

Practical Aspects of Corruption Prevention in Uzbekistan

Otajonov Abrorjon Anvarovich
Tashkent State University of Law, Uzbekistan



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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study explores the practical aspects of corruption prevention in Uzbekistan by analyzing recent legislative initiatives, institutional reforms, and insights from the National Anti-Corruption Council meeting held in March 2025. **Method:** Employing a qualitative approach, the study reviews national legal frameworks, presidential decrees, and institutional policies, supported by content analysis of expert commentaries and international indexes. **Results:** The findings reveal that corruption in Uzbekistan stems from bureaucratic opacity, excessive administrative procedures, and limited public accountability. Despite the enactment of the 2017 Law on Combating Corruption and the 2019 Presidential Decree on legal culture, enforcement mechanisms and civic oversight remain underdeveloped. Moreover, the emergence of digital corruption necessitates adaptive, forward-looking measures. **Novelty:** This article contributes a novel perspective by shifting the focus from punitive strategies to systemic, preventive solutions in the unique context of Uzbekistan's post-Soviet administrative structure. It underscores the importance of digital governance, legal education, and targeted capacity-building in addressing contemporary corruption threats.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a global problem in the political structure of any state, regardless of the level of economic and social development. Chapter II of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, entitled "Measures to Prevent Corruption", states that in Article 5 (Policies and Practices for the Prevention and Fight against Corruption), each State Party shall comply with the basic principles of its legal system. Develop and implement effective and coordinated policies to combat corruption, promote public participation, and reflect the principles of law enforcement, public affairs, and public property management, honesty and integrity, transparency, and accountability.

Indeed, it was not without reason that the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, at the meeting of the National Council for Combating Corruption on March 5, 2025, emphasized that "Prevention of corruption begins with the selection of professional and dedicated personnel in the state service and their vaccination with the halal vaccine". Based on this, we will dwell on the causes of corruption and the issues of its prevention.

Corruption is a term that is increasingly being used in national and international law. Corruption is not a new phenomenon; it has existed since the beginning of social relations[1].

According to the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle said that “In any state system - through laws and other orders, the work should be organized in such a way that it should not allow illegal enrichment of officials”.

The French thinker Charles Montesquieu said: “It is known from centuries of experience that any person with any authority has a tendency to abuse it and walks in that direction until this official achieves a certain goal”.

The head of our state Shavkat Mirziyoyev also stressed the need to take strict measures to combat corruption, various crimes, and other offenses in our society, to prevent them, and to ensure in practice the requirements of the law on the inevitability of punishment for crime[2]. According to A.F.Primov, a number of measures have been implemented in recent years to combat corruption in public administration.

On July 7th, 2008, our country ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption and Uzbekistan signed on to the Istanbul Plan to Combat Corruption, which was adopted in March 2010 by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

In addition, on December 13th, 2011 the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan agreed to join the Eurasian group on combating money laundering and terrorist financing. Uzbekistan was among the first countries in the region to enact the Law “On combating money laundering and terrorist financing”.

The adoption of the Law “On Combating Corruption” on January 3rd, 2017, is important as a logical continuation of these measures.

In addition, the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated on December 2nd, 2014 №328 “On measures to introduce a system for assessing the impact of legislation on entrepreneurial activity” and the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated on December 25th, 2015 №384-mh “On the approval of the methodology of anti-corruption examination of projects” introduced a mechanism aimed at preventing the “passage” of corruptiogenic norms in the draft regulations.

In particular, Transparency International has released the Corruption Perception Index 2018. Uzbekistan scored 1 point more than last year on the 100-point index – 23 points.

However, the country’s rating fell one point to 158th out of 180 countries and regions. It had the same outcome as in the State of Mozambique in Africa. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev stated in this regard that “in our society, we must take strict measures to combat corruption, various crimes, and other offenses, to prevent them, and to ensure in practice the requirements of the law on the inevitability of punishments”[3].

RESEARCH METHOD

Corruption, its essence, and development, as well as its causes and conditions, is a historical and ongoing, contentious, and topical issue in disciplines such as economics, law, philosophy, psychology, and pedagogy. The factors that contribute to corruption, in particular, are highly contentious, and the priority of identifying and

studying these factors is that the fight against corruption, particularly its prevention, must first identify and eliminate the factors that cause it.

After all, the only way to reduce or eliminate corruption is to find the problems and conditions that cause it. As these countries transitioned to a market economy following the demise of the former Soviet Union, new corruption factors emerged. A.A. Amanov, in particular, noted that widespread interference in the activities of public authorities by economic authorities, an imperfect system of organization and control of the civil service, and a lack of legal regulation, as well as interference in the financial and economic activities of economic entities by the state, particularly local government bodies, all, contribute to corruption[4].

M.Sh. Shedi cites excessive interference in the economy, incomplete economic reforms, excessive taxes and levies, government weakness, the need for conciliation and access, a lack of regulation of state control, and legal flaws in a comprehensive analysis of the causes of corruption [5].

Analyzing the economic, institutional, and social reasons, V.G.Popov and V.N.Umnikov point to the high level of closure of government agencies, the inconvenient reporting system; the lack of transparency in the legislative system, and the weakness of the state's personnel policy.

The concept of administrative reforms in the Republic of Uzbekistan also points out that the insufficient openness and transparency of the executive branch leads to various forms of corruption.

According to Sh.R. Kobilov, one of the roots of corruption is the excessive preservation of the state's permitting functions [6]. R. Klitgaard argues that a lack of control over an official's "sovereignty" over the provision of services to a business entity or the creation of certain privileges can lead to a corrupt deal.

Sh.R. Kobilov also cites imperfect laws, the bureaucratization of public life, an increase in the number of officials, organizational difficulties in business, and an increase in intermediaries as factors in the development of corruption.

According to K.I. Golovshinsky, as a result of incomplete control over the process of drafting "by-laws" in public administration, the current legislation creates corrupt, legal norms that create conditions for corruption. As a result, there may be vague and difficult-to-understand legal norms and regulations in the legislation, which create conditions for officials to intimidate citizens and take bribes. Following A.V.Vohobov, the severity and extent of corruption depend on various factors. The most important of these is the restriction of economic freedom, state interference in entrepreneurial activity, and finally, the state monopoly of natural resources [7].

Based on the foregoing, one of the primary causes of corruption in government is the huge number of administrative allowing and conciliation procedures in place, as well as their compliance with departmental interests and the legal preservation of corrupt practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As a result, the state's inescapable impact on social life is a crucial factor in the formation of corruption. Corruption is viewed not simply as a criminal offense, but also as a poor moral act that society strongly condemns. As a result, corruption takes the form of concealment in all circumstances. Permitting, conciliation, an inspection of economic activity, application of sanctions against it, and consideration and settlement of individual and legal entity appeals in the field of public administration should all be done in a way that allows anybody to become acquainted with it at any time. It is required to implement an electronic queuing system as well as a mechanism to ensure that it is strictly followed.

As long as the administrative activities of state bodies and employees should be open to the control of anti-corruption bodies and the public at any time of acquaintance.

Consequently, in this regard, the head of our state Shavkat Mirziyoyev also noted the need to implement an effective decision-making system based on openness in public administration in the appeal to the Oliy Majlis.

Regardless of what form of application has been made to the state bodies, it should be immediately registered and immediately displayed on the website of the relevant body, as well as the process of consideration of this application should be explained in the form of the following table.

Also, in accordance with Article 6 of this Convention, each State Party shall, in accordance with the basic principles of its legal system, ensure the existence of a body or, where appropriate, a body to prevent corruption, using the following measures:

A. To pursue the policies referred to in Article 5 of this Convention and, where appropriate, to monitor and coordinate the implementation of such policies;

B. Expanding and disseminating knowledge on corruption prevention. It is clear from these rules that in the fight against corruption, states, based on the principles of their legislation, create regulations aimed at preventing and combating corruption and establish state bodies that carry out this process. A number of foreign countries have developed a set of administrative norms aimed at preventing and eliminating corruption in public administration. The work done to prevent and combat corruption in the public service system developed in countries such as Finland, Singapore, the United States, Canada, Germany, France, and the Netherlands is commendable. According to Transparency International, Finland has one of the lowest levels of corruption[8].

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On combating corruption" of January 3, 2017 contains a number of provisions aimed at preventing the crime of corruption. It identifies the main directions of state policy in the field of combating corruption, which include:

1. Raising the legal awareness and legal culture of the population, the formation of an intolerant attitude to corruption in society;
2. Implementation of measures to prevent corruption in all spheres of state and public life;

3. Timely detection of corruption offenses, their suppression, elimination of their consequences, their causes and conditions, ensuring the principle of inevitability of liability for corruption offenses [9].

Improving legal awareness and legal culture in society includes improving the system of legal education and legal education, which are the main measures to combat corruption, achieving a positive attitude of all government agencies, officials, and citizens toward the law, increasing legal literacy, ensuring social and legal activity of citizens. In this regard, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 9, 2019 “On radical improvement of the system of raising legal awareness and legal culture in society” [10].

This Presidential Decree identifies the following as the main tasks of raising legal awareness and legal culture in society:

1. Formation of a system of consistent communication of the content and essence of the ongoing socio-economic reforms, adopted legislation and state programs in the country, “Decision of the spirit of respect for the law in society – the key to building a democratic state governed by the rule of law” strengthening the idea of life;
2. In raising the legal awareness and legal culture in society, first of all, pay special attention to the systematic and integrated conduct of education, the deepening of legal awareness and legal culture in all segments of the population, starting from preschool education, and the balance between personal and public interests wide publicity;
3. To inculcate in the minds of the younger generation the concepts of law and duty, honesty and purity, as well as moral norms, to teach them important aspects of the Constitution from childhood [11];
4. Organizing legal and educational activities for the formation of legal culture among the population in accordance with the history, religion, national values of our people, as well as strengthening the sense of patriotism, and belonging to each country through the formation of a sense of pride in state symbols;
5. Raising the legal awareness and legal culture of civil servants, the formation of intolerance of them to corruption and other offenses;
6. Strengthening cooperation between public authorities and administration, including law enforcement agencies and civil society institutions in the implementation of legal advocacy;
7. Systematize the wide and effective use of the principles of social partnership in the organization of activities to increase legal awareness and legal culture in society;
8. Increasing the role of the media in providing legal information, the widespread use of innovative methods of legal advocacy, including the use of web technologies;
9. Improving legal education, as well as developing a system of training, retraining, and advanced training of legal personnel;

10. In-depth study of the scientific basis for raising legal awareness and legal culture in society [12].

Also, in order to raise legal awareness and legal culture in society, a systematic and integrated organization on the principle of “person – society – community – educational institution – organization – society” was established. The General Prosecutor’s Office, the State Security Service, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Combating Economic Crimes under the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Uzbekistan act as direct state bodies in the fight against corruption and each has anti-corruption powers [13].

It should be especially noted that at the meeting of the National Anti-Corruption Council on March 5, 2025, the President drew attention to the fact that “currently, there is no clear list of corruption crimes in the legislation, and the law approved by the parliament is mainly limited to strengthening punishment, and such issues as preventing corruption, educating people in the spirit of intolerance to it, creating preventive mechanisms, and encouraging those who contribute to the disclosure of crimes are not reflected”[14].

Continuing his remarks, the President also noted that “in the current era of technologies, new, digital forms of corruption are emerging, and therefore, starting from the new academic year, it is necessary to train specialists in this area at the Internal Affairs and Law Enforcement Academies”[15].

In addition, at the meeting, it was noted that it is necessary to study international experience, create a solid legal framework for the effective fight against cybercorruption, analyze the factors of official and domestic corruption, develop and implement scientifically based proposals for their prevention.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study identifies that corruption in Uzbekistan persists due to entrenched institutional weaknesses, legal ambiguities, and limited civic oversight, despite significant legislative efforts such as the 2017 Law on Combating Corruption and the 2019 Presidential Decree on legal culture. **Implication :** The findings suggest that sustainable anti-corruption efforts must move beyond punitive measures toward comprehensive, preventive strategies that include digital transparency, legal education, and civic engagement. Strengthening e-governance systems and promoting a culture of intolerance toward corruption through multi-sectoral collaboration are essential for long-term impact. **Limitation :** The analysis primarily relies on qualitative legal and institutional reviews without incorporating empirical data or public perception metrics, which may limit the generalizability and depth of policy evaluation. **Future Research :** Subsequent studies should adopt mixed-method approaches, including longitudinal data and public opinion surveys, to evaluate the real-world effectiveness of implemented reforms and to assess the role of digital tools in mitigating evolving forms of corruption in post-Soviet transitional systems.

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* Otajonov Abrorjon Anvarovich (Corresponding Author)

Tashkent State University of Law, Uzbekistan

Email: abror_otajonov@mail.ru
