# EFFECTIVENESS OF ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGIES: EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN KAZAKHSTAN

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**Abstract.** In the era of globalization and accelerated societal transformation, corruption continues to represent a critical challenge across both scholarly discourse and practical governance. It erodes democratic principles, hinders economic development, and compromises social equity. Therefore, the implementation of robust anti-corruption measures is essential for strengthening public administration systems, fostering public confidence in government institutions, and promoting transparency.

This research aims to assess the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies in Kazakhstan, highlight successful preventive practices, and propose recommendations to enhance anti-corruption mechanisms within the system of public administration.

Considering the breadth of the documents examined, the study employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative content analysis techniques.

The outcomes of this research may serve as a valuable resource for public administration bodies and civil society institutions in formulating anti-corruption initiatives and refining existing policies.

*Keywords:* corruption, anti-corruption strategy, public service, corruption prevention, public service.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** korupcija, kovos su korupcija strategija, valstybės tarnyba, korupcijos prevencija, viešoji tarnyba.

### Introduction

Corruption continues to be a widespread problem affecting institutions of public administration, the private sector, and business environments across the globe. It poses a significant barrier to socio-economic progress and weakens the effectiveness of governmental structures.

Importantly, corruption and the measures to counteract it are not solely contemporary concerns. Historical evidence indicates that corrupt practices existed as early as ancient civilizations, including those of Egypt and Rome.

In ancient Roman law, the term "corruption" can be found, derived from the Latin word "*corrumpere*," which means "to destroy, break, or unlawfully bribe" (Arvind 2001). Similarly, ancient Egyptian inscriptions advised: "When you appear before your superior, bow your head, for it will save your household; defiance will bring you trouble." (Tomsinov 2004)

Although the manifestations of corruption evolve with changing circumstances, its core essence remains constant. And while the foundations of corruption in ancient times differ significantly from contemporary examples, the principle remains unchanged (Transparency International 2024).

One key distinction between modern and ancient corruption is its globalized nature. In the present day, corruption transcends national boundaries, infiltrating international organizations and posing a threat to the global legal order. It is now recognized as an international problem that jeopardizes the integrity of worldwide governance systems (Lipinsky et al. 2019).

#### Literature review

The effectiveness of a country's anti-corruption efforts and the level of corruption within its borders are critical factors that enhance its reputation. The level of corruption directly influences foreign direct investment inflows, political negotiations, and the country's standing on the global stage (Karlina and Kochneva 2023).

Although corruption can arise in various forms and poses numerous risks, its persistence is frequently associated with systemic flaws in the institutional design of public governance. Ambiguous and contradictory legislation, along with a general lack of accessibility and clarity for the population, grants public officials significant interpretive latitude. This, in turn, reinforces informal power structures within state institutions and elevates the likelihood of arbitrary administrative decisions. In public administration, corruption is often rooted in the concentration of monopolistic authority and the broad discretionary powers held by officials (Vashalomitdze 2021).

Monopolistic power is more prevalent in economically developed countries, while discretionary power is commonly observed in developing nations. However, successful anti-corruption efforts require not only the active engagement of public authorities but also the commitment of the business community and civil society in combating corruption (Gaynullin et al. 2024).

Adam Smith, an economist, studied the impact of corruption on economic development. In his works, he demonstrates how corruption leads to a decrease in investment, the deterioration of public services, and the slowdown of economic growth, particularly in countries with transition economies (Semenkova 1979).

Richard Thaler, a professor of economics, explored how corruption affects social inequality and the quality of public governance. His works emphasize that corruption can create barriers to the development of democracy and undermine citizens' trust in state institutions (Thaler 2017).

Daron Acemoglu, an economist and co-author of the book Why Nations Fail, conducted research on the impact of corruption on the economic development of India and China. In his analysis, he found that high levels of corruption are associated with slower economic growth. When governments are susceptible to corruption, the amount of investment in critical sectors, such as infrastructure and education, decreases, negatively affecting longterm development prospects (Acemoglu and Robinson 2020).

Anti-corruption legislation is being developed and strictly enforced across countries worldwide. Dedicated state agencies tasked with combating corruption have been established, and penalties for corruption-related offenses are becoming increasingly severe.

In the fight against corruption, efforts are not limited to contemporary legal measures but also extend to the formulation of precise anti-corruption policies. Furthermore, in an ever-changing world, strategies and action plans are being devised to adapt to new challenges in combating corruption.

Singapore's anti-corruption framework, grounded in well-regulated legal documents and proactive measures, has demonstrated the possibility of significantly reducing corruption levels within a short period.

Singapore has successfully reduced corruption to minimal levels through a combination of political will, effective legislative reforms, the integrity of an incorruptible authorized body, and the independence of the judiciary. The clarity of reform objectives for the entire population, along with the strict implementation of these reforms, has produced unprecedented results recognized globally (Arvind 2001).

In addition to the Singapore model, the Hong Kong model of anti-corruption can also be highlighted. According to the works of renowned British scholar Alan Doig, Botswana has achieved significant success by adopting Hong Kong's anti-corruption model. Botswana's anti-corruption strategy consists of three main components: investigation, anti-corruption education, and preventive measures (Chi 2024).

However, the lack of a clear formula for corruption offenses means that adopting foreign models may not always yield positive results. According to Professor Rob McCusker, a renowned scholar of Teesside University, corruption is a phenomenon primarily driven by the wrongful actions of individuals. In his research, the scholar emphasizes the need to conduct social and cultural studies before developing anti-corruption strategies. He also advocates for adapting international practices to align with national characteristics (Mc-Cusker 2006).

The renowned scholar Gibson, in his works, argues that the development of anti-corruption strategies contributes to the enhancement of effective governance mechanisms within state institutions and helps build public trust in governmental bodies (Disch et al. 2009).

However, it is clear that without eliminating bureaucratic barriers within state institutions, the implementation of any strategy will be difficult (Chidi and Ibrahim 2020).

After gaining independence, the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted the fight against corruption as one of the state's strategic priorities. The first major strategic document in the history of independent Kazakhstan, the "Kazakhstan-2030" development strategy, also outlined an uncompromising anti-corruption plan. Moreover, the current "Kazakhstan-2050" development strategy also places significant emphasis on combating corruption.

Based on these national strategic documents, specific strategic plans aimed at reducing corruption have been adopted and are being implemented. These include the "Anti-Corruption Strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2015–2025" (now repealed) and the "Concept of the Anti-Corruption Policy for 2022–2026".

Additionally, the "National Report on Anti-Corruption Efforts" is published annually to explain the results of work carried out based on these strategic documents.

Thanks to the initiatives outlined in these documents, a number of comprehensive measures have been implemented in the country. However, despite the adopted measures, the number of corruption offenses remains high in Kazakhstan. Therefore, questioning the effectiveness of the country's anti-corruption strategies is a legitimate phenomenon. (Talgatuly et. al. 2025)

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of Kazakhstan's strategic documents has not been widely analyzed in the scientific literature. Additionally, there is a lack of specific research on the relevance and effectiveness of the anti-corruption measures taken.

### Methodology

To assess the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies, this study explores not only the current and past strategies adopted by the Republic of Kazakhstan but also a broader array of related materials, including national programs, legal frameworks, political declarations, annual reports, media publications, and other relevant sources. A comprehensive document review was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Content analysis was chosen as the primary methodological tool for this research.

The distinctive value of content analysis lies in its ability to interpret written sources within their broader social and institutional contexts. This method facilitates the systematic extraction and classification of structured data from documentary sources. In particular, the analysis of legal documents and official reports is essential for understanding the nature and effectiveness of anti-corruption policies implemented in Kazakhstan.

By applying content analysis, the study allows for a simultaneous examination of qualitative insights and quantitative indicators. The textual review of anti-corruption policy documents reveals their key principles, instruments, and strategic directions, while the integration of quantitative metrics supports the evaluation of their practical implementation and overall effectiveness. The advantage of content analysis in the study is that it allows the researcher to eliminate personal bias from the analytical process6 (Lindberg et al. 2023).

The fight against corruption in Kazakhstan is multifaceted and comprehensive. Given the large number of documents, legislations, and reports, content analysis provides an effective method for systematically processing extensive data and drawing unified conclusions. This approach plays a significant role in identifying patterns between strategies and their outcomes, as well as in detecting trends within the research.

In the process of content analysis, anti-corruption strategies and action plans will be assessed through quantitative examination of the criminal corruption landscape in Kazakhstan. This assessment will incorporate the Corruption Perceptions Index published by Transparency International, an international non-governmental organization committed to combating corruption and evaluating its prevalence worldwide.

The collected data will be organized into structured formats, including tables and bar graphs. These visual tools will serve as the basis for drawing preliminary conclusions regarding the effectiveness of Kazakhstan's anti-corruption policies. To interpret the data, the study will employ general theoretical methods such as comparative analysis, synthesis, generalization, induction, and deduction.

#### Results and discussion

Since gaining independence, the importance of combating corruption has been firmly established in politically significant state documents. The Republic of Kazakhstan's first and most comprehensive strategic document, the "Kazakhstan-2030" strategy, published in 1997, highlights the importance of a strong fight against corruption on six occasions. According to this document, by the year 2000, Kazakhstan was to establish a professional government, complete reforms in public service and government operations, and prioritize the fight against corruption and abuse of power (Kazakhstan-2030: Increase in Prosperity 1997). In the "Kazakhstan-2030" strategic document, corruption is described as an incomplete set of "qualities" that were nurtured by the former bureaucratic regime and, in recent years, have transitioned from a hidden form to an open one (Kazakhstan-2030 Increase in Prosperity 1997).

As a consequence of this strategy, measures were undertaken to reinforce democratic principles, enhance transparency and accountability within public administration, and foster public trust in governmental institutions. In 1998, the Republic of Kazakhstan enacted

the "Law on Combating Corruption," aimed at attracting skilled professionals to the civil service and establishing conditions that promote integrity and loyalty among public officials. This legislation laid down fundamental anti-corruption principles, including mechanisms for oversight, prevention, control, and prohibition.

Notably, it was the first law within the Commonwealth of Independent States to explicitly define the objectives, guiding principles, and operational mechanisms of authorized bodies tasked with combating corruption.

From 2001 onward, state programs designed to combat corruption were implemented pursuant to this law. These programs involved evaluating the existing corruption landscape and formulating action plans to address urgent challenges in the short term.

The initial comprehensive anti-corruption strategy, which included both situational analysis and future planning, was adopted in 2014 and covered the period from 2015 to 2025. However, in response to the accelerating effects of globalization and evolving societal expectations, a new policy framework was developed. On February 2, 2022, the President of Kazakhstan approved the "Concept of Kazakhstan's Anti-Corruption Policy for 2022–2026," which consolidated national experiences and integrated leading international best practices in anti-corruption efforts.



Figure 1. Political documents of the Republic of Kazakhstan Source: authors

As shown in the table above, in the history of independent Kazakhstan, two strategic documents with the primary goal of combating corruption can be observed.

The initial strategic document, developed on the foundation of the Republic of Kazakhstan's Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2015–2025, represented a significant milestone through the repeal of the Law "On Combating Corruption" and the enactment of the Law "On Anti-Corruption Measures." Unlike its predecessor, the new legislation emphasizes not only the fight against corruption but also its prevention, adopting a holistic approach to mitigating corruption risks. The primary priorities of this anti-corruption strategy are summarized in Table 1.





Source: authors

The author will classify the strategic priorities into five distinct categories. According to the table, only one of these measures functions as a response mechanism that activates after a corruption incident has occurred—the enhancement of accountability for those involved in corrupt activities. In contrast, the remaining measures comprise a range of preventative actions designed to inhibit corruption before it takes place.

In the course of implementing this strategy, the authorized body recognized in the fight against corruption, the Anti-Corruption Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Anti-Corruption Service), has established the main principles of its activities. These include effective prevention, widespread public awareness, constructive cooperation with society, and the integration of criminal and legal measures (The Concept of Anti-Corruption Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022).

The authorized body established the Corruption Prevention Institute, which has played a crucial role in curbing corruption within the public service and promoting integrity throughout society. Furthermore, emphasis was placed on empowering non-governmental organizations, allowing them to act as public oversight entities within the public administration sector. Active engagement from civil society and the broader public was encouraged through opportunities to attend public service performance reports, offer recommendations, interact directly with senior officials, and pose questions. Government transparency underwent rigorous scrutiny, with the authorized body conducting relevant assessments. The strategic focus transitioned from merely addressing the consequences of corruption to tackling its root causes. To this end, the authorized body performed both external and internal analyses alongside ongoing anti-corruption monitoring aimed at identifying and mitigating corruption risks within public administration.

Historically, the authorized body combating corruption operated as a largely closed and punitive institution. However, with the implementation of this strategic framework, it opened public-facing offices and fostered closer collaboration with the citizenry. During this period, robust partnerships were also formed with international anti-corruption organizations.

During the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2015–2025, a number of deficiencies became apparent. Among the key issues were the absence of a holistic and systematic approach to corruption prevention, the limited application of sociological research in evaluating the outcomes of anti-corruption initiatives and the performance of public institutions and the authorized body, as well as the insufficient institutional readiness to maintain the required level of transparency.

These shortcomings were directly acknowledged in the strategic document, which demonstrates the capacity of the public administration system to recognize its own weak-nesses and undertake corrective measures.

Subsequently, the article proceeds to analyze the effectiveness of the current Anti-Corruption Policy Concept for 2022–2026, as detailed in Table 2.



### Table 2. The best mechanisms for preventing corruption

#### Source: authors

Tables 1 and 2 outline the most effective mechanisms currently utilized in Kazakhstan to prevent corruption. The selection of these mechanisms is substantiated by their practical integration into the national anti-corruption framework. These instruments serve as core components of the country's preventive strategy and are regularly subjected to performance evaluations within the broader context of anti-corruption policy implementation.

These mechanisms are also embedded in the National Report on Anti-Corruption Activities, a key strategic document that provides an overview of the status and results of anti-corruption efforts in Kazakhstan. Their inclusion is based both on assessments conducted by competent authorities and on recommendations from international organizations specializing in anti-corruption regulation.

Therefore, the mechanisms highlighted in this study are not only practically relevant but are also continuously monitored, underscoring their essential role in establishing a sustainable anti-corruption infrastructure in the country.

According to the implementation plan of the Anti-Corruption Policy for 2022–2026, the efforts undertaken aim to enhance earlier initiatives introduced in the initial strategic document while also incorporating international best practices.

Modifications to the original mechanisms, informed by foreign anti-corruption organizations, are designed to optimize their operation and ensure consistency. As a result of these improvements, the preventive tools managed by the authorized body have been systematized, and standardized criteria for evaluating their effectiveness have been introduced. The measures outlined in the strategic document indicate that Kazakhstan is aligning its anti-corruption development with elements of the Singaporean model.

This strategic approach emphasizes a dual focus: cultivating a culture of integrity among civil servants and society at large, while simultaneously enforcing strict punitive measures. Throughout the implementation of these plans, several key objectives have been achieved, leading to a noticeable decline in corruption-related offenses.



Diagram 1. Corruption crimes in the Republic of Kazakhstan

Source: National Report on Combating Corruption

In addition, the international non-governmental organization Transparency International provides a positive assessment of the results of the anti-corruption mechanisms in our country.





Source: Transparency International (https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/kazakhstan)

As a result of the long-standing anti-corruption policy in the country, for the first time in history, Moody's agency assigned a "stable" rating to the Republic of Kazakhstan due to progress in public administration and anti-corruption efforts (Moody's Ratings n.d.).

## Conclusion

Kazakhstan's anti-corruption policies have evolved significantly over the years, with legal reforms, institutional restructuring, and increased transparency efforts playing a central role in the fight against corruption. However, despite these initiatives, challenges remain in fully eradicating corrupt practices, ensuring consistent enforcement, and fostering a culture of integrity. This study has analyzed the effectiveness of Kazakhstan's anti-corruption strategies and identified both strengths and areas for improvement.

While legislative advancements and institutional mechanisms have contributed to increased public awareness and stricter penalties for corruption-related offenses, the persistence of corrupt practices suggests that additional measures are necessary. To enhance the efficiency of Kazakhstan's anti-corruption framework, the following recommendations are proposed:

### 1. Strengthening institutional accountability

Improve inter-agency coordination to prevent overlapping functions and enhance the efficiency of law enforcement bodies tasked with corruption prevention.

### 2. Enhancing public engagement and whistleblower protection

- Encourage the participation of civil society organizations and private sector actors in anti-corruption monitoring efforts.
- 3. Leveraging digital innovations
  - Expand the use of artificial intelligence, blockchain, and big data analytics to improve transparency in government procurement and financial transactions.
  - Develop digital platforms for citizens to report corruption anonymously, increasing accessibility and participation in anti-corruption efforts.
- 4. Improving the legal framework and enforcement
  - Close existing legislative loopholes that enable corrupt practices and ensure consistent application of anti-bribery laws.
  - Increase the severity of punishments for high-level corruption offenses to deter misconduct at all levels of governance.
- 5. Fostering ethical leadership and public sector integrity
  - Establish clear career incentives for ethical behavior, ensuring that promotions and professional growth are tied to integrity and compliance with anti-corruption regulations.
- 6. Conducting regular policy evaluations and adaptations

- Establish mechanisms for continuous assessment of anti-corruption policies to measure their real-world impact and effectiveness.

By implementing these recommendations, Kazakhstan can further strengthen its anti-corruption framework, reduce vulnerabilities within its governance institutions, and foster a culture of integrity. While progress has been made, sustained efforts, policy refinements, and active societal participation will be key to ensuring a long-term and effective fight against corruption.

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## ANTIKORUPCINIŲ STRATEGIJŲ VEIKSMINGUMAS: PATIRTIS IR PASIEKIMAI KAZACHSTANE

Anotacija. Globalizacijos ir sparčios visuomenės raidos kontekste korupcijos problema išlieka viena aktualiausių temų tiek akademinėje sferoje, tiek praktikoje. Korupcija griauna demokratijos pagrindus, stabdo ekonominę pažangą ir kenkia socialiniam teisingumui. Taigi veiksmingos kovos su korupcija pastangos yra itin svarbios viešojo administravimo institucijoms, didinant visuomenės pasitikėjimą valstybės institucijomis ir užtikrinant skaidrumą.

Šio tyrimo tikslas – išanalizuoti antikorupcinių strategijų veiksmingumą Kazachstane, nustatyti geriausią korupcijos prevencijos praktiką ir pateikti rekomendacijas, kaip tobulinti kovos su korupcija mechanizmus viešajame administravime.

Atsižvelgiant į analizuojamų dokumentų apimtį, tyrimas buvo atliktas taikant tiek kokybinius, tiek kiekybinius turinio analizės metodus.

Šio tyrimo išvados gali būti panaudotos kuriant viešojo administravimo ir pilietinės visuomenės organizacijų kovos su korupcija planus bei tobulinant esamus mechanizmus.

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