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## Political Corruption as a Cause of the Ineffectiveness of Anti-Corruption Policy and a Threat to the National Security of Ukraine

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The article examines the problem of political corruption as a systemic factor reducing the effectiveness of state anti-corruption policy and as a threat to the national security of Ukraine. The approaches to the formation of anti-corruption policy in Ukraine remain insufficiently systematic, which is reflected in the fragmented nature of decisions, incomplete consideration of previous experience, and limited analysis of alternative instruments of state influence. Particular attention is paid to the social dimension of corruption. It is noted that corruption in Ukraine is consistently perceived as one of the key social problems, while the greatest concern is associated specifically with political corruption related to the activities of public authorities, political parties, and state decision-making processes. At the same time, everyday corruption practices are often not perceived by the population as critically dangerous, which is due to the low level of trust in state institutions and the historical peculiarities of their development. The content of political corruption is clarified as a form of improper use of public authority, administrative, and political resources for the purpose of obtaining private or group benefits. Its direct connection with the processes of public policymaking, distribution of public resources, and the functioning of key state institutions is established, which determines its systemic nature and distinguishes it from other forms of corruption. It is substantiated that political corruption has a multidimensional impact, in particular leading to reduced effectiveness of public administration, distortion of economic mechanisms, weakening of social trust, and increasing risks to national security. It is demonstrated that the effectiveness of anti-corruption policy largely depends on the quality of information support in the decision-making process. Emphasis is placed on the need to use complete, reliable, and verified statistical and sociological data for identifying corruption risks, assessing their scale, and determining priorities for state response. Based on the conducted analysis, it is determined that counteracting political corruption requires a comprehensive approach, including ensuring transparency of electoral processes, institutional separation of politics and business, strengthening the independence of the judiciary, developing public oversight, and fostering a sustainable culture of intolerance toward corrupt practices.




### KEYWORDS

political corruption, anti-corruption policy, public administration, institutional capacity, financial resources, national security.



## Політична корупція як причина неефективності антикорупційної політики та загроза національній безпеці України

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### СТАТТЯ

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У статті досліджується проблема політичної корупції як системного чинника зниження ефективності державної антикорупційної політики та як загрози національній безпеці України. Встановлено, що в Україні підходи до формування антикорупційної політики залишаються недостатньо системними, що проявляється у фрагментарності рішень, неповному врахуванні попереднього досвіду та обмеженому аналізі альтернативних інструментів державного впливу. Особливу увагу приділено суспільному виміру корупції. Зазначено, що в Україні корупція стабільно сприймається як одна з ключових суспільних проблем, при цьому найбільший рівень занепокоєння викликає саме політична корупція, пов'язана з діяльністю органів влади, політичних партій та процесами ухвалення державних рішень. Водночас побутові корупційні практики часто не сприймаються населенням як критично небезпечні, що зумовлено низьким рівнем довіри до державних інститутів та історичними особливостями їх розвитку. Уточнено зміст політичної корупції як форми неправомірного використання владних повноважень, адміністративних і політичних ресурсів з метою отримання приватної або групової вигоди. Встановлено її безпосередній зв'язок із процесами формування державної політики, розподілу публічних ресурсів та функціонуванням ключових інститутів держави, що визначає її системний характер і відмінність від інших видів корупції. Обґрунтовано, що політична корупція має багатовимірний вплив, зокрема призводить до зниження ефективності державного управління, деформації економічних механізмів, послаблення соціальної довіри та зростання ризиків для національної безпеки. Показано, що результативність антикорупційної політики значною мірою залежить від якості інформаційного забезпечення процесу прийняття рішень. Наголошено на необхідності використання повних, достовірних та перевірених статистичних і соціологічних даних для ідентифікації корупційних ризиків, оцінки їх масштабів і визначення пріоритетів державного реагування. На основі проведеного аналізу визначено, що протидія політичній корупції потребує комплексного підходу, який включає забезпечення прозорості виборчих процесів, інституційне розмежування політики та бізнесу, посилення незалежності судової влади, розвиток громадського контролю та формування стійкої культури нетерпимості до корупційних практик.



### КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

політична корупція, антикорупційна політика, публічне управління, інституційна спроможність, фінансові ресурси, національна безпека.

## 1. Introduction

The prevalence of corrupt practices and the level of their penetration into all spheres of public administration, political processes, economic relations and social development remain one of the key challenges for socio-economic stability, security and sovereignty of Ukraine. In modern conditions, corruption reaches such a limit that it remains one of the main threats to national security and independence, both by citizens of Ukraine and the international community.

The level of corruption has a significant impact on the state of compliance with democratic values and the functioning of public institutions. Political corruption is a particularly dangerous form of corruption, since it covers subjects directly involved in the adoption of strategic state decisions, the formation and implementation of state policy. This type of corruption is concentrated at the highest levels of the political system and poses a direct threat to the national security and defense capability of the state.

## 2. Literature Review

The analysis of scientific papers on political corruption and anti-corruption activities in the public administration system indicates the presence of various theoretical and methodological approaches to its interpretation as one of the key factors of institutional inefficiency of state mechanisms for combating corruption. The studies emphasize that political corruption significantly limits the effectiveness of anti-corruption policy, significantly affects the processes of managerial decision-making and weakens the institutional capacity of the state. This issue is especially relevant in the context of martial law, European integration processes and growing security challenges, when political corruption simultaneously acts not only as a factor of managerial inefficiency, but also as a constant threat to the national security of Ukraine.

In the works of Ukrainian researchers, corruption is interpreted as a structural factor of negative changes in the public administration system. In particular, in the research of O. Dlugopolskyi, attention is focused on the relationship of corruption with the institutional weakness of the state, inefficiency of the distribution of public resources and disruption of the functioning of managerial decision-making mechanisms. In this context, corruption is considered not only as an offense, but as a systemic risk to the functioning of public policy [5].

A separate area of research is the analysis of corruption risks. The work of A. Pohorilyi emphasizes the complexity of identifying and interpreting corruption risks, which limits the effectiveness of anti-corruption policy and complicates the formation of preventive management mechanisms. This is consistent with the approaches of modern institutional theory, according to which the level of corruption is determined by the quality of the institutional environment and the effectiveness of control mechanisms [13].

An important area of scientific research is the connection between political corruption and national security. In the work of I. Shopina, corruption in the defense and public administration sector is considered as a factor that directly affects the defense capability of the state and its ability to respond to external threats. Similarly, in Korczak's study, anti-corruption policy is defined as a basic component of ensuring national security, which confirms its strategic importance in the context of modern security challenges [10; 12; 15].

A number of studies emphasize that in the context of armed conflict, corruption risks are increasing, especially in the field of defense procurement and public finance management. This reinforces the importance of transparency of policy implementation and the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures [14].

Studies show that corruption negatively affects economic and social security, reduces the efficiency of public investments, significantly changes the structure of budget expenditures and worsens the investment climate. This confirms the systemic nature of corruption as a factor affecting all key areas of social development [2; 16].

### 3. Problem Statement

The article is aimed at a comprehensive analysis of political corruption as a systemic phenomenon of public administration, which is a key factor in the ineffectiveness of anti-corruption policy and forms multi-level threats to the national security of Ukraine.

### 4. Methods and Materials

The following sources of information were used in the work: the results of sociological surveys on the perception of corruption among citizens in Ukraine, analytical materials of international organizations, as well as scientific publications, in particular, the works of Ukrainian scientists in the field of public administration, anti-corruption policy and national security.

The current regulations of Ukraine in the field of preventing and combating corruption, and regulating the functioning of the system of public administration and ensuring national security, were also considered.

The following methods of scientific research were used to study these sources. Among the general scientific methods, the methods of analysis and synthesis were used to systematize scientific approaches to the interpretation of political corruption, its forms and mechanisms of influence on state institutions. Inductive and deductive methods made it possible to summarize the data of sociological research and form theoretical conclusions about the nature of corruption practices in modern Ukraine.

The systemic approach is used to study corruption as a multi-level phenomenon that covers political, administrative, economic and social dimensions. Thanks to this, the relationship between political corruption, the quality of public administration and the state of national security has been determined.

The comparative method is used to analyze the scientific approaches of Ukrainian and foreign researchers to the interpretation of political corruption and anti-corruption policy. This made it possible to identify common trends in the interpretation of corruption as an institutional risk and a systemic challenge for public administration.

The content analysis was used to process the results of analytical reports and scientific publications on the prevalence of corruption, the level of public trust in state institutions and the perception of political corruption in Ukraine.

### 5. Results and Discussion

The effectiveness of the state anti-corruption policy, as well as any other state policy, largely depends on the use of complete, objective and verified data, as well as on the focus on solving key problems in the field of preventing and combating corruption. Such problems can be solved more effectively if there is statistical, sociological and analytical information about their causes, consequences, scale and dynamics. This is the basis of the concept of the full cycle of state policy formation, which is used in European countries and other developed countries.

Ensuring the full cycle of state policy formation is also provided for by Ukraine's international obligations under the UN Convention against Corruption (Articles 5, 6, 61), as well as the recommendations of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development on assessing the effectiveness of anti-corruption policy. At the same time, in Ukraine, the process of forming anti-corruption policy is not always based on sufficiently complete and reliable data, which affects its effectiveness.

In particular, anti-corruption policy is not always sufficiently focused on solving the main problems in this area and is often non-systemic. When making decisions, the previous experience of Ukraine and other countries is not always taken into account, the interests of all stakeholders are not fully analyzed, and possible options for solving problems are not always considered comprehensively. In addition, further monitoring, coordination and evaluation of decisions are not carried out effectively enough, which reduces the overall effectiveness of anti-corruption policy.

Sociological studies that are systematically conducted in Ukraine indicate that corruption continues to be perceived by the population as one of the most pressing social problems. At the same time, the results of surveys show that a significant part of citizens do not have direct experience of corruption in everyday life [8].

Modern research also shows that the greatest public concern is high-level, or political, corruption. Instead, corruption manifestations at the household level are often perceived by the population as less dangerous for society or even not always identified with corruption activities. This situation is largely due to the low level of trust in state institutions, which has been formed over a long historical period. The functioning of Ukrainian society under totalitarian political regimes contributed to the formation of the perception of state power as an institution separated from society, which significantly influenced the level of public trust and the peculiarities of citizens' attitudes to corruption.

Additional factors in the formation of public distrust were the lack of stable democratic traditions, insufficient development of mechanisms of civic participation and limited opportunities for effective public control over the activities of public authorities. The combination of these factors has significantly complicated the process of building trust in state institutions and the formation of an effective system of democratic governance, even after a significant period after Ukraine's independence.

At the same time, an important prerequisite for overcoming non-transparent mechanisms for the functioning of political institutions and establishing the principles of integrity, openness and accountability in the activities of political parties is a high level of public attention to the problems of political corruption. Active public control, an appropriate level of political culture of voters and public demand for transparency of political processes are important factors in the formation of effective mechanisms for preventing political corruption. In this context, it is of particular importance to strengthen public monitoring of the activities of political parties, financing election campaigns and the political decision-making process, which contributes to strengthening democratic standards for the functioning of the political system and reducing corruption risks in the field of public administration.

To date, Ukraine has formed the necessary prerequisites for the further development of the state mechanism for preventing and combating corruption, including political corruption, which is confirmed both by the development of anti-corruption legislation and the activities of specialized institutions and civil society [9]. In the works of Ukrainian researchers, the problem of corruption is most often analyzed in the context of public procurement, the activities of government bodies and political processes [4; 5]. In the scientific aspect, political corruption is defined as the unlawful use of official position, administrative resources and political influence by representatives of the political elite and subjects of power relations in order to obtain personal, group or corporate benefits connection with the processes of state policy development, managerial decision-making, allocation of budget resources and control over the main state institutions. Unlike other corruption manifestations, it has a systemic character, since it is able to affect not only certain areas of public administration, but also the functioning of the political system as a whole, the level of democratic development and the state of national security of the state. Participants in political corruption can be various representatives of the public administration system and the political environment, in particular political parties, government officials, representatives of executive structures and other subjects of political activity. In scientific research, political and bureaucratic forms of corruption are usually distinguished. Political corruption is mainly associated with the struggle for power resources, influencing election campaigns and legislative processes, while bureaucratic corruption manifests itself in the field of administrative activities due to abuse of official powers by officials. In modern scientific approaches, corruption is interpreted as a complex multi-level phenomenon that has a negative impact on the economy, the system of public administration, the social sphere and the international authority of the state. It is considered not only as a set of individual illegal practices, but as a factor that deforms management mechanisms, disrupts the effective allocation of resources and reduces the level of institutional capacity of the state.

First of all, corruption negatively affects the public investment system, creating a situation in which the increase in funding does not provide an adequate increase in the efficiency and quality of project implementation. States with a high level of corruption are characterized by irrational use of budget resources, artificially overestimation of the cost of work, misappropriation of funds and insufficient control over the implementation of investment programs. In the current conditions in Ukraine, even with a tendency to increase capital investments in 2025, there are significant risks of corruption influence on the processes of post-war recovery, which can lead to a decrease in the effectiveness of reconstruction and an increase in losses of public finances in the absence of effective mechanisms for controlling and preventing corruption.

At the same time, corruption causes a deformation of the structure of public expenditures, which manifests itself in a reduction in funding for socially important areas, in particular education and healthcare, and the concentration of resources in industries with high corruption risks, primarily

defense and infrastructure. In the context of a full-scale war, an increase in defense spending is objectively necessary, but these areas require an increased level of transparency and control, as they remain the most vulnerable to corruption abuses and inefficient use of funds.

A separate consequence of corruption is the weakening of the fiscal capacity of the state, which is manifested in the reduction of tax revenues, the spread of tax evasion schemes and the expansion of the shadow sector of the economy. This leads to a decrease in the financial resources of the state budget and limits the possibilities of implementing long-term development programs, in particular in the social and security spheres. In addition, the high level of corruption worsens the investment attractiveness of the state due to the instability of the regulatory environment, high risks and the increase in the cost of doing business. As a result, credit external financing mechanisms prevail, which increases the debt burden and macroeconomic risks, while countries with lower levels of corruption demonstrate a higher ability to attract foreign direct investment as the basis for sustainable economic development.

Corrupt practices significantly reduce the efficiency of public administration and weaken the institutional capacity of authorities [13]. Under such conditions, managerial decisions are increasingly focused not on the public interest, but on obtaining private benefits, which is accompanied by an increase in bureaucratic workload, complication of administrative procedures, political instability and the spread of informal decision-making practices. As a result, this leads to distortion of market mechanisms, a decrease in the level of competition, increased monopolization of certain sectors of the economy and the formation of artificial barriers to the entry of new market participants, which negatively affects innovative development and competitiveness [7].

In the social dimension, corruption worsens the quality and accessibility of public services, primarily in the fields of education and healthcare, which contributes to the growth of social inequality, increased poverty and reduced social mobility of the population. As a result, a steady decline in the level of trust in state institutions is formed, social cynicism spreads, civic activity weakens and tolerance to informal practices increases [2; 16].

In the broader economic context, corruption functions as a hidden additional "tax" on the economy, as it increases business costs, increases the cost of public services, distorts the mechanisms for allocating resources, and reduces the competitiveness of honest economic actors. This leads to an increase in transaction costs, a reduction in investment activity, especially in the small and medium-sized business sector, and an overall decline in the productivity of the economic system.

In the macroeconomic dimension, corruption is seen as a hidden additional burden on the economic system, as it increases business costs, increases the cost of public services, distorts the mechanisms of resource allocation and weakens the position of honest business entities. This, in turn, leads to an increase in transaction costs, a decrease in investment activity, especially in the small and medium-sized business sector, as well as to a general decline in the efficiency of the economy [1].

The most systemic impact of corruption is manifested in the field of national security, as it weakens the institutional stability of the state, reduces the effectiveness of the security and defense sector, and limits the ability of the state to respond promptly to internal and external threats [15]. Corrupt practices in the defense, law enforcement, and management spheres reduce defense capabilities, lead to inefficient use of critical resources, and create vulnerabilities that can be exploited by external actors to destabilize the state. At the same time, corruption reduces the level of trust in state institutions, which is a key element of national resilience, and negatively affects the ability of the state to ensure internal stability, economic security and the implementation of strategic interests. Taken together, this forms a long-term systemic threat to national security, as corruption limits the state's ability to mobilize resources, effectively manage crises, and maintain the resilience of institutions in war and post-war conditions [12]. In the context of Ukraine's European integration course and Russia's armed aggression, corruption remains one of the key challenges of state development. It makes it difficult to approach the standards of the European Union and weakens the state's ability to function under martial law. In the context of a full-scale war, there is an intensification of investigations into corruption offenses in the defense sector [4]. The war has increased sensitivity to the use of public resources, and therefore corrupt practices have become especially socially dangerous, as they directly affect the defense capability, resilience of institutions and the level of trust in them. During martial law, corruption takes various forms, including abuse of power, misuse of international financial and humanitarian aid, as well as misappropriation of budget funds directed to defense and social needs. Such practices reduce the effectiveness of public administration and create direct risks to meet the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the civilian population, which may affect the overall dynamics of

military processes. International expert circles and the Ukrainian society express concern about the potential increase in corruption risks in connection with the possible transition of international support from military aid to financing the restoration of destroyed infrastructure [6; 14]. A separate group of corruption risks in the field of civil service is represented by cases of obtaining illegal benefits for facilitating evasion of military duty, including through the issuance of forged medical documents. Such practices violate the principle of equality of citizens before the law, increase social inequality and negatively affect the level of social cohesion under martial law.

At the same time, a significant factor in the persistence of corruption risks is the insufficient level of digital transformation of public administration, which negatively affects the efficiency of executive authorities and local self-government, as well as the speed and convenience of obtaining administrative services by citizens and businesses. In the field of informatization, the key problem is the imperfection of the organization of public procurement, in particular, the improper preparation of tender documents and the insufficient level of technical competence of responsible persons, which can lead to an overestimation of the cost of procurement or the use of conditions that restrict competition [11].

An additional source of risks is the dependence of the provision of administrative services on paper certificates and documents, which requires significant interaction of citizens with the authorities and creates preconditions for abuse. Although digitalization allows automating data exchange between state registers and reducing contact with officials, its full implementation is limited by the low technical level of individual information systems and their insufficient integration into the unified digital infrastructure of the state.

As a result, these manifestations of corruption go beyond purely economic issues and become a threat to national security. They weaken the stability of the public administration system, reduce the efficiency of the use of resources necessary for the defense and restoration of the state, as well as reduce the institutional stability of the state. finances and strengthening the responsibility of officials. Only if corruption risks are systematically reduced, it is possible to ensure the effective operation of state institutions, strengthen the security potential of the state and achieve the defined strategic development goals. Combating political corruption involves a set of interrelated measures. First of all, it is important to ensure transparent and competitive democratic elections, which reduces the possibility of illegal influence on the formation of state authorities. A clear distinction between political activity and business interests also plays a significant role, which minimizes conflicts of interest and reduces the level of lobbying influence on the decision-making process. impartiality of the judicial system, which provides legal control and prosecution for corrupt actions in the political sphere. An important element is the development of effective mechanisms of public control that increase the level of accountability of authorities to society. In addition, it is essential to create a political culture of intolerance to corruption, in which such practices are perceived as socially unacceptable and lose their legitimacy.

## 6. Conclusions

Strengthening the institutional capacity of the anti-corruption system to identify and assess corruption risks in key areas of public life contributes to the formation of a more systematic approach to combating corruption. In this process, the interaction of state anti-corruption bodies with representatives of the expert community, scientific institutions, civil society and international technical assistance programs is important, which ensures the comprehensiveness of analysis and consideration of various dimensions of corruption practices.

At the same time, within the framework of the functioning of anti-corruption policy, political corruption needs special attention as a factor that significantly affects the effectiveness of public administration and the ability of anti-corruption mechanisms to be implemented. Its manifestations at the level of political decision-making, resource allocation and the formation of managerial priorities can limit the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures and reproduce corruption risks in other sectors of public administration. In this context, political corruption is one of the key challenges for ensuring the integrity of anti-corruption policy and strengthening the national security of the state. The main reasons for the existence of the vast majority of such corrupt practices are two interrelated blocks of factors. The first of them is the general low level of quality of regulatory legal acts regulating the relevant areas of social relations. This is manifested in the inconsistency of legal regulation with modern socio-economic realities and managerial challenges, the insufficient ability of legal norms to effectively perform the

function of regulating social processes and satisfying public needs, as well as in the presence of gaps, collisions and cases of duplication of functions of different authorities.

The second block of factors is related to the presence of provisions in regulatory legal acts that, independently or in cooperation with other norms, create preconditions for committing corruption offenses or corruption-related offenses. Such provisions include, in particular, improper determination of the competence of state authorities and local self-government bodies, insufficient specification of the content and scope of rights and obligations of persons, unreasonable establishment of benefits, advantages or other privileges for certain categories of subjects, the use of evaluative legal constructions, the presence of conflicts and gaps in legislation, as well as excessive duplication of powers of different bodies.

To minimize corruption, it is not enough to limit oneself only to strengthening criminal law response, increasing the efficiency of law enforcement agencies or forming proper moral and ethical attitudes in society. An important direction of anti-corruption policy should be the creation of such institutional and administrative conditions under which meeting the needs of citizens and business entities in a legal way will be more accessible, cost-effective and procedurally convenient than the use of corrupt practices.

In this context, the promising areas for improving the public administration system are the digitalization of administrative processes, the automation of individual management decisions, the expansion of remote provision of public services, the increase in the transparency of the activities of the authorities and the simplification of administrative procedures. The implementation of such measures helps to reduce direct contact between citizens and officials, minimize discretionary powers and, accordingly, reduce opportunities for corruption risks.

At the same time, it is advisable to consider information and communication campaigns not as an independent mechanism for overcoming corruption, but as an auxiliary tool aimed at supporting and popularizing the created legal alternatives to corrupt models of behavior. Their effectiveness largely depends on the real functioning of transparent and accessible mechanisms for interaction between citizens and businesses with the public sector.

The formation of partnership interaction between the state and business is of particular importance. Within the framework of such interaction, the state should encourage business entities to use legal and transparent mechanisms for resolving disputes in relations with the public sector, minimizing the practice of using informal or corrupt methods to achieve managerial or economic results.

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