

# The evolution of corruption theories as a prerequisite for the formation and implementation of state criminal law policy

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## Abstract

Corruption is a complex socio-economic phenomenon that significantly harms the efficiency of state institutions and social development. It undermines democratic governance and the rule of law, inhibits economic growth, distorts market competition and causes citizens to distrust government. Understanding its mechanisms through the prism of different theoretical approaches allows for the formation of a holistic anti-corruption strategy. The article analyzes the evolution of key theories of corruption - from classical models of the principal-agent and collective action to modern institutional, network and rational-choice concepts. The main mechanisms are identified by which each of these theories justifies corrupt behavior as a consequence of certain economic, social and institutional factors. It is clarified how the achievements of the study of each of these theories can be integrated into the creation of effective measures of state criminal law policy to prevent and combat corruption. Practical recommendations for improving the public administration system have been developed, which will be based on a synthesis of the analyzed theoretical approaches. Each of these theories reveals unique aspects of corruption phenomena, which together create the basis for systemic counteraction through legislative, institutional, and social mechanisms.

*Keywords:* corruption; public administration; principal-agent; collective action theory; rational crime theory; institutional theory; criminal law policy; corruption prevention.

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## 1. Introduction

Corruption negatively affects all levels of public administration, undermines the rule of law, and hampers socio-economic development. Corruption in Ukraine is systemic in nature, which corresponds to the essence of the theory of collective action since corrupt practices permeate all levels of governance and the economy. In other words, when misconduct becomes a mass phenomenon, it is difficult for an individual to act honestly due to the expectation that others do the same. This creates a kind of "collective trap" in which corruption is tolerated at the collective level. The ineffectiveness of traditional approaches to combating corruption also confirms the relevance of turning to the evolution of scientific theories. For a long time, anti-corruption policy was based mainly on principal-agent models, which assume that it is necessary to improve control over officials (agents) by the state or the public (principal) - and corruption will be overcome. However, modern research shows that this is not enough, because corruption is often rooted in social norms and informal institutions. This implies the need for a comprehensive consideration of different theoretical approaches. The evolution of views—from individualistic models of rational choice to collective and network concepts - reflects the awareness of the multidimensionality of corruption.

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## **2. Literature Review**

The problems of the causes and nature of corruption have been widely studied by both foreign and domestic scientists. Among foreign researchers, the works of J.Scott, N.Groenendijk, H.Marquette, C.Peiffer, M. Granovetter, M.Castells, P.Bourdieu, B.Rotenberg, K.Nathanson, E.Silva, K.Arrow, O.Williamson, J.-J.Laffont, D.Martimort, R. Klitgaard, and D.North. In the Ukrainian scientific space, many studies are also devoted to the problems of the causes of the origin of corruption, namely by such scientists as N.M. Kolisnichenko, H.Kohan, S.V. Piasetska-Ustych, V.Solovyov and O.I. Cheban.

## **3. The identification of previously unresolved issues and the formulation of research hypotheses**

The identification of previously unresolved issues and the formulation of research hypotheses. The purpose of the article is to examine the evolution of corruption theories, in particular the analysis of five main approaches – principal-agent theory, collective action theory, network theory, institutional theory and rational crime theory - in order to determine their contribution to the formation and implementation of state criminal law policy.

## **4. Research methodology and methods**

Corruption has been recognized as one of the most widespread and dangerous social vices since antiquity. It undermines the principles of state governance, and since the end of the 19th century, it has also been considered as the main threat in the private sphere, destroying trust and stability of economic and social relations [15].

The methodological basis of the study is a combination of several scientific approaches. First, the historical-logical method was used to trace the evolution of theoretical views on corruption in chronological order, from classical economic models to modern sociological and political theories. For a comparative analysis of different theories, a comparative (comparative) method was used: each of the five theories considered was analyzed according to common criteria (prerequisites for the emergence of corruption, the main content of the explanation, examples of manifestations, proposed anti-corruption solutions), which allows comparing their strengths and weaknesses. A structural-functional approach was also used - it helped to identify how individual elements (agents, principals, social networks, institutions, individuals, etc.) interact within each theory and how these interactions generate corrupt practices. The systemic approach provided a holistic view of corruption as a systemic phenomenon that is simultaneously subject to the influence of economic, social, legal and political factors.

## **5. Main results**

Today, the scale of corruption remains impressive: according to Transparency estimates International, hundreds of billions of euros are paid in bribes worldwide each year, and corruption, bribery, theft and tax evasion cost developing countries an estimated US\$1.26 trillion per year [5]. Such widespread corruption requires a deeper understanding of its causes and conditions in order to effectively combat it. Corruption is a complex socio-legal phenomenon that has evolved along with the development of society. At different stages, researchers have interpreted the essence of corruption in different ways, putting forward alternative approaches to its explanation. Differences in views have formed several scientific schools and theories. In particular, supporters of the neoclassical economic school focused on the fact that corruption is mainly reduced to receiving bribes through abuse of power. In their opinion, officials endowed by the state with monopoly powers can distort market mechanisms in their own interests, creating artificial obstacles for citizens and businesses. The other party - investors or citizens - in such a situation often offers to pay a bribe in order to avoid delays or oppression. Representatives of this approach emphasize the importance of establishing strict restrictions and clear rules in the public sector to prevent corrupt interference [24].

In the Ukrainian scientific space, the topic of the phenomenon of corruption is also widely covered. In turn, O.I. Cheban examined the various causes of corruption through the prism of several theories - principal-agent, collective action, game theory and legitimacy – and concluded that the phenomenon of corruption is extremely complex; therefore, there is currently no generally recognized universal theory that would fully explain its causes [3].

Piasetska-Ustych S.V. in her works emphasizes the systemic nature of Ukrainian corruption, which resonates with the theory of collective action: corruption permeates all levels of government and the economy, supporting itself through the mass nature of practices and the mutual benefit of participants [22].

Kolisnichenko N.M. focuses on individual psychological factors; she highlights the personal traits and professional interests of civil servants that increase their propensity to corruption and also analyzes the mechanisms that contribute to or hinder the emergence of corruption in the public sector [13].

Solovyov V. focuses on the application of the theory of rational choice (rational crime) to understand and counteract corruption: he considers how subjects of power weigh benefits and risks and emphasizes the need to create conditions under which committing corruption offenses becomes unprofitable due to the high probability of exposure and the severity of punishment [25].

Kohan H. notes the popularity of the agent (principal-agent) theory in explaining political corruption when the agent appropriates a share of the resources belonging to the principal. This theory, according to the researcher, underlies most models of interaction between the government (principal) and subordinate officials (agents) [12].

The scientific literature offers a rich spectrum of theories and approaches to explaining corruption. All of them, in their own way, complement the understanding of the emergence of corruption. Based on the work of the above-mentioned scientists,

we will consider five key theories of the emergence of corruption, which are the most influential in modern science: the principal-agent theory, the theory of collective action, the network theory, the institutional theory and the theory of rational crime (choice). Studying the evolution of these concepts will allow us to develop a holistic approach to the formation of state criminal law policy in the field of combating corruption.

Let's consider each of them according to the following mechanisms:

- prerequisites for occurrence;
- content of the theory;
- existing examples;
- decisions on combating corruption.

The main problem of corruption according to the principal-agent theory is the asymmetry of information between the principal (government / citizen) and the agent (state or public servant), that is, the interests of the state servant and the government do not coincide, as the state servant uses the resources and power provided by the state for personal interests and neglects the interests of citizens and the government [6].

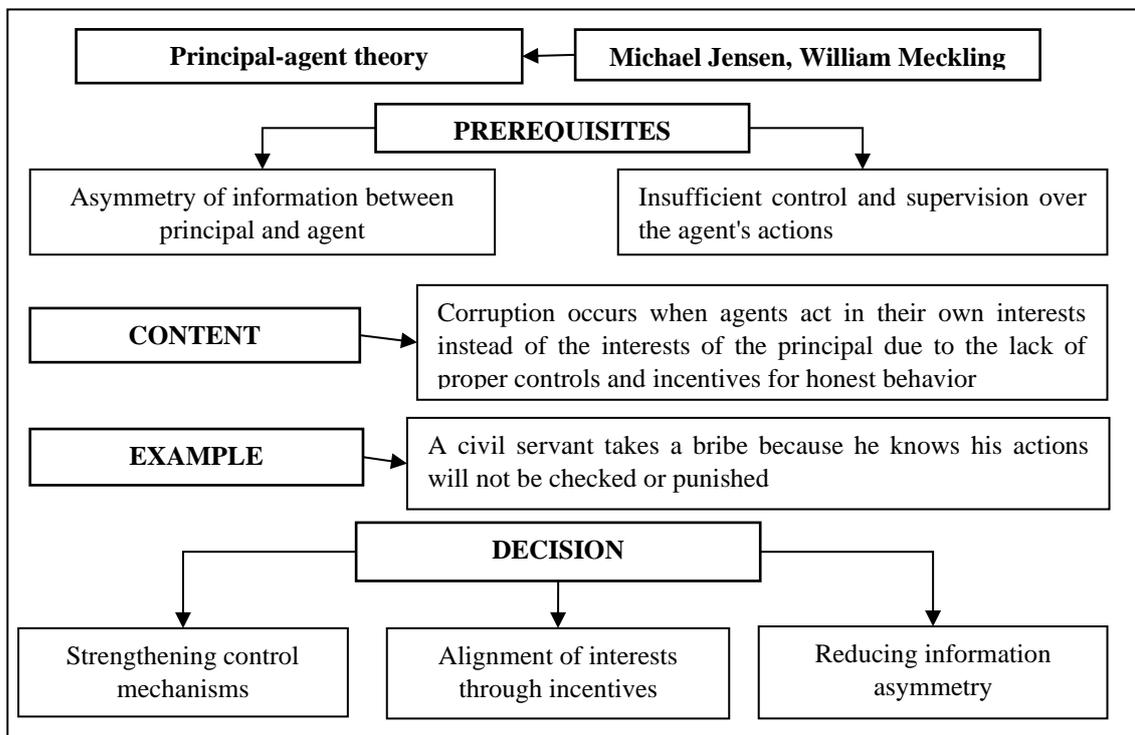
The classical formulation of this theory was proposed in economics by Michael Jensen and William Meckling [10] and later adapted to the field of corruption by such researchers as S.Rose-Ackerman [23], R.Klitgaard [11], and others.

Public administration is usually organized hierarchically, where the leader sets the overall goals and measures for the organization - goals and measures that lower-ranking civil servants - the agents - must carry out honestly. However, this creates an asymmetrical relationship. The removed principal has less information than the agent, who has practical knowledge. This asymmetrical relationship can be used to the agents' own advantage.

Robert Klitgaard [11] builds on this understanding and summarizes the relationship between corruption and hierarchical organizations in the following formula:

$$\text{Corruption} = \text{monopoly} + \text{freedom of action} \div \text{accountability}$$

According to the formula, corruption thrives when public officials are granted monopoly power over clients, when they have a high degree of discretion, and when the accountability of agents is weak. The first two elements - monopoly + discretion - consider the agent's ability to control public services, which makes him / her an attractive target for bribery. The third element - lack of accountability, which can take various forms, including responsibility, control, and punishment - draws attention to the individual's calculation of the probability that the bribe will be discovered in the possible punishment compared to the value of the bribe offered. Thus, the formula is based on individual and instrumental rationality, and two different sets of anti-corruption strategies subsequently emerge.



Source: developed by the author

Fig. 1. The concept of the "Principal-Agent" theory

The traditional model of bilateral relations "principal-agent" has been expanded by modern scholars. For example, N.Groenendijk refutes the traditional model of principal-agent, where two subjects – government / official - participate and proposes a new concept of the principal-agent model through the relationship of three subjects, namely: principal-government, agent-subordinate / official, and corrupter-enterprises / lobbyists that influence the agent. According to the proposed new model of corruption, the agent finds himself between two principals, the first - who delegates tasks and tries to control his actions, and the second – who incites and encourages corruption, thereby bribing him. The main problem of corruption in this

case is not only the lack of control, but also the choice of the most profitable strategy for himself by the agent. If the principal (government) increases control measures, the agent, through cooperation with the corrupter principal, can increase the concealment of corruption crimes or demand greater illegal benefits from the risk of exposure. The main measures to combat corruption through tripartite interaction are not only to strengthen monitoring of the actions and punishment of the agent, but also to limit the incentives for the corrupt principal and change the institutional environment [9].

A similar idea was developed by D. della Porta and A. Vanucci, who view political corruption as a kind of “market” of illicit exchanges. They note that as long as there is a formal institutional exchange between the principal (citizens) and the state agent, there will also be a parallel corrupt exchange between the same agent and the briber (third party) who interferes with the interests of the principal [28].

According to T'Serclaes and Jollands of the International Energy Agency (IEA), proponents of the principal-agent theory highlight three strengths: its adaptability to different organizational relationships; its ability to explain the behavior of individuals; and the theory's contribution to improving contractual agreements [27].

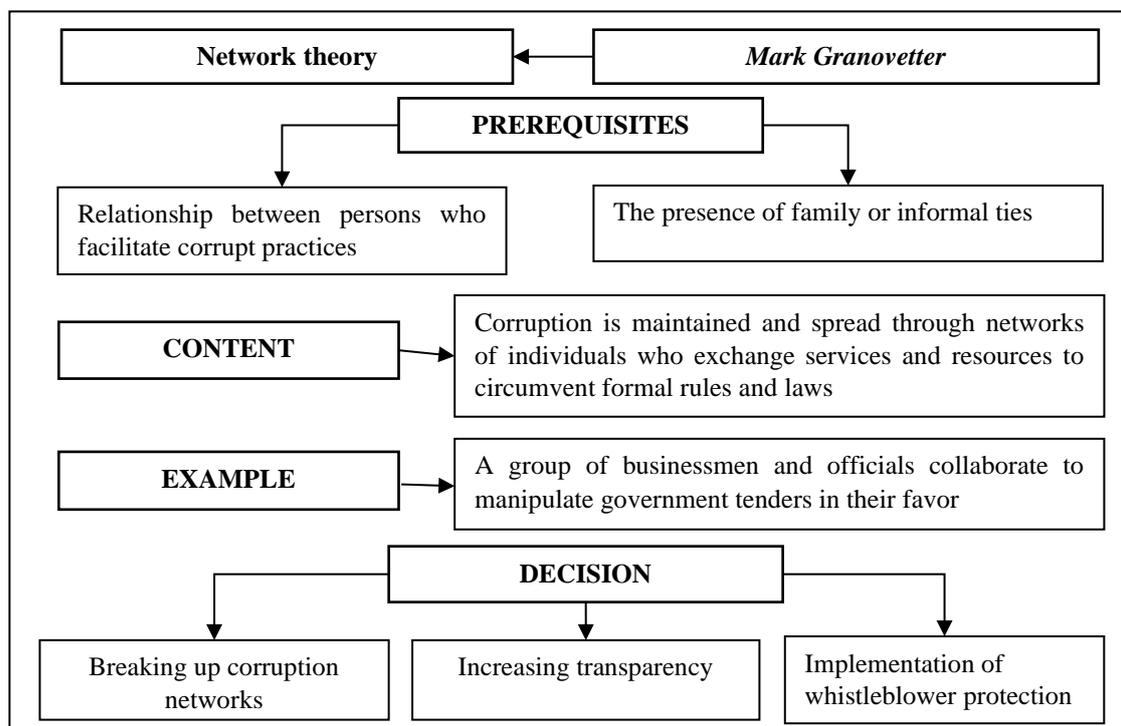
According to the studied principal-agent theory, it is possible to form a list of measures aimed at eliminating the agency problem (abuse of authority, obtaining undue benefit):

- first, it is strengthening control and monitoring of the actions of agents - the creation of independent special-purpose anti-corruption bodies, internal and external audit systems, and expanding the possibilities of public control. Effective supervision reduces the likelihood that abuses will go unnoticed.

- second, aligning interests through a system of incentives: this involves introducing conditions of service under which honest behavior of the agent is profitable. This may include decent remuneration of officials, transparent promotion procedures, rewards for compliance with the principle of integrity, as well as strengthening mechanisms for confiscation of illegally acquired assets that make corruption economically unprofitable.

- third, reducing the information asymmetry between the principal and the agent by increasing transparency - open data on the activities of officials, electronic decision-making systems, etc. The more information society / principal has about the actions of officials, the harder it is for the latter to hide abuse. It is also important to limit the discretionary powers of agents, reducing the monopoly on the allocation of resources – through deregulation, digitalization of administrative services, and clear regulations of procedures. The implementation of these recommendations follows from the agency theory and is aimed at bringing the interests of agents as close as possible to the interests of society and minimizing the space for their personal enrichment at the expense of state functions.

The following figure 2 depicts the concept of the lace theory of corruption.



Source: developed by the author

Fig. 2. The concept of the lace theory of corruption

Network theory views corruption as a product of informal social networks and connections between people. This approach is associated with the names of sociologists Mark Granovetter [8] and Manuel Castells [16], who argue that corrupt practices are rooted and spread through stable networks of interaction between participants who gain mutual benefit by violating formal rules. The prerequisites for corruption here are the existence of extensive patronage relationships, clan and family ties (nepotism), and corporate collusion, which create parallel structures of influence alongside official institutions.

If officials, businessmen, politicians and other actors are united in tight informal networks, within which the exchange of services and resources prevails, then these networks can be used to circumvent issues outside the law. In essence, corruption is supported and spread through social networks of individuals who exchange services and resources in order to circumvent formal rules and laws.

An example of network corruption is “clan's hip” in politics or business: a group of officials and entrepreneurs close to them creates a stable corruption network, agreeing on the distribution of government contracts, appropriation of budget funds, or other mutually beneficial schemes. Each participant in such a network receives his share of the benefits (money, influence, resources) and at the same time provides cover for other members of the network. Just as in criminal syndicates there is a circular pledge of silence (the law of *omertà*), in corruption networks there is an informal code of loyalty: participants do not betray each other, since everyone is connected by common responsibility and risks. They act latently, often in parallel with official structures, supplementing (and actually replacing) the functions of some institutions. For example, formally, a competition for a government tender may be conducted by the appropriate committee, but in fact the decision is made by a narrow circle of “their” people in an informal setting, long before the official procedure.

Network theory shows that corruption is not only an individual deviation, but also a social phenomenon embedded in the system of social relations. Corruption is characterized as an informal, latent interaction of interdependent state and non-state actors aimed at using public resources in the personal interests of certain individuals.

According to researchers B. Millward and J. Raab, such informal “dark networks” are illegal, hidden and aggressive in nature; their participants consciously form extensive interdependencies within the system of public administration, subordinating it to their narrow-group interests. In non-democratic systems, where decision-making processes are closed and feedback to society is weak, the most favorable conditions for the emergence of such latent utilitarian networks are created [17].

Blandenburg E. supports the approach of previous researchers and argues that the viability of utilitarian networks is based on many participants, informality of contacts, close friendly or family relationships, the absence of any elements of a formal organizational structure, and the assignment of specific roles to each participant. Any modern state demonstrates one or another combination of public institutions and latent structures, the competition of their inherent mechanisms and technologies of influencing decisions made. In non-democratic systems, the most favorable conditions are created for the formation of closed structures, since their features are the closeness of the decision-making process and the absence of adequate communication channels that provide feedback. Democratic systems are also not completely free from non-public political interaction, conspiracies of government representatives, and attempts to use the powers at their disposal in their own interests. Therefore, it is difficult to disagree that it is impossible to completely eradicate corrupt practices. On different scales, they affect any state system, but they begin to pose a danger to the political and socio-economic development of the country if corruption turns into a systemic factor, “a huge institutional trap, an ineffective independent and self-sufficient institution” [2]. This means that, in parallel with official institutions, informal associations of representatives of power are formed, which illegally convert the powers at their disposal, preventing the performance of the functions and tasks assigned to public authorities.

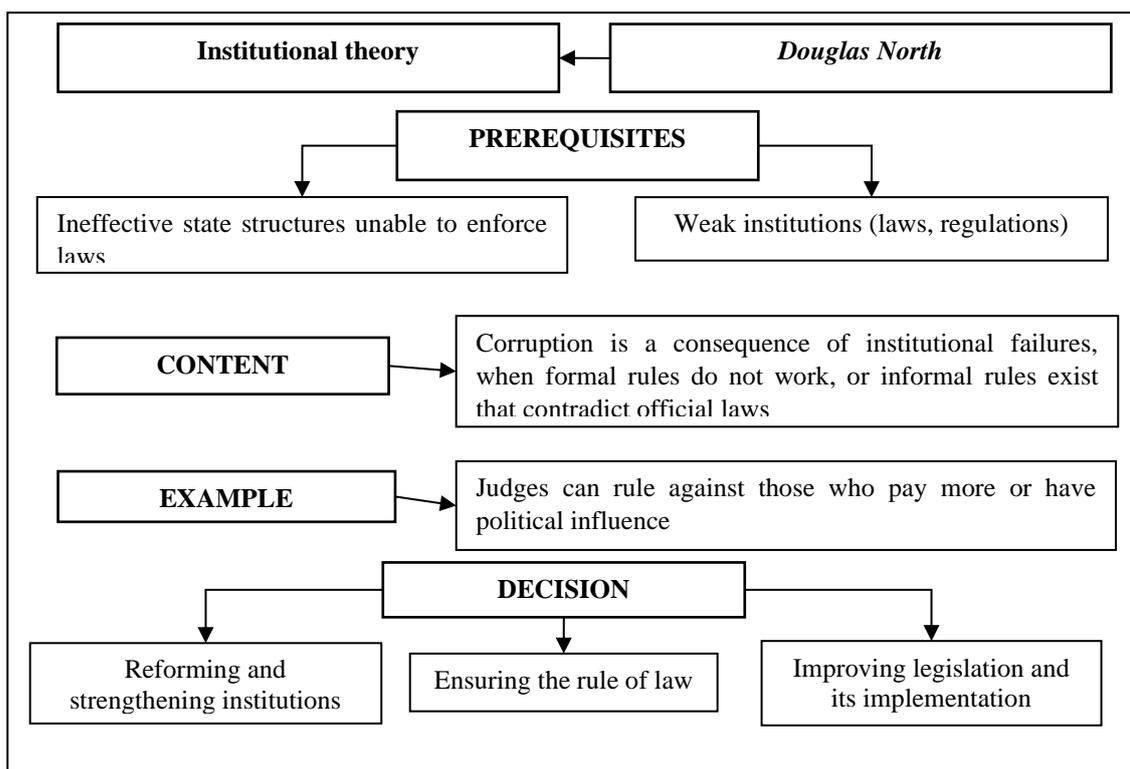
The network organization of corruption allows for a wide and mass coverage of participants, and also reduces the likelihood of its legal overcoming, since the field of view of law enforcement agencies mostly falls on specific performers who are not directly related to the power centers in the network. Provided that a sufficient number of such latent associations are formed in the public administration system, corruption becomes systemic.

The widespread spread of corruption networks ultimately leads to the internal institutional development of the state, as it indicates the intensity of cooperative processes as well as the decrease in institutional control over the activities of officials and politicians. Thus, state power, acting as a source of public values, can transform into a source of corruption when abused for personal gain. In other words, there is a replacement of functional-institutional interactions that ensure the implementation of public needs with dysfunctional practices [6].

Just as network theory focuses on the disintegration of corruption networks and increasing the transparency of social interactions. One of the key measures to combat corruption is to identify and break informal ties, which can be achieved through the investigation of corruption schemes, the application of measures against conflicts of interest (to break the chains of “nepotism - providing advantages, privileges for close friends, relatives or close people by abusing their official position”), regular rotation of personnel in areas prone to stagnation of personnel “clans” and the transfer of interaction between officials and citizens to the public sphere (for example, electronic services instead of direct contact).

Whistleblowers are also an effective tool for combating corruption. Therefore, the relevant anti-corruption bodies should create guarantees for their protection, because network members who, for one reason or another, decide to report illegal activities must have guarantees of safety and support. The introduction of effective whistleblower protection programs and anonymous channels for reporting corruption promotes the release of information, undermining the conspiracy of silence within networks.

The following figure 3 reflects the concept of the institutional theory of corruption.



Source: developed by the author

Fig. 3. The concept of the institutional theory of corruption

Institutional theory explains corruption by the weakness and defects of the institutions themselves—that is, the formal “rules of the game” in society (laws, regulations, organizations), as well as by the discrepancy between formal and informal norms. According to the representative of institutionalism, Douglas North [19], corruption is a manifestation of institutional failure: it flourishes where formal laws do not work properly or where informal rules and practices exist that contradict official norms.

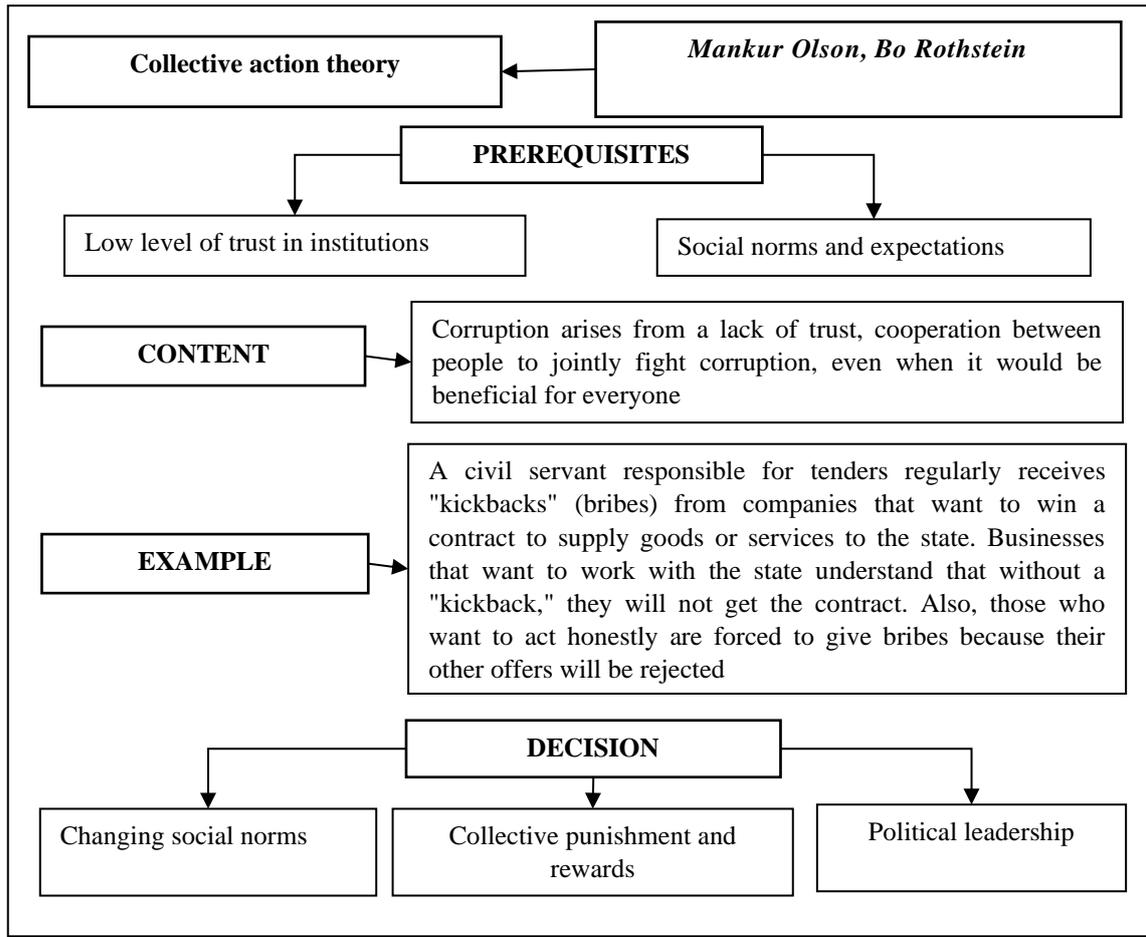
Scientists from Hebei University, Yudha Aryo Sudibyo and Sun Jianfu [26], point out in their study that “the institutional model suggests that corruption at the organizational level is caused by a lack of support from the target environment, poor understanding of regulations, and the implementation and practice of these regulations.

Other aspects include weak commitment to eradicating corruption, insufficient transparency of the institutional environment, and the complexity of the administrative system. Regarding the understanding of corruption, institutional theory introduces a social context and provides a systematic understanding of how corruption can become entrenched in organizations, institutions, and society despite the existence of an anti-corruption system. Institutional theory believes that corruption affects the nature, structure, and transparency of the political system and its institutions [22].

Institutional studies indicate that the causes of corruption can be: insufficient support for the rule of law, unclear or overly complex regulations that are difficult to implement, officials' intolerance of corruption prevention, opaque procedures, and an overly complicated administrative system. Under such conditions, even honest officials may find themselves faced with a dilemma: to follow ineffective rules or to act illegally, as is done around them.

It is worth emphasizing that in order to effectively combat corruption according to institutional theory, it is necessary to revise existing laws with the introduction of clear criteria for liability for violations, as well as adapt Ukrainian legislation to the requirements of international anti-corruption conventions, in particular the UN Convention against Corruption, which Ukraine ratified in 2006. However, practical implementation indicates low independence of the judicial system and law enforcement agencies, which complicates the application of clear sanctions for corruption offenses.

The following figure 4 presents the concept of a collective theory of the origin of corruption.



Source: developed by the author

Fig. 4. The concept of the theory of collective action

Collective action theory views corruption as a problem of collective behavior and coordination in society. It is based on the ideas of Mankur Olson on the logic of collective action and subsequent research, including by Bo Rothstein and his colleagues. According to this approach, even if all members of a society understand the harms of corruption and would like to live in a society free of bribery, each individual may have no incentive to act honestly if he is convinced that others continue to participate in corrupt schemes [19].

In particular, the authors, Bo Rothstein, Anna Persson, and Jan Theorell, argue that anti-corruption programs and policies may largely fail under collective action theory because of their overreliance on principal-agent theory, which focuses on controlling individual behavior. In contrast, collective action theory offers a more optimal approach to combating systemic corruption by encouraging social cooperation. According to the scholars, principal-agent theory “seriously misunderstands the fundamental nature of the corruption problem”, which is based on collective action; it becomes a problem when people would be better off cooperating but instead choose to pursue their own interests due to a lack of incentives to act [21].

The prerequisites for corruption within the collective action theory are low levels of trust in society and a lack of joint action to achieve the common good. If people do not trust state institutions and each other, they do not believe that others will abandon corruption and therefore do not abandon it themselves.

In Ukraine, this phenomenon is well illustrated by the example of domestic corruption: many citizens have a negative attitude towards bribery but continue to give them to government institutions to obtain certain services, because they are convinced that there is no other way. Even officials who might not seek to take bribes find themselves participating in bribery since it is an established practice of informal relations - and refusing means breaking a tacit contract with colleagues or running the risk of being removed. As researchers note, people who expect that most of those around them, as well as control mechanisms, are corrupt, are less motivated to act honestly or to counteract corruption.

In turn, Elinor Ostrom proposes a solution to the “problem of collective action,” which consists in creating institutions for enforcing rules that criminalize action that is individually rational, thus encouraging people to act in accordance with the common good [20].

According to the theory of collective action, standard tools such as increased control and accountability will be ineffective if expectations and norms of behavior in society cannot be changed. One way is to change social norms by conducting large-scale information and educational campaigns that promote integrity and create an atmosphere of rejection of corruption in society. If honest behavior becomes socially acceptable and zero tolerance for corruption is established, individuals will

receive a moral incentive. Educational programs, youth education, and the involvement of authoritative figures and opinion leaders to promote a culture of integrity play an important role here.

Political leadership is also an important tool for changing social norms, because if officials demonstrate intolerance for corruption and at the same time ensure real steps (punishing high-ranking officials, maintaining integrity), this can focus positive public expectations regarding the fight against corruption.

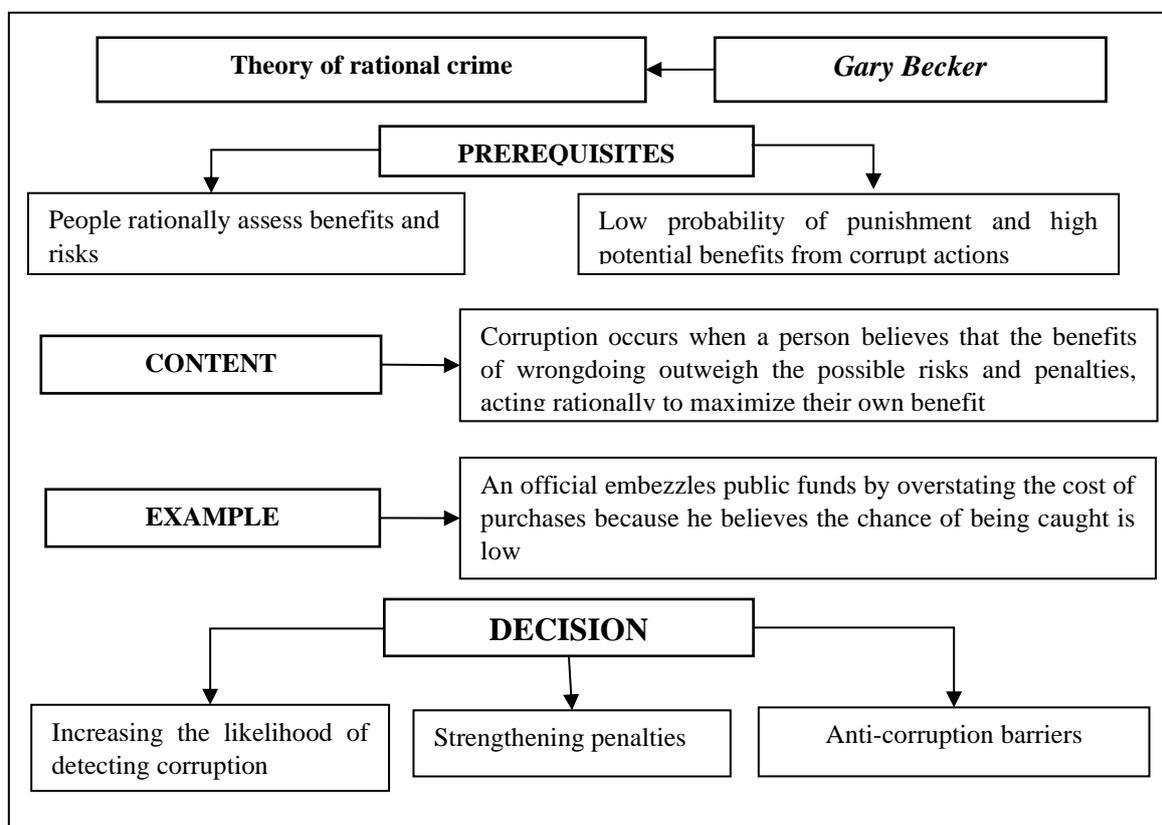
The next tool for combating corruption is the mechanisms of collective responsibility and incentives. The basis of this tool is collective punishment; that is, if corruption is detected in a state body, then all members of the team are responsible; this motivates each official to internal control; on the other hand, collective rewards - additional funding, grants for achieving integrity indicators. Thus, a common interest is formed to act honestly.

The theory of rational crime (figure 5) is based on the economic approach of Gary Becker and other representatives of the school of “economic analysis of law”. It treats corruption as part of rational calculation and an integral and often deeply rooted method by which people make decisions. This theory also emphasizes the role of subjective risk perception: if there is an atmosphere of impunity in society, then even with formally high sanctions, the criminal may not believe that he will be punished. This is due to the fact that people act on the basis of information and expectations [1].

Every potential person who intends to participate in bribery or another type of corruption offense, before making a decision to violate the law, assesses what he will gain (monetary reward, property benefit, etc.) and what he may lose (the probability of being caught, the amount of fine or imprisonment, loss of reputation). If the expected benefit is greater, corruption looks like a rational choice. Thus, the prerequisites for corruption are a low probability of detection, weak punishment, and high potential benefits.

Effective measures to minimize corruption offenses based on the theory of rational crime are:

- increase in corruption exposure - the risk of being caught will become almost inevitable, in which case almost no one will risk taking a bribe. To do this, the state must strengthen the anti-corruption law enforcement system, namely, ensure the effective work of specialized bodies (NABU, SAP, SBI, NP, SBU), introduce modern methods of detecting crimes (digital traces - electronic evidence of a criminal offense, analytical tools in the tax service and at customs control points);
- strengthening penalties for corruption offenses - the punishment should be equally proportional to the harm caused and severe enough to discourage risk-taking. Strengthening criminal sanctions in the form of actual imprisonment for bribe-taking officials, significant fines, a lifetime ban on holding public office, economic sanctions in the form of confiscation of property, and multiple fines;
- creation of an anti-corruption barrier;
- technological and organizational solutions, for example, maximum automation of processes, distribution of powers between several persons; this will complicate abuse of official positions.



Source: developed by the author

Fig. 5. The concept of the theory of rational crime

## 6. Conclusions and prospects for further research

Based on the theories considered, a set of recommendations can be formulated for state criminal law policy aimed at preventing and combating corruption. Each theory puts forward its own emphasis, so the optimal strategy should integrate these approaches:

- *Principal-agent theory*. State anti-corruption policy should focus on ensuring the inevitability of responsibility and effective supervision of officials. It is necessary to improve control and audit mechanisms in the state apparatus. It is also important to align the interests of agents and the principal - on the one hand, through decent wages and social security for officials (to reduce the motivation to seek “additional income”), and on the other - through effective sanctions for corrupt actions that force the agent to take into account the interests of the state. Criminal law policy should provide for inevitable punishment for abuse of office, effective articles of the Criminal Code covering all forms of corrupt acts, as well as protection of the rights of whistleblowers, who actually play the role of the principal’s “eyes” in controlling the agent;

- *Network theory*. It is necessary to implement measures that destroy corruption networks and closed conspiracies. Criminal liability for conspiracy to commit corruption crimes should be strengthened (for example, the qualifying feature “committed by a group of persons” with stricter sanctions). The policy should provide for tools for penetrating hidden networks: operational-search measures, the use of technologies to identify connections (analysis of social networks, monitoring suspicious financial transactions between related persons). Strict restrictions on conflict of interest and kinship in the civil service are needed (anti-corruption legislation should make it impossible to directly subordinate close persons and control the combination of positions and business interests). The state should also stimulate transparency in the interaction of government and business: registers of meetings between officials and lobbyists, public consultations, and declarations not only of income, but also of contacts with representatives of private structures;

- *Institutional theory*. It is necessary to constantly analyze the legislation for norms that contribute to corruption and make changes. For example, reduce excessive regulation and eliminate ambiguities that allow an official to decide issues “at his own discretion.” In the criminal law sphere, harmonize national laws with international standards and clearly prescribe the components of corruption offenses in order to avoid the possibility of evading responsibility due to technical gaps. The institutional capacity of law enforcement agencies must be strengthened by ensuring the independence of anti-corruption structures, sufficient funding and professional training of personnel. It is necessary to build a system of checks and balances: intensify parliamentary control over the executive branch in the use of budget funds, and expand the powers of the Accounting Chamber and state auditors. The rule of law is a key condition: courts should become the main driver of the fight against corruption and not its participant;

- *Theory of collective action*. Measures should be introduced that change public attitudes and promote collective intolerance of corruption. The National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption is implementing its state program to form a culture of integrity through the Integrity Office and a number of training and educational initiatives. The implementation of comprehensive measures will contribute to increasing the level of legal awareness and ethical standards among civil servants and citizens and the formation of sustainable skills to recognize and prevent corruption risks in everyday work. A necessary measure is to strengthen the role of the public, which involves the creation by the state of conditions for independent public control (simplified access to public information, support for anti-corruption NGOs with grants);

- *Theory of rational crime*. Criminal law policy should maximize the risks and costs for corrupt officials and reduce their benefits. It is imperative to complete the formation of an inevitable punishment system: everyone who commits a corruption crime should know that their chances of being caught are very high. This means ensuring the effective work of anti-corruption institutions: the inevitability of exposure can be increased by expanding the powers and technical equipment of pre-trial investigation bodies. The severity of punishments should be such that even in the event of doubt about the inevitability, the expected losses exceed the gain. That is, fines for corruption should exceed the amount of bribes many times over, and imprisonment should significantly affect career and freedom.

The implementation of such a comprehensive policy corresponds to the modern scientific understanding of corruption and will ensure higher efficiency than narrowly targeted measures. State criminal law policy, built taking into account the evolution of corruption theories, is able to introduce systemic changes: reduce the field for corrupt activities, inevitably punish the guilty, and change the behavioral attitudes of all participants in social relations. As a result, this will contribute to the establishment of the principles of legality and integrity, increase the efficiency of public administration, and restore public trust in government institutions. Thus, the combination of theoretical knowledge with practical steps forms a reliable basis for the gradual reduction of corruption in society.

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