burden. As in the GCR survey, there is again a positive correlation between bribery frequency and regulatory burden.

Table 6. Controlling for Propensity to Gripe, GCR97

Dependent Variable	Regulatory Burden			Regulatory Discretion			Time Wasted with Bureaucrats		
Bribery	.19* (.02)	.18* (.02)	.16* (.02)	.22* (.02)	.20* (.02)	.17* (.02)	.17* (.02)	.16* (.02)	.15* (.02)
Regulatory burden							.23* (.02)	.23* (.02)	.22* (.02)
Regulatory discretion							.21* (.02)	.20* (.03)	.19* (.03)
Large Firm	.01 (.08)	.02 (.08)	.01 (.08)	-.03 (.06)	-.00 (.06)	-.02 (.06)	-.14# (.08)	.13## (.08)	-.14## (.08)
Foreign Firm	-.03 (.06)	-.04 (.06)	.03 (.06)	-.04 (.05)	-.05 (.05)	-.03 (.05)	-.15* (.07)	-.14* (.07)	-.14* (.07)
Kvetch 1	.12* (.02)			.20* (.02)			.018 (.026)		
Kvetch 2		.21* (.03)			.33* (.02)			.084* (.033)	
Kvetch 3			.29* (.03)			.44* (.03)			.140* (.04)
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sector dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
#obs	2742	2751	2751	2744	2754	2754	2726	2735	2735
R^2	.07	.08	.08	.30	.29	.27	.21	.21	.21

Source: Authors' calculations.

Notes: *, #, and ## denote significant at the 5 percent, 10 percent, and 15 percent levels, respectively.

The remaining part of the table reports regressions with time spent with government officials as the dependent variable. We see that the frequency of corruption and managers' time spent with officials are positively correlated, just like in the GCR samples. That is, firms that reported to have paid more bribes also have more management time spent negotiating with the bureaucracies, which is inconsistent with the beneficial grease hypothesis. This is true after we control the country fixed effects regulatory burden, predictability of bribe transaction, and firm size. The same pattern holds when we restrict our attention to the subsample of all foreign firms, or all domestic firms (Columns 6 and 7), and to the subsample of countries with relatively high predictability of corruption. Again the same pattern appears

in the subsample of countries in which bribe payments are high, or in the sample of Latin American and Caribbean, and Asian countries (not reported).

VI. POSSIBLE PERCEPTION BIAS

A potential problem with the above regression analysis stems from possible survey respondent perception bias that may be correlated across survey questions. Suppose that firms A and B have to pay exactly the same amount of bribes, and that their managers have to spend exactly the same amount of time with government officials. If the manager in firm A who answers the survey questions happens to have a bad feeling toward the government, he may give a worse rating on both corruption and management time questions. If this happens, we may mistakenly think that the answers from these firms indicate a positive relationship between bribery and time the managers spend with officials, even though none exists by our initial assumption. Note such perception bias is a potential problem for many research based on survey response.

To address this concern, we construct a measure of perception bias at the level of individual respondents, based on how the respondents rate the quality of arguably identical public goods. We label our measure as "Kvetch"[4] after the Yiddish expression for habitual complainer.

Let us start with the GCR97 survey. In order to ensure robustness of our subsequent regression results, we construct three Kvetch measures, using incrementally more questions from the survey. "Kvetch1" is the deviation of individual respondent's answer to question 4.01, "overall infrastructure in your country" is "worse than in your major trading partners,"
from the average answer from all respondents in that country. A high number implies a greater tendency to gripe.

"Kvetch2" is an equally-weighted average of the individual answer's deviations from the mean for question 4.01 (described above) and question 4.12 ("government budget neglects infrastructure investment").

"Kvetch3" is an equally-weighted average of the individual answers from the national mean for four questions, 4.01 and 4.12 described above, plus 4.09 ("your country suffers from severe power shortage") and 4.11 ("warehousing, storage facilities, and distribution networks are grossly inadequate"). Again, a high number implies a greater tendency to gripe.

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[4] According to Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Kvetch (a Yiddish word) as a noun means a habitual complainer. It can also be used as a verb to mean "to complain habitually: GRIPE."

We include these measures, one by one, in our regressions in order to control for the possibilities that some respondents are more likely than others to exaggerate how bad government officials are on every question. The objective is to see if the positive association between the time managers spend with government officials and perceived corruption level reported early would go away with this control.

Note that quality of the public goods covered by the Kvetch measures, particularly "Kvetch3," may, to some degree, be "customized" for exactly the same reason as our theoretic story. Therefore, these measures may overcorrect the perception bias. In other words, there is a risk that the positive association between the time managers spend and corruption disappears when the Kvetch measures are added into the regressions, even when the true relationship is positive.

Table 7 reports the regression results. All three Kvetch measures have positive coefficients in all regressions and eight out of nine of them are statistically significant.

Including the Kvetch measures tend to reduce the point estimates on the bribery coefficient relative to the comparable specifications without Kvetch (Table 2). This is consistent with the hypothesis that perception bias may be present. However, even after controlling for the perception bias, the positive correlation between bribery and effective red tape does not go away.

We implement a similar idea to the WDR sample. First, we also construct three measures of perception bias, which use increasingly more questions from the surveys. "Kvetch1" is an equally-weighted average of the respondent's ratings (on a 1-6 scale with 1 being the best and 6 the poorest) of the following three public goods: the general condition of roads, the efficiency of mail delivery, and the quality of public care provision.[5]

"Kvetch2" is an equally weighted-average of the respondent's ratings (all on a 1-6 scale with 1 being the best) of the following four public goods: general rating of the efficiency of government in delivering services right now (question 25, part 1, in the WDR survey), plus the three questions covered in "Kvetch1."

"Kvetch3" is equally-weighted average of the ratings of six questions: in addition to the four public goods covered in "Kvetch2," we add "frequency of power outages" and "time it takes to get a public telephone line connected" (questions 23 and 24, respectively, in the WDR survey).

Next, we repeat the key regressions in Table 6 with the three Kvetch measures added one by one. The regression results are reported in Table 7. As we can see, the Kvetch variables are positively correlated with the measures of red tape (regulatory burden and the time firm

[5] They are questions 22(b-d), respectively, in the WDR97 survey.

Table 7. Controlling for Propensity to Gripe, WDR Survey

Dependent Variable	Regulatory Burden			Regulatory Discretion			Time Wasted with Bureaucrats		
Bribery	.10* (.01)	.10* (.01)	.10* (.01)	.07* (.02)	.06* (.02)	.06* (.02)	.023* (.03)	.023* (.03)	.023* (.03)
Unpredictability of bribes				.06* (.03)	.03 (.03)	.03 (.03)	.019* (.005)	.017* (.005)	.016* (.005)
Regulatory burden							.015* (.03)	.015* (.03)	.015* (.03)
Large Firm	.05 (.05)	.04 (.04)	.04 (.04)	.05 (.05)	.05 (.04)	.05 (.05)	.003 (.008)	.002 (.007)	.003 (.007)
Foreign participation	.04 (.04)	.06 (.04)	.06 (.04)	.05 (.04)	.06 (.04)	.07# (.04)	-.0070 (.0066)	-.010# (.006)	-.010## (.006)
Kvetch 1	.14* (.02)			.14* (.02)			.0010 (.0035)		
Kvetch 2		.18* (.02)			.18* (.02)			.034* (.0038)	
Kvetch 3			.20* (.03)			.20* (.03)			.0074#* (.0043)
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sector dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
#obs	3260	3484	3487	3283	3475	3478	3121	3298	3298
Aj.R^2	.05	.06	.06	.05	.07	.07	0.103	0.111	0.106

Source: Authors' calculations.

Notes: GDP variable in logs, other variables in step ratings between 1 and 7. Time costs (dependent variable), Bribes and regulation variables are from GCR97; standard deviation in parenthesis; * denotes statistically significant at 5 percent; and # denotes statistically significant at 10 percent.

officers have to spend with government officials) and their inclusion generally reduces the coefficient on the bribery variable. This suggests that part of the correlation between reported effective red tape and reported bribery frequency may indeed relate to the Kvetch effect. However, in all cases, the coefficients on the bribery variable remain positive and statistically significant, suggesting the perception bias due to differential grumpiness is not the driving reason for our earlier findings.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In a partial equilibrium context in which bureaucratic burden and delay are exogenous, bribe payment may help firms to reduce the effective burden and delay they face. In a general equilibrium in which regulatory burden and delay are endogenously chosen by the bureaucrats in order to extract rents, more bribe payment will not be associated with less delay and lower burden. We develop a simple theoretical framework to demonstrate that firms that pay more bribes would not necessarily face less effective red tape or harassment. In fact, the contrary can be true.

In the second part of the paper, we examine some evidence from three large firm-level surveys, focusing on the relationship between bribe payment and management time wasted with bureaucrats, and between bribery and cost of capital.

While the surveys at hand have some clear advantages for our purposes, such as questions asking thousands of firms throughout the world on the very variables we are honing in, its potential problems ought to be explicitly taken into account as well. Chief among them is the possible perception bias, given that the survey does not elicit hard numbers from the respondents but ratings in an index. We have conducted some controls and robustness tests with these variables to account for possible perception bias and found that the results are still robust vis-a-vis these tests.

First, and rather conclusively, we find that there is no evidence to indicate support in the data for the "grease" argument. In other words, we do not find evidence that the business sector paying bribes helps them overall to reduce time waste or capital costs. Second, and somewhat more tentatively, we find evidence suggesting that the contrary may be the case, however: where the business sector pays more bribes, they end up with higher, not lower, time wasted and cost of capital. Our results have important implications. The main one is on the "logic of collective action" for the business community to have external levers allowing them to credibly precommit to no bribery. For instance, laws that help to increase firms' ability to commit against bribery, such as the international adoption of criminalization of foreign bribery (akin to the recent OECD resolutions, OAS antibribery pledges, the United States Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, etc.), not only can help to reduce corruption incidence but also help to reduce the bureaucratic delays firms may face.

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