
PREVENTING POLITICAL CORRUPTION IN UKRAINE: CURRENT STATE AND CHALLENGES DURING THE WAR

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Abstract

Russia's military aggression has intensified the issue of political corruption in Ukraine as new threats emerge. Ignoring this issue in the short term could significantly destabilize the system of state governance and, in turn, jeopardize Ukraine's existence as an independent and democratic state. This study examines changes in the mechanisms for detecting and preventing political corruption in Ukraine under the full-scale Russian invasion, particularly in areas such as state funding of political parties, transparency of party finances, and officials' asset declarations. Despite security concerns, public attention to political corruption in Ukraine is growing. The absence of a systematic approach characterizes Ukraine's current political corruption prevention stage. Despite the war, an anti-corruption infrastructure has been established and is operational, with ongoing optimization of the relevant legal framework. On the other hand, informal practices that exhibit evident characteristics of political corruption continue to influence governance.

Keywords: political corruption, informal institutions, party financing and reporting, e-declaration, civil society.

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

Corruption is a global, complex, and destructive phenomenon, and efforts to combat it are nearly as old as its existence. It distorts the moral state of any society, undermines democracy, erodes the rule of law, and violates the socio-economic rights of the poor and vulnerable groups [Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1997]. Fighting corruption is the responsibility of every society, and leading international actors emphasize the necessity of consolidating efforts at global, national, regional, and local levels. Key factors in an effective anti-corruption policy include democratic institutions and social cohesion, which shape the policy framework and ensure its sustainability. It is essential to address the consequences of corruption and eliminate its root causes [Ades et al. 1999].

Systemic corruption is particularly prevalent in countries experiencing crises in economic, institutional, and broader socio-political sectors. This issue primarily affects underdeveloped countries, autocracies, and states with weak government effectiveness and rule of law [Gründler et al. 2019]. Although formal anti-corruption legal frameworks and institutions may exist, their practical implementation is often undermined by informal rules that take precedence over formal ones [Gwartney et al. 2010].

Developing an effective policy to prevent and combat corruption has been and remains a crucial issue for Ukraine. Every president of independent Ukraine has focused on this issue in their political programs. One of the first anti-corruption legal acts was the Law of Ukraine, "On Combating Corruption", from October 5, 1995. Ukrainian anti-corruption legislation has undergone three stages of

development: the initial stage (1991–2011), the transitional stage (2011–2014), and the reform stage (2014–present). The first stage was marked by flaws in legislation concerning the types of corrupt acts, the individuals involved, and liability for corruption-related offenses [Viktorchuk et al. 2023]. The second stage involved many policy documents containing goals that were not achieved. The lack of a systematic approach to anti-corruption legislation marked the third stage. Corruption levels in the country, including political corruption, remained high, leading to mass public protests—the Orange Revolution in 2004 and the Revolution of Dignity in 2014—which resulted in a change of government. The fall of the Yanukovych regime marked the beginning of a new stage in political reforms, where the issues of preventing and combating corruption, particularly at the highest political levels, became more pressing.

Great expectations were placed on the presidency of Volodymyr Zelenskyy, whose election campaign was built mainly on criticizing the actions of his predecessor, Petro Poroshenko, particularly in the sphere of anti-corruption policy. However, the current government has also made mistakes, and public trust in Zelenskyy has significantly declined, primarily due to unmet expectations regarding eradicating corruption. A key moment in this decline was the constitutional crisis of 2020 when the Constitutional Court of Ukraine (CCU) ruled that mandatory electronic asset declarations for officials and provisions of the Criminal Code regarding inaccurate declarations and illicit enrichment were unconstitutional [Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine 2020b]. Although the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (VRU) later partially rectified these decisions by amending the Law on the Prevention of Corruption in December 2020, the initial rulings had already weakened anti-corruption institutions, undermined international trust, and enabled corrupt officials to evade responsibility. In recent years, several high-profile corruption scandals have been linked to informal institutions, including nepotism, cronyism, favoritism, and clientelism. Zelenskyy has appointed many high-ranking officials without parliamentary approval, including childhood friends and former colleagues from the entertainment industry. Judicial reform has slowed, and political interference in anti-corruption agencies has increased to maintain control over them. Even Zelenskyy acknowledged in a January 2025 interview that although Ukraine has developed one of Europe's most complex anti-corruption systems, the fight against corruption remains unresolved.

The new threats posed by Russia's military aggression have further increased the urgency of developing an effective anti-corruption policy. The full-scale invasion of

Ukraine has shifted government priorities toward security, resilience, and maintaining the combat readiness of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. While Ukrainian society recognizes the ongoing issue of political corruption, there is a growing perception that this issue is not a priority and can be addressed after the war. However, this approach is fundamentally flawed. Ignoring political corruption today will only further weaken the state governance system in the short term and jeopardize Ukraine's existence as an independent and democratic state in the long run. Therefore, this study is aimed at the examination of changes in approaches to detecting and preventing political corruption in Ukraine under the conditions of Russia's full-scale invasion. The working hypothesis suggests that during the war, Ukrainian society is less concerned with the issue of corruption due to the prioritization of security and personal survival; the political elite has a greater awareness of the threats posed by political corruption and is taking appropriate measures; and the war does not affect the pace of implementation of policies aimed at preventing and combating political corruption in Ukraine. To achieve this goal, the authors used a number of scientific research methods, such as: comparative method (to reveal the content of political corruption, taking into account the peculiarities of various approaches); method of analysis of legal acts (to clarify changes in anti-corruption policy in Ukraine in the field of political relations); method of periodisation (to identify the main periods of development of anti-corruption policy in Ukraine); method of processing sociological data (to diagnose public opinion on political corruption) and others.

2. DETERMINANTS OF POLITICAL CORRUPTION

Despite its widespread use, there is no universally accepted definition of "corruption" due to its complex nature. A more traditional definition is provided by the World Bank and the non-governmental organization Transparency International, which defines corruption as "the misuse of public office for private gain". A broader understanding of corruption is outlined in the UN Global Programme against Corruption, which describes it as "the abuse of power for private benefit", encompassing both the public and private sectors [European Union law 2003].

Ukrainian researcher D. Koretska-Shukevich identifies seven academic approaches to interpreting this phenomenon. The traditional approach considers corruption not strictly as a legal norm but as a set of behavioral, moral, and ethical rules. In this case, corruption does not necessarily involve financial or material gain in exchange

for an action. The classical approach defines corruption as acquiring material benefits in monetary form. The economic approach views corruption as a type of financial behavior in which individuals with administrative and managerial authority serve the economy and become part of it while deriving certain benefits. The functional approach is typical of developing societies, where corruption is seen as a tool for influencing political processes in states with weak or ineffective democratic institutions and authoritarian political regimes. The behavioral approach considers corruption a socio-psychological phenomenon rooted in human vices such as greed and envy. It represents a distorted form of controlling one's social status, leading to societal demoralization and the erosion of moral values. Finally, the institutional approach defines corruption as state-power relations characterized by the exchange of official powers [Koretska-Shukievich 2020].

Corruption is classified into household, business, and political bribery based on social spheres [Anishchenko 2020]. Research on political corruption began only in the 20th century, as cases of political decisions being made in exchange for benefits to high-ranking officials became more frequent. Significant contributions to the development of political corruption theory were made by I. Amundsen, A. Heidenheimer, M. Johnston, V. Le Vine, R. C. Brooks, C. Friederic, K. Balachandrudu, P. Mark, J. Scott, M. Kitsing, S. Kotkin, S. Levitsky, D. A. Miller, J. L. Newell, J. Nye, S. Rose-Ackerman, G. Helmke, M. Philp, P. M. Heywood, and others. Ukrainian researchers have also studied this issue, including O. Bazaluk, V. Beglytsia, L. Berezinsky, B. Bondarenko, A. Borovyk, K. Davydenko, H. Kokhan, I. Kushnaryov, M. Melnyk, Y. Nevmerzhytsky, O. Nesterenko, V. Nonik, R. Radetsky, A. Tytko, V. Trepak, T. Fesenko, and others. From a political science perspective, research on political corruption focuses not on its scale but its causes and consequences. A key challenge in such research is distinguishing political corruption from other types.

Political corruption manifests through the actions of high-ranking officials when these actions are not related to their legally defined duties but are carried out for personal gain [Somin et al. 2015]. Many political scientists argue that political corruption encompasses any transaction between private and public sector actors through which collective goods are unlawfully converted into private benefits. In a more specific interpretation, political corruption occurs at the highest levels of the political system and involves individuals who directly make political decisions [Amundsen 1999]. Thus, political corruption is defined as the abuse of power for political purposes that precede others: (1) obtaining power and (2) maintaining,

strengthening, or expanding authority [Melnyk 2009]. In a broader sense, political corruption refers to the behavior and actions of decision-making actors—voters, politicians, bureaucrats, and interest or pressure groups—who violate contemporary laws and ethical, religious, and cultural societal norms [Aktan 2015: 49].

According to I. Amundsen, this type of corruption differs from bureaucratic or household corruption, and its characteristics include its prevalence at the highest levels of government and its significant political consequences. Political corruption not only leads to the misallocation of resources but also affects decision-making processes. It manipulates political institutions and procedural rules, thereby influencing governance structures and the political system, often resulting in institutional decline. Amundsen concludes that political corruption is more than a deviation from formal written legal norms, professional ethical codes, and judicial decisions. It occurs when government officials systematically abuse, circumvent, ignore, or even tailor laws and regulations to serve their interests. It also represents a deviation from the rational-legal values and principles of a modern state, with weak accountability of officials to the broader public being a central issue. In authoritarian countries, the legal foundations for assessing and condemning corrupt practices are weak and often subject to direct interference from the ruling political elite [Aktan 2015: 49]. Political corruption is typically clandestine, and its presence leads to the gradual erosion of democratic institutions, ultimately rendering them non-functional.

Political corruption becomes apparent in various forms and methods within the political system. According to I. Kushnaryov includes illegal party financing and actions that distort the role of political parties as key actors in a democratic system. Moreover, breaches of parliamentary and high-ranking official ethics, the sale of positions on a party's electoral list, voter bribery, and the misuse of administrative resources. Other forms include the adoption of key party decisions without broad discussion among party members, conflicts of interest among officials, patronage policies, political nepotism, cronyism, favoritism, opaque lobbying, and judicial corruption in political cases [Kushnarov 2018: 51].

For post-communist countries, R. Karklins classifies corruption based on political losses into three types. The first type is corruption at lower government levels, including bribery, deliberate manipulation of regulatory norms, and using administrative inspections for extortion. The second type is asset misappropriation for personal gain, involving abuse of power in public procurement, nepotism, clientelism, and the “sale” of government positions. The third type is the capture of

the state by corrupt networks, which includes deliberate efforts to reduce political competition, manipulation of electoral processes, judicial corruption, abuse of oversight or investigative authority, the use of kompromat as a tool of political struggle, and media corruption [Karklins 2002: 24].

It is important to note that political corruption is a complex and challenging social phenomenon to study. Analyzing only a given state's formal legal framework is insufficient; moral, normative, and ethical criteria must also be considered.

3. PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF POLITICAL CORRUPTION IN UKRAINE: KEY TRENDS AMID RUSSIA'S FULL-SCALE INVASION

Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the primary concerns of Ukrainian society became the preservation of sovereignty, the restoration of territorial integrity, enhanced security, and the protection of citizens' lives. Ukraine faced unprecedented challenges that affected all aspects of socio-political life. However, the corruption issue did not disappear from the public agenda; on the contrary, it remains one of the most pressing concerns for most Ukrainians. This assertion is supported by numerous sociological surveys conducted after the onset of full-scale hostilities, encompassing respondents who remained in Ukraine and those who were forced to leave the country.

In December 2023, the National Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine commissioned the fifth national survey by Info Sapiens to comprehensively assess the corruption situation in Ukraine. The overall findings of the study can be characterized as disappointment after hopes for improvement, with corruption ranking as the second most serious issue in Ukraine, following Russia's military aggression. Both business representatives (73 %) and ordinary citizens (72 %) highlighted corruption as a significant concern. According to the survey, 63 % of respondents indicated that corruption levels had increased since the full-scale invasion. In comparison, 24 % believed they had remained unchanged, 5 % observed a decrease, and 9 % could not assess the situation. The responses allowed for the identification of key reasons for the increase in corruption levels: the impunity of corrupt officials (77 %), the inefficiency of anti-corruption agencies (53 %), the ineffectiveness of law enforcement agencies (50 %), the dysfunctionality of the judiciary (49 %), the inaction of citizens (26 %) and civil society organizations (22 %), and household-level corruption (35 %). The survey also identified the institutions perceived as most responsible for corruption: the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (53 %), law enforcement agencies (51 %), the judiciary (50 %), and anti-

corruption agencies and organizations (49 %). Additionally, 44 % of respondents blamed local authorities, 40 % blamed Ukrainian citizens, 38 % the government, 37 % the President's Office, and 36 % the President himself. Respondents considered political corruption at the highest levels—within the government or parliament—to be the most serious issue (93.2 %), followed by corruption in business and household-level corruption. Political and business corruption were identified as the main drivers of the overall increase in corruption levels. Notably, concerns about political corruption among entrepreneurs increased even compared to 2021. When asked about the most effective measures to combat corruption, respondents most frequently supported punitive measures, including strengthening criminal liability up to life imprisonment (60 %), confiscating the property of corrupt officials' close relatives (57 %), and restricting business activities for government officials after leaving public service (45 %). Additionally, respondents prioritized reform and educational initiatives in the following order: reforming anti-corruption agencies (45 %), promoting intolerance of corruption in society (38 %), and inviting foreign judges to work in Ukraine (33 %). However, 67 % of respondents expressed pessimism regarding the possibility of improving the corruption situation in Ukraine in 2025 [Karklins 2002: 24].

In July and August 2023, the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation studied Ukrainian citizens' perceptions of corruption threats during the war, excluding territories occupied by Russia. According to the findings, 47 % of respondents stated that corruption remains Ukraine's most significant obstacle to business development, even during the war. In comparison, 37 % identified war-related destruction as the main hindrance. More than half (52.5 %) of respondents expressed the view that the government should be criticized for corruption and disagreed with the notion that such criticism destabilizes the country or undermines trust from foreign partners. Additionally, over 78 % of respondents believed that the President of Ukraine bears direct responsibility for corruption within the government and military administrations [Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation (DIF) 2023]. For comparison, a nationwide study of Ukrainians living in Europe who had left due to Russia's full-scale invasion was also conducted in 2023. According to the results, 84 % of respondents considered corruption levels in Ukraine higher than in Europe [Tkalych 2023]. Among the positive developments, respondents highlighted the improvement in administrative services. However, the primary source of frustration for Ukrainians remained elite corruption or abuse of power at the highest levels of government, which is inherently a political issue.

The findings of authoritative international institutions are also crucial for assessing the situation. According to the V-Dem Institute, based at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, Ukraine's political corruption index 2023 was 0.61 (on a scale from 0 to 1, where 1 represents high corruption). In comparison, the index was 0.60 in 2022, 0.67 in 2021, and 0.81 in 2014. For reference, in neighboring Poland, this index in 2023 was 0.13, nearly four times lower than in Ukraine [Our World in Data 2023]. Transparency International Ukraine reported that Ukraine scored 36 out of 100 on the Corruption Perceptions Index for 2023, ranking 104th out of 180 countries. This reflects a slight improvement compared to 2022, with an increase of three points [Transparency International Ukraine 2023]. Thus, the data from sociological surveys and international rankings demonstrate the presence of political corruption in Ukraine and its prioritization as a key issue for the public and businesses, second only to the full-scale Russian invasion. While some progress has been made, the current pace of anti-corruption efforts remains insufficient despite the government's consistent declarations that combating systemic corruption is a top priority.

4. RESULTS AND CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ANTI-CORRUPTION POLICY IN POLITICAL SPHERE OF UKRAINE DURING THE WAR

Ukrainian researchers identify multiple reasons for the persistence of corruption in the country. S. Radetsky highlights several key factors: political, manifested through the lack of a clear state-building vision and low moral standards; economic, resulting from the absence of transparent economic processes; legal, due to the incomplete definition of subjects involved in corrupt practices; organizational, allowing individuals with business or criminal backgrounds to secure government positions; and socio-political, including tolerance toward corruption, self-interest, and poverty [Radetskyi 2018: 151]. To some extent, Y. Matsiievskyi argues that Ukraine has developed an inefficient combination of political and economic institutions, with key political actors lacking motivation to change the status quo [Matsiievskyi 2016: 36]. Similarly, H. Zelenko notes that informal institutions play a significant role in Ukraine, acting as veto groups that obstruct positive changes. These include the shadow economy, corruption, nepotism, and other factors that distort the essence of a formal democratic system [Zelenko 2025: 33].

Corruption has hazardous consequences in the context of full-scale war, directly affecting national defense capabilities. It results in the procurement of lower-quality equipment, reducing the operational efficiency of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. It

contributes to the loss of scarce resources, creates opportunities for financing the aggressor state, undermines trust in the defense sector and the rule of law, fosters a culture of impunity, and facilitates the infiltration of Russian influence agents into government structures.

As previously noted, the current stage of Ukraine's anti-corruption policy development began with the political shifts following the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, which led to the adoption of numerous documents to combat corruption. A foundational step in this process was the adoption of the Law of Ukraine "On Preventing Corruption" on October 14, 2014, which initiated the construction of a new anti-corruption infrastructure. Further progress was made in June 2022 when the Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2021–2025 was approved to achieve substantial improvements in preventing and countering corruption [National Agency on Corruption Prevention 2022].

Additionally, new mechanisms for preventing and combating political corruption were introduced. Among the most significant measures were state financing of political parties, transparency of party finances, and mandatory asset declarations for officials. However, implementing these measures proved challenging and faced significant resistance from political elites. These mechanisms were also subject to modifications following Russia's full-scale invasion, with changes justified on the grounds of national security and wartime conditions.

In 2015, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Preventing and Combating Political Corruption", [Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine 2015] which, in Section IV, established the procedure for state financing of political parties. According to Article 173, parties that received at least 2 % of the vote in the most recent parliamentary elections were granted the right to budget financing. However, in 2019, the Verkhovna Rada restricted state funding to only parliamentary parties, which secured more than 5 % of the vote [Zabolotna 2023]. The final decision on granting such financial support was entrusted to the National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption (NAPC). Oversight of the lawful and targeted use of state funds allocated to political parties was assigned to the Accounting Chamber and NAPC. Simultaneously, a requirement for quarterly financial reporting by political parties (Article 17) was introduced as one of the conditions for obtaining a visa-free regime with the European Union.

Subsequently, on March 30, 2020, the Verkhovna Rada adopted Law No. 540, "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Aimed at Ensuring Additional

Social and Economic Guarantees in Connection with the Spread of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)”, [Zabolotna 2023] which also affected political party reporting procedures. The law stipulated that political parties must submit their reports no later than forty days after the quarantine. In practice, the pandemic effectively legalized the possibility for political parties to refrain from submitting financial reports to the NAPC. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada, citing security concerns, imposed a moratorium on the review of financial reports, even those submitted voluntarily by political parties. As a result, several billion hryvnias remained outside public and NAPC oversight, leaving unanswered questions about how state funds allocated to political parties since 2020 were spent. Moreover, state funding for parliamentary parties in Ukraine has been steadily increasing. Between 2020 and 2022, parliamentary parties received nearly 2 billion UAH from the state budget. For 2023, over 753 million UAH was allocated for political party financing, 811 million UAH was planned for 2024, and more than 890 million UAH for 2025 [Slovo i Dilo 2025].

The refusal of political parties to submit financial reports created new challenges, including increased opacity in political financing due to the absence of reports in the POLITDATA registry, the complete lack of state and public oversight of political party activities, and the inability of voters to access information on the sources of funding for parliamentary political parties or how state funds were allocated. It also became impossible to determine the financing and expenditures of the “Opposition Platform – For Life” party from 2020 to 2022 in the context of the ban on pro-Russian political parties. These developments naturally provoked an adverse reaction from anti-corruption bodies. The head of the Department for the Prevention of Political Corruption at the NAPC, H. Chornutska, emphasized the need for legislative amendments to restore the submission and verification of political party reports. In December 2023, the NAPC submitted a draft law for government consideration, securing support from civil society organizations and international partners, particularly the ambassadors of G7 countries and the EU, who had repeatedly insisted on such reforms [National Agency on Corruption Prevention 2023d].

As a result, on December 26, 2023, the Law of Ukraine, “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Regarding the Improvement of State Financing and Control over Political Party Activities”, [Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine 2023] came into force. This law required political parties to submit financial reports covering the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposition of martial law in Ukraine

in February 2022 in cases where they had not been voluntarily submitted. Political parties must now report their assets, income, expenditures, and financial obligations to the NAPC quarterly or annually. Failure to submit reports carries penalties, including fines ranging from 300 to 400 non-taxable minimum incomes, equivalent to 5,100 to 6,800 UAH. However, according to the NAPC, nearly 170 political parties failed to submit reports for the second quarter of 2024, while 150 parties failed for the third quarter of 2024, indicating weak enforcement mechanisms in Ukraine [National Agency on Corruption Prevention 2023b].

Another significant step in preventing political corruption was the introduction of electronic asset declarations for officials. In 2014, the Verkhovna Rada adopted the Law of Ukraine, “On Preventing Corruption”, [Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine 2014] which required individuals authorized to perform state or local government functions to submit annual income declarations to the Unified State Register of Declarations by April 1 (Article 45). This register became operational in August 2016 on the official NAPC website with open, round-the-clock public access. However, due to security concerns, the declaration requirement for officials was suspended in February 2022. On February 24 of the same year, the NAPC restricted public access to the declarations registry to prevent the aggressor from obtaining information on Ukrainian civil servants and politicians. At that time, these measures were justified, as Russian forces occupying Ukrainian territories actively sought out state officials and law enforcement personnel [Pashynskyi 2022]. Later, in early March 2022, Law No. 2115-IX, “On Protecting the Interests of Reporting Entities and Other Document Filers During Martial Law or the State of War”, came into effect, postponing all reporting deadlines to three months after the end of martial law [Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine 2022]. However, officials could technically submit electronic declarations voluntarily. In 2021, for example, only a third of those required to declare their assets did so voluntarily. Nonetheless, the declarations registry was not accessible for public scrutiny.

The restoration of electronic asset declarations for officials, which had been suspended at the onset of the full-scale invasion, became one of the seven key requirements for Ukraine’s accession to the European Union and a crucial condition set by the International Monetary Fund for further financial support. Under pressure from international creditors, Ukrainian lawmakers considered several legislative proposals. One such proposal suggested reinstating declarations while keeping the register closed to the public (Bill No. 9534). However, civil society representatives opposed this measure, particularly in light of high-profile corruption

scandals, and launched a petition urging the president to veto the bill. Within hours, the petition gathered the required 25,000 signatures, and by the end of the first day, more than 50,000 people had signed it [Klitina 2023]. The National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption (NAPC) also appealed to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, raising concerns about a provision that would allow individuals who submitted false information in their declarations—up to a discrepancy of 1.3 million UAH—to avoid inclusion in the Unified State Register of Corrupt Officials if they paid a fine. This effectively weakened the register at a time when false declarations were among the most socially harmful corruption-related offenses. International partners, including the International Monetary Fund, the EU Council, the European Commission, and the ambassadors of G7 and EU countries, also insisted on restoring mandatory electronic declarations for officials. As a result, the president vetoed the bill and proposed making declarations publicly accessible, aligning with public sentiment, as approximately 90 % of Ukrainians supported the reinstatement of mandatory asset declarations for officials even during wartime [Zabolotna 2023].

On October 12, 2023, Law No. 3384-IX on amendments to specific laws of Ukraine regarding the procedure for submitting declarations by individuals authorized to perform state or local government functions under martial law came into effect [National Agency on Corruption Prevention 2023c]. The law reinstated the obligation for officials to declare their assets and restored the NAPC's verification functions. It also required state and local government officials to submit electronic declarations for 2021, 2022, and 2023. On December 10, 2023, the NAPC reopened public access to the register while implementing security measures to protect sensitive information [National Agency on Corruption Prevention 2023c]. This marked a significant step forward in the fight against political corruption, as public access to officials' asset declarations is a key tool for holding them accountable. Simultaneously, the NAPC introduced a fundamentally new approach to selecting declarations for verification. This innovation allowed for processing a record number of submitted declarations and increased the effectiveness of inspections. In 2023, only up to 30 % of all submitted declarations were planned for automated verification through registry software, but by 2025, this figure was expected to reach nearly 100 %. As a result, by early 2025, numerous public officials had already been formally charged with illicit enrichment based on the findings of electronic asset declarations.

5. CONCLUSIONS

An effective policy for combating political corruption is crucial not only for preserving Ukraine's sovereignty, democracy, and European integration aspirations but also for ensuring the country's post-war reconstruction. Since 2014, significant progress has been made in anti-corruption efforts, mainly due to international pressure and civil society activism. However, since 2020, these efforts have faced setbacks due to legislative changes prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the full-scale Russian invasion, and increased attempts by Ukrainian politicians to control independent anti-corruption institutions, including NABU, SAP, and the NAPC.

The current stage of political corruption prevention in Ukraine lacks a systematic approach. On the one hand, despite the war, an anti-corruption infrastructure has been established and continues to function while the corresponding legal framework is being optimized. On the other hand, informal practices indicative of political corruption persist, including interference in the work of anti-corruption bodies, obstruction of new anti-corruption legislative initiatives, and attempts to restrict previous anti-corruption measures under the justification of security concerns [Mysyshyn 2023]. Despite the war, political corruption remains a significant concern for Ukrainian society, with public attention to the issue increasing in 2023 compared to 2022. Although it was initially assumed that the war would reduce corruption due to the country's existential threat, this has not materialized. While the war has not triggered zero tolerance for corruption, there has been some progress in implementing and improving policies for preventing and combating political corruption. However, these efforts have been primarily driven by pressure from international partners and civil society rather than by political will within Ukraine's leadership.

To strengthen Ukraine's fight against political corruption, it is essential to reinforce the independence of newly established anti-corruption institutions while reducing the influence of informal structures perpetuating corruption. It is also necessary to expand the role of international experts in refining Ukraine's legal framework and monitoring the activities of anti-corruption bodies, including in the selection of personnel. A comprehensive strategy for combating political corruption should be developed, incorporating a clear legal definition of political corruption, which is currently absent from Ukraine's legislative framework. Overcoming systemic political corruption in Ukraine requires more than new laws, an anti-corruption infrastructure, or judicial reforms. Establishing a legal culture and a culture of corruption prevention is crucial, ensuring that anti-corruption values become

embedded within society. Civil society must be strengthened by safeguarding freedom of speech and action, which, to some extent, remains restricted under martial law. Additionally, mechanisms for genuine interaction between civil society institutions and state and local government authorities must be implemented. Achieving these goals in the fight against political corruption is a long-term process, significantly complicated by the war and security risks facing Ukraine. Therefore, political will is paramount—genuine, rather than declarative, intentions from the country's leadership to effectively combat corruption in all its forms and at all levels of government. Only through sustained efforts, international cooperation, and the active involvement of civil society can Ukraine build a political system that is resistant to corruption and aligned with democratic values.

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