Combating and Preventing Corruption in Local Government: Foreign Experience, Administrative, Legal and Criminal Aspects*

Oleh Shkuta,¹ Andriy Basko,² Inna Pozigun,³ Eduard Pleshko,⁴
Nataliia Prodanets ⁵

1,3,5 Odessa State University of Internal Affairs, Ukraine
 ² Zaporizhzhia National University, Ukraine
 ⁴ Institute of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the National University "Odesa Maritime Academy", Ukraine



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Abstract.

This article is devoted to the negative impact of corruption on the efficiency of the state, the ability of the state to govern, and the deterioration of public life organisations during wartime in Ukraine. The prevention of corruption risks in local government organisations should be carried out by the authorities exclusively at the level of legislative acts. It must comply with the principles of the rule of law and relevant state security. This article presents a detailed analysis of Ukrainian legislation to prevent corruption risks in local self-government organisations (within the administrative and criminal law). It is concluded that strengthening liability for corruption under martial law in Ukraine is fully justified, as it aims to prevent the "reduction" of international aid in wartime, equating corruption with cooperation with the enemy and delivering preventive strikes. A scientific vision of the legislative approach to solving the problem of fighting corruption in Ukraine has been developed, considering the realistic goals of such activities and the war in Ukraine. The following aspects of the legislative approach to the fight against corruption are taken into account: anti-corruption mechanisms at the legislative level and in the activities of executive authorities; formation of an effective system of state bodies that implement the state policy in the field of combating corruption risks; bringing individuals to responsibility for corruption through imprisonment and other measures; intolerance of the population to corruption during the war, etc. Attention is drawn to the need for states to comply with international standards, namely the recommendations of GRECO and the Istanbul Action Plan of the OECD Anti-Corruption Network.

Keywords: Corruption Prevention; Local Self-Government Bodies; Legal Regulation; Legal Status; Corruption Evaders: Foreign Experience

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¹ **Oleh Shkuta** - Doctor of Juridical Sciences, Professor, Odessa State University of Internal Affairs, Ukraine. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0395-5710 Email: olehshkutaukr@gmail.com

^{2.} Andriy Basko - Doctor of Philosophy in Law, PhD student of Zaporizhzhia National University, Zaporizhzhya, Ukraine. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-9858-257X Email: 77 av@ukr.net

³ Inna Pozigun - Doctor of Philosophy, Lecturer at the Department of Criminal Law Disciplines of the Institute of Law and Security, Odessa State University of Internal Affairs, Ukraine. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4781-8259 Email: lnna021292@ukr.net

⁴ Eduard Pleshko - Candidate of Law, Leading Researcher at the Research Center "Derzhavnyi okeonarium", Institute of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the National University "Odesa Maritime Academy", Ukraine. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0005-9637-3497 Email: rpo.odessa@i.uat

⁵ Nataliia Prodanets - PhD in Law, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Criminal Law Disciplines of the Institute of Law and Security, Odessa State University of Internal Affairs, Ukraine. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1117-1652 Email: ustynova1970@gmail.com

^{**}Corresponding author: olehshkutaukr@gmail.com

A. INTRODUCTION

Modern Ukraine, like many other countries of the world, faces the problem of corruption at various levels of government. One of the main aspects where corruption has a powerful influence is local self-government bodies. Corrupt practices in these bodies often go beyond financial manipulation, covering a wider range of violations, from political influence to human rights violations. In order to understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to consider in detail the political, legal and social prerequisites underlying corruption manifestations in local self-government.

The degree of protection of each state against external threats, including armed aggression, is directly dependent on internal stability, the strength of the national state apparatus, and the effectiveness of political power on the entire state territory. Corruption is often the leading domestic cause of political and economic crises in this context. It must be agreed that it has a wide-ranging impact on all societies, as it undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to human rights abuses, market distortions, reduced quality of life, and allows organised crime, terrorism, and other threats to human security to flourish. This negative phenomenon can be found in all countries - large and small, rich and poor - but it is in developing countries that its consequences are the most destructive. (General Assembly adopts UN Convention against corruption, opens treaty for signature at high-level conference in Merida, 2003)

In connection with the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, based on the proposal of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, by Clause 20, Part 1, Art. 106 of the Constitution of Ukraine (Constitution of Ukraine, 1996), the Law of Ukraine "On the Legal Regime of Martial Law" (Law of Ukraine, 2015) put into effect the plan for introducing and ensuring the measures of the legal regime of martial law in Ukraine. In such conditions, today, one of the country's strategic priorities remains the fight against crime and corruption. Today's criminogenic realities require an effective response mechanism on the part of the state, in particular, ensuring coordinated, purposeful, joint actions of legislative and law enforcement agencies.

Analysis of publications in which the solution to this problem was initiated. The work of V. B. Ave'ryanov, B.M. Golovkina, A.T. Komzyuka, A.O. Levchuk, Ye. Leheza, O.M. Litvynova, I.O. Lugovoi, ID. Shepherd, O.P. Ryabchenko, V.I. Shakuna, S.O. Tents and others. Despite a significant number of works devoted to the prevention and counteraction of corruption, certain aspects of the application of legislation in the field of corruption prevention in martial law conditions have not been studied.

B. METHODS

The study is based on the works of foreign and Ukrainian researchers on methodological approaches to the disclosure of criminal-legal, administrative-legal and financial-legal aspects of preventing corruption in local government bodies. The epistemological method examined the criminal-legal, administrative-legal and financial-legal aspects of avoiding corruption in local government bodies. Thanks to the logical-semantic method, the conceptual apparatus was deepened, and criminal-legal, administrative-legal, and financial-legal aspects of preventing corruption in local government bodies were identified. Analysing the disclosure of criminal-legal, administrative-legal and financial-legal aspects of preventing corruption in local government bodies was possible thanks to existing legal methods.

Using analytical methods, available data and scientific sources of information on preventing corruption in local government bodies were investigated. The logical-semantic methods used in the article reveal the essence of preventing corruption in local government bodies. The comparative legal method made it possible to compare the legislation of foreign countries in the article, including evaluating regulatory legal acts.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The most famous indicator of the level of perception of corruption in one or another country is the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), which is calculated by the international organisation Transparency International since 1995. The main criterion of the Index is not ranking but the points the country receives. The minimum rating, which is zero, indicates that corruption has effectively replaced the state, while the maximum score (100) indicates an almost complete absence of corruption. The CPI measures the perception of corruption, not the actual level.

This index reflects the perception of corruption in the state sector of the economy by representatives of the business elite. In addition, it is a kind of consolidated rating that assesses the level of corruption in different countries. To compile this index, various sources are used, such as the World Economic Forum, the Institute of Management Development, Price Waterhouse Coopers, Freedom House and Gallup International. In order to reduce possible differences in numbers caused by random factors, the evaluations of the previous ones are taken into account over the years.

This indicator includes data from previous years to avoid sudden fluctuations in the numbers that random factors may cause. According to the results 2023, Ukraine received 36 out of 100 points. The table below shows the results for CPI received by Ukraine over the past 11 years.

During the specified period, Ukraine added 11 points to the study. This is the most significant increase among the countries currently considered candidates for the EU. The latest study covers the period from February 2021 to September 2023. Ukraine received a significant increase in the indicator just in time for a full-scale war. Ukraine's growth was 3 points—one of the world's best results for the past year. Also, Ukraine became one of the 17 countries in this year's SRI that demonstrated its best performance ever.

The success of the further development of Ukraine as a sovereign and independent, democratic, social, legal state now, more than ever before, depends on the determination of politicians, statesmen and public servants and the principledness of every citizen and civil society in general in the fight against the external and internal enemy. One of Ukraine's most dangerous internal enemies is corruption, which makes effective economic, social, and humanitarian development impossible and slows down its European integration, ultimately playing into the hands of the external enemies of our state. That is why eradicating corruption is currently one of the most important tasks of the Ukrainian state. (Kovbasyuka, 2016)

An effective fight against corruption requires a scientific concept of its prevention. One of the main foundations of such a concept should be understanding corruption as a socially determined phenomenon. Based on this, it is necessary to develop a strategy and tactics for combating it, set appropriate goals, determine the means of their achievement, and determine the level of material, financial, organisational, and legal support. (Shilo, 2019)

The prevention of corruption is a complex, organised, and scientifically based process of the influence of the state and other specially authorised subjects on the formation of negative factors of corruption and the flow of corruption in society. One key direction of such prevention is the prevention of corruption crime. The preventive content of this crime is focused on eliminating and neutralising the causes and conditions of corruption crime, as well as other criminogenic factors that affect the formation of the personality of persons who commit corruption crimes. Theoretical and methodological support for corruption crime highlights the importance of preventing this socio-legal phenomenon and other forms of struggle. (Melnyk, 2001)

The strategic goal of the anti-corruption policy is to combat corruption at the level of state power and local self-government by increasing transparency in their activities, observing the rights and freedoms of people and citizens, creating conditions for the development of the economy, ensuring European social standards and the well-being of the population. Achieving this goal is possible through implementing the anti-corruption policy, which provides for the gradual reduction of the level of corruption in the state and establishes an effective mechanism for preventing and countering corruption in Ukraine. Based on this, strategic and tactical goals of combating corruption should be determined, tasks should be set before specific state authorities, and means of combating corruption should be chosen. (Rasyuk, 2018)

Effective fight against corruption in Ukraine requires the presence of appropriate political will as well as adequate legislative support (complex norms and legal provisions governing anti-corruption mechanisms and liability for corruption violations), the formation of an effective system of state institutions ensuring proper coordination of the formation and implementation of anti-corruption policies, the preventive measures and their overcoming. The creation of such an institutional system must comply with international standards (in particular, the UN and Council of Europe anti-corruption conventions, GRECO recommendations, and the Istanbul Action Plan of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) Anti-Corruption Network) and global best practices, as well as take into account the specificities of Ukraine's legal system The specificities of the Ukrainian legal system must be taken into account.

In the context of war, it is imperative to strengthen the fight against corruption by introducing changes and additions to existing laws. In particular, after victory, Ukraine will receive billions of dollars from its partners to revitalise its economy and infrastructure. Moreover, when "funding" covers the worst parts of the state apparatus, unhealthy eyes will shine, and new offshore accounts will be opened. The anti-corruption system in Ukraine was not very effective even during peacetime. During the war, the domestic law enforcement agencies did not have a free hand to deal with corrupt people because they were primarily investigating military criminal offences.

For example, the draft Law on Amendments to the Criminal Code (CPC) of Ukraine on Strengthening Liability for Corrupt Actions During Martial Law proposes to equate the acquisition by a person authorised to perform the functions of the state or local self-government of assets, value which exceeds its legal income by more than six thousand five hundred tax-free minimum incomes

of citizens, during the period of martial law and within one year after its termination or cancellation.

For this purpose, the draft Law proposes to supplement Art. 111 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, which deals with state treason, with a new provision, according to which a corrupt official can be deprived of his liberty for a term of up to 15 years or sentenced to life imprisonment, with confiscation of property and with the deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities.

In this aspect, it is worth noting that the Law of Ukraine dated March 3, 2022 No. 2113-XX "On Amendments to the Criminal Code of Ukraine on Strengthening Liability for Crimes Against the Basics of National Security of Ukraine in the Conditions of Martial Law" (On amendments to the Criminal Code of Ukraine regarding the strengthening of responsibility for crimes against the foundations of national security of Ukraine under the conditions of martial law, 2022) added Article 111 (Treason), 113 (Sabotage) of the Criminal Code of Ukraine as a sign of aggravating responsibility - committing acts in conditions of martial law or during an armed conflict, as well as providing sanctions for committing such acts - imprisonment for a term of fifteen years or life imprisonment will, with confiscation of property. (Leheza et al., 2022)

Treason or sabotage under martial law means the acts provided for in Articles 111 or 113 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, respectively, in the period and in the territory where a special legal regime has been introduced in the event of armed aggression or threat of attack, danger to the state independence of the state. Territory where a special legal regime has been introduced in the event of armed aggression or threat of attack, danger to the state independence of Ukraine, its territorial integrity, which provides for the provision of appropriate state authorities, military command, military administrations and local selfgovernment bodies, the powers necessary to avert the event of armed aggression or threat of attack, danger to the state independence of Ukraine, its territorial integrity, which provides for the provision of appropriate state authorities, military command, military administrations, and local self-government bodies, the powers necessary to repel armed aggression, ensure state security, and eliminate the threat of danger to the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and the rights and freedoms of individuals and citizens, and the rights and legal interests of legal persons, and to temporarily legal interests, and the duration of the validity of these restrictions (martial law). (Criminal Code of Ukraine, 2001)

Committing treason or sabotage during an armed conflict means

committing the actions provided for in Art. 111 or 113 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, respectively, in the period and in the territory where there is an armed conflict between states (international armed conflict, armed conflict on the state border) or between warring parties within the territory of one state, as a rule, with support from the outside (internal armed conflict). (Kobrusieva et al., 2021)

Establishing harsh sanctions for committing the specified actions is fully justified in a war with Russia, as well as in any other armed conflict. The state can prosecute and impose the most severe punishment on persons who sabotage the state council and prevent new manifestations of these socially dangerous acts.

In order to bring the guilty to criminal responsibility, as well as its inevitability, it is also necessary to establish an absolute ban on the release of the guilty from criminal responsibility, punishment or its serving in the case of crimes against the foundations of national security of Ukraine, provided for in Article 109-114-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, against the peace and security of mankind, provided for in Art. 437-439 and part 1 of Art. Article 442 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine was committed under martial law. In this regard, we propose to supplement several articles 45-48, 74, 75, 79, 80-82, 86, 87, 89, 91 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine with provisions on the prohibition of exemption from criminal responsibility, punishment or its serving, removal or repayment of a criminal record in case of committing crimes against the foundations of national security of Ukraine, provided for in Art. 109-114-1, against the peace and security of mankind, provided for in Art. 437-439 and part 1 of Art. 442 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. (Halaburda et al., 2021)

Thus, the amendments provided for in the draft law on amendments to the Criminal Code of Ukraine on strengthening liability for acts of corruption under martial law are fully justified and aim to prevent the "disbursement" of international aid during wartime, preventive strike missions, and equating wartime corruption with collaboration with the enemy. (Leheza et al., 2023)

Next, in the context of the subject of the article, the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law of Ukraine "On Prevention of Corruption" regarding the specifics of the application of legislation in the field of prevention of corruption under martial law is worthy of attention, in which, for the period until the termination or abolition of martial law, the requirement for gifts to conform to generally accepted notions of hospitality and limitations on the value of gifts, established by the second part of Article 23 of this Law, do not apply to:

- 1). Receipt of funds, in full used exclusively for such purposes (provided there is confirmation of the use of the received funds in full for one or more specified purposes);
- 2). To the Armed Forces of Ukraine or other military organisations organised by the laws of Ukraine, to voluntary organisations of regional communities, and to intelligence and law enforcement agencies (but only if there is appropriate confirmation of the complete provision of such goods to the entities specified in this paragraph), to release ownership and provide the goods without charge or Acceptance of the goods at a price lower than the lowest market price;
- 3). Receipt of the full value of the goods provided as a charitable donation or humanitarian aid to persons affected as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, upon termination of their ownership, either free of charge or at a price lower than the lowest market value, provided that there is appropriate confirmation that such goods were provided in full for a specific purpose; and (provided that there is appropriate confirmation that such goods have been provided in full for a specific purpose. (Leheza *et al.*, 2023)
- 4). By persons residing in temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine, in areas where hostilities have been committed as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, or as a result of (the threat of committing) hostilities due to the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine or (the threat of) temporary occupation of territory of Ukraine Receipt for free or at a price lower than the lowest market price by a person forced to leave his/her place of residence as a result of (threat of) hostilities due to armed aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation or temporary occupation of the territory of Ukraine. (Leheza et al., 2023)

Also, establish that: a) in the declaration of a person authorized to perform the functions of the state or local self-government, the reporting period of which fully or partially falls on the period of martial law, the information that must be indicated in the declaration in accordance with clauses 7, 10 of the first part Article 46 of this Law, the subject of the declaration has the right not to indicate in the declaration in relation to the objects of declaration provided for in clauses 2-3 of this section; b) in the case of receiving income, acquiring property, making expenses specified in clauses 2-3 of this section, a notification about significant changes in property status is not submitted; c) for the period until the termination or abolition of martial law, the period of control, inspection and monitoring suspended by the National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption in accordance with the Law of Ukraine "On Protection of the Interests of Subjects

of Reporting and Other Documents during the Period of Martial Law" is suspended state or state of war" dated March 3, 2022 No. 2115-IX. The period resumes from the day following the day of termination or cancellation of martial law. (Korniienko et al., 2023)

One should also agree with the conclusions about the high corruption risks of this Project due to the use of general formulations without specification and the possibility of monitoring the spending of funds and other gifts. Receipt of money is not always a consequence of the emergence of ownership rights to such money, and as a result, a gift. If you give money to a neighbour to buy bread, he does not become its owner. If the funds were received for transfer to special accounts or donations, then the employee would not receive any gift since he is not using his funds. As a result, there is no obligation to report significant changes in property status. (Sinkevych et al., 2024)

The same applies to goods. Receipt of goods free of charge is also not a fact of ownership. Suppose we are talking about receiving goods free of charge or at a price below the minimum market price for transfer to the Armed Forces of Ukraine or other military formations. In that case, they can be transferred directly to such entities or through the mediation of other entities (for example, charitable foundations, volunteer organisations, etc.). In addition, it is not clear how you can get the product at a price below the minimum market price at which the product can be purchased. (Villasmil Espinoza et al., 2022)

The receipt of this type of service does not require separate permission or the creation of a special legal regulation, since they can be received in accordance with current legislation, namely as publicly available discounts on goods, services, publicly available winnings, prizes, bonuses, bonuses (Part 2 of Article 23 of the Law of Ukraine "On Prevention of Corruption"), as they are provided not only to employees, but also to other persons who live in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, the territories of hostilities as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, or who were forced to leave their place of actual residence as a result of the conduct (threat of conduct) of hostilities due to the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, temporary occupation (threat of temporary occupation). This also applies to medicines, humanitarian aid, etc. (On prevention of corruption, 2014)

The National Civil Service Agency of Ukraine has developed 10 projects of normative legal acts, providing for implementing the Law of Ukraine dated May 2, 2022, No. 3077 "On service in local self-government bodies". The Law of Ukraine "On Service in Local Self-Government Bodies" improves HR approaches

in local self-government bodies. Although this law will enter into force after the end of martial law, the National Agency of Ukraine for Civil Service has prepared most of the by-laws necessary for its implementation. These are two resolutions of the CMU and five standard provisions and procedures, approved by orders of the National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service Issues and registered in the Ministry of Justice. (Matviichuk et al., 2022)

Work is currently underway on the Standard procedure for forming and organising the personnel reserve's work. This act has already been discussed with strategic stakeholders. A draft resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On approval of criteria for determining the list of positions of employees of local self-government bodies performing maintenance functions" has been developed. The document was sent to the regulatory ministries and all-Ukrainian associations of local self-government bodies to express their position. (Tylchyk et al., 2022)

The National Agency of Ukraine for Civil Service issues is also developing a new competitive procedure for local self-government bodies. A project on the standard procedure for conducting a competition for the position of a local self-government employee has been prepared. Experts and representatives of all-Ukrainian specialised associations are currently considering it. Thanks to the competitive procedure, the best candidates should be selected for service in local self-government bodies. At the same time, the competition must ensure the implementation of equal access. Moreover, the procedure should be honest, modern, client-oriented, and understandable. (State Tax Service of Ukraine, 2022)

The National Agency of Ukraine for Public Service and the USAID project "Promoting Integrity in the Public Sector" (Pro-Integrity) are implementing an initiative to develop veterans' careers in public service. Its purpose is to ensure veterans have access to opportunities in the civil service and local self-government bodies. A separate section has been created on the official website of the National Agency of Ukraine for Civil Service Issues, "Public service for veterans: answers to frequently asked questions". There is information about the algorithm for finding current vacancies, requirements for candidates, the procedure for selection and appointment to a position, etc. A series of informational posters has also been developed and will be placed in the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

An E-map of vacancies has been created on the Ministry of Veterans Affairs platform, "E-Veteran". "On it, you will find vacancies in the civil service and local government. First, this card is aimed at veterans, but anyone can go to

it and find a job. Of course, this is a temporary step. The e-card will be valid until the Unified Public Service Vacancy Portal is restored. (Clarification No. 4 dated 07.03.2022 regarding applying certain provisions of the Law of Ukraine "On Prevention of Corruption" regarding financial control measures under martial law, 2022)

The National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service issues emphasizes the need to use the opportunities of the Personnel Reserve for positions in state bodies in the de-occupied territories. It is formed from persons who desire to work in civil service positions in the deoccupied territories. More than 2,500 Ukrainians have already agreed to become part of the teams that will restore power in the de-occupied territories.

Among other successful practices implemented by the National Agency of Ukraine for Public Service in human capital management is youth internships in public authorities. The National Agency of Ukraine for Civil Service issues, in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine and the United Nations Development Program in Ukraine, has launched a project on youth internships in local government. In July 2022, 27 representatives of local self-government bodies from different regions of Ukraine underwent face-to-face training. Based on the training results, 10 communities were selected, which are currently participating in the pilot youth internship program. (Zadyraka et al., 2023)

D. CONCLUSIONS

The fight against corruption risks in local self-government bodies in Ukraine continues more or less effectively. The construction of an established mechanism for (practical) prevention of corruption in government bodies must necessarily meet international standards. The directions for preventing corruption risks in local self-government bodies are highlighted: accessibility and convenience, i.e. advisory assistance to the subjects of declaration regarding the specifics of compliance with the requirements of financial control, taking into account the explanations of anti-corruption authorities (in particular, web information from the authorities of Ukraine - https://nazk.gov.ua/uk/); coordination and interaction of public administration bodies with relevant local self-government bodies in order to timely identify and bring to their attention the relevant anti-corruption authorities; prevention and settlement of conflicts of interest for public servants; organisation of electronic channels for notification of possible facts of corruption offenses or certain corruption risks in local self-

government bodies; timely reception and consideration of appeals from citizens as related to corruption and other violations of legal requirements.

Emphasised attention, for the National Civil Service Agency of Ukraine, HR tools must meet the principles of integrity and allow attracting and retaining honest professionals. For example, during the competitive selection for individual positions, such a requirement as Integrity is evaluated. Another important component is the formation of organisational culture. It depends on how easy it is for your colleagues to breathe and how comfortable the conditions are for working effectively.

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