

Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Measures and Key Priorities for the Future in Uzbekistan

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examines the anti-corruption reforms initiated in Uzbekistan under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, with a focus on institutional restructuring and policy innovation aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability. **Method:** The research utilizes a qualitative approach through policy analysis and discourse review of official government documents, speeches, and media reports related to the National Anti-Corruption Council's activities. **Results:** The findings highlight significant advancements including the establishment of specialized institutions, implementation of digital systems in procurement and public services, promotion of open land auctions, and the launch of income declaration mechanisms for public officials. Public engagement and media involvement have emerged as pivotal components in fostering a national anti-corruption culture. **Novelty:** The study contributes new insights into Uzbekistan's multi-sectoral approach by integrating compliance mechanisms, regional oversight expansion, and civic participation within a centralized anti-corruption framework, positioning the country as a reform model in post-Soviet governance contexts.

INTRODUCTION

On March 5, 2025, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, chaired a session of the National Anti-Corruption Council to evaluate ongoing efforts and delineate future priorities in combating corruption. He underscored that corruption remains a significant impediment to the nation's reform agenda, echoing global concerns where corruption inflicts an estimated \$3 trillion loss annually.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has instituted a comprehensive anti-corruption framework, encompassing the enactment of pertinent legislation, formation of specialized parliamentary committees, and the establishment of both the National Anti-Corruption Council and the Anti-Corruption Agency [1].

A pivotal aspect of this strategy is fostering active public participation in identifying and addressing corrupt practices. The media's role has been notably amplified, promoting transparency and public oversight. This shift towards openness has elevated Uzbekistan's position in international transparency rankings by 138 places, now occupying the 30th spot globally and leading in Central Asia [2].

Addressing systemic corruption necessitates eliminating its root causes. A significant reform in this direction is the transition from administrative allocation of land plots to an open auction system, enhancing transparency. Similar advancements are

evident in the construction sector through the implementation of the “Shaffof Qurilish” (Transparent Construction) program.

The adoption of the Public Procurement Law, digitalization of tender processes, and fostering a competitive environment resulted in budgetary savings of 14 trillion soums last year [3].

Modern technologies have further mitigated corruption risks. For instance, banks now offer consumer loans up to 100 million soums online within five minutes, eliminating staff involvement and potential misconduct. Freed banking resources are redirected to develop financial services in local communities (mahallas), broadening public access to credit programs.

The education sector is undergoing extensive digitalization. Over ten services in preschool and school institutions have transitioned entirely to electronic formats, reducing physical visits by 2.5 times. In higher education, automated examination and university selection processes, along with the digital issuance of 35 types of documents, have decreased in-person visits by 2.2 times.

Effective measures have also been implemented in road safety. The use of body cameras by law enforcement officers, introduction of auction-based vehicle license plate sales, and adoption of digital protocols have significantly reduced corruption risks in this domain.

Reforms aimed at simplifying administrative procedures for citizens and businesses have led to the elimination of 120 document requirements and over 160 licenses and permits. This initiative has resulted in the creation of nearly 200,000 new enterprises, with the number of foreign-invested companies increasing fivefold to 23,000.

The number of electronic government services has surged 15-fold to 721, with user numbers exceeding 11 million. These measures have bolstered public, business, and international confidence in ongoing reforms. Consequently, over the past seven years, Uzbekistan has attracted more than \$120 billion in investments, and the national economy has doubled, reaching \$115 billion last year.

Despite these advancements, President Mirziyoyev expressed dissatisfaction with the Anti-Corruption Agency's performance, criticizing its focus on statistical reporting over proactive crime prevention. He highlighted that 75% of corruption crimes occur at the district and mahalla levels, often involving bribery for infrastructure connections, licensing, preferential loans, and employment.

In response, the President ordered the dismissal of 117 officials responsible for anti-corruption efforts within ministries and agencies, instructing the appointment of honest, educated, and professional personnel in their place. Ministers are now held politically accountable for corruption offenses within their departments [4].

These comprehensive anti-corruption measures aim to strengthen the rule of law, improve the investment climate, and enhance public trust in state institutions, contributing to Uzbekistan's sustainable development.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article is based on a comprehensive analysis of Uzbekistan's anti-corruption policies using qualitative and quantitative research methods. The study incorporates official government reports, legislative documents, and statistical data from reputable sources such as the Presidential Administration of Uzbekistan, the Anti-Corruption Agency, and international organizations. Comparative analysis was conducted to assess the effectiveness of implemented reforms by examining global best practices. Additionally, media reports and expert opinions were reviewed to provide a broader perspective on public engagement and institutional transparency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strengthening Anti-Corruption Institutions

To address this, the government has decided to reform the activities of the Anti-Corruption Agency. As part of an experimental initiative, compliance control functions in five key institutions – the Ministries of Health, Construction, and Water Resources, as well as the joint-stock companies “Uzbekneftegaz” and “Uzsuvtaminot” – will be transferred to the agency. This restructuring aims to enhance oversight and ensure a more effective corruption prevention mechanism [5].

Additionally, a comprehensive analysis of systemic and everyday corruption at the district level will be conducted. Based on the findings, targeted measures will be developed and submitted to the National Anti-Corruption Council for further action.

Decentralized Anti-Corruption Efforts

Statistics indicate that 75% of corruption-related offenses occur at the district and mahalla levels. In response, the composition of regional anti-corruption councils will be completely overhauled, with leadership transitioning to the chairpersons of regional Kengashes (Councils) of People's Deputies. These councils will be granted the authority to propose legislative improvements to the National Anti-Corruption Council to mitigate corruption risks and ensure the inevitability of punishment for violations.

For the past eight years, the sector-based regional development system has played a crucial role in addressing socio-economic issues. However, given the evolving circumstances, a redistribution of responsibilities has been mandated. Prosecutors, heads of internal affairs, and tax authorities will no longer be involved in managing these sectors but will focus solely on their core duties, including crime prevention and enforcement.

Ensuring Transparency in Public Procurement

A heightened focus is being placed on increasing transparency in public procurement. To this end, an Expert Commission will be established, and an electronic procurement platform will be developed based on international best practices. A key regulatory change stipulates that procurement prices must not exceed the average market rate by more than 20%. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in strict accountability measures and financial penalties.

The procurement of essential assets using state and off-budget funds will also be subject to stricter regulations. Government institutions will be encouraged to prioritize

domestic manufacturers for vehicles and furniture purchases, while large-scale projects will be required to undergo mandatory anti-corruption assessments.

Institutional Reforms for a Transparent Government

A cornerstone of Uzbekistan's anti-corruption strategy is the establishment of a professional and ethically responsible civil service. To achieve this goal, the recruitment and evaluation procedures for public service positions are undergoing substantial reforms to ensure merit-based selection and integrity in governance. Furthermore, the long-anticipated law on mandatory income and asset declaration for public officials is set to be introduced for public consultation. This initiative aims to enhance financial transparency, strengthen accountability, and align Uzbekistan's anti-corruption framework with international best practices, as recommended by organizations such as the OECD and the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) [6].

For instance, countries like Georgia and Estonia have successfully implemented robust income declaration systems, which have significantly reduced corruption risks in the civil service. According to the OECD's "Asset Declarations for Public Officials: A Tool to Prevent Corruption" (2011) [7], mandatory disclosure frameworks play a crucial role in detecting illicit enrichment and fostering public trust in government institutions.

These measures reflect Uzbekistan's commitment to fostering a culture of integrity within the public sector, ensuring that state institutions operate with greater transparency and accountability.

Fostering an Anti-Corruption Culture Among the Youth

A key priority in Uzbekistan's anti-corruption strategy is fostering a zero-tolerance attitude toward corruption among the younger generation. To achieve this, educational institutions will systematically integrate anti-corruption principles into their curricula, ensuring that ethical integrity and accountability become fundamental aspects of learning. Additionally, youth-led initiatives aimed at promoting transparency and integrity will receive targeted state support, empowering young people to actively contribute to the fight against corruption.

International experience underscores the effectiveness of such educational measures. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) highlights that embedding anti-corruption education at all levels of schooling helps instill ethical values early on, fostering a culture of integrity that persists into adulthood. Programs such as the UNESCO Global Citizenship Education Initiative and the World Bank's Integrity Curriculum demonstrate that educating youth on governance, ethical leadership, and civic responsibility leads to long-term reductions in corruption.

Moreover, Uzbekistan's commitment aligns with global frameworks like the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), which encourages state parties to promote integrity education as a fundamental tool for corruption prevention (Article 13 on public participation and education). Empirical research supports this approach, with studies showing that nations prioritizing anti-corruption education tend to experience lower levels of corruption over time.

By integrating these measures, Uzbekistan aims not only to curb corruption in the short term but also to create a lasting cultural transformation—one in which transparency, ethics, and civic responsibility become deeply ingrained societal values [8].

Strengthening the Legal Framework for Anti-Corruption Measures

This landmark address and policy shift by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev aim to inject fresh momentum into Uzbekistan's anti-corruption efforts and fast-track institutional reforms. By issuing 55 targeted directives, including the drafting of five new laws and 12 presidential decrees and resolutions, the President has signaled a decisive push toward a more transparent and accountable governance system [9].

A cornerstone of this initiative is the strengthening of the legal framework for anti-corruption policies. The introduction of a mandatory income declaration system for public officials and mechanisms to prevent illicit enrichment align Uzbekistan with international best practices, such as those outlined in the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC, Article 20). These measures are expected to enhance financial transparency, deter corruption, and ensure greater accountability in public administration [10].

Furthermore, the Anti-Corruption Agency and internal compliance bodies within both public and private institutions will see expanded mandates to bolster oversight and enforcement mechanisms. This move mirrors global approaches, such as the OECD's Integrity Framework for Public Sector Compliance and the World Bank's recommendations on corporate integrity mechanisms, which emphasize the role of robust internal controls in reducing corruption risks [11].

The policy shift also underscores personal accountability at the ministerial and departmental levels. To combat everyday corruption, high-ranking officials will be directly responsible for integrity measures within their respective institutions. A public evaluation system for state services will be introduced, empowering citizens to assess government efficiency and report irregularities, thereby promoting transparency and public trust. Officials who fail to meet performance and integrity benchmarks will face strict corrective measures, ensuring that anti-corruption efforts yield tangible, measurable outcomes [12].

Impact on Business Climate and Public Trust

The independence of regulatory inspections will be strengthened, and large-scale investment projects and auctions will incorporate mechanisms to mitigate corruption risks. The optimization of public procurement processes and the restriction of direct purchases will help conserve budgetary funds and prevent their misallocation [13].

Freed-up resources will be redirected toward crime prevention, strengthening public security, and boosting citizen trust in government institutions. Enhanced prosecutorial oversight of unlawful inspections will create a more favorable business environment and attract further investment into the regions [14].

This comprehensive approach underscores Uzbekistan's commitment to institutionalizing transparency and accountability at all levels of governance. As the country continues to implement these reforms, the effectiveness of its anti-corruption

measures will be closely monitored and adjusted based on practical outcomes and international best practices [15].

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : Uzbekistan's holistic anti-corruption strategy demonstrates a significant shift towards transparency, civic responsibility, and institutional reform, with a strong emphasis on societal engagement and legal awareness, especially among youth. **Implication** : These measures suggest that sustainable anti-corruption efforts must extend beyond legislative frameworks to encompass cultural transformation and collective action, potentially serving as a model for other nations facing similar governance challenges. **Limitation** : Nevertheless, the long-term effectiveness of these reforms may be constrained by socio-political inertia, limited civic capacity in rural areas, and the need for consistent policy enforcement across all levels of governance. **Future Research** : Further studies should investigate the impact of grassroots initiatives and youth-led civic education programs on corruption perception and behavior, as well as comparative analyses of anti-corruption outcomes in post-Soviet states.

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