

CORRUPTION AS AN IMPORTANT SOCIAL PROBLEM: STRATEGIC MEASURES TO FIGHT CORRUPTION IN UKRAINE

Nadiia Vasynova

Associate Professor at the Department of Public Service and Management of Educational Institutions, Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University, Ukraine
e-mail: ned1235@ukr.net, orcid.org/0000-0002-7019-0247

Summary

It is determined that during the full-scale war, the corruption system that has existed in Ukraine for decades was able to adapt and quickly develop new niches, including those related to the war. The Great War did not become an impetus for a real fight against or minimization of corruption schemes. Under these conditions, corruption remains a serious factor that negatively affects most processes in the country (economic, social, political, legal, and other), and is an obstacle to NATO membership and state development.

It is noted that over the past ten years, a number of anti-corruption laws have been adopted in Ukraine, which demonstrates the confident direction of the state to address this problem. However, their implementation is not sufficient to reduce the level of corruption in the country. To improve the state of anti-corruption measures, it is necessary to ensure the legitimacy of all branches of government, and comprehensive work in this area is important.

It is proved that the fight against corruption is a long-term process that requires constant efforts and cooperation from all segments of society, but it is necessary to ensure a comprehensive approach to overcoming corruption.

The author identifies the key elements, the introduction and implementation of which, in combination, will reduce corruption to a level that will not pose a serious threat to the State and society, in particular, have the potential to overcome this global phenomenon. In addition, the author outlines strategic measures to minimize corruption in Ukraine.

Key words: public, officials, prevention of corruption, strategic anti-corruption measures, integrity, sustainable economic development.

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1. Introduction

Problem statement. Corruption always increases when a country is in the process of transformation. Since Ukraine is not just going through the stage of democratization of the state system, but is also undergoing a radical transformation of the economic and political system, legal and social systems, the growth of corruption is an objectively determined factor (*Koruptsiia*). In addition, during the full-scale war, the corruption system that has existed in Ukraine for decades was able to adapt and quickly develop new niches, including those related to the war. The Great War was not an impetus for a real fight or minimization of corruption schemes. It partially redistributed cash flows and attracted new categories of officials, civil servants and the public to the system. New corruption niches have opened up in the military, mobilization, defense procurement, provision of military personnel, and border crossing issues (*Ukraina cherez koruptsiu, 2023*). Under these conditions, corruption remains a serious factor that negatively affects most processes in the country (economic, social, political, legal, and other), and is an obstacle to NATO membership and state development.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The issue of corruption in the public administration system, in particular the causes and prevention of corruption, is in the focus of attention of many researchers, in particular: N. Olentsevych, O. Fomina and others (*Olentsevych & Fominoi, 2018*).

I. Karabaz and T. Kozhukhova consider overcoming corruption as the basis for effective public administration and sustainable economic development of the country. The causes and consequences of corruption in public authorities for the public administration system are considered by T. Brus, A. Arshynnikova (*Brus and Arshynnikova, 2018*). In addition, the authors draw attention to the need for closer international cooperation to achieve success in the fight against corruption.

The author's team (M. Mikhnenko, O. Rusnak, A. Mudrov, etc.) (*Mykhnenko, Rusnak & Mudrov, 2013*) in the textbook «Preventing and Combating Corruption» systematically disclosed the main provisions of this problem, in particular: the state and trends of the fight against corruption in Ukraine; legislation in the field of combating corruption, etc. The manual also takes into account the reports of international and Ukrainian non-governmental organizations, which highlight the results of sociological research on corrupt practices of officials and the prevalence of corruption in certain countries.

The purpose is to outline strategic measures to minimize corruption in Ukraine.

Methodology. The research on the topic of the article is based on the results of the analysis of scientific publications (*Brus and Arshynnikova, 2018; (Karabaza & Kozhukhova, 2018); Khrykov & Vasynova, 2021; Mykhnenko, Rusnak & Mudrov, 2013; (Olentsevych & Fominoi, 2018)* on corruption issues, analytical materials (2–3; *Koruptsiia; Stan koruptsii v Ukraini, 2023; Ukraina cherez koruptsiuu, 2023; Vid antykoruptsii do dobrochesnosti, 2020*); legal and international acts (*Koruptsiia, 2006; Pro zapobihannia koruptsii, 2014*).

To achieve this goal, a set of research methods was used:

- theoretical – interdisciplinary analysis of scientific literature to determine the state of development of the problem;
- analysis, synthesis, generalization – to identify the key elements, the introduction and implementation of which, in combination, will reduce corruption to a level that will not pose a serious threat to the state and society, to substantiate the theoretical provisions of the article and to formulate conclusions;
- forecasting and planning – to outline strategic.

2. Review of the source base on the issue and current legislation on liability for corruption offenses

The system of measures to prevent corruption in Ukraine, in particular in the public service, is regulated by a number of documents. First of all, the Law «On Prevention of Corruption», the requirements of which are reproduced and/or detailed in special acts of higher legal force for certain types of public service and in numerous bylaws. In addition, anti-corruption legislation establishes a set of restrictions and obligations for public servants, which together create the primary line of defense against corruption, which should prevent corruption offenses from occurring in the first place. Its immediate goal is not to bring to criminal liability, but to prevent the emergence of preconditions for corruption (illegal connection with private individuals, material or moral dependence of a public servant, etc.), to reduce the latency of corruption and to facilitate the detection of their signs in the behavior and life of officials

Among the most important international documents is the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), which is also one of the world's most powerful anti-corruption instruments. The purpose of this Convention is to:

- a) to promote the adoption and strengthening of measures aimed at preventing and combating corruption more effectively and efficiently;
- b) to encourage, facilitate and support international cooperation and technical assistance in preventing and combating corruption, in particular in asset recovery;
- c) promoting honesty, responsibility and good governance in the management of public affairs and public property (*Konventsia, 2006*).

An analysis of the current legislation on liability for corruption offenses suggests that Ukraine has a generally sufficient legal framework for effective anti-corruption. It provides for a whole range of criminal, administrative, civil, disciplinary and other measures that allow bringing to some type of liability almost any public official who has committed some kind of abuse of power or position (*Koruptsiia*).

Thus, the adoption of a number of anti-corruption laws in Ukraine over the past ten years demonstrates the state's confident commitment to solving this problem. But, according to experts (*Mykhnenko, Rusnak & Mudrov, 2013*), the enactment of anti-corruption laws is not enough to reduce the level of corruption in Ukraine. To improve the state of anti-corruption measures, it is necessary to ensure the legitimacy of all branches of government, and comprehensive work in this area is important.

3. Public opinion

A survey conducted in the winter of 2023 by USAID/ENGAGE in conjunction with the USAID «Support to Anti-Corruption Champion Institutions in Ukraine» «Interaction» (SACCI) Project found that citizens consider corruption to be a very serious problem for Ukraine (89% of respondents), second only to a full-scale invasion. Political corruption is the main and most serious type of corruption (81%). Despite a marked improvement in public perception of the prevalence of corruption, 94% of respondents still believe that corruption is widespread throughout Ukraine. The percentage of those who believe that the level of corruption has increased since the beginning of the full-scale war exceeds the percentage of those who believe that it has decreased, which means that society remains very divided on this issue (*Stan koruptsii v Ukraini, 2023*).

Based on the above and our own observations, it should be noted that in countries where corruption is widespread, people tend to attribute all problems to corruption: refusal to hire, getting a bad grade in an exam, etc. One can assume that in any of these examples, corruption could have occurred. But the same outcome could have been the result of a personal mistake, poor management, incompetence, low level of experience, rules or regulations on the part of the public servant, imperfect procedures, etc. There are many reasons why a situation is the way it is, but it may not always be corruption-related. Even when there are no grounds, all this can create the impression of corruption.

Hence, the fight against corruption at the state level should begin with the fight against corruption at the level of personal education, first of all, with the formation of the competence of «responsibility» among the citizens of the country, i.e. their conscious attitude to the requirements of society, the ability to take responsibility for their own lives and actions. Our previous studies have shown that an important aspect of the fight against corruption is to ensure

the development of the ethical component of everyone (both employees and the population). A high level of moral qualities of a person (resident, community worker) and a conscious willingness to take responsibility for their work before people and the state is a key to preventing corruption in the course of performing official duties (*Khrykov & Vasynova, 2021*).

Thus, one of the ways to prevent corruption is to create a culture of public professionalism. Therefore, it is important to work not so much against corrupt officials as for the integrity of the governance system. This approach was the basis for the work of the «Decentralization Offering Better Results and Efficiency» (DOBRE) program with 75 participating communities. During 2017–2019, the Civic Partnership for «Transparent Local Budgets», a DOBRE partner in the anti-corruption component, trained and advised communities on how to assess their corruption risks, develop and implement policies and procedures that will reduce these risks, and to use them on an ongoing basis and extend integrity practices to all areas of community activity, including the involvement of residents (*Vid antykoruptsii do dobrochesnosti, 2020*).

The review of scientific developments on the research issue, the legal framework and the results of the public opinion poll led to the conclusion that (*Konventsiiia, 2006; Koruptsiia; Pro zapobihannia koruptsii, 2014; Ukraina cherez koruptsiu, 2023; Vid antykoruptsii do dobrochesnosti, 2020*):

- corruption exists in any society, but there are different levels of perception of corruption by the population in different countries;
- corruption as a phenomenon is generally condemned in any culture, which is confirmed by the fact that most countries have adopted sufficiently strong anti-corruption legislation and numerous international agreements;
- corruption is inherent in all countries, but the scale of corruption is important in this aspect, etc.

4. Strategic measures to minimize corruption

The fight against corruption is a long-term process that requires constant efforts and cooperation from all sectors of society, but it is necessary to ensure a comprehensive approach to overcoming corruption.

In Fig. 1 highlights the key elements that, in our opinion, in combination, will reduce corruption to a level that will not pose a serious threat to the state and society, and in particular, have the potential to overcome this global phenomenon.

Taking into account the critical analysis of scientific works (*Karabaza & Kozhukhova, 2018; Mykhnenko, Rusnak & Mudrov, 2013*) and the results of previous studies (*Khrykov & Vasynova, 2021*), the strategic measures to minimize corruption in Ukraine include:

1. Implementation of codes of ethics along with the creation of conditions conducive to their effectiveness.
2. Implementation and organization of measures for anti-corruption propaganda among the population, formation of public opinion that will ensure intolerance to corruption.
3. Introduction of effective public control over the activities of state bodies. However, public control should be understood as the activity of the public (subject of public control), which consists in identifying inconsistencies in the activities of public authorities, other state organizations and local self-government bodies with the provisions of legislative and other regulatory acts, expected results of state policy, standards of public services, etc., as well as influencing these bodies and organizations to eliminate such inconsistencies and the reasons that cause them.

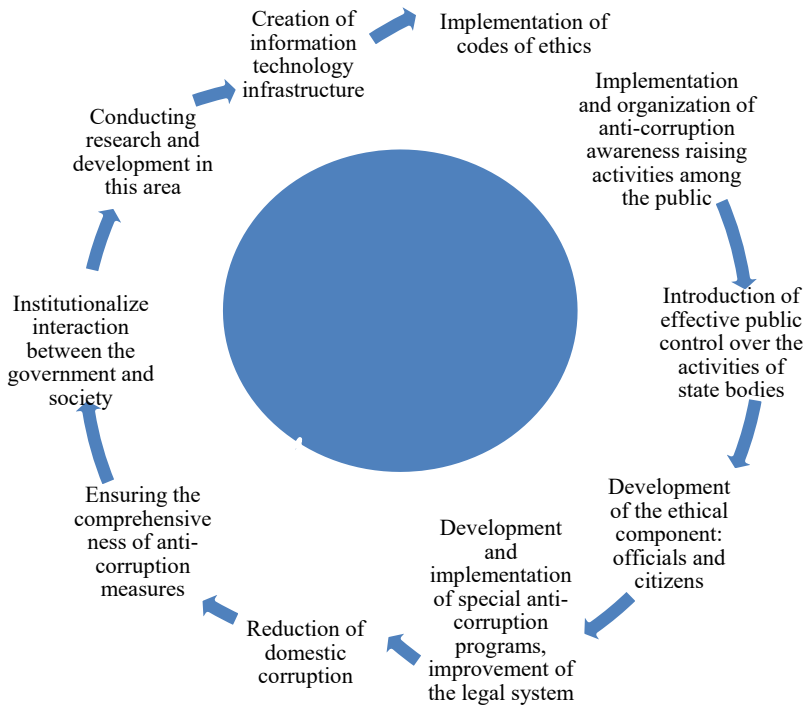


Fig. 1. Components of minimizing corruption

4. Development of the ethical component, raising the level of moral qualities of officials and citizens.

5. Development and implementation of special anti-corruption programs, further improvement of the legal system. The legislative framework for combating corruption should be supplemented, but an important aspect is to measure its effective impact on officials and citizens. Hence, it is proposed to conduct a relevant survey.

6. Reducing domestic corruption by optimizing administrative procedures.

7. Changes in basic social relations (reduction of gender inequality, reduction of property inequality).

8. Institutionalize interaction between the government and society. In particular, interaction with the society and encouragement of citizens' participation will ensure transparency of the authorities and expand opportunities for public control. To begin with, you can start communication/dialogue through forums, platforms for communication (online and offline).

9. Create an information technology infrastructure that will allow for the widespread use of electronic services; provide the opportunity to send instant text messages from citizens' mobile phones to a specified address for feedback.

10. Conducting research and development activities in the field of corruption prevention. Based on the results of the research, it may be

– methodological recommendations on activities to prevent corruption and resolve conflicts of interest are developed, including proposals to eliminate the causes that contribute to corruption;

- preparation of training manuals on the issue of ethics of civil servants and corruption;
- practical recommendations for improving the Codes of Ethics for civil servants were developed;
- training courses were developed on the issues to improve the skills of employees;
- overview lectures, seminars (webinars) for residents were prepared;
- methodological recommendations for the development of programs and planning of anti-corruption measures were prepared. It is interesting to note that the analysis of community programs and plans revealed that their content duplicates the provisions of legislative and regulatory documents, methodological recommendations, job responsibilities, and does not reflect the specifics of corruption risks in a particular community or specific measures to overcome them. It is established that it is common practice for the plan to remain unchanged for several years and to provide for a permanent deadline for the implementation of certain items, which indicates the formality of such plans and the fact that their implementation is not analyzed, etc.;
- expanding the positive global experience in fighting corruption, building good governance and the social practice of refusing to give bribes by providing opportunities to solve their problems in a non-corrupt way;
- developed methods for assessing the level of moral qualities of employees and citizens. For example, in the framework of previous studies, we have characterized the criteria for assessing the state of the ethical system of a territorial community and proposed a system of methods that can be used to determine the level of moral qualities of community leaders, employees and residents: surveys and assessments; observation; experiment; analysis of Internet materials on the life of the territorial community, in particular, the community website;
- special requirements for professional competence and situational tasks for competitions to fill vacant positions with the participation of experts were developed.

Conducting in-depth research on the issue, analyzing international experience, and introducing and implementing anti-corruption projects, among other things, has sufficient potential to increase integrity, so it can be classified as one of the anti-corruption tools.

In conclusion, we note that the issues of corruption and victory in the war against Russian invaders are not separate from each other, but are closely interrelated. In history, it has happened more than once that much smaller states in terms of territory and human potential have repelled the aggressor and won the war. But, as a rule, this victory was the result of more effective public administration, social unity, lower levels of corruption and high-quality personnel policy at all levels (*Ukraina cherez koruptsiu*, 2023).

The effective fight against corruption is not possible as a result of one-time and short-term actions of any degree of activity and severity at any level, but requires long-term socio-economic, political and legal transformations. These activities should be based on a combination of preventive and repressive measures. The priority role should be given to preventive measures at the national level (*Mykhnenko, Rusnak & Mudrov*, 2013).

5. Conclusions

In addition, it is important to understand that the process of overcoming corruption is hampered by the involvement and interest of not only government officials, business, and education, but also ordinary citizens. Hence, it is precisely the comprehensive anti-corruption measures that will help to overcome corruption in Ukraine and guarantee the country's sustainable economic development.

Therefore, special attention should be paid to the analysis of integrity tools in this area, the analysis of successful international practices in anti-corruption reforms and the possibility of their adaptation to Ukraine, but taking into account the social and national mentality of society, which is the subject of further research.

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