**Preventing and fighting against** **corruption in Asian countries   
in the digital technology era: Opportunities and challenges**

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Currently, the world is under the strong impact of the industrial revolution 4.0 with the features of connecting things, digital technology and virtual-reality interference. This impact brings many difficulties and challenges for countries in the fight against corruption. Along with the speed of development of science and technology, many corrupt behaviors have also changed towards becoming more sophisticated, more difficult to detect with unprecedented ways in history. Solving this difficulty requires the Governments to synchronously implement many measures, with special attention paid to the application of achievements in the digital age in order to realize the goal of preventing and repelling corruption. Recent practice shows that a number of Asian countries have achieved success in planning and implementing policies to prevent and deal with corruption under the influence of digital technology today. These successful stories can be a useful reference for developing countries in the fight against corruption, including Vietnam. Based on the analysis of anti-corruption policies and measures of some countries in Asia, the paper will identify opportunities as well as challenges for these countries in the prevention and fight against corruption under the strong impact of digital technology.

**1. Current situation of preventing and fighting against** **corruption in Asian countries in the digital technology era today**

Corruption is a diverse, multifaceted and complex social phenomenon that associated with governments in all countries[[1]](#footnote-1). In many countries, this phenomenon has caused great harm in terms of economy, politics and society, especially reduced people's confidence in the public authorities, in the political regime, seriously threatening political stability. Therefore, the fight against corruption takes place vigorously all over the world and Asia is not an exception. Reality in the past years shows that, in a number of Asian countries, cases of particularly serious corruption involving large amounts of hidden and dispersed national assets are becoming increasingly common. In particularly, with the development of science and technology, the strong impact of the industrial revolution 4.0, corrupt acts have become cunning, complex and more difficult to detect if there is no strategic groundbreaking solutions with the active participation of the whole society. In fact, Asian countries with high levels of science and technology development have gained many achievements in the fight against corruption, such as China, Japan, and Singapore.

**a. China**

China is a country with many similarities with Vietnam. Besides its outstanding achievements in economic and social development, China also emerged as a country that suffered a lot due to corruption. During its reform and opening up period, corruption has caused this country's GDP to decline around 13.2% to 16.8% per year; resulting in a loss of revenue of about $150 billion in taxes, wasting around 15% to 20% of the money in all projects.[[2]](#footnote-2) Corruption is identified by the Chinese Communist Party as one of the dangers of social conflict. Strong protests and strikes from the people in recent years show that corruption has not really been repelled in this country.

The Communist Party of China believes that in order to control public power and prevent corruption, the key issue is power binding and monitoring. Currently, China has implemented four solutions synchronously to bind and monitor power, namely: *Using the law to bind power; Using the morality to bind power, Using the power to bind power and Using the people to bind power*.[[3]](#footnote-3)

*Using the law to bind power* means that you must rely on a strict, unified, comprehensive legal system to control the exercise of power, control the thoughts and behaviors of the power entities. This means the use of power must be legalized, put into procedures and order to prevent arbitrary use of power. *Using morality to bind power* means educating, nurturing and improving the moral qualities of individuals and organizations which hold power in their hands to self-control negative acts in the use of power. *Using the power to bind power* means making a balance of power through mutual control between branches of power. *Using the people to bind power* means that power is controlled through a mechanism of control and supervision of power from the people. These four measures must be carried out synchronously and mutually support one another, in which *using the law to bind power* is the focus because the remaining measures are only effective when implemented through the form of law.

In the context of the fourth technology revolution, the prevention and fight against corruption in China has created positive changes. A lot of technologies have been applied in controlling the power exercise of China's government apparatus. The industrial revolution 4.0 with widespread internet has made information collection, inspection and monitoring not limited by geographical space or distance. Through the Internet, corruption cases will be revealed, information about corrupt acts will be spread rapidly. In the past years, thanks to the application of digital technology achievements, a series of scandals related to Chinese officials have been uncovered.

The fact that Chinese officials accepting bribes, owning luxury apartments and huge amount of property without being able to explain the origin of these assets has caused a lot of social discontent. Research has shown that most of the scandals are discovered through mass media. People denounce about corrupt cases anonymously by posting images, videos on the Internet, using digital technology devices. This urged state agencies to quickly investigate and handle these cases. It is clearly seen that the Chinese Government has used many creative methods, especially taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technology, building an anti-corruption environment on the internet, expanding the scope of public participation in anti-corruption campaign, accelerating the detection of both large and small corruption cases, and promoting transparent operating mechanisms of power.

**b. Singapore**

It can be said that Singapore is one of the Asian countries that have achieved success in the fight against corruption. In recent years, Singapore has always made efforts to build a thriving society with a culture of saying no to corruption. Singapore's administrative system is known as one of the most rigorous in Asia. Due to a strict legal system, Singaporeans are always ready to denounce when detecting corrupt acts. The government does not accept tolerance towards anyone who violates the law, even if he/she is a person with a high position in the state apparatus.

Currently, Singapore's “four “No” to corruption” solution is still working. They include: No courage to be corrupt – No way to be corrupt - No need to be corrupt - No desire to be corrupt. [[4]](#footnote-4)

*Firstly*: No courage to be corrupt: In Singapore, each civil servant, when receiving a salary, will deduct 5% of their salary into the savings fund, which will increase according to the rate of salary increase of civil servants and officials. This fund is managed by the State Bank and will be returned to civil servants upon retirement. However, if in the term of their work, any public servant commits corruption, the whole amount above will be confiscated by the state. The higher the rank of the official, the larger the amount is confiscated. This policy has greatly curbed corruption in Singapore.

*Secondly:* No way to be corrupt: The Singapore government requires every public official to declare their assets annually. If their number of assets increases but they fail to explain the reasons, it can be considered corrupt and confiscated by the state.

*Thirdly:* No need to be corrupt: Singapore implements a very satisfactory scheme of remuneration for cadres and civil servants. Under this scheme, public officials can afford to live and support their families without corruption. This method of the Singapore Government on the one hand has limited corruption, on the other hand also created trust e in the remuneration policy of the Government

*Fourthly*: No desire to be corrupt: Singaporean government stipulates the principle that if anyone, who commits a corrupt act, is found out, he/she will be judged according to the criminal law with very complicated and cumbersome procedures. With these procedures, Singaporean public officials and civil servants strictly comply with the provisions of the law on anti-corruption.

Singapore's anti-corruption work is as successful as it is today, partly because Singapore has pursued a high-salary policy to reduce the temptation for officials and civil servants to commit corrupt acts. Salary for senior officials and officials in Singapore is among the highest in the world. Singapore pays higher salaries to civil servants than the private sector so that civil servants ensure a lifetime (the monthly salary of new graduates is 2,200 SGD - about 35,000,000 VND; Minister's salary is more than 1,000,000 SGD/year - about 16,000,000,000 VND)[[5]](#footnote-5). The goal is to attract talents and inhibit the benefits of corrupt practices. The higher the salary, the greater the chance of losing a job is. In Singapore, civil servants with corruption of even $1 are also removed from the state apparatus. Therefore, it will reduce the number of corrupt acts and reduce the need to lead to corruption.

In addition, Singapore is also a leading country in providing the first digital administrative services in the world. Thus, Singapore has eliminated opportunities for corruption by providing a variety of public services on the Internet or via mobile phones. As a result, dishonest officials will have a harder time asking for bribes or garnishment from public payments.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**c. Japan**

Japan is a country with a developed economy and also an attractive destination for investors. Japan is ranked as one of the least corrupt countries in the world.

Up to now, Japan has not had its own anti-corruption laws and has not built up a specialized anti-corruption institution. To strengthen the prevention and fight against corruption, Japan is interested in building the Ethics Law, which is popular for all public employees and the people. The National Civil Service Law governs civil servants at the central level, and the Local Civil Servants Law governs local civil servants. Japan is one of the most industrialized countries in Asia, ranked as the third in the world with a thriving economy and a very scientific state management apparatus. Japanese people are highly disciplined and have a high level of awareness due to their good education; hence, they are highly aware of complying with the law very thoroughly. Japan attaches great importance to disseminating the Ethics Law to cadres and civil servants so that they are self-aware and self-observed, and at the same time Japan also performs well in publicity, transparency in management, supervision and internal control between state agencies. Independent judiciary is respected and implemented in practice, the Court conducts fair trial, and the spirit of law is always highly respected. According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2015 - 2016, informal payments to get more favorable decisions from the courts in this country rarely happen. In case disputes occur, Japanese people always seek for judicial measures to resolve such disputes.

The Japanese Government considers the prevention and fight against corruption as a national focus and has an effective mechanism to investigate and punish abusive and corrupt acts. Japan has a very good policy on protecting whistleblowers and has a policy to create favorable conditions for people to exercise the right to complain and denounce, so the number of denunciations has continuously increased over the years.

Japan is a country with a positive attitude towards technology and innovation, and looks at technology and innovation as an opportunity to solve many problems of society. Japan has taken advantage of the achievements of science and technology in receiving complaints and denunciations from people, for example, establishing a hotline to receive denunciations. All allegations, whether reflected on the Internet, by mail or directly reflected, have equal legal validity. Therefore, state agencies receive a lot of complaints and denunciations against state officials, including even very small cases. This is also an effective anti-corruption measure in Japan.

**2. The opportunities for anti-corruption in the digital era in Asia**

Digital platform and application of the achievements of the fourth technology revolution open up many opportunities for detecting and accusing corrupt acts s in every country, not only in Asian countries.

One of the fourth industrial revolution’s achievements is the appearance of artificial intelligence. Artificial Intelligence is one of the features of the fourth industrial revolution. Artificial intelligence (AI) is intelligence performed by any artificial system. This term is often used to refer to computers with indefinite purposes and to the sciences that studies the theories and applications of artificial intelligence[[7]](#footnote-7). Most of these countries now adopt AI for anti-corruption and this is considered as one of the indispensable measures to eliminate corruption. There are many conflicting opinions about the impact and influence of artificial intelligence on human life, but its great contributions in the field of security and corruption prevention is undeniable.

Corruption practices are becoming more and more complicated, cunning, delicate and very difficult to expose if only adopting traditional measures. The adoption of AI will be very helpful in detecting corruption acts. Most of Asian countries are using AI in controlling the income of state officials. AI will analyze, assess, detect corruption based on irregular fluctuation in government official’s property.

With the strong development of the fourth industrial revolution, it will be easy for governments to establish data centers which help state agencies to analyze and manage data more conveniently. The adoption of Information Technology in state management is inevitable. The Internet contains enormous amount of human knowledge. The easy, quick and widespread sharing ability of the Internet turns it into an ideal information providing environment for the community.[[8]](#footnote-8) Thanks to technology, the gap between people and state is considerably narrowed down. Moreover, instead of manual information management, management agencies can extract data and use it for human resource management, quickly detect assests which have unknown origin of state officials with great reliability. Besides, the application of digital achievements with widespread internet will help inspection and supervision not limited by geographical conditions. Through websites and internet, crime inspection, corruption detection and accusation will be more convenient.

Currently, laws of Asian countries all have provisions on the publicity and transparency in state agencies’ operation. Apart from documents related to national security, legal systems of all countries recognize the right of citizens to access to official information and documents of state agencies. In order to implement this right in the practice, it requires countries to adopt Information Technology. Only with the Internet and digital media, people can adequately access to documents which were enacted and enforced.

In addition, the adoption of digital technology will bring people opportunities to participate in state management, supervise and argue with public authorities. Activities of state agencies will be publicize on social networks. Then, people will make suggestions, supervise and express their desires to public authorities. In that way, each of public officials will be strictly supervised by the people. Therefore, corruption acts will be detected easily by the public. This is also a measure to minimize corruption in any countries.

The integration of modern technology applications from the fourth industrial revolution will create opportunities for state agencies in general and government in particular to exchange with the world through technology cooperation and transfer, high-quality human resources training in public service activities. This human resource will have enough competence and strength to form a public administration with transparency and integrity. They will have good awareness, good way of thinking and good actions in anticorruption efforts of the country.

It can be said that, the efficiency of the fight against corruption largely depends on the facilities conditions. In the context of the fourth industrial revolution, equipment and digital applications for corruption prevention become extremely important and increasingly invested by many countries. Obviously, the adoption of new technology will create an enabling environment which facilitates the detection, accusation, and prevention of corrupt acts.

In the context of a global integration and inter-independence, Asian countries are making great joint efforts to resolve global problems, especially corruption issuethat Coruption has crossed the borders of each country. In developing countries, when receiving 1 USD direct aid from a foreign country, 10 USD is often lost and transferred to foreign banking accounts. The truth is corruption in developing countries is fostered and nurtured ed by developed countries through big financial bank organizations.[[9]](#footnote-9) In this situation, if countries do not cooperate in the fight against corruption, it will be impossible to achieve desired results. Therefore, in the context of vigorous digital technology development, Asian countries need to take full advantage of international cooperation and integration, get a common point of view, and set out an action plan in the region to grasp the opportunities and overcome challenges to repel corruption.

**3. Challenges for anti-corruption in the digital era in Asia**

The digital technology era has been creating many positive changes in the anti-corruption work of countries all around the world. A lot of technologies have been applied in the process of enforcing the state power of the public apparatus. However, the development of technology always has two sides, besides its positive effects, it also brings many challenges that requires people to find solutions to cope with those challenges.

**a. Challenges regarding technology issue**

Industrial Revolution 4.0 is a breakthrough point in terms of technology. This transformation affects all aspects of social life, including the fight against corruption. There have been many different debates about the good or bad outcomes of technology development, if people are aware of both positive values ​​and risks, technology will be a powerful tool in the battle to put an end to injustice, to play an active part in preventing and combating corruption.

Currently, artificial intelligence is present in all fields of life, especially in the fight against corruption. Iff AI is not applied, it will be difficult to achieve efficiency. Artificial intelligence is able to accurately distinguish patterns of criminal acts even when the acts are not related. Artificial intelligence will accurately analyze and process information to quickly discover criminal signs, significantly contributing to enhance efficiency in the fight against corruption. In Asia, countries with developed economies such as Korea, China, and Japan have been planning to promote the manufacture of automatic production lines, machines, and automatically-connected smart control system. The race among countries in producing advanced technologies such as robots, sensors and artificial intelligence is happening in a very drastic way. It is expected that in the next decade, robots will be applied in all fields of economy, politics, security and society.

Almost all countries in Asia emphasize the important role of putting artificial intelligence into anti-corruption practices. For example, China has developed an artificial anti-corruption intelligence system called Zero Trust to detect corrupt officials. This system will observe, supervise, and evaluate the work and personal life of public officials. Any fluctuation in their assets is recorded by this system. This tool is especially useful in detecting suspicious transactions and transfers of assets or unusual increases in bank accountss under the name of an official or their relative. Now this system is very widely used and is effective in detecting corrupt officials in China.

Besides, the application of artificial intelligence will help prevent financial crime and money laundering - one of the important tools to fight corruption and boost the efficiency of recovery of corrupt assets. In the current situation, increasing anti-money laundering competence, especially money originating from corruption, need to be closely linked with the fight against corruption. According to the World Bank (WB), every year, the world has lost about 1,000 billion USD through bribery and corruption activities; at the same time, billions of USD of illegal origin was "laundered" through many ways. Anti-money laundering becomes a burning front, requiring the participation of all countries to combat with corruption crimes on a global scale. Money laundering activities are becoming more sophisticated and complex with many new forms. In the context of modern payment methods increasingly developing, digital technology is increasingly booming with the presence of anonymous virtual currencies that are creating many opportunities for money laundering criminals to take advantage of money laundering.. Moreover, every day thousands of transactions take place, the traditional storage of information will impede to detect violations. Only when applying new technology, especially artificial intelligence (AI), then the anti-money laundering and crime prevention will be effective.

Technology is develops nonstop and easily getsoutdated. Meanwhile, acts of corruption are becoming increasingly cunning and complex, which is impossible for any fixed specific technology to suit the demand of preventing and combating an ever changing issues. Therefore, improving technology is always a big challenge in anti-corruption. The task set out for each country is to always explore and invent new technologies to replace antiquated technology in order to promptly detect gaps in the implementation of corrupt acts.

No one can deny the great role that digital technology plays in solving and preventing corruption. Robots and artificial intelligence are tools to support people, but it does not reduce the role of people in completely eliminating corruption. Technology is always a double-edged sword, and if it is used by humans to perform illegal deeds, it will cause further more dangerous disasters.

**b. Challenges regarding human issue**

The world is witnessing a series of science breakthroughs and technology advances taking place in many different fields. Anyone can participate in this revolution. This creates products and services at insignificant costs with thousands of applications that make human life more convenient, easy and comfortable.

However, besides the great benefits this revolution brings, experts worry that corporations which possess digital technology platforms will create monopolistic positions, control personal data of billions of people, news streams and online information. In this way, the invasion of the database to steal or change important information is a constant danger of any organization. The issue of security, safety of information, especially national security, is a big challenge given the rapid development of science and technology, the intertwining of different information flows. Enemy forces will always find for opportunities to execute evil conspiracy; therefore,national security is always an issue that must be attached much importance to in the context of the digital era.

In the context of technology development, inequality in society can be deepened among labor groups in society. The income disparity between the group of low-skilled workers and the group of skilled workers will be increasingly large. This leads to a rising gap between the rich and the poor in society. Moreover, sthe development of automation will lead to a disruption in labor market. In manufacturing operations, robots, automatic production lines will replace humans. Thus, the stratification in society will become clear. This situation requires each individual to change themselves. Each person must improve his or her professional qualifications and catch up with information technology in order not to fall behind the strong growth of digital technology. Nowadays, there are forms of online communication that people are getting familiar with such as emails, social networks, the internet ... besides traditional ones such as writing and direct interaction. Therefore, the State must also change the manner of governing the society. The state is the subject holding a large amount of information, with the current management method that requires the state to actively share and elucidate information to society.

Increasing the openness and transparency of state operation is also one of the crucial measures applied by many countries in the anti-corruption process. Thanks to the help of science and technology, individuals and state agencies have the responsibility to be open and transparent in their operation and people will easily access information via the internet and social networks. This is the first measure to prevent corruption from the side of the people. Publicity and transparency in the operation of state agencies will help people easily know their rights and obligations. Additionally, openness and transparency will also make civil servants more conscious in their duty performance, as . all violations, harassment, and powers abuse in running public service will be exposed and handled. Practicing publicity and transparency will be the key to combat with corruption. In fact, the more transparent and open the country is, the lower the rate of corruption is in that country.

People are the main factor in the fight against corruption, and it is also people who create corruption. No matter how has technology developed, people are still playing a core role in the anti-corruption of any country. In the world, even in countries with developed science and technology and strict state management, many large-scale corruption cases still occur.

**c. Challenges regarding the institutional issue**

The essence of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 is related to the institutional revolution. The rapid development of digital technology has made the traditional institutional framework change. In fact, there have been many serious corruption cases, where corrupt people are ones with high positions and big powers in state agencies. They are nominees empowered by the people and it also them who take advantage of the gaps in management mechanisms and policies and fully utilize the modern scientific and technological achievements of the 4.0 revolution such as information technology accomplishment to perform corrupt activities with increasingly sophisticated, complex and discreet tricks to be easily concealed.

The great impact of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 is putting the states under the pressure to change its mindset when enacting and enforcing laws. The digital age always brings unpredictable opportunities as well as risks to each country, requiring a complete legal framework to establish appropriate codes of conduct. Therefore, the legal system and regulatory framework are required to be built in a flexible way, easily adaptable to the changes of society in the context of the industrial revolution 4.0.

The change of mechanisms, methods, management manners of the State and society is inevitable due to the impact of technology under the industrial revolution 4.0. In the operation of the state apparatus, authorities at all levels are required to self-adjust, renew themselves, find ways to interact with the citizens for more effective management. The apparatus of State agencies needs reforming and rearranging in a more streamlined manner, ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and transparency.

The state agencies must change the traditional management procedures into electronic management processes, increasing transparency, accountability and relationships with the people. On the other hand, it is necessary to build modern information technology facilities and information security bases to meet the demands in practice. Currently, the industrial revolution 4.0 will bring a diverse and elusive electronic data system. Through electronic information databases, block-chain technology, cloud computing ... criminals using high technology often search and co-operate to find ways to penetrate, to easily establish rapport to at appropriate public property, so on. Therefore, the issue of network security management needs to be paid much more attention by all countries.

In addition, the trend of international integration is increasingly widespread, requiring countries to comply with international laws and to promulgate a suitable national legal system, compatible with international one. In the context of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, the emergence of new technologies such as 5G communications, drones, internet of everything, online healthcare and electronic pharmacists. Thus, countries must comply with international laws and at the same time set up their own rules and laws to create advantages, protect national interests, and minimize unfair competition of rivals. Therefore, if any country does not have a flexible institution or strict legal framework along with a developed national science and technology, it will surely be isolated from the global normative system and fall far behind compared with the world.

Through analyzing the challenges of digital technology to anti-corruption work above, we can give some comments:

The Industrial Revolution 4.0 has been bringing many challenges in all aspects of social life and the field of anti-corruption is no exception.

The application of digital technology in the fight against corruption is critical and indispensable.

Governments in all countries need to ensure human factors, because humans are the most important factor.

**CONCLUSION**

Corruption is a very complex social phenomenon, causing many consequences for society. Besides the enormous economic, political, cultural losses, corruption also drives society and people are morally degraded, possibly even destroying a social regime. The fight against corruption is a tough, long and arduous war, not excluding any country. For countries in Asia, corruption has far more severe consequences, as the average income level of the people is quite low. Nowadays, with the strong influence of the digital technology revolution, we must be well aware of the opportunities as well as challenges that this revolution brings, thereby taking suitable measures to repel corruption. The national task of every country is to develop appropriate policies and institutions to manage changes in the application of digital technology. Preventing and combating corruption can only be effective with good governance and the proper manners for technology management.

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