

Party Issue Positions and Legislative Actions on Corruption in Ukraine, 2002 - 2017

This research was funded by the Preludium grant of the National Science Centre, Poland [Narodowe Centrum Nauki]. Project number: 2017/25/N/HS6/01174. Project Name: Influence of party ideology and characteristics of parliamentarians on legislative actions on war, corruption and inequality in Ukraine [Wpływ ideologii partii i charakterystyk parlamentarzystów na działania ustawodawcze w sprawie wojny, korupcji i nierówności na Ukrainie].

The most widely known definition of corruption is “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain” (Holmes 2015). Transparency International suggests three types of corruption: grand, petty and political. Grand corruption is a type of corruption happening on the highest levels of power and disrupting the functioning of state institutions; petty corruption is a small scale corruption that occurs among lower level state officials; political corruption, in contrast, is a manipulation of policies and rules for personal gain (Transparency International, official website).

Corruption has been endemic in Ukraine since the country gained independence in 1991. Due to lack of government control on the initial stage of independence, corruption in Ukraine has become ubiquitous (Kalman 2004, Spector et al. 2006). After Euromaidan 2013/2014, when the country faced large-scale protests against attempts of implementation of authoritarian political practices by the dominant ruling party, the government officials should have started to implement some new anti-corruption legislation complying with the international norms (Fluri and Badrak 2016).

Ideological positions expressed in electoral manifestos of political parties should be an indicator of the subsequent actions of the parliamentarians. Yet, when faced with countries with a weak party system, such as Ukraine (Kononchuk and Yiarosh 2010), the questions about the relevance of ideological positions for legislative action need to be revisited. Considering the last 25 years of electoral politics in Ukraine, the question arises as to the extent to which ideologies guide parties or the idea of “power for power’s sake” guides them. While there are more than 200 political parties in Ukraine, scholars suggest that major parties and blocs, and their parliamentarians, are more interested in the representation of business interests than that of the citizenry (Prymush 2014, Shveda 2012, Goniukova 2014, Kuzio 2014).

To study what Ukrainian political parties, blocs and parliamentarians in terms of their ideological positioning are inclined to embrace fight with corruption, I study electoral manifestos and legislative roll call voting on anti-corruption legislation in 2002 - 2017.

First, I measured ideological positions of political parties and blocs creating two scales of ideological positions (1) value positioning: conservative authoritarianism – liberalism; (2) economic

positioning: state interventionism (statism) – economic liberalism. In addition, the third scale measures positioning on the (3) populism scale: populism – pluralism. Then, to observe the link between issue position and legislative action, I used roll call voting data (the record of voting for each legislative act in the parliament) and parliamentary debates data.

To identify the legislation that deals with corruption, I use a targeted search using the key words: (a) corrupt (corruption) (“коруп”); (b) state serv (state service) (“держ служб”); (c) publ inform (publicly available information) (“публ інформац”). In total, I have collected 28 legislative acts. I merged the roll call voting data and coded manifesto data with EAST Pac Ukraine to (a) examine voting on particular legislative act and (b) construct multilevel cross-classified regression models exploring the associations between party ideological positions and voting for groups of legislative acts. I complemented the roll call voting data with the parliamentary debates data to study the motivation behind adoption of certain legislative acts and policies. (1) East European Parliamentarian and Candidate Database (EAST PaC)¹ containing the universe of parties, candidates, and parliamentarians for national elective office in Ukraine (2002 – 2014).

I found that Ukrainian political parties and blocs pay attention to the issues related to corruption in their manifestos. Nonetheless, adoption of anti-corruption legislation has been slow so far: using the key-words search, I have identified 28 legislative acts dealing with corruption. The results of quantitative analysis show that Ukrainian there is a small (0.07) statistically significant association between populist parties and blocs and voting for the anti-corruption legislation: the more populist the party is the more the parliamentarians belonging to this party are inclined to support this type of legislation. Value positions (conservative authoritarianism – liberalism) and economic positions (statism – economic liberalism) show no statistically significant associations with voting for the anti-corruption legislation.

Overall, while the topic of corruption and adoption the anti-corruption legislation appears frequently in the manifestos of political parties and blocs, parliamentarians are reluctant to support implementation of necessary legislation regardless of their ideological positions.

¹ EAST PaC is a product of the research grant, “Who Wins and Who Loses in the Parliamentary Elections? From Formal Theory to Empirical Analysis,” funded by Poland’s National Science Centre (Sonata Bis decision number 2012/05/E/HS6/03556) PI: Joshua Kjerulf Dubrow.

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