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CORRUPTION AS DEVIANT SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND ITS EXTERNAL FACTORS

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Abstract. This article analyses corruption as a deviant social behaviour, reveals its content, analyses different approaches to the definition of corruption and explores its external factors.

Based on different points of view, three different approaches to defining corrupt behaviour are proposed: public interest, public opinion and legal norms. There are also three different stages of corruption. At the first stage, corruption does not have a pervasive or significant impact on everyday life. The second stage is characterised by the fact that corruption has become immanent and has turned into an everyday problem. And at the third stage, the degradation of values and norms is caused not by corruption itself, but by its functional interaction with other factors.

The author notes that the factors contributing to corruption can be divided into direct and indirect ones. Direct factors are considered to be interconnected with the activities carried out by the state; indirect factors include the quality of the bureaucracy, the level of public sector wages, the penal system, institutional control and transparency of laws.

The phenomenon of corruption is highly dependent on the political and economic environment. The more regulated and restricted economic activity in a country is, the greater the powers and authority of officials in decision-making. The potential for corruption is particularly high where officials are regulated and have the ability to make decisions based on discretionary powers.

The level of corruption also depends on monetary policy. Countries with higher economic and political freedom, well-regulated financial sectors, and low levels of informal economy or black market are less corrupt than those with the opposite.

The level of efficiency of public administration also determines the degree of corruption. This efficiency is determined by the quality of rules and permits, as inefficient and unclear rules contribute to corruption in at least two different ways: an artificially created monopoly on power that allows civil servants to gain undue advantage is based on their superior position and is embedded in the system. However, on the other hand, inefficient and unclear rules create obstacles and thus encourage individuals to give undue advantage in order to speed up bureaucratic procedures.

In summary, it is noted that corruption is a symptom of deep-rooted and fundamental economic, political and institutional weaknesses and deficiencies in the country. Therefore, to be effective, anti-corruption measures should address these root causes rather than symptoms. The emphasis should be on preventing corruption by addressing the root causes of corruption through economic, political and institutional reforms. Anti-corruption bodies such as the National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU),

the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office and the National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption (NAPC) will not be effective in the absence of serious efforts to address the underlying causes.

Keywords: *corruption, deviant behavior, corrupt behavior, external factors, economy, politics, political corruption, public interest, public opinion, legal norms, public sphere, public administration, institutions.*

Problem Statement. Corruption is as ancient as human civilization itself. It exists worldwide, across all political and economic systems, to varying degrees; it takes numerous forms and has a wide range of consequences for both the economy and society as a whole. Its impact on economic development and social structures has been the subject of extensive research and analysis, yet it remains only partially understood. Corruption hinders economic growth, affects business operations, employment, and investments. It also reduces tax revenues and the effectiveness of various financial aid programs. Society as a whole suffers from high levels of corruption, as it undermines trust in the law and the rule of law, weakens the education system, and ultimately lowers the overall quality of life. In recent decades, studies on the causes and consequences of corruption have significantly advanced.

Corrupt behavior is driven by numerous mechanisms and factors, including economic, legal, political, historical, and geographical influences. Corruption is a socio-economic phenomenon deeply rooted in long-standing traditions that have existed for millennia. In a certain sense, it is part of human culture. Although individuals may benefit from corruption in specific cases, it remains a harmful societal phenomenon.

There is no universal solution to combating corruption. What proves effective in one country or region may not necessarily succeed in another. This article analyzes

different approaches to defining corruption, examines its external causes and consequences, and explores possible ways to combat it.

State of Research. Corruption, its concept, nature, and causes have been studied by both foreign and domestic scholars in various disciplines, including law, psychology, and sociology. Among the most notable international researchers in this field are S. Alatas, D. Anderson, I. Amundsen, G. Becker, E. Brown, S. Wei, D. Kaufmann, R. Klitgaard, D. Lederman, P. Mauro, V. Miller, V. Tanzi, and J. Wallis, among others. Domestic scholars have also made significant contributions to the study of corruption, including L. Arkusha, L. Bahrii-Shamatov, V. Gvozdetzky, V. Dereha, O. Dudorov, O. Dulskyi, V. Zhuravskyi, M. Kamlyk, M. Karmazina, Ya. Kashuba, O. Markeeva, M. Melnyk, M. Mykhalchenko, Ye. Nevmerzhytskyi, S. Stetsenko, and O. Fradynskyi. However, despite extensive academic research on corruption, it continues to grow and spread across various spheres of public life, highlighting the need for further scientific exploration of this issue.

The purpose of this article is to analyze corruption as deviant social behavior, to study different approaches to its definition, external factors of corruption and its possible consequences, and ways and means of overcoming it.

Summary of the main material. Corruption is a type of behavior that deviates from the norm, which is actually widespread or considered to be widespread in a given context, such as political. It is deviant behavior associated with a certain motivation, namely personal gain at the expense of the state. The classical concept of corruption as a general disease of the political “body” has survived to this day and is central to the political thought of Machiavelli, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. For Machiavelli, corruption was a process by which the virtue of the citizen was undermined and ultimately destroyed. The Roman Republic also had its share of corruption, and people like Cicero, who were interested in reviving the republic, were engaged in identifying

and bringing to justice serious cases of corruption, especially in the provincial administration.

Corruption is not a new phenomenon, but has its roots in ancient history. Documents on the existence and recognition of corruption date back to Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. In addition, the archives found in the administrative center of the Middle Kingdom of Assyria (c. 1400 BC) refer to civil servants taking bribes, with high-ranking officials and close relatives of the head of state involved. There are also references to bribery in the Old Testament Scriptures [14, P.23].

However, corruption is a broader concept than just bribery or gaining some kind of advantage, it also includes patronage or influence. Corruption should be called what it is - “a form of organized crime and a serious violation of human rights”[5, P.20].

Understanding the virtues of corruption requires a definition that is acceptable to different cultures and countries. Corruption is defined as behavior that deviates from generally accepted rules to achieve individual gain, it is a deviation from explicit and behavioral norms (in the legal and ethical sense). The widespread prevalence of corruption in some societies suggests that corrupt behavior is itself a norm, even though it is inefficient and generally frowned upon.

Although different societies may have a similar understanding of right and wrong when talking about corruption, a person may interpret the same activity as natural or as corrupt behavior depending on the country of origin or the social norms in which they were raised. As a result, researchers on corruption face the challenge of finding a comprehensive definition of corruption.

Based on different points of view, political science literature offers three different approaches to the definition of corrupt behavior: public interest, public opinion and legal norms [10, P. 3].

Corruption in the public interest is deviant behavior that impedes the public interest and is committed by administrative or political bodies. This definition emphasizes the intrinsic motivation of civil servants to provide services to certain groups in exchange for private rewards [9, P. 34].

In the light of the public opinion approach, the variation in corruption standards means that corruption is what the public thinks it is. This variation is the result of cultural differences. Thus, it not only precludes the possibility of a clear cross-cultural definition, but also creates new uncertainties, such as who exactly represents the relevant public[10, P. 4]. From this point of view, public opinion does not provide clear guidance on how to solve the problem of an unambiguous definition of corruption.

Referring to the legal norms approach, corruption is defined as behavior that violates “specific rules governing the way public duties are performed”, including the illegal exchange of political values for private rewards [15, P. 67]. It is still debatable who determines the normative nature of the “specific rules” that improve the welfare of the population.

From a similar perspective, there are three elements to the definition of corruption. The first element includes the distinction between public and private spheres. According to it, corruption is defined as behavior that deviates from the formal duties of a public role for “private material or status gain.” The second element recognizes corruption as an act in which one party provides (mainly material) incentives in exchange for political benefits provided by the official. The third element introduces a norms-based assessment. It implies the need to understand corrupt behavior as a deviation from accepted and prevailing norms [9, P. 34]. The following definition, introduced by Transparency International, is based on the above elements: “abuse of entrusted power for personal gain” [13]. This definition is the most common

in the literature. In this sense, “abuse” means a deviation from moral and legal standards that entails costs for the civil servant in the form of sanctions.

There are three different stages of corruption. At the first stage, corruption does not have a pervasive or significant impact on everyday life, and most businesses can be conducted without any distortions. At first glance, the negative effects of corruption appear to be quite limited, even though corruption may be flourishing. At this stage, corruption has not yet had time to penetrate deeper social structures, although it is primarily found in top government circles and large companies. The second stage is characterized by the fact that corruption becomes immanent and turns into an everyday problem. The black market flourishes and laws are routinely circumvented. Corruption becomes a complex social problem, permeating fundamental social interactions.

In the third stage, the degradation of values and norms is caused not by corruption itself, but by its functional interaction with other factors. The transition from subconscious to destructive corruption originates in the group that suffers the least from the consequences of corruption, namely civil servants. Corruption only accelerates the effect of widespread failures in the functioning of the system and, as a result, slows down the development of the whole society [2].

Factors contributing to corruption can be divided into direct and indirect elements. Direct factors are considered to be interrelated with the activities carried out by the state, especially in the context of monopoly and discretionary exercise of power. The degree of corruption depends on how effective public administration is.

This efficiency is determined by the quality of regulations and permits. Direct factors that are a possible source of danger can be divided into 1) regulations and permits, 2) taxation, and 3) provision of goods and services at below-market prices. Indirect factors that influence corruption include 1) the quality of the bureaucracy, 2) the level of public sector wages, 3) the penalty system, 4) institutional control, and 5)

the transparency of laws. These factors influence the emergence and scale of corruption [11, P. 571].

Other researchers have also identified nine possible causes of corruption: 1) the structure and size of the public sector, 2) the quality of regulation, 3) the degree of economic competition, 4) the structure of the government, 5) the level of decentralization, 6) the influence of culture, 7) values, 8) gender differences, and 9) the role of invariant characteristics such as geography and history [8, P. 4].

In general, the factors that influence corruption include, among others, economic, legal, political, historical and geographical.

Corruption is present to varying degrees in different areas of the economy and society. Corruption is most prevalent in socio-economic segments with significant financial flows. These segments are only partially related to the public sector; they are also visible in relations between economic actors. However, the social significance and damage from corruption are more significant in the public sector. This indicates that political parties and certain public administration bodies, socio-economic sectors, and institutions are considered to be the most corrupt.

The level of efficiency of public administration also determines the degree of corruption. Such efficiency is determined by the quality of rules and permits, as inefficient and unclear rules contribute to corruption in at least two different ways: an artificially created monopoly on power that allows civil servants to receive bribes is based on their superior position and is embedded in the system. But on the other hand, inefficient and unclear rules create obstacles and thus encourage individuals to pay bribes to speed up bureaucratic procedures.

The overall level of quality of public administration in a particular country can affect economic performance through the impact on tax revenues, public spending, and the budget deficit [12, P. 3]. An inefficient bureaucracy fuels corruption because it

creates a favorable environment for “fast money”. Such a mechanism is designed to circumvent regulatory bodies that hinder companies' operations. The more inefficient the regulation, the longer the delays for companies that cannot start their business. As a result, such inefficiencies, combined with the risk of losing money and business, lead them to take advantage of “quick money”. When the scope and bureaucracy of each public official's decision-making power is high, people can use their power for personal gain at the expense of the general welfare.

Corruption is also strongly influenced by the socio-economic status of civil servants (public officials) - they compensate for low salaries by obtaining illegal benefits. However, low salaries are not the only cause of corruption; poor public administration, which is a consequence of political overload of officials, due to which loyalty usually prevails over professional standards, also strongly influences corruption.

Studies also point to the importance of economic and political freedom. Every country characterized by a high level of protectionism and other significant barriers to trade fosters corruption, while countries with a long history of openness to trade tend to have lower levels of corruption. Comparisons between countries show that the degree of economic and political freedom is negatively correlated with the level of corruption [3, P. 461-462]. The economic growth of a country, measured by the increase in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, has a traceable impact on the level of corruption in the country [1, P. 499].

Institutions also play an important role in ensuring a healthy legal environment and in facilitating the business of companies. They set the rules of the game in society or, more formally, are the constraints created by people that shape human interaction. When there is an imbalance of power, parties can abuse the system and engage in deviant behavior that harms society. This can lead to violations of the law and loss of

public trust. Therefore, well-functioning institutions are important factors in the fight against corruption.

Political corruption affects everyone directly or indirectly. Elected politicians and political parties, who are expected to act in the public interest, are given the right (and responsibility) to make decisions about the use of public funds and, in exercising their powers, affect the daily lives of every citizen. Consequently, their greed can cause enormous damage. Corruption risks also depend on the degree of concentration of corruption among parties and their supporters.

Political institutions are indispensable in the fight against corruption because they set the rules and regulations that control the economic environment. Key conditions such as trade openness, competition, and economic development are influenced by the rules set by political institutions. Here, transparency and accountability are key to deterring the propensity of public officials to engage in fraudulent behavior, which is likely to occur in an environment of free speech and democratic elections.

Researchers believe that “corruption tends to decline systematically with the development of democracy, parliamentary system, democratic stability and freedom of the press” [6, P. 241].

Thus, the success of anti-corruption efforts depends on the extent to which key elements of the political system are cleared of corruption.

Existing research shows that historical and geographical factors are also very important in predicting the level of corruption in a country.

Historical factors are important in the sense of how history shapes the cultural norms that dictate corrupt behavior. Due to historical precedents, giving and receiving bribes (undue advantage) may be socially acceptable in one country, while similar actions may be condemned in another. In addition, over time, both bribe givers and

bribe takers are able to develop “efficient” mechanisms for engaging in corrupt practices.

Geographic location has a significant impact on the level of corruption. Studies show that resource endowment, agricultural aspects and factors of production play an important role in overall economic development and thus indirectly affect the level of corruption[4, P. 245]. However, an excess of resources can also lead to negative consequences. Exploitation of large resource reserves often leads to significant income imbalances, political corruption and violations of property rights. In addition, some researchers find support for the hypothesis that countries with more geographically concentrated populations (urbanized) are likely to have lower levels of corruption. And in densely populated areas, corruption is strongly restrained due to easier detection and stronger stigmatization [7, P. 444]. **Conclusions. In summary, the fight against corruption is an important task that can be organized by the government; but at the same time, there is a need for cooperation between the government, economic and civil society sectors. The government can contribute to this cooperation by developing control mechanisms, increasing the effectiveness of detection of corrupt acts and, through the judiciary, reducing the likelihood of impunity for such acts and encouraging behavior that complies with norms (while eradicating corruption as a norm). The economic sector can participate in reducing corruption by promoting competitive neutrality and elevating fair competition (market behavior) to the norm, while civil society, including a free press, can do the same by demanding publicity and exercising oversight.**

Corruption is most prevalent where there are other forms of institutional weakness, such as political instability, bureaucratic red tape, and weak legislative and judicial systems. The important point is that corruption and such institutional weaknesses are interconnected and feed on each other. For example, bureaucracy

makes corruption possible, and corrupt officials can increase bureaucracy to gain more undue advantage. Thus, getting rid of corruption helps a country to overcome other institutional weaknesses. Just as reducing other institutional weaknesses helps to overcome corruption.

At its core, corruption is a symptom of deep-rooted and fundamental economic, political and institutional weaknesses and deficiencies in a country. Therefore, to be effective, anti-corruption measures must address these root causes rather than symptoms. Emphasis should be placed on preventing corruption by addressing the root causes of corruption through economic, political and institutional reforms. Anti-corruption bodies such as the National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU), the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office and the National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption (NAPC) will not be effective in the absence of serious efforts to address the underlying causes.

The main conclusion that can be drawn is that reforms (both economic and political) by reducing institutional weaknesses offer the greatest hope for overcoming corruption. Of course, reforms will not eliminate corruption, but they will bring corruption under control and minimize it.

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