Is Fighting Corruption Still on the Agenda?  
From Local Governments to the International Community

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Awareness in society about the corrosive effects of corruption is growing. From the local and regional level to the global, corruption undermines democracy, human rights and the rule of law. In some if not all post-Soviet countries, independent anti-corruption organizations are often partially or completely different from those of national authorities. In authoritarian regimes, anti-corruption campaigns are frequently used in order to get rid of people that are not loyal to the political elites.

Furthermore, corruption increases social inequality and injustice, while also upsetting the balance of economic competition. At the same time, financial frauds and thefts are in a strict legal manner not always included in local and international definitions of corruption. What context is needed for these crimes to be labeled as “corruption”? What are the main lessons-learned from studying financial crime risks in the Baltic States’ local governments?

The emerging consensus is the following: Anti-corruption activities in countries with systemic corruption should be based on a long-term approach that is comprehensive. In order to be truly successful, they would benefit the support of international organizations. At the same time, the activities have to summon domestic social capital and public trust in order to confront corrupt elites. Is achieving this complex set of conditions truly realistic?

Speakers:
Marina Makarova, Professor at the Department of Sociology, Udmurt State University (Izhevsk, Russia)

Jaroslav Dvorak, Associate Professor at the Department of Public Administration and Social Geography, Klaipeda University (Klaipeda, Lithuania)

Moderator:
Matthew Kott, Research Director, Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies (IRES), Uppsala University

Organizers:
The Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies (IRES) and Uppsala Forum on Democracy, Peace and Justice, both at Uppsala University

Abstracts

Presentation 1: Is the Fight against Corruption still an Agenda?
With Marina Makarova, Professor, Udmurt State University (Izhevsk, Russia)
During the last two decades the problem of corruption has been widely discussed by different agents. There are different forms of using the anticorruption discourse and for different purposes: clean market and trade, transparent power, human rights, development of democracy, etc. Anticorruption
activities in countries with systematic corruption should be based on a long-term and comprehensive approach, with the support of international anticorruption movements and organizations, and have sufficient “domestic” social capital and public trust to confront corrupt elites. However, in some cases, achieving this complex set of conditions appears to be unrealistic.

Criticism continues to be directed towards international civil society efforts in fighting corruption (Krastev 2001; Gerhart 2009; Andersson 2017 etc.). Some authors focus on the neoliberal context of international anticorruption organizations’ activities and their indirect control of less developed countries by using anticorruption measures and campaigns (Gebel 2012; Hidness 2005). In countries where democratic institutions exist just as “window dressings”, anticorruption campaign are used to get rid of people who are not loyal to political elites (Andersson and Heywood 2008).

In some post-soviet countries the anticorruption civil society can be perceived as totally or partly contrary to national interests. In Russia, any bottom-up, anti-corruption activity has become unacceptable and even dangerous after the protests led by Aleksej Navalny. The “anticorruption consensus” becomes complicate not only between civil society and state authority but also between the international and domestic anticorruption civil society.

The main discussion questions are:
1. What are the main types of anticorruption policies in developed and developing countries and how do they differ?
2. How do international and domestic anticorruption agendas connect with each other?
3. What are the unintended consequences of anticorruption policies (especially in post-Soviet countries)?

**Presentation 2: Understanding and Reducing Risks of Financial Crimes at the Local Governments**
with Jaroslav Dvorak, Associate Professor, Klaipeda University (Lithuania)

As any other corruption crime, financial crimes in the municipality distort the relationship among individuals and decrease trust in the local government, which is nearest to the residents and represent the state government formally. Financial fraud of municipality officials has influence on the balance of economic competition and can upset it. If the financial resources allotted to the local community are used by dishonest people, this increases social inequality, injustice, and degradation of society ethical values.

Financial frauds and thefts in the private sector are classified as a form of organizational deviation (Holinger, Clark, 1982; Pupura, 1983; Gabor, 1994; Tyleczak, Sheets, 1994; Giacalone, Greenberg, 1997; Shaw, Bologna, 2000; Christopher, 2003; Vardi, Weitz, 2003; DiMarino, Roberson, 2013; Gough, 2013). The literature analysis on this topic has demonstrated attitudes towards corruption in the public sector. Apparently, on the basis of a strict legal position, financial crimes in the public sector are not viewed as corruption in many local and international definitions of corruption (Laugseth, 2006). However, financial crimes are usually included in a broader definition of corruption (Andvig, Fjelstand, 2000). It is emphasized that a certain context is necessary: money, property, or other assets are appropriated when they are taken by a person whom they do not belong to but the person has a possibility to use them.

The main discussion question is to reveal the risks of financial crimes in local governance; to identify the main reasons of the risks and the case specificity of Baltic States local governments.
Bios

Marina Makarova is Professor at the Department of Sociology at Udmurt State University (Izhevsk, Russia). She was the Dean of the Faculty of Sociology and Philosophy for ten years. Her research interests include the sociology of education, social studies of corruption, and civil society. Makarova is currently conducting a comparative study of academic ethics and student cheating in different countries. Her research also focuses on anticorruption discourse and anticorruption activities of civil society organizations around the world, including Sweden, Russia, Germany, Poland, and Latvia.

Jaroslav Dvorak is Associate Professor at the Department of Public Administration and Social Geography at Klaipeda University (Lithuania) and has a longstanding research experience in public service delivery and performance evaluation of public organizations. Among other collaborations, Dvorak has participated as an expert in the preparation of feasibility studies within various Lithuanian public sector organizations. Dvorak has conducted research in Poland, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Lithuania, Belarus, Portugal, Spain and Australia on different issues relating to evaluation capacity building and evaluation methodology, assessment criteria, and regulatory impact assessment.