

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC POLICY IN MITIGATING CORRUPTION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ANTI- CORRUPTION STRATEGIES IN ASIAN DEMOCRACIES

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ABSTRACT

Corruption is one of the major challenges faced by democracies in Asia, threatening government transparency and accountability. Effective public policies are essential to prevent corrupt practices and strengthen institutional integrity. Various anti-corruption strategies have been implemented, but their effectiveness varies depending on the political, social, and economic contexts of each country. This study aims to analyze the role of public policy in mitigating corruption in democracies in Asia through a qualitative approach. The research method involves collecting data from various relevant sources and comparative analysis of the strategies implemented. The results show that countries with strong legal systems and independent institutions are more successful in tackling corruption. In addition, civil society and media participation also contribute significantly to the effectiveness of anti-corruption policies. Developing democracies face various challenges, including elite political influence and resource constraints, which hinder the implementation of anti-corruption policies. Comprehensive reforms are needed to create a more supportive environment for eradicating corruption.

Keywords: Public Policy; Corruption; Democracies.

BACKGROUND

Corruption is one of the major issues hindering development progress in many countries, and Asia is no exception. In recent decades, Asian countries have experienced rapid economic growth and significant social change. However, while economic growth has

brought many benefits, challenges related to clean and transparent governance remain a pressing concern (Naher et al., 2020).

Democracy in many Asian countries allows citizens to participate in electing their leaders and contribute to the formation of public policy. Democracy does not necessarily guarantee a reduction in corruption. In fact, in some cases, corruption remains rampant in countries that have long implemented democratic systems. Democracy does not always correlate with lower levels of corruption. Although democratic systems are designed to encourage transparency, accountability, and public participation, outcomes vary significantly across countries. In many cases, corruption persists despite regular elections and formal democratic institutions, particularly where law enforcement is weak, press freedom is constrained, or the rule of law lacks strength. Countries like India, Indonesia, and the Philippines illustrate how entrenched corruption can coexist with democratic governance. Singapore—often considered semi-authoritarian—has achieved remarkable control over corruption through strong institutions and consistent policy enforcement, these contrasts suggest that the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts depends more on the strength of public policy and institutional integrity than on the mere presence of democratic processes.

Corruption that occurs at high levels, both in government institutions and the private sector, often reduces the effectiveness of public policies aimed at improving people's welfare. Corruption undermines public trust in government, slows economic growth, and creates social injustice.

With increasing globalization and economic openness, international attention to the problem of corruption in Asia has increased. International organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) and Transparency International, have highlighted the problem of corruption as a major threat to political stability and sustainable development in many Asian countries. This has prompted many countries to strengthen anti-corruption policies and establish special institutions aimed at curbing corrupt behavior. However, the results of these policies vary from country to country, raising questions about what factors determine the success or failure of anti-corruption strategies in Asian democracies.

In some Asian countries, such as South Korea and Taiwan, major public policy reforms have helped make significant progress in reducing corruption. These efforts have involved strengthening government institutions, increasing transparency, and tougher law enforcement. Success in these countries serve as important examples for other countries in the region that are still struggling with corruption. In contrast, in other countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines, the challenges of combating corruption remain enormous, despite the implementation of various anti-corruption policies.

Public policies aimed at mitigating corruption cannot be seen as simply a set of rules or regulations. The success of these policies depends heavily on strong political commitment, cooperation between institutions, and the involvement of civil society. In addition, cultural factors and political history in each country also play a significant role in determining how anti-corruption policies are designed and implemented. For example, in countries with a legacy of authoritarian politics, corruption is often deeply embedded in the power structure,

making changes to cleaner governance more time-consuming and more intensive (Villanueva, 2020).

At the regional level, countries in Asia are also increasingly engaging in cooperation to combat corruption through international mechanisms. Regional organizations such as ASEAN have begun to address the importance of good governance and transparency in their efforts to create a more open and competitive economic environment. However, cooperation between these countries has not always yielded significant results, mainly due to differences in political systems, national priorities, and the level of commitment of each country to anti-corruption reforms.

One of the main challenges facing democracies in Asia in their efforts to mitigate corruption is weak law enforcement. Many countries in Asia have strong anti-corruption laws on paper, but their implementation is often ineffective. Corruption involving high-ranking officials, for example, is often not seriously investigated, while smaller, lower-level corruption perpetrators are often subject to unfair law enforcement. This creates public distrust of the legal system and makes efforts to combat corruption more difficult (Mohd-Rashid et al., 2023).

Corruption in Asia is not limited to the public sector. In many countries, the private sector is also involved in corrupt practices that damage the business climate and create barriers for foreign investors. In some cases, large conglomerates in Asia have close ties to governments, allowing them to influence public policy for personal gain. This suggests that anti-corruption strategies must include the private sector and strengthen oversight and transparency mechanisms across society.

There are also several public policy initiatives and innovations that have shown success in mitigating corruption in Asia. For example, the adoption of technology in government, such as e-governance and digital platforms for public services, has helped reduce opportunities for corrupt practices by increasing transparency and facilitating public access to information. The adoption of technology in government, particularly through e-governance systems and digital public service platforms, has significantly contributed to reducing corrupt behavior. By automating bureaucratic procedures, limiting face-to-face interactions, and ensuring real-time data access, technology minimizes discretionary power and opportunities for bribery. In India, the implementation of the Aadhaar biometric identification system has streamlined welfare distribution, reducing leakages and ghost beneficiaries. Similarly, South Korea's Online E-Procurement System (KONEPS) has enhanced transparency in public procurement by allowing open access to bidding processes and contract information. These examples demonstrate how digital tools not only deter corrupt practices but also build institutional trust by fostering accountability and citizen oversight.

The role of the media and civil society organizations is also increasingly important in promoting government accountability and monitoring the implementation of anti-corruption policies.

The purpose of this study is to comparatively analyze public policy strategies for mitigating corruption in Asian democracies. The study aims to identify differences in policy approaches across countries, uncover factors that influence the success of anti-corruption strategies, and understand the challenges faced in their implementation.

Public Policy

Policy serves as a tool of governance, not just in terms of government as an apparatus of the state, but also in relation to the management of public resources. Essentially, a policy comprises decisions or courses of action that regulate the management and allocation of natural, financial, and human resources for the benefit of the public, including the populace, society, or citizens. It arises from a combination of synergy, compromise, or competition among various ideas, theories, ideologies, and interests that reflect a country's political framework (Rosyida et al., 2020).

According to Heinz Eulau and Kenneth Prewitt, public policy is defined as a consistent decision marked by the repetition of behaviors from both the decision-makers and those who adhere to the decision. Carl Friedrich described policy as a series of actions or initiatives put forth by an individual, group, or government within a context where challenges and opportunities exist, with the aim of being effective in addressing those challenges to achieve desired objectives (Tabesh & Vera, 2020).

Bridgman & Davis suggest that public policy encompasses the concept of "anything the government decides to do or not do." In contrast, Hogwood and Gunn define public policy as a collection of government actions aimed at achieving specific outcomes. This definition does not imply that the notion of "policy" is exclusive to or predominantly associated with the government. Non-governmental entities, including NGOs, social organizations (such as Karang Taruna and Family Welfare Education/PKK), and other voluntary groups also formulate their own policies (Mueller, 2020).

Bridgman and Davis further assert that public policy consists of at least three interconnected dimensions: it serves as an objective, represents a legally valid course of action (authoritative choice), and functions as a hypothesis.

1. Public policy as an objective

Public policy fundamentally revolves around achieving public goals. This indicates that it comprises a series of governmental actions aimed at attaining specific outcomes anticipated by the public, who are constituents of the government (Cashore et al., 2021).

2. Public policy as a legal choice of action

The actions determined by policy are legal or authoritative because they originate from an institution recognized as legitimate within the governmental framework. Such decisions obligate civil servants to take action or guide the course of activities, such as drafting laws or government regulations for parliamentary consideration, or allocating budgets for particular programs (Saputra et al., 2023).

3. Public policy as a hypothesis

Policies are formulated based on theories, models, or hypotheses regarding causality. They inherently depend on assumptions about behavior and include incentives that motivate individuals to take certain actions, as well as disincentives that discourage specific behaviors. Effective policies must integrate predictions about potential success with strategies for addressing possible failures (Baulenas et al., 2021).

Based on the definitions provided, several key characteristics of public policy can be identified. First, public policy generally emphasizes actions directed toward achieving specific objectives rather than arbitrary or unstructured behavior. Second, it encompasses a series of activities conducted by government officials, rather than isolated decisions. Third, public policy reflects what the government actively engages in—such as regulating trade, managing inflation, or providing public housing—rather than merely what is intended or planned. Fourth, public policy can have both positive and negative dimensions; positively, it includes definitive governmental actions aimed at addressing issues, while negatively, it may involve decisions by government officials to refrain from action, even when such intervention is critical. Finally, public policy, particularly in its positive aspect, is grounded in legal frameworks and is characterized by authoritative action (Chater & Loewenstein, 2023).

Corruption

Several theories can explain why individuals engage in corruption. These theories include:

1. Rational choice theory.

This theory posits that individuals engage in corruption when the perceived benefits outweigh the potential consequences. Here, "rational" refers to the viewpoint of the corrupt individual, who seeks to gain substantial financial rewards without incurring greater losses than the advantages obtained (Troisi et al., 2022).

According to this theory, humans are seen as rational and calculating, making decisions based on a cost-benefit analysis. When a corrupt individual recognizes an opportunity to gain a significant amount of money (benefit) with minimal risk of detection due to weak oversight (loss), they are likely to proceed with the corrupt act (Wawrosz, 2022).

This theory explains that a person's rationality is not completely free but is bounded rationality. This means that a person makes decisions by only considering short-term risks and based on limited information received at that time, which may result in different decisions at another time (Gadzinski et al., 2022).

This theory suggests that an individual is likely to engage in corruption when the perceived benefits exceed the associated costs and potential losses. The benefits of corrupt acts may include material wealth, enhanced status, personal gratification, or elevated position, while the losses may involve the risk of detection by authorities and subsequent legal penalties such as fines or imprisonment. According to this theory, the formula for corrupt behavior can be summarized as follows: Corruption \rightarrow Benefits of committing corruption $>$ losses from committing corruption (Cherniei et al., 2022).

2. Bad apple theories.

According to this theory, corruption arises from individuals possessing negative traits, often referred to as "bad apples." These undesirable characteristics include greed, immorality, and dishonesty, which can be developed through familial upbringing or social interactions (Manning, 2024).

Traits such as greed and dishonesty are key contributors to corrupt behavior. When individuals, especially those in public office, exhibit corrupt practices, they can influence others within their organization to engage in similar misconduct (Tanner et al., 2022).

To combat corruption based on this theory, it is essential to implement rigorous selection processes for employees and public officials, taking their integrity and honesty into account, as well as thoroughly examining their backgrounds (Adam & Fazekas, 2021).

3. Organizational culture theories.

This theory posits that corruption arises from systems and cultures within organizations that foster corrupt behavior, often referred to as "bad bushels." A corrupt environment can lead individuals who initially possess integrity to engage in corrupt practices (Kulmie et al., 2023).

Corruption can also stem from an individual's loyalty and allegiance to their organization. However, this does not imply that everyone within a corrupt organization will inevitably become corrupt. According to this theory, the role of leadership is crucial; leaders who emphasize ethics, honesty, and integrity are vital in preventing a culture of corruption from taking root within the organization (Braganza, 2022).

4. Clashing moral value theories.

According to this theory, corruption arises from conflicts between an individual's role in society and their position as a public official or state administrator. These dual roles can lead to moral dilemmas, as public officials often struggle to separate their personal lives from their professional responsibilities (Takacs Haynes & Rašković, 2021).

A person may engage in corruption not out of greed, but to assist friends or family as a demonstration of loyalty. The prevailing culture of mutual support in Indonesia can shape the mindset of public officials. Additionally, workplace dynamics can also exert influence; individuals might commit corrupt acts to show solidarity with colleagues who engage in similar behavior (Bhikharie, 2024).

With the authority they possess, public officials can create policies that benefit their family or friends. In this way, acts of corruption may be viewed as expressions of loyalty and solidarity, which is often associated with nepotism (Kumasey & Hossain, 2020).

5. The ethos of public administration theories.

This theory suggests that specific cultural values and societal pressures can motivate public officials to act in certain ways, including encouraging them to engage in corrupt practices to meet community demands (Okafor et al., 2020). Individuals with vested interests may exert pressure on public officials to implement policies that serve their needs. However, in pursuing community-benefiting policies, public officials may sometimes need to bypass established regulations, potentially harming public finances (Laplane & Mazzucato, 2020).

This theory emphasizes understanding corrupt behavior not solely from the perspective of public officials in power, but also from the viewpoint of the community and other stakeholders who seek to influence those officials. To prevent corruption, it is essential to conduct community outreach activities that deter public officials from succumbing to corrupt practices (Gillespie et al., 2020).

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach to explore the role of public policy in mitigating corruption within Asian democracies. Data collection involves gathering information from multiple sources, including academic journals, government reports, policy documents, and previous empirical studies relevant to anti-corruption efforts. In addition, selected case studies are examined to provide in-depth contextual understanding of each country's political, social, and economic environment. Data analysis is carried out through a comparative method, where anti-corruption strategies are systematically evaluated across cases. This involves coding and categorizing policy measures, institutional strengths, and the involvement of civil society and media, enabling identification of patterns and differences. By situating findings within their specific contexts, the research uncovers the conditions under which public policies succeed or fail. This thorough approach supports drawing nuanced conclusions about the most effective strategies for corruption mitigation in diverse Asian democratic settings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Public Policy and Corruption Mitigation in Democratic Countries

Public policy plays a central role in corruption mitigation efforts in democratic countries. The government is required to create a system that can prevent and follow up on corrupt practices at various levels. One aspect that is key to success is the development of a transparent and accountable government system. Transparency allows the public to monitor every decision and action taken by public officials, thereby reducing the possibility of corruption. In addition, accountability provides certainty that every violation will receive appropriate legal consequences. Good public policy must be able to create mechanisms that strengthen these two aspects. Efforts such as implementing rules on openness of information, public supervision, and periodic audits are some of the steps that can increase the accountability of public officials and maintain public trust in the government.

Many countries today claim to be democratic, but defining what constitutes a democratic country requires a clear understanding of its core principles and indicators. A democratic country is generally characterized by free and fair elections, protection of human rights and civil liberties, the rule of law, separation of powers, and active citizen participation in political processes. Institutions such as independent judiciaries, free press, and strong civil society organizations also play crucial roles in supporting democracy. Transparency, accountability of public officials, and mechanisms to prevent abuses of power are essential features that sustain democratic governance, these indicators help differentiate genuine

democracies from regimes that merely adopt democratic forms without fully implementing democratic practices.

Government institutions have an important role in designing effective anti-corruption policies, and these institutions are responsible for formulating regulations that are specifically designed to close loopholes that can be exploited by corruptors. In this case, collaboration between institutions is essential so that the resulting policies can cover various sectors and levels of government. In addition, effective anti-corruption policies must also be supported by institutional reforms that strengthen the role of law enforcement agencies in prosecuting corruption cases. Institutions such as the Anti-corruption Commission and the Corruption Court serve as the vanguard in prosecuting corruption perpetrators, but their role will not be maximized without strong public policy support. Therefore, the role of government institutions is not only limited to designing policies but also to ensuring that their implementation runs smoothly.

Political changes and democratic reforms significantly influence the development and implementation of anti-corruption policies in democracies. To better illustrate the variations in corruption levels across Asian democracies, a comparative overview is essential. The following table (Table 1) ranks selected Asian countries from those with the lowest to the highest levels of corruption based on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) by Transparency International. This comparison highlights the wide spectrum of corruption challenges in the region and underscores the urgent need for tailored and effective anti-corruption strategies. Such a presentation provides a clearer context for understanding how political dynamics and reforms correspond to corruption outcomes.

Table 1. Comparative Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) of Asian Countries, 2024

No.	Country	CPI Score (2024)	Global Rank	Brief Description
1	Singapore	84	3	Very low corruption
2	Hong Kong	75	14	Low corruption
3	Australia	75	14	Low corruption
4	Japan	74	18	Low corruption
5	Taiwan	67	34	Moderate corruption
6	Bhutan	68	32	Moderate corruption
7	South Korea	63	39	Moderate corruption
8	Vietnam	44	87	High corruption
9	Indonesia	37	99	High corruption
10	Sri Lanka	32	127	High corruption
11	Laos	33	114	High corruption
12	Philippines	33	115	High corruption
13	Cambodia	24	157	Very high corruption
14	Myanmar	20	178	Very high corruption
15	North Korea	17	180	Very high corruption

Source: GoodStats, 2024

This table clearly illustrates the wide disparity in corruption perception across Asian countries, emphasizing that even established democracies face ongoing corruption challenges while some less democratic countries maintain relatively lower levels of corruption through strong enforcement mechanisms.

Policies often change following leadership changes or when certain political parties gain more power in dynamic political systems, these changes can bring benefits in the form of reforms that strengthen anti-corruption policies. Changes that are too rapid or too frequent can disrupt the consistency of these policies. A healthy democracy allows for regular changes in power, which in turn can limit the opportunities for public officials to use their power for personal gain with an effective system of checks and balances, corrupt practices can be suppressed. Unstable political reforms or those dominated by oligarchic interests can weaken anti-corruption policies and even open up new opportunities for corruption.

Although public policies in democracies are designed to suppress corrupt practices, their implementation often faces various challenges. One of the biggest challenges is resistance from elite groups who have great power and influence. These groups often have an interest in maintaining the status quo because they benefit from a system that is not fully transparent. In addition, the lack of resources and capacity in oversight institutions is also a serious obstacle to the implementation of anti-corruption policies. In many cases, budget and human resource constraints lead to weak supervision and law enforcement of corruption cases. In addition, the deeply rooted political culture in some countries can also hinder anti-corruption reforms, especially if the public is accustomed to a corrupt system and does not believe that change can be made.

Mitigating corruption in democratic countries through public policy is a complex effort and requires the involvement of various parties. The government, law enforcement agencies, civil society, and the media have complementary roles in suppressing corrupt practices. Public policies must be carefully designed and cover various sectors, and their implementation requires support from all elements of society to ensure that the policies are not just rules on paper, but are implemented in everyday practice. Democratic countries must continue to evaluate and adapt their anti-corruption policies, considering that corruption is a phenomenon that is always evolving and adapting to existing political, social, and economic conditions. With strong commitment and the right policies, democratic countries have a great opportunity to mitigate corruption and create a cleaner and more integrated system of government.

The Role of Law Enforcement in Anti-Corruption Strategy

Law enforcement is an important element in a broader anti-corruption strategy. Without a strong and effectively functioning law enforcement system, anti-corruption policies will only be an unimplementable discourse. The main strength of law enforcement in combating corruption lies in its ability to create a deterrent effect for perpetrators. In this case, law enforcement institutions have a crucial role in ensuring that any violation of the law and public ethics is dealt with firmly, regardless of who is involved. The police, prosecutors,

and courts as the main actors in the law enforcement process have the responsibility to carry out investigations, prosecutions, and trials transparently and fairly. The success of law enforcement depends not only on the existence of strict laws but also on consistent and non-discriminatory implementation. In a well-functioning legal system, corruption can be suppressed because perpetrators know that they will not escape severe sanctions if proven to have committed violations.

Law enforcement in efforts to eradicate corruption in various countries is often faced with significant weaknesses. One fundamental weakness is the influence of political or economic elites who can intervene in the legal process. Systemic corruption at high levels often involves individuals with access to power, who in turn can use their power to evade the legal process, this intervention makes law enforcement institutions less independent, thus undermining their credibility and effectiveness in combating corruption. Weak resource capacity, both financial and personnel, is also a major obstacle. Institutions such as prosecutors or courts often lack the budget to conduct thorough investigations or present credible expert witnesses. Limited human resources, both in terms of numbers and technical skills, also affect the ability to uncover complex corruption cases, especially those involving large and organized networks of perpetrators.

Furthermore, political obstacles often become a stumbling block in enforcing anti-corruption laws. In many countries, corruption is not only a problem of individuals abusing power but also a systemic problem that is deeply rooted in the political structure. Officials or politicians involved in corruption often have great influence over the appointment or dismissal of law enforcement officials, such as the police chief or attorney general. This creates a situation where law enforcement agencies cannot act independently because there is a structural dependence on political elites. In this context, anti-corruption policies implemented by the government cannot be effective if the political system does not support the independence of law enforcement. Power concentrated in a handful of elites provides space for them to protect themselves from legal entanglement while weakening efforts to eradicate corruption at a broader level.

The lack of transparency in the law enforcement process also has the potential to damage public trust in state institutions. When the prosecution or trial process is considered non-transparent, the public tends to doubt the integrity of law enforcement agencies. This lack of transparency gives the impression that the legal process is more regulated by elite interests or overshadowed by political interests. On the other hand, in some cases, weak law enforcement also causes public distrust of the government's commitment to eradicating corruption. When corruptors who have great influence are not punished appropriately, the public becomes skeptical and loses confidence that the law can be enforced fairly. The impact is the weakening of the government's legitimacy, which ultimately affects political and social stability.

The lack of effective law enforcement also has long-term impacts on the sustainability of clean governance. Corruption that is not handled properly can spread widely and affect various government sectors, from public services to state budget allocations. The

inability of law enforcement agencies to act decisively paves the way for corrupt practices that are increasingly difficult to eradicate. This not only harms society economically but also erodes democratic values, where justice and equality should be the main principles. In the long term, weak law enforcement will worsen the problem of corruption, make government institutions increasingly fragile, and ultimately hinder national development and public welfare.

Law enforcement in the anti-corruption strategy must be strengthened through various reforms that support the independence of law enforcement agencies and strengthen the capacity of available resources. Steps such as ensuring the appointment of law enforcement officials who are free from political influence, expanding public access to information about the judicial process, and providing greater support in terms of budget and technical training are essential to strengthening the effectiveness of law enforcement. Furthermore, cooperation between law enforcement agencies and other institutions such as civil society organizations or the mass media needs to be improved to ensure that any violations of the law are exposed and prosecuted fairly. Only with this comprehensive approach can law enforcement become an effective tool in eradicating corruption and ensuring that anti-corruption policies are not just empty symbols, but have an impact on improving the governance system.

The Role of Civil Society and Media in Promoting Transparency

Civil society and the media have a crucial role in efforts to promote transparency and strengthen anti-corruption policies. In the context of democratic governance, civil society is often at the forefront of monitoring government performance and ensuring that public policies, including anti-corruption policies, are implemented transparently. Civil society organizations (CSOs), whether in the form of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), advocacy groups, or civil coalitions, actively act as independent monitors that oversee various public policies. CSOs often identify weaknesses in the government system, evaluate policy implementation, and voice important issues that may be ignored by the government. Through advocacy actions, awareness campaigns, and strategic litigation efforts, civil society pressures the government to be more transparent in managing state finances and enforcing the law against corruption cases.

The mass media, both print, television, and digital, also play a key role in exposing corrupt practices that are often tightly closed from public view. In the modern era, the role of the media is not only limited to reporting news but also as an agent of social change that actively reveals various cases of corruption in various government sectors. In-depth journalistic investigations are often the main source in exposing complex corruption networks, from public officials to the private sector. In addition, the media also helps raise public awareness of the negative impacts of corruption on development and public welfare. When reports of corruption are widely publicized, the public becomes more aware and involved in pushing for change, demanding firm action from the government, and pressuring public officials to be accountable for the policies they implement.

Public pressure driven by civil society and the mass media is often a powerful catalyst for reforming anti-corruption policies, especially in Asian democracies where civic engagement is growing. In countries like South Korea, mass protests and investigative journalism played a critical role in exposing high-level corruption scandals, eventually leading to the impeachment of top officials and the strengthening of institutional accountability. Such public efforts are most effective when matched by a government that demonstrates political will and institutional commitment. For example in Indonesia, the establishment and empowerment of the Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi (KPK) signaled a significant governmental step toward combating corruption. In Singapore, a strong and independent anti-corruption agency (Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau – Singapore - CPIB), combined with strict enforcement and transparent governance, has proven effective in deterring corrupt practices. These cases illustrate that while civil society and media pressure are vital, sustainable anti-corruption outcomes depend heavily on how governments respond—through legal reform, digital transparency initiatives, and consistent enforcement of anti-corruption laws.

When civil society organizations and the media unite in criticizing government policies or actions that are considered corrupt, the social power that is formed can influence the direction of government policy. Demonstrations, petitions, online campaigns, and other forms of participation are concrete manifestations of public pressure that can force the government to reform the governance system, either through the formation of new laws or revisions to existing policies. In many cases, this public pressure also serves as a driver for public officials to increase their accountability in carrying out their duties. The stronger the pressure from the public, the more difficult it is for the government to ignore demands for transparency and accountability so that oversight mechanisms for public policy can be strengthened.

However, civil society and the media are not always free from obstacles in carrying out their roles. In a repressive political environment, civil society's room for movement is often limited by regulations that hinder freedom of association and assembly. Authoritarian or semi-democratic governments tend to impose restrictions on the activities of civil society organizations, especially those that focus on corruption and transparency issues. These restrictions can take the form of forced disbandment, banning of demonstrations, or intimidation of activists. In the context of the media, the biggest challenge is political or economic control that affects press freedom. Media operating in a repressive environment often face censorship, intimidation, or pressure from interested parties to cover up corruption cases. Even in democratic countries, constraints such as media ownership concentrated in the hands of a small economic elite can affect the independence of the media in exposing corruption cases.

In addition, limited access to information is also a serious obstacle for civil society and the media in carrying out their roles. In some countries, although freedom of expression is recognized, access to government data or public financial information is still very limited. This lack of openness of information makes it difficult for civil society and the media to

conduct in-depth investigations into corrupt practices, thereby reducing their effectiveness in promoting transparency. Some countries have indeed implemented laws on the openness of public information, but their implementation is often weak, with various reasons used by the government to refuse to provide information to the public. In this context, the ability of civil society and the media to carry out their oversight function is very limited.

Therefore, the role of civil society and the media in promoting transparency must be supported by a legal and political framework that allows them to work freely and without hindrance. Reforms in the field of access to information, protection of freedom of expression, and efforts to expand the space for public participation are essential to strengthen the contribution of civil society and the media in eradicating corruption. Ultimately, a society that has access to accurate and free information will be better able to monitor its government and hold its leaders accountable. Through close collaboration between civil society, the media, and other elements in society, efforts to realize transparency and accountability in government can be more effective and have a real impact on improving the quality of democracy and sustainable development.

Comparative Analysis of Anti-Corruption Strategies in Asian Democracies

A comparative analysis of anti-corruption strategies across Asian democracies reveals a variety of approaches taken by governments, depending on the level of democratic maturity and the political, social, and economic contexts prevailing in each country. More established democracies, such as Japan and South Korea, generally have more structured anti-corruption policy frameworks and stronger institutions to enforce the law. On the other hand, developing democracies such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and India face more complex challenges, especially in terms of implementing anti-corruption policies, which are often hampered by weak law enforcement, political instability, and the strong influence of economic and political elites.

In comparing anti-corruption policies, one of the striking differences is how established democracies prioritize transparency and accountability through independent and strong institutions, such as autonomous anti-corruption commissions. In South Korea, for example, the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission has played a significant role in detecting and prosecuting major corruption cases, fully supported by a strong legal system. Japan, on the other hand, relies more on administrative oversight and bureaucratic reform aimed at strengthening internal control within government institutions. This approach is different from countries with developing democracies, where anti-corruption institutions often do not have full authority or are caught up in political dynamics that affect their effectiveness. Indonesia, for example, although it has the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) which is known as one of the most progressive anti-corruption institutions, this institution often experiences political pressure from various interested parties.

The success or failure of anti-corruption strategies in different countries is often determined by internal factors, such as the integrity of legal institutions and the ability to

enforce policies consistently, as well as external factors, such as support from civil society and the media. In established democracies, more solid legal structures and a political culture that emphasizes transparency provide a stronger foundation for anti-corruption law enforcement. In South Korea, systematic legal reforms following the political reforms of 1987 strengthened the capacity of state institutions to crack down on corruption. In contrast, in developing democracies, elite political influence is often a major obstacle to efforts to eradicate corruption. India, for example, faces a major challenge in ensuring that anti-corruption policies are implemented without political interference, given the close ties between political and economic elites.

Differences in political, social, and economic contexts also influence how anti-corruption policies are implemented. In countries with more egalitarian social structures, anti-corruption policies tend to be more effective because economic disparities are less wide, meaning fewer incentives for corruption among public officials. In countries such as Japan, where meritocracy and a highly professional work ethic are highly valued, internal oversight mechanisms within government are more effective, because they are supported by social values that emphasize integrity and moral responsibility. In contrast, in countries with greater socio-economic disparities, such as the Philippines and India, widespread poverty and inequality can encourage corrupt practices, both at the elite and at the grassroots levels, due to limited economic opportunities and weak incentives for honest behavior within the bureaucracy.

In addition, political stability also plays an important role in the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies. In countries with strong political stability, anti-corruption policies can be implemented consistently and in the long term. South Korea and Japan, for example, have political stability that supports systemic reforms in the public sector and bureaucracy. Meanwhile, in countries that are more prone to political turmoil, such as Indonesia and the Philippines, anti-corruption policies often change with changes in government, which hinders the continuity and sustainability of reforms. Drastic political changes are also often accompanied by changes in key officials in anti-corruption institutions, thus affecting the integrity of institutions and the effectiveness of law enforcement.

From this comparative analysis, it is clear that the most effective anti-corruption strategies in Asian democracies are those that combine structural reforms with support from civil society, the media, and strong legal institutions. Transparency in public financial management, public participation in the decision-making process, and the independence of anti-corruption institutions are key elements of the success of anti-corruption strategies in established democracies. On the other hand, developing democracies need to address political and social challenges that hinder the effectiveness of anti-corruption policies, especially in terms of strengthening law enforcement and improving internal oversight systems.

The most effective public policy strategies for mitigating corruption in Asian democracies depend on a combination of democratic maturity, institutional capacity, and socio-political support. Countries with independent legal systems, active civil societies, and

free media tend to be more successful in curbing corruption and maintaining government integrity. Meanwhile, developing democracies must continue to undertake comprehensive reforms that include improving legal systems, increasing transparency, and strengthening the role of civil society and the media in monitoring the government.

CONCLUSION

Public policy plays a key role in mitigating corruption in Asian democracies. Effective anti-corruption efforts depend not only on political will but also on the government's ability to design and implement targeted policies that promote transparency, accountability, and institutional integrity. Key public policies that have proven effective in reducing corruption include the implementation of e-governance systems to minimize bureaucratic discretion, the establishment of independent anti-corruption agencies with prosecutorial powers, the adoption of whistleblower protection laws, and the enforcement of transparent public procurement processes. In more established democracies, such policies are supported by strong rule of law and active civil oversight, enabling structural reforms and consistent enforcement. Developing democracies often face political, social, and economic obstacles that hinder the full implementation of these policies. Comprehensive reform strategies—such as judicial independence, asset declaration mechanisms for public officials, and open data initiatives—can significantly improve governance quality. A comparative analysis of anti-corruption approaches across Asian democracies demonstrates that the most effective strategies are holistic, combining legal, administrative, and societal dimensions. Ultimately, sustained commitment from both state institutions and civil society is essential to foster a political culture that rejects corruption and upholds democratic integrity.

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