

Review Paper

Corruption as a Threat to National Security: Analysis of Anti-corruption Mechanisms and their Effectiveness

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the problem of corruption as a threat to national security and analyses various mechanisms for combating corruption, including legal, institutional and social aspects. It studies the effectiveness of various measures to prevent and combat corruption at different levels of government, and a detailed analysis of legal norms and laws aimed at combating corruption is complemented by an overview of the activities of anti-corruption institutions and their role in ensuring national security. The article attempts to identify the main challenges to the effective fight against corruption and provides recommendations for improving existing mechanisms and policies. The relevance of the issue is underlined by the need to ensure the stability and development of the country, as corruption negatively affects institutions and public trust and creates an environment for threats to national security. The main purpose of the article is to review and analyse various anti-corruption mechanisms to determine their effectiveness in the context of national security. The study aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing anti-corruption strategies and mechanisms. The study uses various research methods, including legal document analysis, institutional analysis, socio-cultural and economic analysis, as well as empirical data, surveys and case studies. It highlights successful practices that can be used to improve the anti-corruption strategy, overviews failures and offers recommendations for further improvement of anti-corruption mechanisms in Ukraine. The findings of the study may be relevant to the formulation of national security policies and strategies in the context of the fight against corruption, and may serve as a basis for further discussion and decision-making in the field of anti-corruption policy to strengthen national security.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ① To combat corruption, it is essential to establish an effective system of anti-corruption measures, including prosecutions, the establishment of independent anti-corruption bodies, and the strengthening of ethical standards in government.
- ① International cooperation is also important in the fight against corruption, through sharing experience and information to increase the effectiveness of measures.
- ① It is also crucial to establish a transparent decision-making mechanism for civil servants and an effective system of financial control over budget expenditures.
- ① Corruption is widely recognised as a major threat to national security in many countries, including Ukraine.
- ① The power of anti-corruption measures depends significantly on achieving common standards for defining and combating corrupt practices.

Keywords: Corruption, national security, anti-corruption mechanisms, anti-corruption system, anti-corruption institutions, responsibility, countering corruption

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Today, there are numerous international and Ukrainian political and legal documents, as well as publications by experts, that have led to various interpretations of corruption. Here are two of the most comprehensive and widespread definitions in the literature: corruption is generally defined as the use of an official position by functionaries for personal gain (Vasylenko, 2023, p. 88). The second aspect is that the concept of corruption cannot be attributed exclusively to one group of illegal acts. It takes root in various spheres of life, such as economic, political, social, educational, and cultural, and becomes part of civil society and international relations (Barrington, David-Barrett, Phillips, & Garrod, 2023, p. 241).

The term 'corruption' has its roots in the Latin word '*corruptio*', which means spoilage, bribery, and even '*corrumpere*', which means to spoil (Maslova, 2022, p. 37). According to UN reference materials, corruption is defined as the lack of integrity and honesty, especially the propensity to engage in bribery, and the use of a position of authority to gain an advantage through dishonest means. The Council of Europe Convention on the Civil Liability for Corruption, adopted on 4 November 1999 in Strasbourg, defines corruption as "the act of requesting, offering, giving, or receiving a bribe or any other undue advantage or promise that distorts the normal performance of any duty or behaviour required of the recipient" (Vieira, 2018, p.95).

Some researchers view corruption more broadly as a social phenomenon that extends beyond bribery alone, and is seen in criminological terms. Leslie Holmes, a political science professor at the University of Melbourne, defines corruption as a social phenomenon. She identifies its features as bribery and corruption of public officials and entities, as well as their use of official powers, authority, and opportunities for personal or corporate gain (Holmes, 2015, p. 43). Susan Rose-Ackerman, a professor at Yale University, and Bonnie Palifka, a lecturer at the Institute of Technical Sciences and Advanced Studies of Monterrey (ITESM), also view corruption as a social phenomenon. They emphasise that corruption is caused through functionaries' official position for selfish purposes, and that it affects the running of public administration and management processes (Rose-Ackerman, 2024, p. 39).

It should be mentioned that national security refers to the protection of the state's institutions of power, economy and other important social spheres from external and internal threats (Sparling, 2019, p. 52). In the history of countries and their socio-political systems, corruption poses a significant threat to national security. It is not only a moral issue, but also a complex social and economic phenomenon that can undermine the fundamental principles of the rule of law. Corruption is considered one of the most destructive endogenous internal security threats (Cichocki and Nagańska, 2021, p. 107). Studying the impact of corruption is essential to understand its nature, develop measures to combat it, and prevent its occurrence in the future.

Literature Review

The analysis of different definitions of corruption used in the literature allows us to formulate key aspects of this process. A detailed review of various interpretations helps to develop a commonly accepted definition of corruption and to reveal its main features in the context of national security. Studies by such scholars as: O. Yu.Vasylenko, S. V. Haidu, D. Gafa, V. Hladky, Ye.I. Hryhorenko, J. Cortez, N.V. Likarchuk, Ya.I. Maslova, A. Mourmouras, O.S. Perederii, P. Rangazas, M.E. Rehm, S. Rose-Ackerman, R. Sparling, and S. Chayes highlight the impact of corruption on economic development, political stability and social order in states and explicitly identify the main factors that establish how corruption can jeopardise certain security aspects, which is important for further addressing the problem.

A review of research and academic papers on anti-corruption mechanisms helps to establish effective and innovative strategies and tools. S. Andersson, F. Aneciarico, R. Barrington, C. Vergara, J. Vieira, G. Garrod, E. David-Barrett, E. Dimant, M Ivanyina, S. Issacharoff, A. Nagańska, E. Ceva, S. Power, R. Phillips, M. Ferretti, A. Hardy, L. Holmes, S. Cichocki, T. Schulte analysed national and international approaches to the problem of corruption. They revealed aspects of cooperation between states in developing and implementing effective mechanisms for controlling and preventing corruption.

Aims

The study analyses corruption as a threat to national security. The main objective is to review anti-corruption mechanisms and assess their effectiveness. Additionally, the study examines aspects of corruption, including its impact on the economy, political landscape, and society in general. The research analyses current strategies used to combat corruption, comparing their effectiveness while considering national security. It pays special attention to international initiatives and cooperation in the fight against corruption, with a focus on domestic mechanisms and reforms aimed at preventing corruption in various sectors of society. The study considers current challenges and trends that affect the dynamics of corruption and provides recommendations for further action to strengthen the fight against this negative phenomenon on a national level.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a range of scientific methods, including a systematic approach, analysis and synthesis, scientific abstraction, logical and historical approaches, and economic and mathematical modelling. The systematic approach was used to examine corruption as a complex phenomenon that acts with various aspects of national security. The study analysed the interconnections and mutual influence between various factors of corruption and their impact on the overall security of the country. The analysis and synthesis method is utilized to examine the intricate relationships between anti-corruption mechanisms and their effectiveness. The scientific abstraction method is used to identify the primary aspects of corruption and anti-corruption mechanisms, while the deduction method is used to investigate the general principles and patterns that determine the effectiveness of the fight against corruption. Economic and mathematical modelling was applied to evaluate the effectiveness of different indices and strategies for combating corruption.

RESULTS

Corruption is a significant problem that must be addressed as a top national priority. It is not just an indirect or interconnected issue, but rather a core problem that exacerbates other threats to national security. J. Cortese argues that corruption

causes significant damage to the country's interests (Cortese, 2022, p. 86). For instance, in view of the active anti-corruption efforts of the competent authorities of Ukraine, which have been ongoing for many years, in accordance with the relevant national plans and other regulations, the participants of strategic planning conceived of corruption as a core problem, rather than as a threat related to "the continuing growth of criminal offences against the person, property, state power, public and economic security" (Haidu, 2023, p. 87).

The main danger of corruption as an anti-state and socially dangerous phenomenon is its destructive impact on the foundations of the state system and the constitutional principles of legal regulation of society (Rehm, 2023, p. 174). Firstly, this is due to the fact that the activities of corrupt public officials are aimed at obtaining various personal or narrow corporate benefits (mostly material), rather than ensuring sustainable and effective development of the state system. Today, experts and scholars emphasise that the specificity of corruption lies in the following aspects:

- ◆ -non-implementation or improper implementation of adopted laws and measures to combat corruption;
- ◆ complexity, contradictions and the possibility of ambiguous interpretation of existing legal norms;
- ◆ the existence of by-laws that arbitrarily interpret the provisions of the current legislation;
- ◆ weakness and de facto dependence of the judiciary on the executive branch;
- ◆ absence of a system of controlling bodies, including parliamentary and public control;
- ◆ minimal risk of exposure of corrupt officials and lack of harsh repressive measures against them;
- ◆ lack of guaranteed legal status and decent pensions for civil and municipal servants;
- ◆ numerous decisions that officials have the right to make alone;
- ◆ wide and unimpeded personnel exchange between government and commercial structures;
- ◆ involvement of relatives in the corruption process, - functioning of nepotism in the states;

- ♦ constant complication and modification of forms and methods of corruption;
- ♦ corruption of electoral processes (the so-called “administrative resource”) (Perederii, Hryhorenko, 2023, p. 84).

In accordance with current challenges, corruption is considered a significant threat to the national security of many countries. It has the potential to undermine public confidence in the government, cause social tensions, and result in a loss of economic potential. Additionally, it can serve as a centre for organised crime. Sarah Chayes, an international anti-corruption expert, notes that effective and efficient anti-corruption measures require a comprehensive approach and the functioning of appropriate mechanisms:

1. Legislative framework, i.e. creating and improving anti-corruption legislation and ensuring severe penalties for corruption, including prosecution and confiscation of property.
2. Independence of the judiciary, i.e. ensuring the independence of courts and prosecutors to effectively handle corruption cases and establishing anti-corruption courts or specialised units.
3. Transparency and openness as the development and implementation of mechanisms for government and public authorities to be transparent and provide access to information for the public and journalists.
4. Financial monitoring means the introduction of financial monitoring systems to detect illegal financial transactions and withdrawal of illegally acquired funds.
5. Functioning of civil society, i.e. involvement of the public in the fight against corruption through the initiatives of civil society organisations and the media and protection of the rights and status of journalists who monitor corruption cases.
6. International cooperation as participation in international initiatives and exchange of information for effective fight against cross-border corruption and application of international standards and conventions

against corruption.

7. Effective monitoring and evaluation are the establishment of systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures and the involvement of independent experts to assess the effectiveness of programmes and strategies (Chayes, 2021, pp. 23, 49, 76, 105, 271).

Indeed, corruption today is not only a domestic problem, it goes beyond the borders of countries, becoming a significant factor of change in the international arena, which can undermine stability, cause tensions between countries and interfere with the effective functioning of global security systems (Vergara, 2022, p. 63). According to the latest indicators and analysis of corruption processes, both in the international arena and directly in Ukraine, corruption has become a real threat to national security, because of:

1. the existence of a powerful, widely branched shadow economy and significant illegal income is the main source of funding for corrupt officials;
2. “domestic corruption”, especially in Ukraine, has developed on an unprecedented scale, based on the historically determined principle of governance. As a result, the majority of the country’s population has historically formed a stereotype of corruption as an ethically acceptable form of solving personal problems. According to the Center for Domestic Political Studies (March 2022), 54% of Ukrainians tolerate the fact that they have to bribe officials, and 27% of respondents admitted that they were obliged to bribe officials (Analysis of threats to national security in the field of domestic policy (expert survey), 2023).

The current corruption paradigm assumes that it can be measured only indirectly, using generalised and private indices that differ in the scope and methods of collecting information. Based on these features, all indices can be divided into three groups.

1. Indices that integrate information from multiple sources. The most famous in this group is the Corruption Perception Index, which captures the perceptions of politicians,

officials, analysts and businessmen about the level of corruption in specific countries.

- Indices compiled based on representative surveys of consumers - entrepreneurs or the population - and dedicated to assessing the business climate and corruption pressure on business. The most well-known indices in this group are those measuring “business” corruption: Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey and Executive Opinion Survey.
- Indices obtained by processing expert opinions. For example, the Nations in Transit Report assesses the impact of corruption on business and is highly politicised, while the International Country Risk Guide focuses on the frequency of corrupt extortion and is a guide for foreign investors.

Measuring the degree of corruption in countries is the most important indicator of the efficiency of the economic system and the state. A decrease in this measure’s ability to sufficiently motivate its employees inevitably leads to a decline in the effectiveness of its institutions, procedures, and regulations, creating a fertile ground for corrupt practices (Hardy, 2024, p. 17).

National security issues and economic losses from corruption can lead to increased transaction costs. The consequences of corruption are significant, including increased business costs, slower economic growth, misuse of budget funds, and a decline in people’s well-being. Furthermore, corruption can lead to a decline in a country’s international prestige and a deterioration in the economy’s investment attractiveness, particularly for foreign investors who may be unwilling to operate under corrupt conditions (Andersson and Anechiarico, 2019, p. 73). Therefore, the Corruption Perceptions Index plays a crucial role in determining the level of corruption in countries worldwide. This index provides an objective assessment based on data and expert opinions, contributing to international transparency and the development of anti-corruption strategies (Issacharoff, 2023, p. 216).

It is important to note that the global ranking of countries by the level of corruption is based on the Corruption Perceptions Index. This index is calculated annually and assigns points to countries/

territories, ranking them according to the perceived degree of corruption in the public sector. The index is a composite of surveys and corruption assessments collected by various reputable organisations. The Corruption Perceptions Index, calculated by Transparency International since 1995, is currently the most widely used indicator of corruption worldwide. The index ranges from 0, indicating the highest level of corruption, to 100, indicating the absence of corruption. The latest data available is for 2022, published in January 2023 (see Fig. 1).

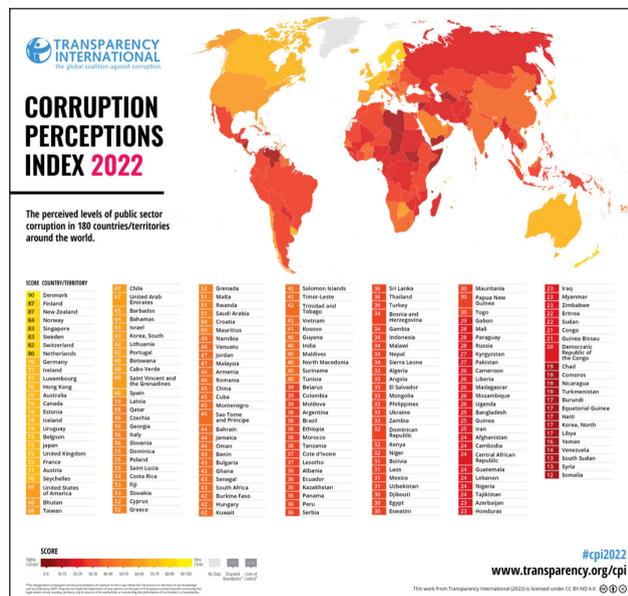


Fig. 1: Corruption Perceptions Index scores for 2022 (Corruption Perceptions Index - 2022, 2022)

Western Europe and the European Union are the leaders in the fight against corruption, with an average score of 66. However, progress has been stagnant in most countries for more than a decade because of undue influence and fragmented anti-corruption measures. It is important to note that Denmark, Finland, and New Zealand occupy the top places in the corruption ranking. This indicates that these countries have effective anti-corruption mechanisms and tools at the state and municipal levels. These mechanisms consist of a system of interrelated, mutually reinforcing measures that involve state, public, and professional institutions working towards a common goal (see Fig. 2). In 2022, Ukraine ranked 116th among 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index, receiving 33 points out of 100. This indicates a one-point improvement compared to the previous year.

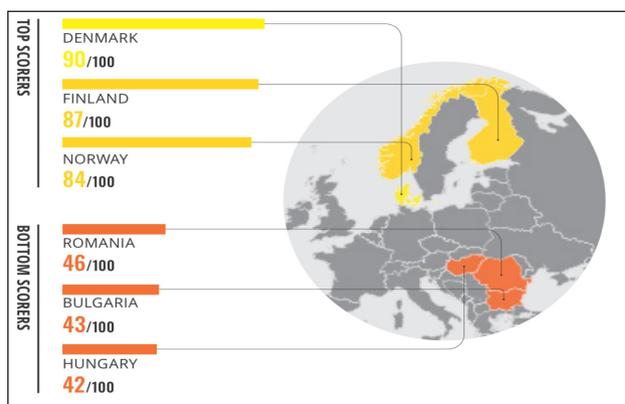


Fig. 2: Corruption indicators in Europe in 2022 (Corruption Perceptions Index - 2022, 2022).

Corruption in Ukraine is a serious threat to national security and is present in various spheres of society, including the public sector and business. It has negative consequences, such as violating legal norms, undermining public trust in the government, and limiting economic development. To effectively counteract this phenomenon and strengthen the stability and independence of the state, a comprehensive approach and systemic measures are required (Hladky, 2019, p. 2011). According to the results of 2022, Ukraine (33 points out of a possible 100 in the Corruption Perceptions Index) received annual recommendations from Transparency International to reduce the level of corruption:

1. Introduce procedures for the election of heads of anti-corruption agencies that consider their independence and professionalism, including the Asset Recovery and Management Agency, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau and the National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption.
2. Increase the openness and accessibility of information, provided that it does not harm national security and defence interests. Restore the system of filing electronic declarations and their verification by the National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption (NAPC).
3. Carry out the reform of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, taking into account the recommendations of the Venice Commission, and hold a transparent competition for the selection of judges of the Constitutional Court.

4. Active use of the Prozorro electronic system for procurement in the process of rebuilding Ukraine after the Russian invasion and ensuring effective control and monitoring of procurement (Corruption Perceptions Index - 2022, 2022).

It should be noted that in April-May 2023, the Centre for Domestic Policy Studies of the National Institute for Strategic Studies conducted an expert survey as part of the research project “Analysis of Threats to National Security in the Field of Domestic Policy”. The survey involved the Centre’s staff and about 50 external experts representing research, educational and public organisations, as well as scholars from different regions of Ukraine. Expectedly, the most recurrent element (22 times) among the threats to national security in domestic policy was “corruption” (Analysis of threats to national security in the field of domestic policy (expert survey), 2023).

International experts have highlighted that corruption is a systemic problem and poses a serious threat to national security. It permeates all aspects of society, including politics, the economy, justice, and public life (Barrington, David-Barrett, Power, Hough, 2022, p. 108). Corruption undermines government transparency and effectiveness, eroding citizens’ trust in their country’s institutions. The concentration of illegitimate advantages and authority in the hands of a select few can create a fertile environment for social conflict and internal political tensions. This can lead to economic inequality, political despotism, corruption, and social unrest, resulting in dissatisfaction among the populace and necessitating systemic measures to ensure fairness and citizen participation in decision-making. Secondly, corruption deepens economic disparities, undermining equality and justice. The rejection of competition and the free market in favour of privileges and closed-door deals distorts economic development and destroys opportunities for society (Johnston and Fritzen, 2020, p. 163). This, in turn, limits innovation, efficient use of resources and investment, and has a negative impact on the state’s resilience to external economic challenges. Thirdly, corruption can undermine national security by weakening control over the economy, defence, and other strategic sectors. This can limit the ability to effectively combat crime, terrorism,

and external threats, as corruption erodes trust in law enforcement and military structures (Dimant & Schulte, 2019, p. 67). As a result, the country becomes vulnerable to dangers that may arise from internal or external conflicts. Fourthly, corruption can have a negative impact on social stability and cohesion. Inequality may cause deep divisions in society, leading to social confrontations and a deteriorating social climate.

In this context, the fight against corruption becomes not only an important component of security policy, but also a matter of national identity and civic unity. Therefore, the most important measures to prevent and suppress corruption include: developing a highly effective legal strategy and strong anti-corruption legislation; introducing mandatory anti-corruption expertise of all laws and regulations, with independent and highly qualified lawyers, economists, managers and relevant specialists entrusted with its production; creation of a well-functioning system of state bodies, organisations and units capable of ensuring high-quality implementation of anti-corruption decisions at a high professional level (Ceva, Ferretti, 2021, p. 114); increasing the openness of public authorities; publishing information by central, regional and municipal authorities on budget execution, implementation of targeted programmes, open competitions, auctions, tenders, expert assessments and conditions of their conduct; raising the level of transparency of management processes; improving control and reporting; reducing government monopoly; optimising conditions and mechanisms of public and municipal procurement.

DISCUSSION

The experience of the least corrupt countries demonstrates that independent structures with extraordinary powers, staffed by highly qualified specialists (without nepotism), are necessary for a more effective fight against corruption in Ukraine. Ukrainian experts, scholars, and specialists emphasise that reducing corruption requires “a decrease in the excessive functions of state bodies and their transfer to public structures. Corruption will continue to flourish as long as decision-making remains subject to individual discretion, even in the face of the harshest enforcement methods” (Likarchuk, 2020, p. 7). We suggest that transferring

certain functions to civil society can increase accountability and reduce corruption risks. However, it is crucial to ensure that decisions are made in accordance with democratic principles and the rule of law. The implementation of forceful measures to combat corruption may have a temporary impact, but it is not a sustainable solution. In fact, it may lead to new issues, such as human rights violations, a lack of democratic guarantees, and a loss of public trust in the authorities.

At the regional or sectoral levels, states and international organisations should not simply duplicate or copy the provisions of universal anti-corruption standards (Ivanyna, Mourmouras, Rangazas, 2021, p. 317). However, it is important to note that universal anti-corruption standards, developed at the regional level, are enriched and supplemented through closer cooperation between states within the relevant structures, taking into account their specifics and powers. However, given the current challenges, regional and sectoral anti-corruption standards, based on the universal anti-corruption standards, developing their provisions and using such approaches, should strive to achieve the most comprehensive view of the national legal systems of all participating states. Therefore, Ukraine has already established relevant mechanisms and an anti-corruption system that includes the following aspects: developing and adopting anti-corruption legislation, determining the mechanism for its implementation, clearly dividing functions between state bodies, determining areas of responsibility, and organizing effective interaction to combat corruption. Special units have been created and maintained to combat corruption, as well as commissions, coordinating bodies, and other entities at various levels. Special attention has been given to the creation of information, analytical, and forensic centres.

CONCLUSION

Corruption is a significant threat to national security in many countries as it undermines transparency, citizens' rights, and trust in government. To combat corruption, it is essential to establish an effective system of anti-corruption measures, including prosecutions, the establishment of independent anti-corruption bodies, and the strengthening of ethical standards in government. Public involvement in the

anti-corruption process is crucial, as it can create pressure on authorities to implement reforms and ensure transparency. International cooperation is also important in the fight against corruption, through sharing experience and information to increase the effectiveness of measures.

To stop corruption, we need to use a whole-of-government approach. This includes legislative, judicial, and social measures, as well as strengthening institutions, implementing effective control mechanisms, and engaging the public. These steps are crucial for ensuring national security and stability in society. Furthermore, it is imperative to align domestic anti-corruption legislation with the provisions of international treaties. Additionally, the recruitment system for the civil service should be improved holistically, considering international experience. It is also crucial to establish a transparent decision-making mechanism for civil servants and an effective system of financial control over budget expenditures.

Corruption is widely recognised as a major threat to national security in many countries, including Ukraine. Instances of bribery, abuse of power, and money laundering significantly undermine the country's economic potential and erode public confidence in state institutions. Therefore, combating corruption is a top priority for ensuring national security, promoting economic growth, and achieving sustainable development. The above characteristics enable the summarisation of international experience in preventing and combating corruption as a crucial factor in improving legislation. Reformation of work on preventing and combating corruption is necessary, and effective measures require the expansion, intensification, and improvement of international cooperation. The power of anti-corruption measures depends significantly on achieving common standards for defining and combating corrupt practices.

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