



Economic Theory

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**AGGREGATED CORRUPTION RATINGS:
ASSESSMENT OF POSITIONS USING
THE CASE OF UKRAINIAN ECONOMY**

Abstract

The paper investigates corruption risks in Ukraine using the most common aggregated indicators: Corruption Perceptions Index, Basel AML Index, Financial Secrecy Index, Global Corruption Index, Global Organized Crime Index, Index of Public Integrity, TRACE Bribery Risk Matrix. The analysis of corruption spread in the economy of Ukraine for each of the indicators is presented in comparison with the best and worst examples of countries in a particular ranking. The article uses the method of comparative analysis and the method of data visualisation. Based on the assessment of the dynamics of many indicators, it is proved that anti-corruption reforms in Ukraine are being carried out more or less effectively, but the main task today is to build a qualitative trend of fighting corruption in the context of war, which will facilitate Ukraine's progress towards EU and NATO membership.

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Problem Statement

Anti-corruption reform in Ukraine has remained one of the most important issues of socio-economic development over the past decade, as corruption is perceived by citizens (National Agency of Corruption Prevention, 2022; Marchenko, 2023) as the third most serious problem after the war and rising living costs, and the second highest priority concern for businesses after Russia's armed aggression. Anti-corruption reform is attracting the attention of Ukraine's international partners, and its implementation was once a prerequisite for obtaining a visa-free regime with the EU. The irreversibility and further implementation of anti-corruption measures remain essential priorities on Ukraine's path to EU and NATO membership, despite Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine.

Literature Review

In their studies, the most cited corruption researchers (Breen & Gillanders, 2012; Gillanders, 2023; Gillanders, 2016; Gillanders, Ouedraogo, et al., 2023) focus on its destructive impact on sustainable economic development, quality of institutions, inclusive growth, etc. Corruption is particularly problematic in developing countries, given the poverty, inflation, unemployment and other challenges of the 21st century. In third world countries, for example, the need to pay a bribe to obtain various documents, permits, avoid problems with the police or gain access

to quality education, healthcare, social services is a common phenomenon that is unfamiliar to citizens of first world countries.

Some scientists emphasize (Charron & Lapuente, 2010; Charron, 2016; Bauhr et al., 2018) that the perception of corruption by external experts often does not reflect the real situation with it, because it is too exaggerated or relies on the assessment of external factors only. External assessments of corruption often do not match the corruption experience and views of real citizens of a particular country, which actualizes the need to develop agreed metrics for assessing corruption in the world (Dluhopolskyi, 2024).

Additionally, research scholars (Goel & Nelson, 1998; Goel & Nelson, 2010; Goel & Nelson, 2021) pay attention to corruption in the context of the size of the state, which allows us to conclude that the scale of public spending has a strong positive effect on the propensity of public officials to corruption abuses (confirmation of Becker's «crime and punishment» model).

In various studies (Hutchinson et al., 2019; Onwujekwe et al., 2020; Agwu et al., 2023; Angell et al., 2023), authors consider the peculiarities of corruption in healthcare facilities in third world countries, noting absenteeism of medical staff as the main form of corruption in the healthcare system. Additional types of medical corruption are corruption related to public procurement of medicines, corruption related to healthcare financing, and corruption related to employment in healthcare facilities.

A group of scientists (Chowdhury et al., 2015; Kalyuzhnova & Belitski, 2019; Audretsch et al., 2022) analyses the impact of tax policy and corruption on entrepreneurial activity in different countries of the world. In the field of international business, corruption increases the burden of regulation, which is manifested in additional financial costs, but corporate tax is not a deterrent to entrepreneurial activity, provided the level of corruption is low.

Ukrainian researchers of corruption (Sydorenko, 2023; Dluhopolskyi et al., 2021; Golovkin et al., 2020; Dluhopolskyi & Danyliuk, 2023; Dluhopolskyi & Chaprak, 2023; Marchenko, 2023) most often associate it with the sphere of public procurement and political appointments. Under the conditions of a full-scale war in Ukraine, corruption investigations (Wilkins, 2023; Jenkins, 2023) are increasingly conducted in the defence complex.

The aim of the article is to study of corruption risks in Ukrainian economy using the most common aggregated indicators: Corruption Perceptions Index, Basel AML Index, Financial Secrecy Index, Global Corruption Index, Global Organized Crime Index, Index of Public Integrity, TRACE Bribery Risk Matrix.

Methodology

Numerous aggregated indices of corruption risks in the context of their impact on socio-economic development by country for the period 2017-2023, obtained from official websites, were used to conduct scientific study. The main research methods are comparative analysis and data visualization.

Research Results

Indicators based on official sources of information and grouped into sub-indices, which, based on different weighting factors, form one or another global index, are considered to be aggregated indices. The key aggregated tools for assessing corruption, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses, are given in the works of European and Ukrainian scientists (Maslen, 2022; Dluhopolskyi, 2024). However, not all of them can be used to analyse the national economy in terms of corruption risks, since some of them cover only a narrow group of countries, which does not include Ukraine (for example, Ibrahim Index of African Governance or OECD Public Integrity Indicators), and some are designed for calculation of individual components that are only indirectly related to corruption (for example, Berggruen Governance Index or EIU Democracy Index), or have episodic data updates and are not representative on a global scale (for example, Bribe Payers Index). We will try to explore Ukrainian trends in overcoming corruption in recent years, using only a few key adjusted indices, which are the most representative.

The most common index used in the context of assessing corruption at the macro level is the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), which has been calculated since 1995 by Transparency International based on 13 studies by reputable international institutions and research centres. The CPI allows you to rank countries from zero points (corruption replaces the state) to 100 points (corruption is almost absent), so the higher the index, the better the country's position in the rating.

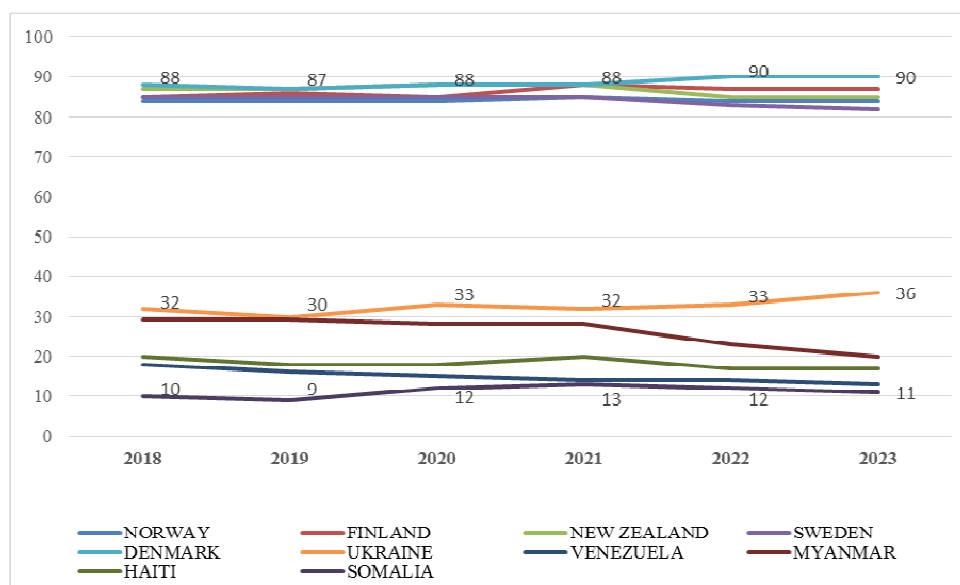
The CPI includes the views of business representatives, investors, market researchers, etc. and the perception of private sector institutions on the prevalence of corruption in the public sector of the economy. A higher score in one country compared to another does not mean that the former is less corrupt than the latter – it means that the former is perceived as less corrupt (Transparency International, 2023).

As shown in Fig. 1, minimal tolerance of corruption is observed in Denmark (score 90 in 2022-2023), Finland (score 87 in 2022-2023), New Zealand (score 85

in 2022-2023), while the perception of corruption as the norm characteristic of Somalia (score 11 in 2023), Venezuela (score 13 in 2023), Haiti (score 17 in 2023). It should be noted that in these CPI outsider countries, the situation has worsened over the past few years. Ukraine's indicators in the CPI for 2018-2023 improved slightly – from 32 to 36 points (in Ukraine, the population is adapting rather slowly to reforms, according to which corruption is not considered the norm).

Figure 1

Rating of certain countries according to the CPI



Source: Transparency International, 2023.

According to Transparency International's 2023 report, Ukraine as an EU candidate ranked 104th with Serbia, adding 3 points over the year, while other EU candidate countries showed the following results (Transparency International, 2023): Georgia lost 3 points (49th place), Montenegro added 1 point (63rd place), Moldova added 3 points (76th place), North Macedonia added 2 points (76th place), Albania added 1 point (98th place), Bosnia and Herzegovina added 1 point (108th place), Turkey lost 2 points (115th place). Among its neighbours,

Ukraine became even more ahead of Russia – the terrorist country in 2023 lost 2 points and with 26 points ranks 141st in the list (Transparency International, 2023). Among its western neighbours, Romania's score remained unchanged (63rd place), while Poland lost 1 point (47th place). Growth in the CPI rating of Ukraine in 2023, even during a full-scale war, became possible thanks to the active and coordinated work of anti-corruption and other public authorities of the country.

The Basel Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Index, which is used to measure and assess risks related to money laundering and terrorist financing across countries, is quite interesting. The AML Index or the Basel Institute Index assesses not the level of corruption and criminal activity in a particular country, related to money laundering and terrorist financing, but the risks of their occurrence and development. The AML Index includes a wide range of risks with different weights (Basel AML Index, 2023): the quality of the anti-money laundering and terrorist financing system (65%); risks of corruption and bribery (10%); financial transparency and standards (10%); general transparency and accountability (5%); political and legal risks (10%).

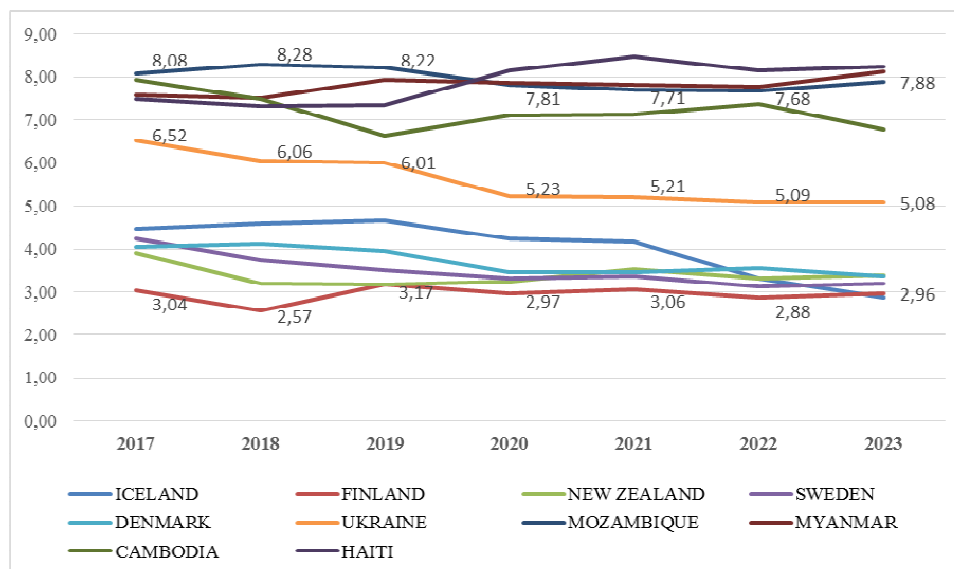
The Basel AML Index ranks countries from 0 (minimum risk) to 10 (maximum risk), so the lower the index, the better the country's AML/CFT risk performance. As can be seen from Fig. 2, the best results according to the Basel AML Index are shown by the countries of Scandinavia and New Zealand, and noteworthy progress was made by Iceland during 2017-2023, which managed to reduce the Basel AML Index from 4.47 to 2.87. The Basel AML Index remains consistently low in Finland (3.04 in 2017 and 2.96 in 2023). For 2017-2023, Ukraine managed to reduce the value of the Basel AML Index by almost 1.5 points – from 6.52 to 5.08, which was facilitated by the active implementation of anti-corruption legislation in recent years. In 2023, Haiti and Myanmar had the worst results according to the Basel AML Index.

Another interesting indicator that allows you to assess the position of countries in the ranking of jurisdictions that most help individuals hide their finances from the rule of law is the Financial Secrecy Index (FSI). The index identifies the world's biggest agents of financial secrecy and analyses laws that governments can change to reduce their contribution to financial secrecy (Tax Justice Network, 2023). Unfortunately, this rating is updated quite irregularly, so the analysis of countries can only be conducted for a certain period as well as for a limited group of countries.

The FSI score for each jurisdiction is calculated based on 20 indicators, which are grouped around four main parameters of financial secrecy: 1) registration of property rights; 2) transparency of the legal entity; 3) fairness of tax and financial regulation; 4) international standards and cooperation.

Figure 2

Rating of certain countries according to the Basel AML Index



Source: Basel AML Index, 2023.

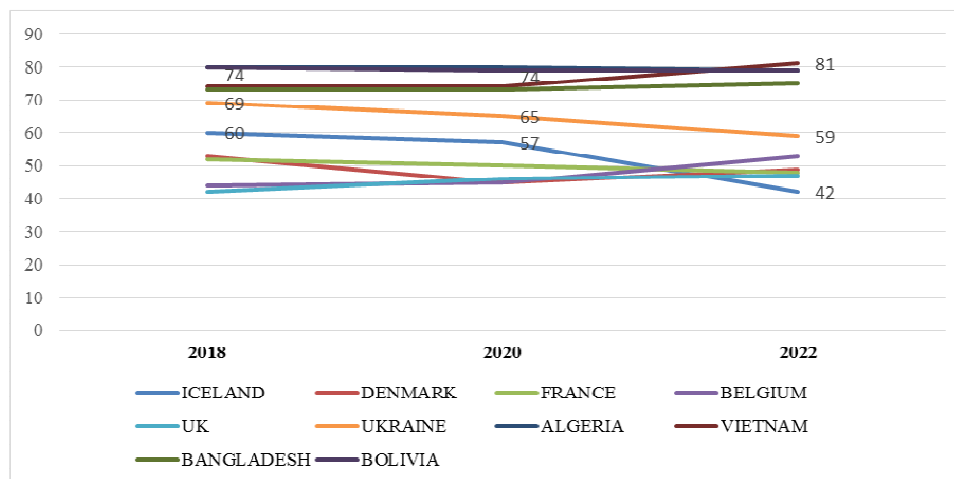
Fig. 3 shows that Ukraine's position for 2018-2022 according to FSI has improved (from 69 to 59 points), i.e., Ukraine is gradually minimizing its contribution to global financial secrecy, although the best trend in changing FSI positions is demonstrated by Iceland.

The next indicator is the Global Corruption Index (GCI), which allows you to identify and classify the risks of encountering corrupt behavior in different countries of the world. The GCI is based on 43 data sets standardized and aggregated on a scale of 0-100, where 0 corresponds to the lowest risk of corruption and 100 to the highest risk.

Top-5 countries according to GCI in 2023 were led by Finland (6.66 points), Norway (8.3 points), New Zealand (8.38 points), Sweden (8.44 points) and Denmark (10.9 points), in which there is minimal risk of corruption, while the Bottom-5 includes Syria (86.82 points), North Korea (85.77 points), Congo (80.49 points), South Sudan (80.0 points) and Yemen (78.89 points), which are the most risky countries in terms of corruption (Risk Indexes, 2024). In 2023, Ukraine received 51.67 points, which indicates an average level of probability of encountering manifestations of corruption at various levels of management and in sectors of the economy.

Figure 3

Rating of certain countries according to the FSI



Source: Tax Justice Network, 2023.

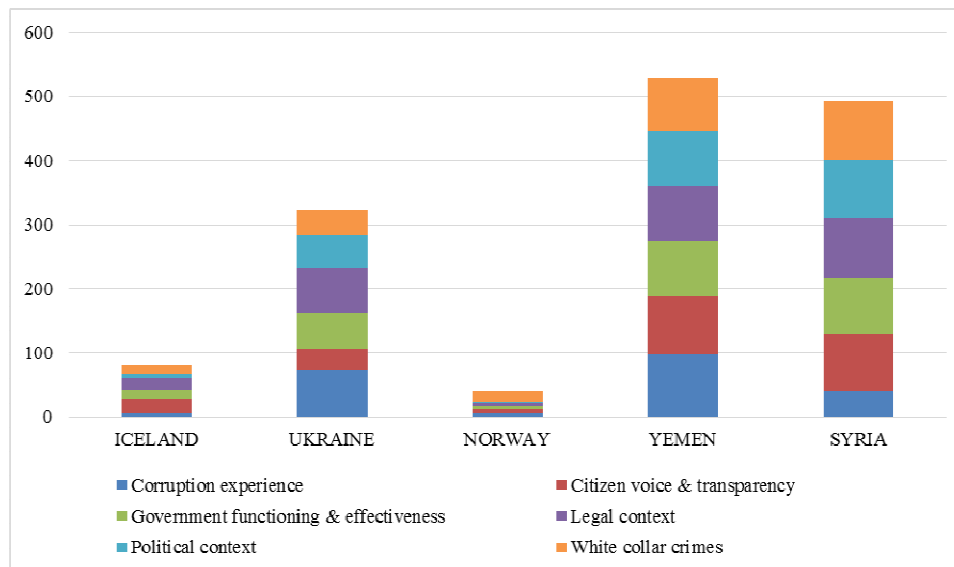
The GCI differs from many other indices in that it shows the various manifestations of corrupt behavior in sufficient detail and provides information on their weight. Fig. 4 demonstrates the prevalence of various manifestations of corruption in Iceland, Norway, Ukraine, Syria, and Yemen – from «white-collar» crimes related to money laundering to political corruption. Ukraine has a high indicator of the risk of corruption experience of citizens (72 points), while even in Syria – 40 points, and in Iceland and Norway – 5 points each. Ukraine also shows a negative situation according to the indicator of the risk of governance inefficiency (56 points), while in Iceland – 15 points, Norway – 6 points (Risk Indexes, 2023).

Another peculiar indicator of indirect assessment of corruption is the Global Organized Crime Index (GOCI), which allows you to assess the ranking of countries in two dimensions:

1. The first component of the GOCI – crime – consists of two sub-components: 1) the scale and influence of 15 criminal markets (political, social and economic systems that facilitate the illegal trade and/or exploitation of goods or people); 2) the structure and influence of 5 types of criminal actors (mafia groups, criminal networks, criminal state actors, criminal foreign actors and criminal actors of the private sector).

Figure 4

Values and components of the GCI of certain countries, 2023

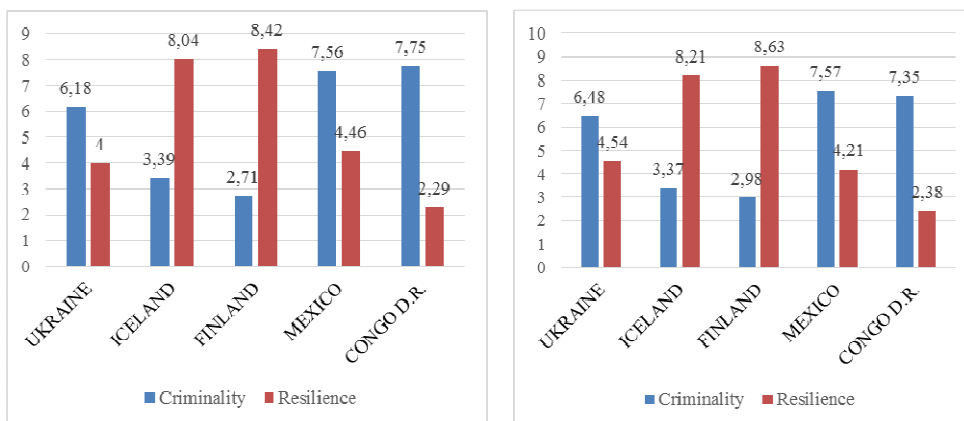


Source: Risk Indexes, 2023.

2. The second component of the GOCI is the quality of resilience measures – the type and effectiveness of measures that states use against the organized crime threats they face (the ability of countries to be resilient against the 12 elements of resilience).

As can be seen from fig. 5, for 2021-2023, Ukraine worsened the crime rate (from 6.18 to 6.48 points) but improved the stability rate (from 4 to 4.54 points). The leading countries in terms of low crime indicators are Iceland (3.37 points in 2023) and Finland (2.98 points in 2023), while the outsiders are Mexico (7.57 points in 2023) and Congo (7.35 points in 2023). Regarding the sustainability indicator, it is quite high in Iceland and Finland (8.21 and 8.63 points respectively in 2023) and low in Congo (2.38 points in 2023).

Figure 5

The value of the GOCI of certain countries by indicators of criminality and resilience

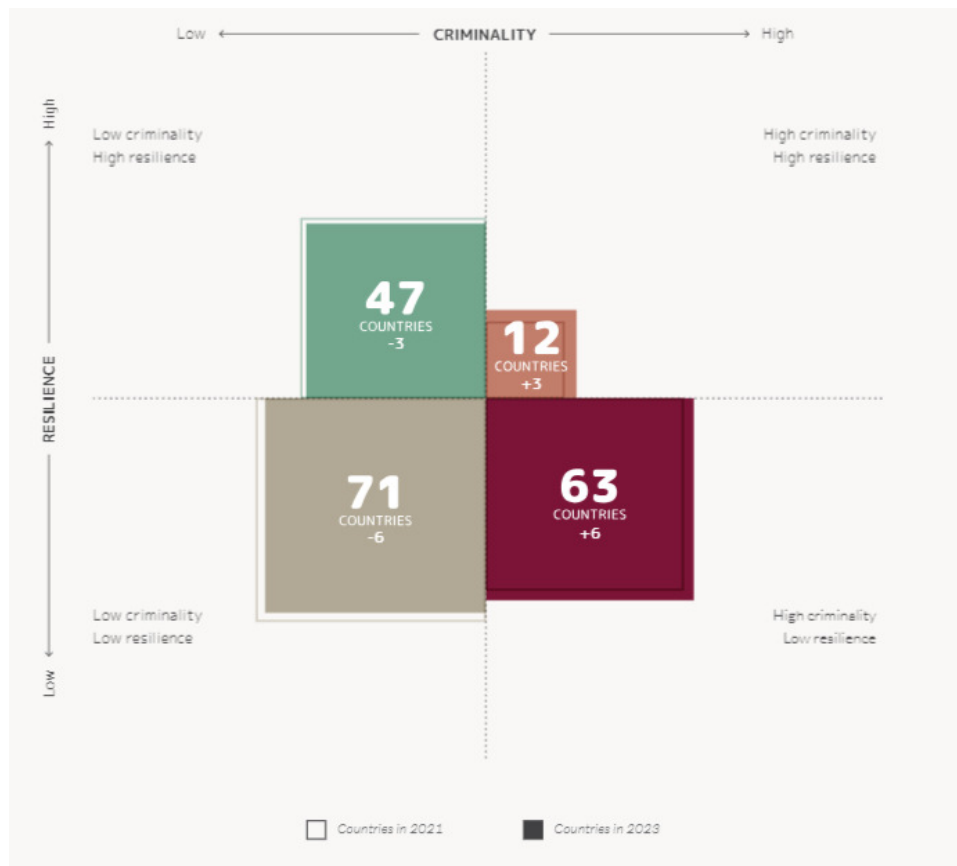
Source: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2023.

In general, if we look through the global data of the Global Organized Crime Index (Fig. 6), it can be seen that for the period 2021-2023, the number of countries with a low level of crime and a high level of resistance to its manifestations decreased to 47 (upper left quadrant), then how the number of countries with high crime and low resilience (lower right quadrant) increased to 63, which is a negative trend.

The best positions from the point of view of combating organized crime are, of course, in the countries of the upper left quadrant (Fig. 7), which includes 31 European countries, 7 American and Asian countries, 6 Oceanian countries, as well as 3 African countries (Cabo Verde, Mauritius and Rwanda). The worst positions according to GOCI are demonstrated by the countries of the lower right quadrant, which includes 21 African countries, 19 Asian countries, 14 American countries, and 9 European countries (including Ukraine). All countries that have moved into the category of «high crime rate – low stability» have faced a surge in crime, corruption, and nepotism without their governments acting appropriately to counter these shameful phenomena.

Figure 6

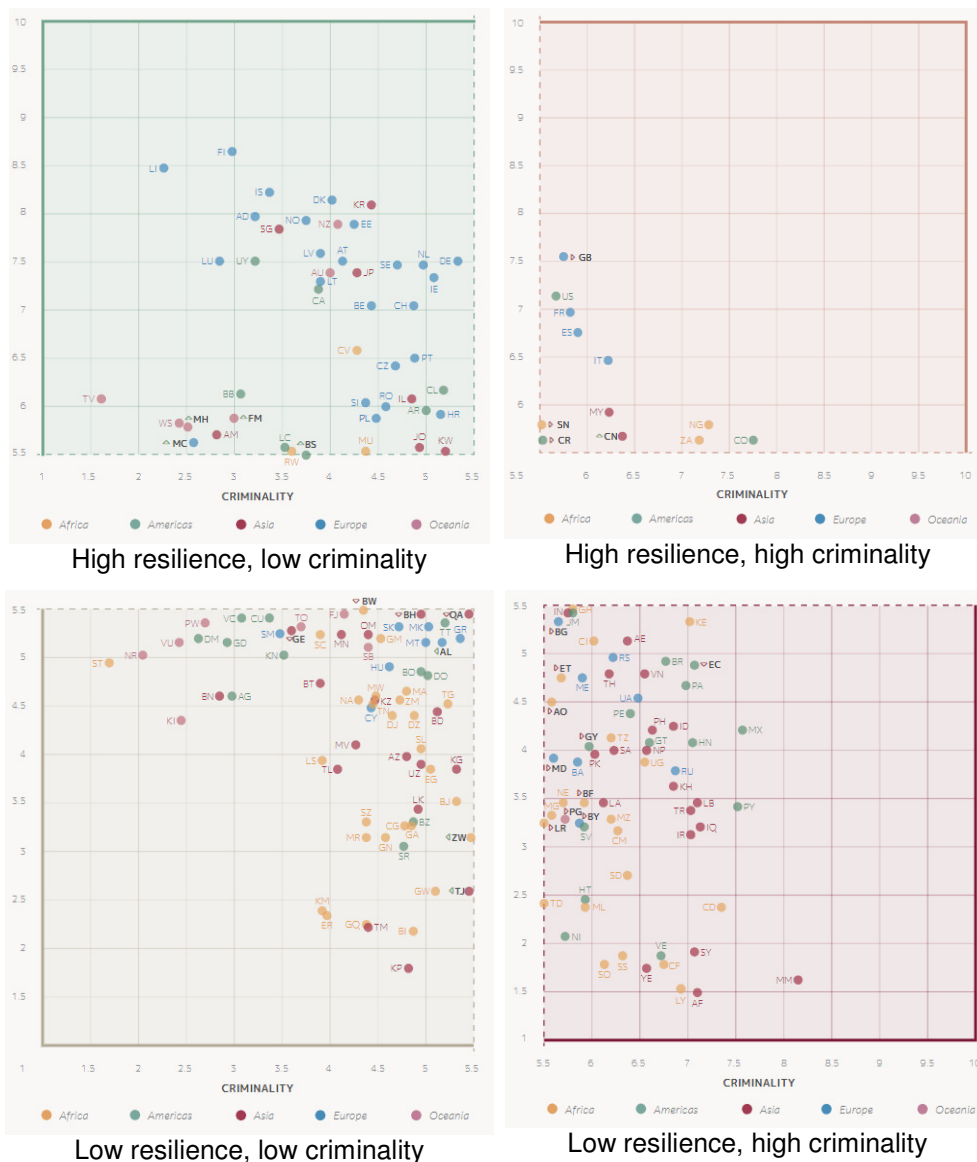
The dynamics of changes in the positions of countries in the GOCI



Source: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2023.

Figure 7

Countries' positions according to the GOCI, 2023



Source: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2023.

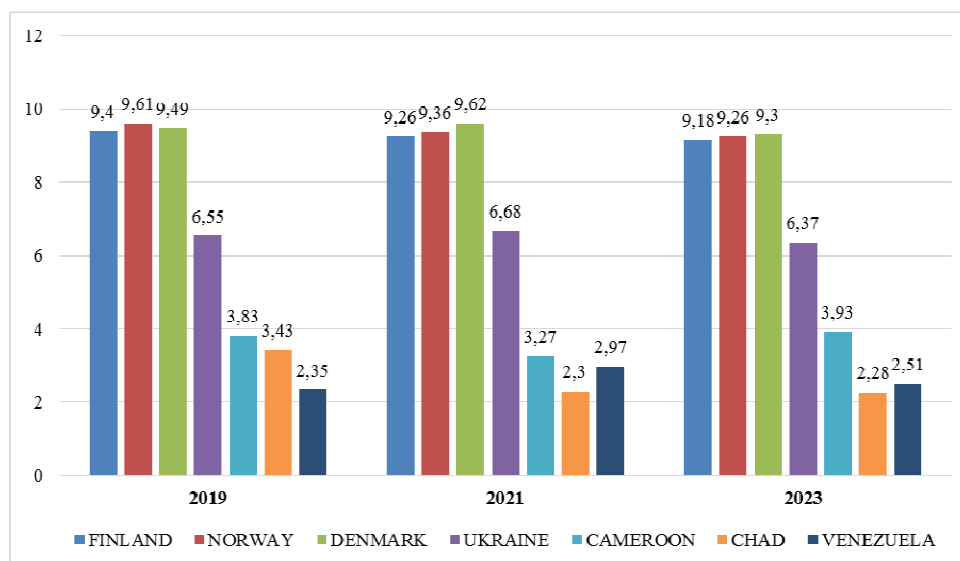
The Index of Public Integrity (IPI) is a new objective indicator of the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies around the world (Center for Corruption Research, 2023). The IPI consists of six separate indicators:

1. Judicial independence.
2. Administrative transparency.
3. Online services.
4. Budget transparency.
5. E-citizenship.
6. Freedom of the press.

The integral IPI indicator is calculated as the average value of all the above-mentioned sub-indices. As can be seen from Fig. 8, Ukraine slightly worsened its position according to the IPI in 2023 compared to 2021, as the leading countries of public integrity – Finland, Denmark, and Norway. Some outsider countries, on the contrary, in 2021-2023 managed to rise insignificantly in the IPI rating (Cameroon, Venezuela).

Figure 8

Rating of certain countries according to the IPI

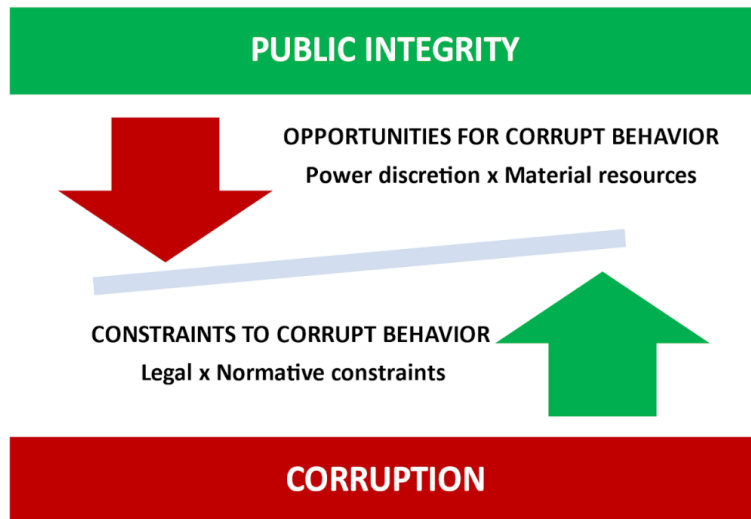


Source: Center for Corruption Research, 2023.

Public integrity and corruption are related phenomena. Thus, the risk of corruption is the result of a balance between the opportunities for its manifestation (for example, discretionary power, access to material resources) and the limitations that public organizations (for example, the judicial system, mass media), civil society and individuals (voters, whistleblowers) can use to prevent powerful persons from abusing their official position in their own interests (Center for Corruption Research, 2023). Public integrity is public good that is a consequence of the behavior of most policymakers and citizens, provided they do not participate in corrupt practices, abuse power, or tolerate corruption. Therefore, the risk of corruption is minimal where there is a prominent level of public integrity (Fig. 9).

Figure 9

The relationship between public integrity and corruption



Source: Center for Corruption Research, 2023.

The TRACE Bribery Risk Matrix allows you to measure the risk of encountering bribery (Global Business Bribery Risk) in 194 countries of the world (0 – minimum risk, 100 – maximum risk) and consists of four elements:

1. Business interactions with government – refers to the direct relationship between the company (or its agents) and public officials, considering the intensity of the interaction, the public's attitude towards bribery and the leverage that the public official can use.

2. Anti-bribery deterrence and enforcement – refers to both formal mechanisms of influence and less formal ways of preventing bribery.

3. Government and civil service transparency – refers to the availability of information about the activities of public sector institutions.

4. Capacity for civil society oversight – refers to checking the freedom and influence of the public (including the mass media) on curbing corruption in the public sector.

According to the 2023 results, North Korea, Turkmenistan, Syria, Equatorial Guinea, and Yemen have the highest risk of commercial bribery, while Norway, New Zealand, Switzerland, Sweden, and Denmark have the lowest risk (TRACE International, 2024). As evidenced by Fig. 10, Ukraine occupies an intermediate place among the countries of the world in terms of corruption risks but has worsened its position since 2020 (from 49 to 52 points).

While studying the TRACE Bribery Risk Matrix in terms of individual elements (Table 1), it should be noted that the risk of frequent business communication with authorities in New Zealand is practically minimized (1), the ability of civil society to control the authorities is highest in Norway and Denmark (1), and the best transparency of government and public service is in Sweden and Norway (1). In Ukraine, the highest corruption risk is associated precisely with the interaction of business and public services (67), while Ukraine has a fairly good indicator of the ability of civil society to control the government (36). Among the TRACE Bribery Risk outsider countries, the worst indicator for transparency of government and public service is in Somalia (100), and for prevention of bribery – in North Korea (100).

Summarizing, we note that although Ukraine has achieved certain successes in recent years according to the deep analysis of the indicators (for example, Basel AML Index, Corruption Perception Index, Financial Secrecy Index), there are still many of them which show Ukraine's weak progress or ratings' deterioration (for example, Global Organized Crime Index, Index of Public Integrity, TRACE Bribery Risk Matrix). Thus, it can be concluded that anti-corruption reforms in Ukraine are conducted chaotically and do not cover all areas of the fight against corruption as a systemic phenomenon.

№ in rating	Country	Score	Score components			
			Business Interactions with Government	Anti-Bribery Deterrence and Enforcement	Government and Civil Service Transparency	Capacity for Civil Society Oversight
195.	North Korea	81	...	100	90	96
196.	Turkmenistan	82	93	48	80	88
197.	Chad	82	83	78	95	70
198.	Venezuela	82	99	75	74	67
199.	Libia	83	88	78	89	70
200.	Somalia	92	90	89	100	88

Source: TRACE International, 2023.

Practical Applications and Limitations

Despite the Russian invasion, Ukraine has demonstrated that progress in the fight against corruption is stable and continues even in the most challenging times for the state (YOUкраїна, 2023). Russian aggression became a kind of test for all Ukrainian state institutions, including anti-corruption bodies. Among the undoubted achievements of 2022-2023, it is possible to single out the adoption of the state Anti-Corruption Strategy and the appointment of the head of the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office, which became a catalyst for intensifying investigations into corruption of high-ranking officials.

According to research data (OECD, 2024), 81% of Ukrainians consider the fight against corruption a priority. The main reasons for corruption, according to citizens, are: «it is possible to negotiate» (38%), «the fish rots from the head» (18%), «our mentality» (14%), «greed» (11%), «poverty» (8%) and «nepotism» (5%). In addition, more than a third of Ukrainians (35.7%) believe that criticizing the anti-corruption actions of the authorities during the war is useful, and more than half (52.5%) expressed the opinion that it is now possible to criticize the authorities for corruption without fearing that it destabilizes the country or reduces the trust of international partners.

At the end of 2019, the international anti-corruption structure GRECO (Group of States against Corruption), which formally unites 48 states of the world and is an "international legislator" in establishing rules and approaches in matters of combating corruption (GRECO, 2024), principles of prevention and fight with her, confirmed that Ukraine fulfilled only 5 out of 31 recommendations. At the end of 2021, a new assessment showed that Ukraine had only achieved 9 out of 31 recommendations. However, in the spring of 2023, GRECO organized an un-

scheduled, emergency inspection of Ukraine. It turned out that during the year of the war, numerous anti-corruption reforms were moved – Ukraine «satisfactorily fulfilled or satisfactorily implements» (Sydorenko, 2023) 15 of 31 recommendations, 9 more are in the process of implementation, 7 remain unfulfilled. The GRECO session approved the removal of Ukraine from its «blacklist», which still includes Poland, Romania, Greece, and Slovenia.

Conclusions

Despite numerous reforms, corruption continues to rank third among the main problems for Ukraine (after the excessive cost of living and military operations) in a population survey and 2nd in the opinion of business representatives. A larger share of respondents (81.1% of the population and 69.2% of businesses) believes that corruption in Ukraine is significantly widespread.

The approved GRECO report gives Ukraine little time to show that the current «jump» in the level of enforcement is a trend, not a fluke. Ukraine's position improves from year to year in many international ratings of the level of corruption (for example, Basel AML Index, Corruption Perception Index, Financial Secrecy Index), despite the conditions of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. All this gives hope for a relatively quick recovery of the Ukrainian economy after the end of the war.

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