Policy Reforms Amidst Corruption: Ukrainian Attitudes Toward Economic Development

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ABSTRACT
This research examines what economic policies Ukrainians think should—and could—work in Ukraine to reform the economic system and combat widespread corruption. This study tests how region-specific determinants and corruption perception levels influence attitudes toward democracy and optimism toward future reform possibilities in Ukraine.

HYPOTHESES
My hypotheses and tests build on the theoretical framework that corruption perception levels, which are influenced by region-specific determinants and historical context, influence attitudes toward anti-corruption initiatives and optimism levels in a country’s economic reform.

METHODOLOGY
1,020 randomly selected Ukrainian citizens aged 18-89 comprised this nationally representative sample of the Ukrainian adult population. This original survey included two experiments and was conducted via face-to-face interviews throughout the country by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS). Analysis included Pearson’s Chi² tests, multinomial logistic regression, ordinal logistic regression, and margins analysis. Optimism and Corruption Perception indices were created and weighted from responses to specific survey questions.

RESULTS

The heat map displays regional trends in corruption perception, with the East more concerned about corruption than Central and Western Ukraine. The West has greater faith in future reform possibilities, Lugansk also has high optimism levels, suggesting that optimism is likely influenced by other factors than region and corruption perception alone.

The coefficient plot shows how geographic region, corruption perception, and economic system preference influence belief in future reform possibilities. The margins plot reveals that as citizens perceive higher levels of corruption, preference for market economy, broadened ownership, and state ownership decreases. At higher corruption perception levels, respondents favor some other economic system than the three proposed options.

SURVEY EXPERIMENT
Half of the participants were randomly selected as the treatment group. Treatment subjects were first told to imagine that Ukraine implements a nationwide program in 2017 to make capital ownership more viable, giving citizens equal access to becoming owners of shares in wealth-producing assets such as new technology, land, or business patents. Both treatment and control groups were asked to describe where they see Ukraine in the next ten years.

CONCLUSION
Widespread corruption in Ukraine is symptomatic of greater flaws in the economic and political systems. Measuring Ukrainian attitudes toward proposed causes and new solutions, this research sets the stage for more effective policy implementation.

• If Ukrainians know the government is doing something, they will feel more optimistic about future reform possibilities.
• Region and corruption perception does influence economic system preference.

In regions East and South, optimism in Ukraine’s ability to reform only approaches the level of other regions when respondents favor Market Economy, suggesting regional disillusionment with collectivism.

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