

## Asian Values and Influence on Bureaucracy: Toward World Class Governance

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### Abstract

This research paper explores the impact of Asian values on bureaucratic governance, aiming to achieve world-class standards. The concept generally refers to a set of cultural, social, and political beliefs that are considered characteristic of societies in East Asia and Southeast Asia. It investigates how Asian values are believed to shape cultural norms, ethical principles, and traditional philosophies that influence bureaucratic structures and practices. Drawing on diverse perspectives across Asia, the study examines how values like collectivism, respect for authority, social harmony, and strong work ethic shape administrative processes and decision making.

Using an interdisciplinary approach, this research analyzes the implications of Asian values for transparency, accountability, and efficiency within bureaucratic systems. Case studies and comparative examples are employed to illustrate the strengths and challenges of integrating Asian values into global governance models. Additionally, the research explores how traditional Asian values intersect with modern bureaucratic principles, identifying areas of alignment and divergence.

By synthesizing insights from cultural studies, political science, and public administration, this paper offers a nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between Asian values and bureaucratic governance. It underscores the importance of recognizing cultural diversity in pursuing world-class standards and advocates for inclusive approaches that honor Asian heritage while striving for excellence in global governance practices.

### Keywords:

values; bureaucracy; governance

### Introduction

Bureaucracy has become a significant phenomenon and an important part of human history. Everyone inevitably interacts with bureaucracy. In modern life, bureaucracy has become the most important and dominant institution in society. It is almost impossible for modern societal processes to function without the intervention of bureaucracy. From birth to death, individuals in the modern world continually engage with bureaucratic institutions. Even before birth, parents must handle marriage documentation. Once born, a child's identity must be registered and a birth certificate issued. As individuals grow up, they interact with bureaucracy through formal education, travel, work, and other activities. Most of people will die in an organization, and when the time comes for burial, the largest organization of all the state must grant official permission. All aspects of human life are connected to bureaucratic organizational units.

The term of "*bureaucracy*" introduced in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century by the French philosopher,

Baron de Grimm and Vincent de Gournay, derives from the French “*bureau*”, as well as signifying a “writing table”, meant to a place where officials worked, and “*-cratie*”, meaning “government”. The Dictionary of the French Academy accepted the word and defined it as “Power, influence of the heads and staff of governmental bureau” (Albrow, 1970). Bureaucratic institutions are the machinery of the state, comprising individuals who are salaried and employed by the government to implement state policies. In brief, bureaucracy can also be described as the state apparatus. In a broader sense, bureaucracy is often referred to as the governmental body or sector that includes its institutions and apparatus.

The model of modern bureaucracy, as we know it today, primarily developed and was practiced in several countries following the Industrial Revolution in Europe during the medieval period. During this era, government bureaucracies and bureaucratic professions grew alongside the expansion of industrial companies and private sector professions. The increasing complexity of bureaucratic institutions was driven by the need to meet the demands of private companies and society for government services and protection. The impact of the Industrial Revolution was felt across various fields, including economics, social structures, and global culture. Additionally, the Industrial Revolution gave rise to modern imperialism, as European countries sought to expand their economies through practices of colonization and domination in various parts of the world, including Asia and Africa.

Asia became a region significantly affected by colonization as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Asian values emerged as a response to counter Western values, which had been deeply ingrained due to years of colonial influence affecting the original values of Asian countries. The concept of Asian values was also viewed as a tool to integrate multi-ethnic Asian societies with weak internal cohesion (Langguth G, 2003). With shared values among Asian countries, it is hoped that Asia can rise, advance, and overcome Western dominance in all areas.

This research paper explores the impact of Asian values on bureaucratic governance and examines the extent of their influence to this day. Originally, the emergence of Asian values aimed to counter Western dominance, with Asia striving to achieve world-class standards and gain global recognition. Emphasizing a set of cultural, social, and political beliefs that are considered characteristic of societies in East Asia and Southeast Asia, this paper investigates how Asian values shape cultural norms, ethical principles, and traditional philosophies, which in turn influence bureaucratic structures and practices.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The concept of Asian values gained prominence in the late 20th century, particularly as some Asian countries experienced rapid economic development while maintaining strong cultural and social traditions. The term “Asian values” was created by various Asian leaders and their

supporters to counter Western notions of civil and political freedoms. They claim Asia as place special emphasis upon family and social harmony, suggesting that Western societies which they view as chaotic and deteriorating. They prefer a society that emphasizes with communitarian values where the interests of society take precedence over individual, rather than the individualism of America (Bauer Joanne & Bell, 1999).

The debate on Asian values has developed by focusing on Asia's social, cultural, and political heterogeneity, where common ground is hard to find. Unlike Europeans, in the West Christianity represents the essential basis of culture. In Asia world, religions have always coexisted with other religions (Langguth G, 2003). There are approximately six religions that have developed and are practiced by countries in Asia, such as Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Shintoism, Christianity, and Confucianism. All of them have their own teachings and beliefs that differ from one another. Thus, both in term of religion as well as language and political culture Asians share no intensive similarities. One thing that some countries in Asia may have in common is that they all experienced colonialism from the West.

Many Asian people harbor lingering resentment towards the West due to its colonial past and unconsciously have an inferiority complex in regard Western civilization. It is understandable that Asia's economic success and growth might boost people's confidence and lead them to challenge Western dominance in International norm. Lee Kuan Yew regards "Asian value" as essential ingredients of East Asia's economic growth (Sheridan, 1997 in Barr, 2000). After the West dominated Asia for the most part of the last two hundred years, most people in the West, including intellectual, has not come to accept Asia and Asian as equal (Koh, 2000).

The notion of "Asian value" as the moral basis of the Asian way demand that the West respect and consider Asian perspectives. Asia's dynamic political and economic policy development has radically reshaped Asia' political and cultural landscape (Langguth G, 2003). The idea of Asian values gains traction by positioning itself against West-centric viewpoints. Its core arguments that: Liberal democracy is a specifically Western value system to Asian culture and any Western efforts to enforce it on Asian nations should be rejected as cultural imperialism (Bauer Joanne & Bell, 1999).

There are several differing views regarding Asian values. There is no agreement among Asian intellectuals and scholars on whether there are specifically "Asian values". Some Asians believe that there are "good" and "bad" values, but no such value can be categorized as Asian values. Those who hold this view therefore believe that values are universal in character, and others believe that because Asia is large and heterogeneous, there is no set of values that is shared by all Asians. Although in some Asia countries, such as those influenced by Confucianism, there is a shared set of common values. Despite of Asia's Diversity, people living in Northeast Asia and

Southeast Asia do share particular personal and social values (Koh, 2000).

David Hitchcock, Researcher of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C. In 1994, interviewed over 100 people contain of experts from research institutes, officials, businessmen and women, journalists, cultural and religious leaders in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Bangkok, Shanghai, Beijing, Seoul, and Tokyo about what personal and societal values East Asians hold in common. On personal values, Asians from the two subregions gave equal emphasis to the importance of hard work, respect for learning, honesty, self-reliance, self-discipline and the fulfillment of obligations. On societal values, the respondents agreed on the importance of an orderly society, harmony, respect for authority, official accountability, and consensus.

Comparing with Hitchcock's earlier research, titled "Asian Values and The United States, How Much Conflict?" we can identify differences between Asian values and American values. In terms of personal values, East Asians emphasized the importance of respect for learning, honesty, and self-discipline, whereas Americans emphasized achieving success in life, personal achievement, and helping others. On societal values, Hitchcock identified three differences between the responses of Asians and Americans. First, 71 percent of the Asians compared to 11 percent of the Americans emphasized the importance of an orderly society. Second, 82 percent of the Americans compared to 32 percent of the Asians emphasized the importance of personal freedom. Third, 78 percent of the Americans compared to 29 percent of the Asians emphasized the importance of individual rights (Koh, 2000).

This study reveals that Asians emphasize the importance of an orderly society, while Americans prioritize personal freedom and individual rights. Additionally, Asians place a strong emphasis on respect for learning and self-discipline, whereas Americans focus on success, personal achievement, and helping others.

Asian values directly intersect with bureaucratic governance. Asia's dynamic political and economic policies, which continue to develop, cannot be separated from the Asian values in the spirit of defeating Western values. Max Weber described bureaucracy as an organizational design that serves as an abstract system for rational management of state affairs, minimizing friction caused by human error and emotions. Bureaucratic organizations are seen as the most rational means for imperative control over people. Theoretically, the key concepts and principles of bureaucracy are based on the nature of authority relationships within an organization. Weber visualized the bureaucratic model as a structured arrangement of power to achieve rational human behavior within a professional hierarchy.

Weber, holding a different view, argued that capitalism in Asia is a model imported from the West. The economic growth and increased prosperity in Asia only began after adopting

Western concepts such as the state and its functions, the rule of law, property rights, and scientific rationality (Langguth G, 2003). This adoption of Western ideas left a significant impact on the Asian political culture, creating a form of cultural hegemony of the West. However, the integration of these Western concepts was not solely the result of colonial imposition; it was also actively pursued by liberation movements (Langguth G, 2003).

The development of bureaucracy in Asia involves bureaucratic reforms that aimed at improving the management of national and governmental affairs. Bureaucratic reform is a crucial step toward advancing a states's progress. By establishing an effective and efficient government system, the goal of achieving good governance is becoming more attainable. (Prasojo & Kurniawan, 2008).

## **Methods**

Using an interdisciplinary approach, this research analyzes the implications of Asian values for transparency, accountability, and efficiency within bureaucratic systems. Type of descriptive research intended that Asian value to be studied is more scientific and accompanied by a systematic procedure using fairly convincing hills (Kiernan & Hill, 2018). Case studies and comparative examples are employed to illustrate the strengths and challenges of integrating Asian values into global governance models. Additionally, the research explores how traditional Asian values intersect with modern bureaucratic principles, identifying areas of alignment and divergence.

The analysis is obtained by synthesizing insights from cultural studies, political science, and public administration from various countries in Asia. The collection of data and information related to the opinions of Asian state leaders and Asian state development data offers a deep understanding of the complex relationship between Asian values and bureaucratic governance and its goals in pursuing world-class governance.

## **The Role of Religio**

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### **in Shaping Asian Values**

From the perspective of religion influencing Western values, it is clear that Christianity plays a significant role. Western values can be understood as the culmination of integral elements from a Jewish-Mediterranean-Christian civilization. This civilization, originating in Asia Minor and Egypt several millennia before Christ, was further shaped by Greece and Rome, which asserted cultural and technical supremacy over the rest of the known world. The influence of the Islamic world during the European Middle Ages also played a crucial role. By the early modern era, this

blend of influences had become confident enough to assert universal claims and to progressively safeguard its self-assessment through imperialistic means (Manfred Mols/Claudia Derichs, 1995 in Langguth G, 2003).

The question of Asia's common cultural bond requires a different approach. Given the wide range of geographical, cultural, religious, language, and political diversity made defining "Asian values" is particularly challenging because discussions about values in each Asian country varies due to the heterogeneous religious background. By using religious perspective that have developed and are practiced in various Asian countries, here is distribution of the Asian religion that showing cultural differences:

1. Islam: Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei and Bangladesh are the Asian countries with the largest Islamic population. Indonesia itself has roughly 200 million inhabitants representing the most populous Islamic state in the world.
2. Hinduism: India and Nepal largely characterized by Hindu traditions. Additionally, there is a significant Hindu minority in Indonesia, particularly in Bali.
3. Buddhism: In Thailand and Bhutan, Buddhism is the official state religion. In Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka, Buddhism is the most widely practiced religion. Other currents of Buddhism in Tibet and Mongolia plays a key role in religious life.
4. Shintoism: In Japan, there is a Buddhism and Shintoism, the traditional Japanese religion.
5. Christianity: The Philippines with their mainly Christian resident and Korea with substantial Christian section of the population.
6. Confucianism: Widely spread in China, Japan, and Korea. In China, Buddhism and Confucianism are traditional Chinese popular beliefs that are viewed more as an ethical or moral view of the world. A similar situation exists in Singapore, where the majority of the population is of Chinese descent.

All of these Asian countries have their own teachings and beliefs that differ from one another. However, the cultural source of "Asian values" most commonly found in Confucianism (Robison, 1996). The Confucianism referred is not the original set of ethics advocated by Confucius, but rather the state-centred form adopted by successive Chinese emperors. Confucianism focuses on people and relationships, guiding behavior within a traditional Chinese hierarchical society. It compares the relationship between rulers and their subjects to that between fathers and sons, with subjects expected to show obedience and respect to their rulers/fathers. In turn, rulers/fathers are encouraged to be virtuous leaders, governing through example, encouragement, and education rather than by the arbitrary imposition of his will (Barr, 2000). Confucianism is characterized as an ethical framework and humanistic perspective that

prioritizes proper behavior in relationships, personal virtue, respect for authority, family loyalty and the importance of education.

The family holds a significant role in the “Asian values” debate, as it forms the prime conceptual basis of a relational view of society, and serves as a natural, self-sustaining mechanism for providing nurture, socialization, and social services to the population (Goh, 1994 in Barr, 2000). It serves as an emotional and philosophical framework for viewing society as an interconnected whole. Family, education, thrift and a disciplined work ethic are what makes Asian values influential in the running of government bureaucracy.

### **Asian Values in Bureaucratic Governance**

The tendency of the government to hold bureaucracy answerable for its behavior and actions is known as bureaucratic accountability (Mendy, 2023). Bureaucracy is expected to make decisions based on accountability in order to achieve government objectives. The performance of a government institution can be considered effective if its accountability report is reliable, trustworthy, and accountable. Government bureaucrats should perform their duties in accordance with their knowledge, as well as the norms and ethics that guide their work, in this instance, are influenced by Asian values.

Accountability is universally acknowledged as a fundamental principle in public sector governance. It has been used frequently by citizens, politicians, policy makers, practitioners, bureaucrats, and academicians. Accountability serves as a crucial tool or an instrument for maintaining quality governance within the bureaucratic systems. It pertains to the conduct, performance, actions, and decisions of bureaucrats. The government has put in place various plans, policies, and institutional frameworks to ensure that those in positions of authority are held responsible for their actions and performance to the public. Consequently, bureaucrats are pressured to justify their operational and financial activities while also improving the quality of their service delivery and outcomes (Wang, 2002 in Paudel & Gupta, 2019). The bureaucrats have an obligation and responsibility to act in accordance with the rules, regulations, procedures, and standards set by governments. This compliance is essential for effectively carrying out their duties and achieving higher levels of performance. For organizations to attain excellent governance with a well-functioning and efficient bureaucracy, they must adapt the mindset, culture, and attitudes of their people to align with the evolving environment (Mendy, 2023).

Ackerman perspective on accountability, describes two distinct types of accountability: accountability as honesty and accountability as performance. He explains that the honesty version is focused on adherence to established processes and is viewed negatively, as it assesses duty bearers based on their compliance with standard operating procedures over time. In contrast,

performance-based accountability is oriented towards results and is considered positive, emphasizing the evaluation of outcomes at the end of projects. Thus, accountability as honesty is linked to following rules, whereas accountability as performance pertains to the proactive, efficient, and effective performance expected from public decision-makers (Ackerman, 2005 in Paudel & Gupta, 2019). In pursuit of continuous improvement in government, accountability provides the duty bearer and organizations with feedback-based inducements to increase their effectiveness and efficiency in their performance.

It's important to note that the idea of "Asian values" is not universally agreed upon and has been the subject of considerable debate. Interpretations of what constitutes "Asian values" vary between different individual advocates and official government ideologies. Generally, the cultural source of "Asian values" most commonly found in Confucianism. Richard Robison, in his writings *The Politics of "Asian values"*, outlines the core of the common claims about "Asian values" that are often associated with (Robison, 1996):

1. that the focal point of social organization and loyalty is neither the state nor the individual but the family, and that it is the family that provides the model for the organization of authority and responsibility within the political system;
2. that the interests of the community or the group take precedence over the vested interests of individuals. Hence, individual obligations to the community are emphasized over individual rights and freedoms;
3. that political decision-making is arrived at through processes of consensus rather than confrontation through representative political systems;
4. that social cohesion and social harmony are priorities, achieved through moral principles and strong government;
5. that economic growth and development is a concomitant of social cohesion and strong government and a right of every citizen and country.

The "Asian values" perspective is rooted in the idea of society as a cohesive organism, with the state serving as the guardian of the collective interest, transcending individual or conflicting interests. These values should be embraced and lived on by every public servant in order to achieve the main goal of government towards progress.

### **Case Studies: Examining the Role of Asian Values**

The idea of "Asian values" has been widely examined and debated in academic literature, policy circles, and public discourse. Both supporting and opposing viewpoints have shaped the understanding of these values. Below are some sources and notable figures linked to the discourse

on Asian values:

The Nobel laureate economist, Amartya Sen is a prominent critic of the concept of Asian values, arguing that it has been used to justify authoritarianism and limit political and social freedoms. He pointed out that violations of freedom and democracy persist globally. A new set of arguments has arisen that challenges the universal significance of these freedoms. One of the main assertions is that Asian values do not place the same emphasis on freedom as Western values do. According to this view, due to these differing value systems, Asia should remain true to its own political priorities (Sen, 1997).

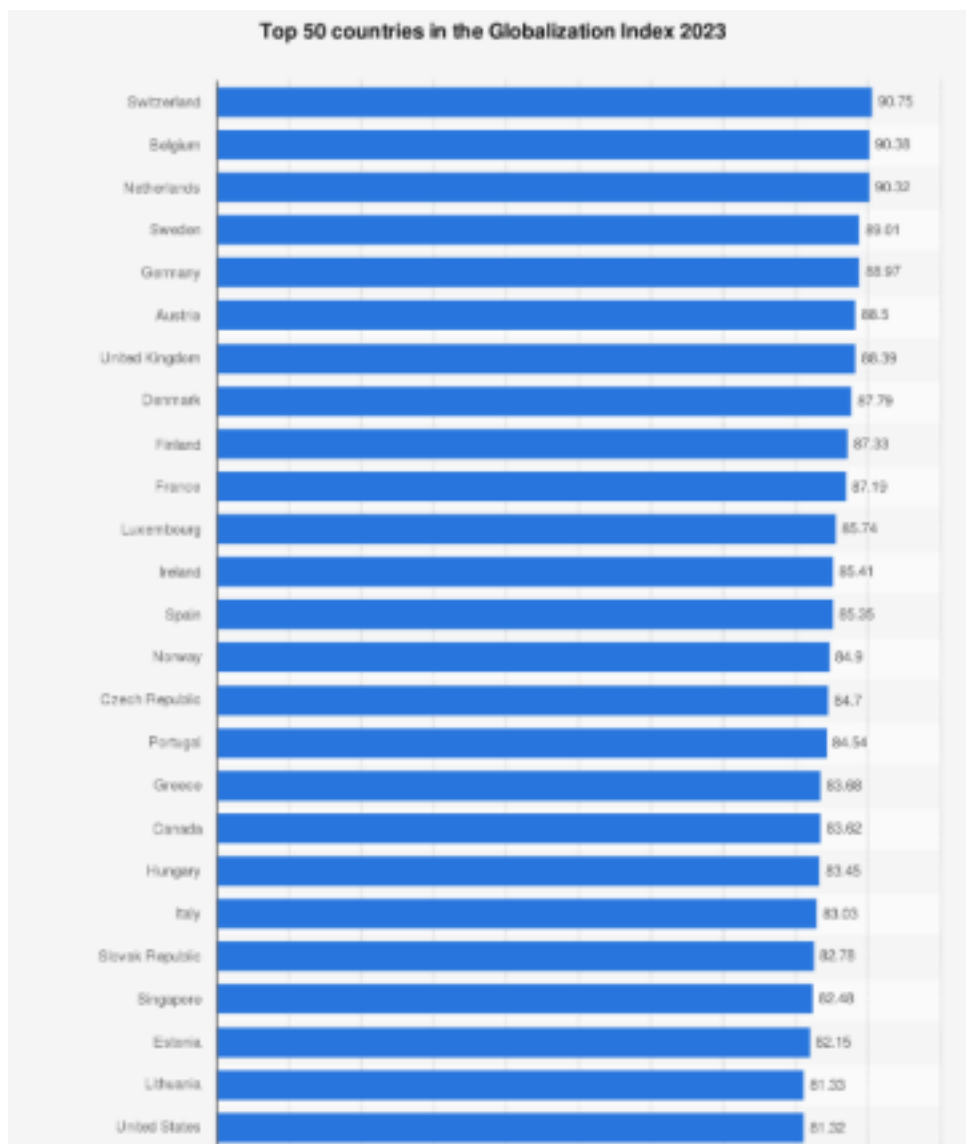
However, Asian value support came from the opinions of other experts. Mahathir Mohamad, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia in the 1990s was a prominent advocate of Asian values. He argued for a form of governance that integrated cultural values with economic development. He explained that the Malaysian perspective of "Asian values" is based on Malay-Islamic culture and should be protected against absorption by "Western values". He urged the three most basic elements of "Malayness", feudalism, Islam, and adat (traditional customs), should all be classed as features to be merely accepted as realities and perhaps adapted to modern needs (Barr, 2000). Mahathir (Mahathir and Ishihara, 1995: 71-86) rejected universalism or the Western liberal notion of human rights which, he believed, can corrupt Malaysian culture and religious beliefs.

Mahathir criticizes Western values as being characterized by "hedonism," which includes materialism, sensual gratification, and selfishness. He argues that Western societies prioritize individual desires over communal well-being, leading to the erosion of traditional institutions and a decline in respect for marriage, family values, elders, and key customs and traditions. According to Mahathir, these values have been replaced by a new set that largely rejects spiritual faith and communal life. Hence, Western societies face issues such as single-parent families, which he associates with various social problems, including incest, homosexuality, cohabitation, unrestrained avarice, disrespect for others and rejection of religious teachings and values (Langguth G, 2003).

The first Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew also contributed significantly to the discourse on Asian values. He claimed that Asian cultures are so different from western cultures (Barr, 2000). For him certain traditional values such as respect for authority and emphasis on education were crucial for Asia's development. "Asian values" became a central part of Lee Kuan Yew's political thought in the 1960s. The prime tactical premise of the "Asian values" argument is one of cultural relativism: that many of the hegemonic political, social and cultural norms of the late twentieth century are western, rather than universal, norms and no more legitimate than alternative norms that could be considered "Asian". This premise taints the claimed hegemonic

norms with the odour of cultural imperialism, to which advocates of “Asian values” respond with strong, some say exaggerated, assertions of state sovereignty (Inoue 1999, 30-34 in Barr, 2000).

Singapore serves as an example of successful implementation of Asian values. Although it was once colonized by the British and English is the predominant language due to the significant number of foreign residents, Singapore continues to use Malay as its national language. A large portion of Singapore's population consists of foreigners, particularly of Chinese descent, who make up 42% of the total population. Operating under a parliamentary republic system with power vested in the Prime Minister, Singapore has evolved into one of the most advanced countries in Asia. In addition to its low levels of corruption, Singapore is also regarded as a comfortable place to live, thanks to its government's focus on public welfare and the provision of adequate infrastructure.



Source: *The KOF Index of Globalization (2023)*

Singapore has demonstrated rapid economic growth. In 2023, it achieved a rank of 22 on the Globalization Index with a score of 82.48, surpassing the United States, which is ranked 25th. This marks a notable achievement, even though Singapore had previously held the top position in 2006. The country's stable political and security environment has made it a prime investment destination for many nations. The influence of Confucianism on Singapore's success is significant, reflecting a broader trend observed in newly industrialized countries in East Asia, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea, which share a similar cultural background, predominantly influenced by Confucianism (Hartati, 2018).

In a speech delivered in Munich in June 1996, Lee Kuan Yew expressed concern that traditional values in Singapore might be eroded by economic development. He noted the challenge of fully controlling the influence of Western values, which penetrate through media and television. The citizens of Singapore who enjoy traveling, are exposed to various foreign ideas. Lee Kuan Yew observed that the individualism prevalent in the West contrasts sharply with the family- and community-oriented ethics found in Confucian-influenced Asia. He believed that this emphasis on community over individualism was a key factor in Asia's economic rise and the foundations for Singapore's success (Barr, 2000).

The Korean politician Kim Dae Jung responds to Lee Kuan Yew's assertion by stating that while culture is not necessarily our destiny, but Democracy is. He highlighted Asia's rich cultural heritage and the fact that Asia had potential contribution to the global world. Kim emphasized that Asia's rich heritage of democratically orientated philosophies and traditions would make a significant contribution to the development of democracy worldwide.

On 15 January 1991, Government introduced The Shared Values for Singaporeans of all ethnic groups to embrace as the nation progressed into the 21st century. The aim of introducing the shared values was to help forge a Singaporean identity that would incorporate the various aspects of the nation's multicultural heritage with the attitudes and values that had contributed to Singapore's success. The Shared Values represent five national principles that incorporate perspectives and values from Confucianism (*Singapore's National Library Board*, 1991). The five values in The Shared Values are:

1. Nation before community and society above self,
2. Family as the basic unit of society,
3. Community support and respect for the individual,
4. Consensus, not conflict, and
5. Racial and religious harmony.

The Shared Values reflect a hierarchy within society, where the nation and its interests are prioritized above individual and family interests. This value emphasizes the importance of

harmonious relationships within families and across different races and religions, aligning with the concept of living in harmony. In accordance with Confucian principles that emphasize harmony, The Shared Values promote consensus and avoid conflict. Community support, which mirrors Confucian values, also involves paying special attention to those less fortunate through voluntary social activities. (Hartati, 2018).

The implementation of The Shared Values has successfully shaped the character of Singaporean society to prioritize the interests of the nation over individual interests. This focus has fostered social order in community life and political stability in supporting national progress. Additionally, Singapore places a high value on meritocracy, where leaders and officials are selected based on their intellectual abilities rather than wealth, family background, or social status. Meritocracy plays a crucial role in a country's advancement, as it ensures that state power is held by individuals who are genuinely competent in their fields.

There is no discrimination within the government in Singapore. Moreover, governmental authority is highly respected. This authority establishes a hierarchy between the government and the public, leading to social order. Through moral education, Singapore also emphasizes the importance of cognitive learning combined with discipline, such as the principle of self discipline taught in Confucianism. Instilling the value of discipline from an early age is expected to prepare children for adulthood and their future careers, ultimately forming the foundation for a well-structured society.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

In Indonesia, the bureaucratic system plays a fundamental role in public service but faces significant challenges. The current administrative system and legal framework are remnants of the colonial government, which prioritized colonial interests. The existing structure, norms, values, and regulations still focus more on serving the interests of the rulers rather than fulfilling the civil rights of citizens (Prasojo & Kurniawan, 2008). The current administrative system is still heavily influenced by Western values, where the government maintains power and controls individual behavior. This is regrettable because the primary task of bureaucracy should be to provide the best possible service to the public.

The colonial-oriented structure, norms, values, and regulations have hindered efforts to meet the aspirations and needs of the public. The quality and performance of the bureaucracy in providing public services remain far from expectations. The bureaucratic focus, which should prioritize public needs, is now often used by bureaucrats and politicians as a means to fulfill their own desires and power. It is no surprise, therefore, that corruption, collusion, and nepotism thrive within the government.

There is a tendency among some East Asia's political leader to give Asian values a bad name by seeking to justify abuse of power and the inequities of their societies in the name of Asian values. For example, corruption, collusion, and nepotism should be condemned by all Asians (Koh, 2000). The negative stigma associated with bureaucrats in the public's mind is a direct result of the actions of the bureaucrats themselves. Issues such as laziness, lack of discipline, mismatches between performance and productivity, difficulty in dismissing employees, and corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN) are significant problems that need to be addressed promptly. To eliminate this negative stigma, the Indonesian government must continuously enhance its efficiency and productivity (Tauhid et al., 2023) and incorporate Asian values into its bureaucratic system, with a focus on serving the public.

The Indonesian government's various initiatives to implement bureaucratic reforms aim to enhance the competence of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN), moving towards world-class bureaucracy. Law No. 20 of the State Civil Apparatus of 2023 (UU ASN), outlines the political implementation and management strategies for the State Civil Apparatus, focusing on improving the bureaucracy through the principles of professionalism, proportionality, accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness (Law No.20 of the State Civil Apparatus of 2023).

According to the Law, the duty of the State Civil Apparatus is to carry out public services, performing state duties, and handling specific development tasks. To fulfill these roles effectively, it is essential to cultivate a State Civil Apparatus that is honest, professional, and impartial, with no political interference, corruption, conspiracy and nepotism. Additionally, the State Civil Apparatus should be capable of serving the public and acting as a unifying force for the nation, in alignment with Pancasila and the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945.

The Minister of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform (MenPAN-RB) launched a policy based on Smart ASN, which aims to be fully implemented by 2024. This initiative is designed to enhance the quality of public services in the context of the Industrial Age and Revolution 4.0. Smart ASN is a space where world-class, developed, and competitive civil servants perform their work (Cahyarini & Samsara, 2021). Civil servants must follow and practice professional behavior, be honest and fair, always keep promises, be firm and disciplined, love their profession, and have noble morals (Tauhid et al., 2023).

Moreover, following the industrial age and revolution 4.0 in 2024, Indonesia must also prepare for society era 5.0 or the *super smart society*, where a variety of new job types that have never existed before will emerge. To ensure that society can compete effectively, comprehensive changes across various sectors are required. A demographic bonus is expected between 2030 and 2040, when the population will be predominantly composed of productive age groups. This presents a collective challenge, particularly in building an intelligent society capable of actively

leveraging and benefiting from technological advancements.

Every bureaucrat must embody a spirit of nationalism in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities. Being Indonesian means embracing friendliness and promoting ethical attitudes and behaviors. Hospitality, in this context, extends beyond mere courtesy to encompass the entire approach and language used in service. By adhering to ethical guidelines, civil servants can significantly contribute to the success of the city government. True hospitality involves demonstrating knowledge, attitudes, ethics, and service skills. The State Civil Apparatus should offer welcoming and attentive service to ensure that the public feels comfortable, valued, and well-served.

The Government must oversee and support the development, implementation, and evaluation of civil servant programs to advance bureaucratic reform. This approach aims to cultivate adaptive, accountable, and competent civil servants, ultimately striving to create “World-Class Smart Civil Servants.” The goal is to shift the mindset and culture of civil servants and elevating the quality of public services for the betterment of society (Tauhid et al., 2023).

## **Conclusion**

In the midst of increasingly advanced and dynamic times, Asian countries must also strive to enhance their quality in all aspects. Achieving world-class bureaucracy should not merely be a slogan but should be pursued through significant changes toward improvement, in alignment with global developments. Government must invest in the capacities and capabilities of the public sector human resource to maintain its innovativeness, and preparedness in the VUCA world.

The evolution of bureaucracy has reached the stage of digitization. All aspects of government bureaucracy should now be available in digital form. Increased public access to information and transparency is essential for a transparent government bureaucracy. With rising accountability in public information transparency, it is hoped that public trust in the government will increase and the negative stigma associated with state civil apparatus can be eliminated.

Additionally, the government must enforce accountability requirements for all administrators, including low-level bureaucrats. An institutional approach examines the principal-agent assumptions regarding what accountability entails, how it is demanded, rendered, evaluated, and assigned, as well as how accountability institutions function and change (Mendy, 2023). Accountability can make government bureaucrats aware of the consequences of unethical behavior in modern governance. Bureaucrats are obligated to explain, answer, justify, and defend their actions and performance (Paudel & Gupta, 2019).

Due to globalization, information technology, and increased human mobility, we have

truly become citizens of one world. We must therefore develop a global consensus on what is good and evil, and right and wrong. The new Asia can make important contributions toward the development of such a consensus. We must adapt and emphasize the positive aspects of Asian values that promote progress, rather than endorsing negative practices in the name of Asian value.

Asian values can serve as a source of “*enlightenment*” for Asia. Evidence of the successful application of these values is seen in the rapid development of countries like Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan. The teachings of Confucius, which have significantly contributed to Singapore's economic growth, emphasize adherence and loyalty, the understanding that the state is a moral agent actively involved in societal development, respect for status and hierarchy, a focus on personal development and education, and attention to social harmony (Hartati, 2018).

The concept of Confucianism in Confucian ethics focuses on self improvement and personal development. It includes a strong work ethic characterized by diligence, seriousness, and respect for higher authority, honoring one's parents, and continuously seeking consensus and harmony. Additionally, Confucian ethics emphasizes order and stability.

"Asian values" encompass cultural norms and principles that prioritize community, respect for authority, familial and social bonds, economic stability, and moral integrity. These values often contrast with Western ideals of individualism, democratic governance, and personal freedom, leading to different approaches in social and political organization. Asian values are closely linked to the principle of accountability, which is crucial for ensuring the quality of bureaucrats and maintaining good governance within the government's delivery system. It encourages bureaucrats to be responsible for their actions and performance (Paudel & Gupta, 2019).

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