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**MODIFYING KLITGAARD'S FORMULA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FIGHT
AGAINST SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

**MODIFICAREA FORMULEI LUI KLITGAARD ÎN CONTEXTUL LUPTEI
ÎMPOTRIVA CORUPȚIEI SISTEMICE ÎN REPUBLICA MOLDOVA**

**МОДИФИКАЦИЯ ФОРМУЛЫ КЛИТГААРДА В КОНТЕКСТЕ БОРЬБЫ
С СИСТЕМОЙ КОРРУПЦИЕЙ В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ МОЛДОВА**

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ABSTRACT:

**MODIFYING KLITGAARD'S FORMULA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FIGHT AGAINST
SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the development of hybrid regimes, systemic corruption has become a pervasive obstacle to liberal democratisation. This paper revisits Klitgaard's formula and argues that the model should incorporate the level of public officials' wages to capture the reality in the Republic of Moldova. Drawing on jurisprudential insights from Hohfeld's framework and comparative modifications of Klitgaard's theory, it highlights how low salaries and opaque income declarations undermine the system, fuel discretionary abuse, and perpetuate monopolistic power structures. Using a hypothetical case of a Moldovan police officer, the study aims at showcasing how inadequate remuneration incentivises 'grey' income schemes and deepens systemic flaws.

The author proposes a package of reforms: competitive salaries paired with leased government housing paid via payroll deductions, comprehensive public asset declarations, and enhanced criminal sanctions for corruption tied to EU benchmarks. By rebalancing Klitgaard's formula, this approach aims to curb decision-making monopolies, bolster transparency, and reverse brain drain. The essay concludes that, alongside broader legal and institutional measures, strategic wage adjustments can change corruption's position from a structural norm into a managed exception.

Keywords: corruption, systemic corruption, European integration, transparency, Klitgaard's formula, anti-corruption reforms.

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РЕЗУМАТ:
MODIFICAREA FORMULEI LUI KLITGAARD ÎN CONTEXTUL LUPTEI ÎMPOTRIVA
CORUPȚIEI SISTEMICE ÎN REPUBLICA MOLDOVA

Odată cu destrămarea Uniunii Sovietice și apariția regimurilor hibride corupția sistemică a devenit un obstacol omniprezent în calea democratizării libérale. Această lucrare revizuieste formula lui Klitgaard și susține că modelul ar trebui să includă nivelul salariilor funcționarilor publici pentru a surprinde realitatea din Republica Moldova. Bazându-se pe perspectivele jurisprudențiale din cadrul lui Hohfeld și pe modificări comparative ale teoriei lui Klitgaard, aceasta evidențiază modul în care salariile mici și declarațiile de venit opace subminează sistemul, alimentează abuzurile discreționare și perpetuează structurile de putere monopolistice. Folosind cazul ipotetic al unui ofițer de poliție din Republica Moldova, studiul își propune să demonstreze modul în care remunerația inadecvată stimulează schemele de venit „gri” și adâncește deficiențele sistemice.

Autorul propune un pachet de reforme: salarii competitive, asociate cu locuințe guvernamentale închiriate, plătite prin deduceri din salarii, declarații complete de active publice și sancțiuni penale sporite pentru corupție, legate de reperele UE. Prin reechilibrarea formulei lui Klitgaard, această abordare își propune să limiteze monopolurile decizionale, să consolideze transparența și să inverseze exodul creierelor. Eseul concluzionează că, alături de măsuri legale și instituționale mai ample, ajustările salariale strategice pot schimba poziția corupției dintr-o normă structurală într-o excepție gestionată.

Cuvinte cheie: corupție, corupție sistemică, integrare europeană, transparență, formula lui Klitgaard, reforme anticorupție.

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РЕЗЮМЕ:
МОДИФИКАЦИЯ ФОРМУЛЫ КЛИТГААРДА В КОНТЕКСТЕ БОРЬБЫ
С СИСТЕМОЙ КОРРУПЦИИ В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ МОЛДОВА

После распада Советского Союза и развития гибридных режимов системная коррупция стала всепроникающим препятствием на пути либеральной демократизации. В данной статье пересматривается формула Клитгаарда и утверждается, что модель должна включать уровень заработной платы государственных служащих, чтобы отражать реалии Республики Молдова. Опираясь на юридические выводы из концепции Хофельда и сравнительные модификации теории Клитгаарда, авторы показывают, как низкие зарплаты и непрозрачное декларирование доходов подрывают систему, способствуют произвольным злоупотреблениям и способствуют сохранению монополистических структур власти. На примере гипотетического случая молдавского полицейского исследование демонстрирует, как недостаточное вознаграждение стимулирует «серые» схемы получения доходов и усугубляет системные недостатки.

Автор предлагает пакет реформ: конкурентоспособные зарплаты в сочетании с арендой государственного жилья, оплачиваемой за счет вычетов из заработной платы, всеобъемлющее декларирование активов в государственном секторе и ужесточение уголовных санкций за коррупцию, привязанных к нормативным показателям ЕС. Пересматривая формулу Клитгаарда, этот подход направлен на ограничение монополий на принятие решений, повышение прозрачности и предотвращение утечки мозгов. В статье делается вывод о том, что, наряду с более широкими правовыми и институциональными мерами, стратегическая корректировка заработной платы может превратить коррупцию из структурной нормы в управляемое исключение.

Ключевые слова: коррупция, системная коррупция, европейская интеграция, прозрачность, формула Клитгаарда, антикоррупционные реформы.

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1. Introduction

With the USSR dissolving and the Cold War ending, Francis Fukuyama (1989: 3) promised ‘the universalisation of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government’, which seemed to be the only way forward. The world community anticipated further harmonisation in the spirit of the United Nations’ Charter (‘international peace and co-operation’) and neoliberalism more broadly. However, the reality turned out to be different for many countries (Ibrahim, 2022: 14). At best, many of them stagnated with an odd status of ‘hybrid regimes’, thus stuck in a position that offered a perfect environment for populism to thrive despite domestic elites articulating their commitment to liberal goals. Cases of others were even less tolerable and played out in dictatorships, violating every cornerstone of Fukuyama’s understanding of liberal democracy.

However, there is one issue that penetrates virtually all countries: systemic corruption. Originating in social psychology and inherent to all legal systems, it denotes a pattern of corruption-related practices that are deeply embedded in a state’s institutional set-up (Rothstein, 2018: 37). As such, it is present worldwide, but to divergent extents. The most obvious victims of systemic corruption are the so-called ‘third-world countries’, especially when they fall victim to hybrid or authoritarian modes of government. In these states, corruption often transcends all levels of social organisation, rendering the entire system of the rule of law ineffective. In the European context, numerous examples of states attempting to accede to the European Union (EU) further emphasise the importance of fighting corruption to comply with the liberal norms of market economy, good governance, and human rights (Dhamo and Dhamo, 2024: 198).

The Republic of Moldova, a fresh candidate member state of the EU, is no exception and has long been suffering from deeply embedded corruption (Council of Europe Group of Experts Against Corruption, 2016: 3). This article takes an alternative approach to the mainstream understanding of systemic corruption by suggesting a modification to Klitgaard’s formula, one of the most widespread theoretical tools to analyse this phenomenon, to account for the peculiarities of the Moldovan context. In this light, this essay suggests another variable to Klitgaard’s equation: the wages of public officials. In doing so, the following section explains why corruption has to be examined alongside fundamental legal concepts and sets this paper’s theoretical foundations. Section 3 provides a hypothetical scenario of how a significant wage increase for public officials may counterbalance the other systemic weaknesses in Klitgaard’s formula, anchoring the necessity of this effort into the empirical reality of the Republic of Moldova. Finally, a short conclusion summarises the findings and elucidates potential setbacks of this approach.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Klitgaard’s Formula: An Important Starting Point

The primary goal of this section is to familiarise readers with the main concepts used in this article and situate it in a broader academic debate concerning systemic corruption. Among the scholars studying this topic, usually the starting point for understanding systemic corruption is Klitgaard’s (1998: 4) corruption formula:

$$C (\text{Corruption}) = M (\text{Monopoly}) + D (\text{Discretionary authority}) - T (\text{Transparency}),$$

where systemic corruption most often occurs in systems with a high probability of decision-making monopoly, a high margin of discretion for authorities, and low levels of transparency. All three variables describe different qualities of the decision-making process in a particular polity (Klitgaard, 2011: 33). In this setting, a high level of monopoly refers to the idea that decisions are made by an exclusive group of people in power who do not offer the general public an opportunity to participate in the process. Discretion denotes the degree to which those in power may decide on the course of action in a particular situation without restrictions, which are inherent to a democratic system of checks and balances. In its turn, transparency quantifies how open the mechanics of the decision-making process are to the general public, allowing the latter to trace the decisions as to their objectives and means of adoption and implementation. Given that each society adopts different decision-making strategies, many academics have engaged in the discussion of Klitgaard formula’s analytical power, trying to modify it to fit their local context.

For example, Sujatmiko (2012: 1) argued that the Klitgaard formula would only correspond to Indonesian circumstances if one subtracted *social control* from the right part of the equation. In the

opinion of other scholars of the Indonesian legal system, adding a sociological dimension to the original formula provides a basis for the much-needed ‘social audit’ in a society that struggles to establish and solidify democratic practices (Irham, 2021: 233). In a similar vein, a group of Russian political economists from Kazan argued that, in order to interpret the political reality of the Russian Federation correctly, Klitgaard’s formula should explicitly account for ESGO – ‘executive state government organs’ – a term they use to refer to the Russian commanding elite (Leontieva *et al.*, 2015: 388). According to Leontieva *et al.* (2015: 387), although ESGO is located at the intersection of different variables in the original version of Klitgaard’s corruption formula, it is unique because corruption permeates ‘all areas of life’ in Russia. This example will serve as a theoretical foundation for this author’s arguments in section 3 below, as that research on Russia was set in the context of a post-Soviet country, which is closer to the empirical reality of the Republic of Moldova than to that of Indonesia. Nevertheless, Moldova was spared the unfortunate destiny of the Russian legal system which, for a long time, has been held hostage by a state apparatus which serves the goals of a clique controlled by President Putin.

Finally, touching upon the lack of expected results of the Bretton Woods institutions-led anti-corruption reforms in several African states, Ledeneva, Bratu, and Köker (2017: 10) tried to connect Klitgaard’s formula to the traditional principal-agent problem. They pointed out that, to efficiently eliminate corruption, an agent government should not only try to increase accountability and limit its decision-making discretion but also, in the context of the Bretton Woods institutions credit system, be forced by the principal (intergovernmental institution sponsoring reforms) to reduce its incentives to engage in corrupt behaviour. In this sense, their findings resonate with those of the Russian scholars mentioned above by highlighting the importance of the ruling elites’ motivation and international cooperation in the fight against corruption. In light of the increased international financial and political support for conducting anti-corruption reforms, which implies that the principal is playing a relatively active role, the Republic of Moldova’s government and President Maia Sandu have reiterated their willingness to cooperate with their partners to eliminate corruption on Moldova’s path to the EU, both in words and actions (Corman and Schumacher, 2023: 1120; M Markevych and M Marinkov, 2024: 11-12).

Thus, we can see that since the publication of Klitgaard’s seminal theoretical analysis of systemic corruption, many scholars have applied it to their local contexts and, in addition to this, tried to modify its variables to account for their respective circumstances. This testifies to Klitgaard theory’s versatility and, as such, indicates that it might be a useful tool for examining particular regional circumstances in which corruption takes place. However, before applying this formula to the Moldovan context, the following subsection seeks to explain why corruption is, in the first place, a legal concept and demands an examination from a jurisprudential point of view.

2.2. *Corruption as a Fundamental Legal Concept*

Law, perceived as a normative system aimed at protecting public order (D’Amato, 2024: 1), encompasses a large number of concepts. While identifying even a part of them is beyond the scope of this research, this author emphasises the importance of explaining why corruption can be considered inherent to any legal system. At this point, it is opportune to mention that this analysis is embedded in the liberal legal tradition and its findings might not necessarily be applicable to others, as the latter’s particular social contexts might be so drastically different that the concepts used in this argumentations are not treated equally (Glenn, 2014: 14).

When a person raised in the liberal paradigm is asked to define law, they inevitably refer to the dichotomy of rights and duties, because we are all trained to believe that the main goal of any legal system is to protect one’s rights by imposing duties on others. This logic stems from the Christian Renaissance idea that humans are God’s lieutenants, created in God’s own image, and thus are all equal and entitled to a set of (almost) sacred liberties (Hockstad, 2022: 731). The Hohfeldian understanding of the notions of right and duty is very useful here because it provides us with a framework to analyse how these two, arguably the most fundamental legal concepts, can be examined from within rather than perceived as monolithic. In this light, Hohfeld (1917: 745) identified four key elements giving birth to rights: (1) privilege, (2) claim, (3) power, and (4) immunity. Systemic corruption, as the following passages seek to argue, is capable of depriving

each of them of their ability to create rights and impose duties, thus harming the very nucleus of the legal system.

Hohfeld (1917: 746) argued that person A has a *privilege* to do something if there is no prohibition for A of doing this, and that this privilege creates a first-order right for A. To international lawyers, this might sound extremely similar to the well-known *Lotus* principle, under which a state is allowed to act in a certain way unless it is prohibited by a rule of international law (Csernus, 2023: 949). Thus, A has a privilege (and, consequently, a right) to know the government officials' wages if there is no prohibition of any kind against this information being made available. In the context of Klitgaard's formula, hence, systemic corruption can easily harm A's rights if the officials in country X try to diminish the system's level of transparency by hiding their real income, which they receive using 'grey' schemes.

Furthermore, A has a *claim* (therefore, a right) that B does something if B has a duty to A to do so (Hohfeld, 1917: 746). Returning to the example from the previous paragraph, A has a right to know the real income of public officials if the latter have a legal duty owed to A (and the public as a whole) to make this information available. This seems to be a standard practice for Western liberal democracies, but in many transitional and hybrid regimes, due to high levels of corruption, the public cannot claim access to public officials' declarations because they deny making them public by, for instance, intentionally failing to vote in favour of respective bills. This balance is often reflected in the jurisprudence of regional human rights courts addressing the issue of the freedom of expression, which is also interpreted to entitle persons to a right to obtain information of public interest. At the same time, this right of the public implies a duty for the governments to disclose such information. However, this right often conflicts with the state's right to protect the matters of national security and/or other public officials' right to privacy (Barendt, 2009: 70-72).

The examples of Hohfeld's second-order rights arising from powers and immunities are more complicated but are still prone to harm caused by corruption. According to him (1917: 746), A has a *power* if she has the ability to alter her own or another's aspects of the Hohfeldian system. Hence, legislators have the power to deny the public access to their income declarations because they can alter their population's privilege (or claim) to have this information available by means of adopting a prohibitory law. Examples of ex-USSR countries provide clear empirical observations of this phenomenon, where reforms aimed at imposing an obligation on all public officials to disclose their income information take years to be adopted (Novokmet *et al.*, 2018: 200). *Immunity* in this system is a kind of opposite of power: A has immunity if B lacks the ability to alter the Hohfeldian incidents (Hohfeld, 1917: 746). Corruption can provide state officials with the ability to alter public claims and obligations when they are not supposed to have it, thus depriving the population of their immunity and denying their second-order rights.

As previous passages have demonstrated, a significant degree of systemic corruption can easily violate each of Hohfeld's incidents that create rights and impose duties. Given that rights lie at the foundation of any liberal legal system, corruption, depriving those entitled to these rights of their (effective) enforcement (and, in extreme cases, existence), becomes a 'parasitic' fundamental legal concept. Although it would be wrong to equate corruption to other such concepts, it should always be accounted for in their analysis because of its ability to quickly render other concepts' application ineffective. Thus, instead of placing it in line with more traditional fundamental juristic notions of authority, legality, and legitimacy, this author argues that corruption represents the other side of the coin: it is a concept that is capable of hampering all other fundamental legal concepts, and by implication cannot be separated from them.

3. Increasing Wages of Public Officials to Address Systemic Corruption

This section discusses the modification of Klitgaard's formula using a hypothetical situation of a police officer in the Republic of Moldova. All the quantitative data used to support this case were taken from the official governmental databases and triangulated with the help of publicly available information. By the time our officer graduates from the State Police Academy, the salary offered to her by the Ministry of Internal Affairs is around 6.000 - 8.000 lei per month (equivalent to 300-400 euros: Mișuță, 2022; Ziarul de Gardă, 2025). This sum is around 50% lower than the average salary per country (14.500 lei: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2025a), which

immediately places our officer in a disadvantaged position. Given the lack of transparency in the system (an assumption based on empirical observations: Pisarenco and Vlasiuk, 2017; Cenusa *et al.*, 2023; Goncarencu, 2024) and the low financial resources provided to her, it should not come as a surprise that the young police officer is reasonably expected to give in to the temptation of looking for other sources to make her life more enjoyable (Agora, 2025). Bearing in mind that her employment contract is full-time, which excludes the option of finding another job in parallel to this without overburdening her, it is almost inevitable that she will explore her options of ‘grey’, corrupt sources of income.

Thus, facing the prospect of having to work for 25 years in a row to be eligible for a pension (Parliamentary Law nr. 1544, 1993: art. 13), she, for a quarter of a century, slowly moves up the career ladder (her wages increasing even more slowly), and continues exploring illegal (or, at best, ‘shady’) methods to increase her income. The options are out there, but the main one is embezzlement. Depending on her function, the reason for taking bribes will vary, but every position in the Ministry of Internal Affairs implies such a theoretical possibility. Subject to their diverging responsibilities, both a patrol officer (not to issue a fine for speeding, for instance) and the minister of internal affairs (to not notice a smuggling scheme) can be bribed. All of these result in diminished transparency in a legal system that already lacks it which, according to Klitgaard, increases the levels of systemic corruption in Moldova in turn.

What the system is left with is perfectly visualised by the empirical observations of Moldova. Stuck between aspirations to comply with the rule of law standards and the harsh reality of low wages that contribute to high (systemic) corruption, and limited regional and universal integration ambitions, the country is ranked 76th in the Corruption Perception Index with over a fifth of its population (22%) admitting having bribed a public service provider in the last 12 months (Transparency International, 2025). In these settings, corruption is not an exception – it is a rule. The main motivation for becoming a governmental official (or a public sector employee more generally) is thus neither a sincere will to assist in providing essential public services nor good intentions to build a better society. Instead, people perceive these jobs as trampolines to the world of bribes, large public budgets that can be split among decision-makers, and international assistance/credits that can be stolen from their own population to whom they, in principle, are accountable. Moreover, even those who enter the system with pure hearts and bright ideas witness their motivation shrinking upon running into the impenetrable wall of the harsh reality of low wages, unpleasant working environments, and systemic corruption.

However, one should not be completely desperate about this situation. While there has been some considerable progress in the state’s fight against corruption, evidenced by a number of ambitious reforms aimed at promoting judicial independence and transparency in the public sector (GRECO, 2024: 15-16; Center for International Legal Cooperation, 2025; Venice Commission, 2025: 11-12), more radical short-term solutions might be needed. To achieve it, this author suggests the following approach. Let us return to our young, fresh graduate of the State Police Academy, full of energy and eager to work for the country. However, the circumstances will now be different. Instead of a miserable salary that at best amounts to the half of the economy’s average, the Ministry of Internal Affairs will provide this officer with a lease apartment and a competitive salary that is sufficiently above the already mentioned 14.500 lei: say, of 30.000 lei (equivalent to 1.500 euros) per month. This will align the public sector’s financial offers with those of the private one. To further boost the officer’s will to work in the governmental system, we will also offer her a pension that significantly surpasses the country’s average (4.400 lei or 220 euros: National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2025b) – for example, within the range of 20.000 – 25.000 lei (equivalent to 1.000 - 1.250 euros). Additional special indexation regime for public servants’ pensions might be applied, as well. This way, we will ensure that most of the young officers will have a high motivation to work 25 years straight before they retire.

Yet, to bring these circumstances closer to reality and to make them address the systemic corruption issue, several other amendments should be made. First, the apartment that our officer receives from the government is not a gift. Every year, 4% of the apartment’s market price will be deducted from her salary, which, given our new assumptions, is big enough to cover this expense.

This way, we will ensure that this officer will stay in the profession for those 25 years of work experience that she needs to retire with, in new circumstances, a decent pension. Additionally, by the time she retires, she will have her own apartment: at the end of her service, the lease will be fully paid to the government from her salary. Second, the system of submitting personal property declarations should be reformed. Declarations of most public sector employees should be publicly accessible, regularly updated, and, what is even more important, as detailed as possible in function of their position. Supervisory bodies within and outside respective governmental agencies, such as anti-corruption institutions, as well as the civil society (NGOs and independent media), should be granted full access to these data in order to ensure the highest transparency of every governmental employee. Accounting for privacy and data protection considerations, it should be clear to our officer that once she assumes the role of a public servant whose duty is to protect public order, she has to be accountable to the public in fact, not only on paper.

Finally, several important modifications have to be made to the criminal legislation of the country. Every crime involving corruption or taking place when performing official duties will involve a reasonably increased punishment in the boundaries of what is accepted by the standards of international criminal jurisprudence. To account for Moldova's European integration goals and existing international obligations, it is essential to keep this reform aligned with the benchmarks of the Council of Europe and the European Union. Furthermore, when the fact of corruption is established by a domestic court in a fair process, the apartment leased to our officer will be confiscated in favour of the government without any reimbursement of its price that she had already paid in the form of 4% yearly salary deductions. In addition, if some of the officer's family members lived with her in that apartment, they would be obligated to leave it by the same judicial decision. The harsher method of punishing corruption-related crimes will serve as an additional motivation for public servants not to engage in them. To ensure that these actions do not amount to an unjustified interference with their rights, everything should be performed in a transparent manner, accounting for human rights guarantees, such as the right to a fair trial, the right to property, and the right to privacy.

What we have as a result of these structural and legal changes is relatively minor, but an important contribution to remedying the problem of systemic corruption. Back to Klitgaard's formula, this modification allows us to balance other variables on the right side of the equation, especially the lack of transparency, which is directly remedied by institutionalising a system of open and sincere declarations subject to scrutiny by both supervising bodies and civil society. Furthermore, perhaps indirectly, this modification diminishes the decision-making monopoly of those in power because, with higher wages in the public sector, more people will want to work there. Many young graduates of prestigious international universities will find it respectable to work at home, knowing that they will be able to receive wages comparable to those offered in other countries. Hence, at least a fraction of them will return home and provide fresh ideas on how to diversify and improve national decision-making, moving older monopolists away from their chairs. To a certain extent, this new approach will also address the problem of brain drain, which has struck the Republic of Moldova in recent years following the increased accessibility and affordability of education and employment abroad (Benea-Popușoi and Arivonici, 2021: 66; Șerpi, 2022: 173).

4. Concluding Remarks

While many people with whom this author discussed systemic corruption were desperate about even attempting to fight it, he believes that, with proper legal and institutional frameworks in place, corruption can be turned from a rule into an exception. Based on the above discussion on Klitgaard's famous formula of corruption, this research aimed at explaining how it can be modified to fit the local context of post-USSR hybrid democracies. The main goal of this contribution was to argue that, by increasing wages of the public sector workers, especially those holding traditional offices of power (police, bureaucrats, and other government employees), it is possible, at least in theory, to diminish the level of corruption in the system. However, it invites compliance with several strong assumptions. Besides increased wages and pensions, these include building an

extensive living infrastructure for public officials, modifications to criminal law, and more transparency in the form of disclosing governmental workers' income declarations.

It goes without saying that these suggestions are not without limitations. One might reasonably contradict this argument by stating that its implementation will require significant investment on behalf of the government because it will imply a redistribution of the public budget towards the public sector to build apartments and increase wages. However, a counterargument would be that it might be resolved with the help of international lending institutions, such as Bretton Woods, because they will be more than eager to help a country that sincerely undertakes a course on fighting corruption systemically. Eventually, once the problem of systemic corruption is taken control of, all the previously stolen resources will become available.

Another objection might refer to this approach's compliance with the principles of the rule of law and non-discrimination, especially because it suggests a differential treatment regime, at least under criminal law, by implying more severe forms of punishment for governmental officials than for anyone else. Nevertheless, two points are crucial here. First, a high position involves a high level of responsibility. Although police officers and bureaucrats are (almost) never elected in the Republic of Moldova, they provide vital public services and thus have to be accountable to the public. This accountability implies a higher degree of civil and criminal punishment for crimes performed within their official capacity. Second, it is in the very nature of hybrid and transitional regimes that carrots fail to produce expected results: stick, thus, is the most effective, if not the only, way at this stage, to achieve liberal aims. However, as the country strives to join the European Union, it has to do so by giving full respect to liberal values, which involves that each and every instance of interference with persons' rights in the course of eradicating corruption has to be necessary, proportionate, and serve public goals. Furthermore, one should notice that the suggestions proposed in this essay offer short-term limitations in order to fight the issue of systemic corruption, a very legitimate aim in itself. Once the problem is addressed effectively and the situation is stabilised, there will be no need for such strict rules; reasonable *ex ante* regulation will suffice to keep systemic corruption under control.

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