Leveraging new emerging technologies to enhance the anticorruption arsenal: Assimilating India's experiential insights into Uzbekistan's criminoverse

Abhishek Thommandru* | Fazilov Farkhud Maratovich

Abstract: Corruption looms large throughout Uzbekistan's sociopolitical landscape, stifling economic growth and social harmony. To combat this formidable challenge, Uzbekistan seeks to draw upon India's extensive experience in harnessing new emerging technologies (NETs), such as the Digital India mission and the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), for effective anticorruption measures. This paper conducts a comprehensive exploration of Uzbekistan's corruption landscape, unveiling the historical, cultural, and institutional factors that fuel this pervasive issue. This paper also delves into the severe consequences of corruption for Uzbekistan's economy, governance, and society, emphasizing the critical need for robust anticorruption strategies. Leveraging India's proven insights, it meticulously dissects successful strategies tailored to the Indian context. This includes strengthening anticorruption laws, empowering anticorruption agencies, fostering transparency, promoting accountability, and engaging civil society. Recognizing that combating corruption demands a multidimensional approach, this paper advocates a holistic strategy encompassing legal, institutional, societal, and cultural dimensions. Through comparative analysis, this paper offers recommendations for Uzbekistan's anticorruption arsenal. These include establishing specialized anticorruption agencies, enacting comprehensive legislation criminalizing all forms of corruption, promoting transparency and accountability via digital platforms, and nurturing a culture of integrity through educational and awareness initiatives. Acknowledging the disparities between Uzbekistan and India, this paper underscores the importance of adapting strategies to the local context. This study highlights the significance of institutional capacity building, international collaboration, and civil society engagement in anticorruption endeavors. Furthermore, unwavering political commitment and leadership are stressed as pivotal elements in the fight against corruption. In conclusion, the integration of India's experiential insights and the strategic utilization of new emerging technologies provide Uzbekistan with a unique opportunity to confront and overcome its pervasive corruption challenges. By embracing these recommendations and tailoring them to their specific context, Uzbekistan can aspire to become a more transparent, accountable, and corruption-free society. This transformation holds the promise of sustainable development, good governance, and social justice for its citizens.

Keywords: criminoverse, Uzbekistan, anti-corruption, governance, transparency

1. Introduction

Addressing corruption in Uzbekistan is an ongoing and complex issue deeply rooted within the country's historical and political context; this issue requires sustained efforts and collaboration to overcome, exerting a pervasive influence on the nation's sociopolitical landscape. Its adverse effects extend beyond mere financial misappropriation, posing a substantial impediment to development and progress. Addressing this critical issue necessitates a strategic and innovative approach aimed at fostering good governance and integrity. In this context, the integration of experiential insights from India, a nation known for its diverse anticorruption initiatives and reform efforts, presents a promising avenue to bolster Uzbekistan's anticorruption strategies.

This paper embarks on an exploration of Uzbekistan's complex criminoverse, with a central focus on the pervasive issue of corruption that has afflicted the nation persistently. The multifaceted nature of corruption intertwines with historical legacies and contemporary political dynamics, creating a complex landscape that requires a multifaceted response. As Uzbekistan grapples with the challenge of corruption, it becomes imperative to draw inspiration and insights from successful anticorruption experiences. This paper delves into the intricate web of corruption within Uzbekistan's criminal justice system while also examining India's accomplishments in implementing anticorruption reforms. By assimilating these insights, we aim to identify potential solutions and develop a more effective approach to combating corruption in Uzbekistan.

India's journey in combating corruption has yielded a wealth of qualitative data, shedding light on effective strategies and initiatives that can be adapted to suit Uzbekistan's unique environment. Notably, with a focus on harnessing new
emerging technologies (NETs), such as blockchain-enabled Know Your Customer (KYC) systems and other practices that promote accountability and transparency in the economy and governance, India’s experiential insights serve as a valuable knowledge repository. This research undertakes a comprehensive analysis encompassing qualitative case studies, expert interviews, and meticulous data examination to uncover the potential applicability of India’s anticorruption insights within the Uzbekistani context. It aims to elucidate how these insights, although cultivated within a different sociopolitical milieu, can be suitably tailored, and customized to address the nuanced intricacies of corruption in Uzbekistan.

Recognizing the diversity of challenges and opportunities that Uzbekistan presents, this paper refrains from proposing a universal remedy. Instead, it advocates for a context-specific approach tailored to Uzbekistan’s unique circumstances in the fight against corruption. Through a critical examination and synthesis of India’s experiences, this research endeavors to provide Uzbekistan with a roadmap to enhancing its anticorruption efforts by promoting transparency, accountability, and ethical governance.

In anticipation of the future, this paper envisions how Uzbekistan can learn from India’s experiences and assimilate these new emerging technology insights into its own anticorruption narrative. By embracing and adapting these lessons, Uzbekistan can take a significant stride toward cultivating a culture of integrity and justice, ultimately augmenting the well-being and prosperity of its citizens.

1.1. Criminoverse and overview of Uzbekistan’s situation in terms of corruption and crime

The term "criminoverse" encapsulates the intricate web of cultural, political, legal, social, and economic factors that collectively define the landscape within which crimes unfold and are addressed. It represents the universe of criminal activity within a specific geographic region, be it a country, region, or community. The criminoverse is a dynamic and multifaceted system molded by a myriad of influences, including historical legacies, geographical features, demographic composition, infrastructure, institutional structures, societal norms, values, and belief systems. It encompasses not only the crimes themselves but also the strategies and mechanisms employed to prevent, detect, investigate, prosecute, and punish these transgressions. As societies evolve, so does the criminoverse, adapting to new forms of criminal activity, emerging technologies, and shifts in social, political, and economic conditions. Therefore, comprehending criminoverse is essential for the effective functioning of law enforcement, the criminal justice system, and crime prevention efforts.

Uzbekistan, nestled in Central Asia, grapples with a pervasive problem of corruption and crime, as underscored by its rankings on the Corruption Perceptions Index. In 2020, Uzbekistan occupied the 153rd position out of 180 countries, with marginal improvement in 2022 but still concerning 120th out of 180 countries. This ranking underscores the substantial challenge posed by corruption within the nation. Corruption in Uzbekistan manifests in a spectrum of forms, ranging from everyday instances of petty corruption in routine services to more severe instances of high-level corruption deeply entrenched within government agencies. Bribery, nepotism, and embezzlement are among the prevalent forms of corruption plaguing Uzbekistan’s sociopolitical landscape. Moreover, the nation’s law enforcement authorities face significant obstacles in addressing crime, especially organized criminal activities such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, and the presence of well-established criminal syndicates. While the government has made commendable efforts to combat corruption and crime, these endeavors have highlighted the pressing need for comprehensive and transformative reforms to establish a robust anticorruption framework in Uzbekistan (Khidirov, 2021).

Another pressing concern within the Uzbekistani criminal justice system is the pervasive influence of organized crime groups, often operating with sophisticated and extensive networks deeply embedded within the nation. In response, the government has established specialized agencies tasked with investigating and prosecuting organized crime cases. These efforts have encountered challenges, including instances of administrative issues and external factors that have occasionally impacted their effectiveness.

To effectively address the challenge of organized crime, Uzbekistan can draw valuable lessons from India’s experience in confronting similar issues, notably exemplified by its encounter with the infamous Mumbai underworld. India’s approach encompasses a multifaceted strategy involving intelligence-led operations, proactive policing measures, and the enforcement of stringent legal statutes to disrupt and dismantle organized criminal networks. The adoption of comparable tactics could significantly enhance Uzbekistan’s capacity to combat organized crime and concurrently strengthen its broader criminal justice system (Lewis, 2016).

2. India’s experience in anticorruption measures

India’s protracted battle against corruption, a deeply entrenched societal issue, has prompted the implementation of a multifaceted array of measures aimed at mitigating its adverse effects. Notably, the establishment of the Central Vigilance Commission in 1964 was instrumental in its role in diligently monitoring instances of corruption within governmental agencies (Peisakhin, 2010). Simultaneously, the Right to Information Act of 2005 marked a watershed moment, significantly bolstering transparency and curbing corrupt practices by granting citizens access to government information. Furthermore, the inception of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act in 2014 represented a noteworthy stride toward establishing an autonomous...
Thommandru and Maratovich (2024)

anticorruption ombudsman tasked with investigating allegations of corruption involving public officials. However, it is pertinent to acknowledge that despite these commendable efforts, corruption continues to exert a profound influence within the intricate fabric of Indian society. The prevalence of bribery and nepotism in governmental and business transactions underscores the formidable challenge of addressing deeply ingrained systemic corruption. This enduring challenge accentuates the imperative for persistent, innovative strategies to effectively confront and mitigate this issue (Reddy, 2005).

In alignment with India's evolving anticorruption priorities, the government has embarked on an array of initiatives in recent years to combat this pervasive issue. These include legislative measures such as the Prevention of Corruption Act of 1988; the establishment of pivotal institutions, including the Central Vigilance Commission and the Central Bureau of Investigation; and the implementation of transformative schemes such as the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Digital India. The groundbreaking digital payment system (UPI) has significantly reduced the scope of corruption by facilitating secure and efficient digital transactions (Pal, 2018). Additionally, Digital India aims to digitalize government services comprehensively, thereby minimizing opportunities for corrupt practices. Moreover, government-led initiatives such as the "Jan Dhan Yojana" have been introduced to ensure universal access to bank accounts, further strengthening financial transparency. Simultaneously, the "Direct Benefit Transfer" scheme was devised to disburse government subsidies directly into beneficiaries' bank accounts, thereby curbing the involvement of intermediaries and mitigating opportunities for corruption. These proactive measures provide valuable insights and inspiration for nations grappling with corruption, exemplifying the potential efficacy of similar strategies, including digitalization, in curbing corrupt practices (Tummala, 2002).

Nevertheless, despite the multitude of anticorruption initiatives, India's battle against corruption has been marked by both successes and setbacks. As evidenced in Figure 1, which depicts India's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) score and rank over the past decade, the nation continues to grapple with perceived corruption. The 2013 Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, which represents a significant stride toward corruption prevention, has encountered challenges in its implementation. The Right to Information Act of 2005, a pivotal instrument for fostering transparency and accountability in government departments, faces obstacles due to the reluctance of public officials to share information and a lack of awareness among citizens regarding the provisions of the act. The introduction of e-governance initiatives, most notably Digital India, has streamlined government processes but grappled with issues such as inadequate cybersecurity measures (Sinha, 2011). Concurrently, the contentious events surrounding demonetization in 2016 and the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) exposed deficiencies in the government's ability to plan and execute anticorruption measures effectively. Nonetheless, these experiences serve as valuable lessons, enabling India to refine and augment its anticorruption arsenal, with digitalization and UPI emerging as pivotal tools in the fight against corruption (Sondhi, 2000).

2.1. Relatability of India’s experience in the Uzbekistan context

Given the systemic and pervasive nature of corruption in both nations, the anticorruption endeavors of India provide pertinent insights into Uzbekistan's context. Notably, India's anticorruption movement, epitomized by the Lokpal bill of 2011-2012, offers a viable model for Uzbekistan's efforts to fortify its anticorruption framework. Like in India, Uzbekistan has witnessed the emergence of civil society groups advocating for heightened transparency and accountability within its government, catalyzing advocacy for anticorruption legislative reforms. Figure 2, Uzbekistan continues to rank low in terms of corruption perception, underscoring the need for robust anticorruption strategies. India's adept utilization of technological innovations, as exemplified by the Public Interest Disclosure and Protection of Persons Making the Disclosures Bill of 2010, has extended the reach of anticorruption measures to remote and underserved areas. Uzbekistan, confronted with physical and social infrastructure barriers, can similarly harness such technological innovations to surmount these challenges.
Ultimately, by leveraging India’s experiences and strategies, Uzbekistan can effectively address corruption and cultivate a culture characterized by transparency and accountability (Sinha, 2011).

Furthermore, it is pivotal to recognize the substantial role played by the private sector in mitigating corruption within Uzbekistan. Corporations must adopt and maintain ethical and transparent business practices to set an exemplary standard for others to emulate. Achieving this goal necessitates the implementation of robust internal controls, including comprehensive anti-bribery and anti-corruption policies and procedures. Furthermore, fostering a corporate culture that prioritizes integrity and honesty is paramount in sustaining ethical conduct.

Additionally, corporations should acknowledge the ripple effect of their actions on society and assume accountability for their broader impact. Collaborative endeavors between the private sector and the government to promote anticorruption initiatives and offer support for their implementation can be highly efficacious. Through synergy, these entities can collectively cultivate a milieu characterized by transparency, accountability, and ethical behavior, thus effectively combatting corruption within Uzbekistan (Jurkiewicz, 2019).

Uzbekistan has recently witnessed a substantial overhaul of its anti-corruption policies. In 2017, Mirziyoyev announced the establishment of a specialized anticorruption agency tasked with the investigation and prosecution of corruption cases. This represents a significant departure from the prior system, which relied predominantly on the Prosecutor General’s office for the handling of corruption cases. As illustrated in Figure 3, Uzbekistan has marginally improved its CPIA transparency and corruption score in recent years, coinciding with its policy changes. Furthermore, the introduction of mandatory asset declarations for public officials signifies a pivotal step in augmenting transparency and accountability. The newly formed agency represents a promising development in Uzbekistan’s anticorruption efforts owing to its composition of trained investigators and prosecutors who are better equipped to navigate intricate corruption cases. Furthermore, the introduction of mandatory asset declarations for public officials signifies a pivotal step in augmenting transparency and accountability. Nevertheless, there are concerns that the current anti-corruption strategy of the Uzbekistani government may overemphasize punitive measures, potentially overshadowing the critical imperative of addressing the root causes of corruption, including weak institutional frameworks and deficiencies in transparency (Cordella and Basu, 2018).

The Uzbek Criminal Code encompasses various actions recognized internationally as corrupt practices, such as embezzlement, abuse of public office, and bribery in various forms. However, there are significant gaps in the Criminal Code

Figure 2 Uzbekistan Corruption Rank.

Figure 3 The World Bank CPIA Transparency, Accountability, and Corruption in the Public Sector.


The Uzbek Criminal Code encompasses various actions recognized internationally as corrupt practices, such as embezzlement, abuse of public office, and bribery in various forms. However, there are significant gaps in the Criminal Code
that need consideration. These include the lack of specific provisions for bribery by foreign public officials and the lack of gifts provided to public officials. Additionally, there are no defined offenses related to nonmaterial gain bribery, third-party bribery, or the promise of a bribe, distinct from the actual exchange of bribes. Uzbekistan's legislative framework also deviates from OECD conventions, particularly in distinguishing between bribery within the private and public sectors, which could raise concerns about the proportionality of criminal penalties for private sector offenses (Urinboyev, 2018).

Notably, Uzbekistan's regulation of conflicts of interest is limited by its narrow definition of “conflict of interest” and lack of comprehensive regulation in this area. There are no legal constraints on postpublic service employment, even within entities previously overseen by the respective public servant. The country lacks provisions mandating asset disclosure by public officials and does not have a systematic procedure for evaluating conflicts of interest in public procurement.

Furthermore, Uzbekistan lacks legal safeguards to protect whistleblowers who come forward with corruption allegations, highlighting a significant gap in its anticorruption framework. While the Uzbekistani government has implemented policies aimed at modernization, liberalization, and economic growth, in addition to efforts to combat corruption, challenges remain. These include limited independent media outlets and political opposition, which hinder comprehensive corruption eradication and the promotion of democratic governance. Addressing these challenges will require continued government attention and intervention to build a more transparent and accountable system. Uzbekistan's efforts to combat corruption and organized crime have made progress, with increased transparency and accountability. However, eradicating corruption entirely remains a challenging task. While the government has raised penalties for corruption and empowered law enforcement, systemic issues such as weak institutional frameworks and insufficient political will persist. The economy's reliance on extractive industries also makes it vulnerable to corruption. Addressing these foundational problems is crucial for effectively tackling corruption and associated criminal activities. Furthermore, Uzbekistan's judiciary lacks independence, often collaborating closely with prosecutors and law enforcement, and acquittals are rare. The legal system emphasizes obtaining confessions, and bribery is sometimes used to avoid conviction, particularly in politically significant cases. Unfortunately, impartial judicial forums are scarce, particularly in major business disputes, further complicating the fight against corruption and organized crime (Lasslet, 2017).

The Higher Economic Court, which is ostensibly responsible for overseeing economic matters, is not regarded as a trustworthy venue for resolving disputes by businesspeople. In fact, this court has been implicated in many contentious expropriation cases and unfavorable judgments against foreign investors, as detailed in the preceding section of this report. Independent legal practitioners have faced sustained harassment and pressure from state authorities for an extended period. Securing adequate legal defense counsel is a challenging task for most individuals accused of crimes. This predicament has been exacerbated since January 2009 when a new law came into effect, effectively dismantling previously autonomous lawyers' associations and replacing them with an entity subordinate to the Ministry of Justice. According to a Human Rights Watch report, this law has significantly weakened the criminal defense bar, effectively silencing advocates who were willing to take on politically sensitive cases and raise allegations of torture in court (Urinboyev, 2013). This legal transformation has resulted in a loss of independence for lawyers in Uzbekistan, rendering them reliant on the executive branch of the government. As illustrated in Figure 4, Uzbekistan's Corruption Perceptions Index score has remained very low over the past decade, reflecting ongoing corruption challenges. There are frequent reports in the media detailing instances of judges accepting bribes, both in civil and criminal cases. A survey of businesses revealed that more than 20 percent of respondents admitted to paying bribes “frequently,” “usually,” or “always” during court proceedings. However, it is important to distinguish these incidents from cases involving influential political or business figures. In such high-profile cases, judges often find themselves with limited discretion, compelled to comply with the decisions dictated by those in positions of power (Abrah and Hyder, 2021).

![Corruption Perceptions Index](https://www.malque.pub/ojs/index.php/mr)

**CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>126</td>
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**Figure 4** Corruption Perceptions Index Uzbekistan.
The position of Uzbekistan in the rankings has improved due to a significant increase in budget transparency, openness in the financial and banking sectors, and efforts to address concerns related to the judiciary. The Higher Economic Court, which is ostensibly responsible for overseeing economic matters, is not regarded as a trustworthy venue for resolving disputes by businesses. In fact, this court has been implicated in many contentious expropriation cases and unfavorable judgments against foreign investors, as detailed in the preceding section of this report. Independent legal practitioners have faced sustained harassment and pressure from state authorities for an extended period. Securing adequate legal defense counsel is a challenging task for most individuals accused of crimes. This predicament has been exacerbated since January 2009 when a new law came into effect, effectively dismantling previously autonomous lawyers' associations and replacing them with an entity subordinate to the Ministry of Justice. According to a Human Rights Watch report, this law has significantly weakened the criminal defense bar, effectively silencing advocates who were willing to take on politically sensitive cases and raise allegations of torture in court. This legal transformation has resulted in a loss of independence for lawyers in Uzbekistan, rendering them reliant on the executive branch of the government. There are frequent reports in the media detailing instances of judges accepting bribes, both in civil and criminal cases. A survey of businesses revealed that more than 20 percent of respondents admitted to paying bribes “frequently,” “usually,” or “always” during court proceedings. However, it is important to distinguish these incidents from cases involving influential political or business figures. In such high-profile cases, judges often find themselves with limited discretion, compelled to comply with the decisions dictated by those in positions of power.

3.1. Legal loopholes exploited by corrupt individuals or syndicates

Like in many other countries, corruption in Uzbekistan has been facilitated by a range of legal and institutional loopholes that have allowed corrupt individuals and syndicates to operate with relative impunity (Caiden, 2018) While it is important to emphasize that efforts have been made to address these issues, significant challenges remain. Some of the legal loopholes exploited by corrupt entities in Uzbekistan include the following:

1. Bureaucratic Red Tape: Complex bureaucratic procedures, coupled with a lack of transparency, can slow administrative processes. This creates opportunities for corrupt officials to expedite processes in exchange for bribes.

2. Inconsistent Enforcement of Anti-Corruption Laws: Although anticorruption laws exist in Uzbekistan, their enforcement has been inconsistent, allowing corrupt individuals to evade legal consequences. This inconsistency can be attributed to political interference and a lack of independence within the judicial system.

3. Ambiguity in Asset Declarations: Incomplete or ambiguous asset declaration requirements for public officials can create loopholes for concealing ill-gotten wealth. The lack of stringent measures for verifying asset declarations has been exploited to hide corrupt gains.

4. Lack of Whistleblower Protection: The absence of robust protection for whistleblowers exposes individuals who report corruption to potential retaliation. This discourages witnesses from coming forward with valuable information.

5. Political Patronage: Nepotism and political patronage influence key appointments and promotions, allowing well-connected individuals to occupy positions of power and influence, often with impunity.

6. Weak Oversight of Financial Institutions: Inadequate oversight of banks and financial institutions can facilitate money laundering and the movement of illicit funds. This has been exploited by corrupt individuals and organized crime groups to legitimize their ill-gotten gains.

7. Complex Tax Evasion Schemes: Sophisticated tax evasion schemes, including underreporting of income and shell companies, have been used to evade taxes and launder money, with some individuals and entities benefiting from weak tax enforcement.

8. Judicial Independence: The judiciary's lack of complete independence from political influence has led to concerns about the impartiality of legal proceedings, allowing corruption cases to be manipulated or dismissed.

The acknowledgment of Uzbekistan’s government initiatives and recent reforms aimed at addressing legal loopholes facilitating corruption is imperative. These reforms, notably outlined in the "Strategy of Action on Five Priority Areas of Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021," underscore a commitment to modernization and liberalization. The key objectives included opening the economy, attracting foreign investments, and cultivating a more favorable business environment. Consequently, these endeavors have led to tangible outcomes, notably increased job creation and notable economic growth. Concurrently, steps have been taken to combat corruption, exemplified by the establishment of a dedicated anticorruption agency, the promotion of open government practices, and the augmentation of transparency within government procurement processes. Nevertheless, the persistence of corruption serves as a stark reminder of the intricate challenges inherent in addressing these multifaceted issues. This finding underscores the persistent need for sustained efforts directed toward the fortification of legal frameworks, the amplification of transparency, and the cultivation of a culture that prioritizes accountability (Yuldashev, 2019).
Furthermore, in addition to the traditional avenues of bribery and manipulation of the judicial system, corrupt entities in Uzbekistan have leveraged legal loopholes for their advantage. Notably, they have employed tactics such as the utilization of shell companies or intermediaries to obscure ownership of businesses and assets, thereby thwarting authorities' efforts to trace illicit activities and freeze-associated assets. Moreover, some corrupt individuals have exploited legal provisions that allow for plea bargains or reduced sentences, capitalizing on their wealth and influential connections to secure favorable outcomes in court. These legal loopholes not only enable the evasion of punitive measures but also erode public trust in the justice system. Consequently, comprehensive anticorruption efforts in Uzbekistan must extend beyond addressing overt bribery and manipulation to address these legal gaps to preclude further exploitation by corrupt actors (Abdurakhmanov, 2018).

Furthermore, the efficacy of anticorruption endeavors in Uzbekistan is impeded by a lack of transparency and accountability within the legal system. Corrupt officials often manipulate legal processes through their influence, undermining impartial enforcement. Moreover, corruption within the judiciary compromises the ability of judges to uphold the law impartially. This fosters a sense of impunity among those involved in corrupt practices, contributing to the perpetuation of a culture of corruption. To address these issues, concerted efforts are required to enhance the independence and fairness of the judiciary. This entails comprehensive training for judges and prosecutors regarding the implications and consequences of corruption, as well as improvements in legal procedures and enhanced safeguards for whistleblowers. Furthermore, the establishment of an autonomous anticorruption agency endowed with the authority to investigate and prosecute corruption cases has the potential to considerably strengthen Uzbekistan's anticorruption endeavors. Current anti-corruption measures in Uzbekistan have exhibited limitations in eradicating corruption comprehensively. Hence, a more holistic approach informed by India's experiential insights is warranted. Along with India's willingness to implement anticorruption strategies, India's extensive experience and diverse repertoire of these strategies can serve as valuable examples for Uzbekistan (Smith, 2019).

However, to derive maximum benefit from India's experiences, Uzbekistan must meticulously consider cultural and institutional differences and tailor these anticorruption measures to align with its unique needs. The key takeaway from India's experiences is the imperative of determination, political will, and cohesive collaboration among stakeholders in the fight against corruption. Consequently, the Uzbek government must embark on an earnest effort to reinvigorate and recalibrate its anticorruption initiatives, rendering them more comprehensive and efficacious at nurturing a culture characterized by transparency, accountability, and integrity.

Institutional factors are formidable impediments to Uzbekistan's efforts to eradicate corruption from its societal fabric. The nation's intricate institutional framework encompasses numerous state bodies and agencies that frequently operate in isolation, leading to coordination deficits and a failure to identify and address instances of corruption among officials. Moreover, the extensive patronage networks entrenched within Uzbekistan's political and economic elite constrain the government's capacity to effectively prosecute the corrupt. Furthermore, the judiciary, operating under limited powers and lacking independence, operates under the influence of the executive arm of government, impeding equitable justice delivery, particularly in high-level corruption cases. As such, institutional factors emerge as significant threats to Uzbekistan's anti-corruption aspirations, necessitating immediate reforms to imbue the system with enhanced accountability, transparency, and governance (Manion, 2004).

In addition to internal measures, external factors have a substantial influence on reinforcing Uzbekistan's anticorruption initiatives. International organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund can extend their technical assistance through capacity-building, training, and monitoring programs. The embrace and adherence to international legal frameworks, such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), can promote cross-border cooperation in investigating and prosecuting corruption-related offenses. Moreover, diplomatic pressures exerted by foreign nations can incentivize Uzbekistan to address corruption more effectively. International sanctions or the withholding of aid can serve as potent deterrents, signaling the consequences of engaging in corrupt practices. In sum, external support can complement domestic anticorruption measures, bolster Uzbekistan's anticorruption framework, and facilitate international collaboration in the pursuit of a corruption-free society (Zurapov, 2019).

Uzbekistan can also glean valuable lessons from India's initiatives, such as the Digital India program. This program seeks to leverage technology to enhance governance, improve citizen services, and promote digital literacy. Uzbekistan can adopt a similar approach by investing in the requisite infrastructure to develop a digital economy and bolster its e-government capabilities. Additionally, India's experience with decentralization through initiatives such as the Panchayati Raj system has empowered local communities and rendered government processes more transparent and accessible. This approach can be embraced by Uzbekistan to fortify grassroots participation and bolster local governance structures. In sum, Uzbekistan stands to benefit significantly from the study and implementation of India's initiatives, which are tailored to suit its distinctive needs. This adoption, when coupled with technological advancements, will profoundly contribute to the cultivation of a culture underscored by transparency, accountability, and integrity, thereby considerably enhancing Uzbekistan's anticorruption endeavors (Abduazizov, 2022).
4. Crucial Role of ICT in Anticorruption Measures

The rapid proliferation of information and communication technology (ICT) and digitalization in the 21st century holds great promise for transforming societal dynamics and public service delivery. Within the realm of anticorruption efforts, ICT has garnered widespread recognition for its potential to revolutionize the prevention, detection, and prosecution of corrupt practices. Numerous studies affirm that ICT can serve as a catalyst for enhancing transparency, fostering accountability, and promoting citizen engagement. It also facilitates advocacy and strengthens the interaction between government entities and the public. Among the most lauded ICT tools are websites, mobile applications, and emerging technologies such as distributed ledger technology (DLT), big data analysis, and artificial intelligence (AI). These tools contribute significantly to the fight against corruption by improving access to public information, monitoring the activities of officials, digitizing public services, and enabling corruption reporting (Kim, 2014).

However, it is essential to recognize that the mere existence and accessibility of these tools do not guarantee their effective utilization. Their adoption is contingent on the quality of the content provided and the characteristics of the user base. ICTs deployed in anticorruption initiatives operate within the context of existing societal divisions and power dynamics and are often perpetuated by corruption itself. Without careful consideration of corruption and associated power imbalances during their design and implementation, ICT interventions risk inadvertently reinforcing these issues. Consequently, the success of ICT-based anticorruption measures hinges on their alignment with local contexts, specific needs, cultural backgrounds, and levels of technological proficiency (Abu Shanab, 2013).

Nonetheless, the effective combination of contextual factors, ICT functionalities, and corrupt behaviors remains an underexplored area. For instance, how can a digital public service best contribute to combating low-level corruption in a society characterized by inconsistent connectivity? While ICT is frequently examined as a tool for combating corruption, it is essential to acknowledge that it can also have adverse effects when employed in ways that perpetuate corruption. ICT has the potential to bolster the detection and prevention of corruption, particularly at the petty level, by fostering transparency and accountability in governance. Within the realm of anticorruption efforts, ICT is expected to reduce corruption rooted in the principal-agent problem by enabling more effective monitoring of public officials by government supervisors. This is particularly valuable when newly elected governments are keen on combating entrenched corruption. These services also increase transparency by providing government information to citizens and other stakeholders, facilitating accountability.

Table 1: Tech Impact on Corruption & Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S No.</th>
<th>New Emerging Technology</th>
<th>Impact from NET in combating corruption</th>
<th>Empirical Evidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>E-Government Services</td>
<td>E-Government Services are expected to reduce corruption rooted in the principal-agent problem by enabling more effective monitoring of public officials by government supervisors. This is particularly valuable when newly elected governments are keen on combating entrenched corruption. These services also increase transparency by providing government information to citizens and other stakeholders, facilitating accountability.</td>
<td>The literature on the correlation between e-government and corruption is extensive and includes several empirical studies of moderate quality. These studies tend to provide evidence supporting the notion that e-government has a potential role in reducing low-level corruption.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Crowd Funding Platforms</td>
<td>Crowdsourcing is a sourcing model where individuals or organizations obtain goods or services from a large, open, and rapidly evolving group of participants. In the context of anticorruption efforts, crowdsourcing platforms gather reports from citizens on petty corruption incidences, typically via the internet or telephone. These platforms can be driven by government or civil society concerns to reduce petty corruption and inefficiencies in the public sector. Crowdsourcing platforms can increase upward transparency and collective knowledge, increase the threat of exposure, and deter corruption. However, the value of crowdsourcing platforms depends on user participation, which can be affected by factors such as accessibility, skills, mutual expectations, perceptions, vision, and external environment.</td>
<td>There is a notable absence of robust, empirically grounded research regarding the influence of crowdsourcing platforms on corruption. The available evidence is constrained to a handful of case studies that highlight and elucidate the successes or shortcomings of particular platforms, focusing on factors such as participation rates, data generated, and subsequent actions taken.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Whistleblowing tools</td>
<td>Digital Whistleblowing Solutions leverage information and communication technology (ICT) to empower individuals to report instances of corruption involving public officials, collecting</td>
<td>Due to the distinctive characteristics of high-profile and frequently intricate cases stemming from whistleblowing disclosures, there is a prevalent</td>
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comprehensive details on individual cases. These tools are designed to facilitate criminal prosecutions and mobilize efforts against corrupt individuals in positions of power. Notable examples include GlobaLeaks and the BKMS® compliance systems. Whistleblowing tools contribute significantly to the fight against corruption by unveiling critical information about cases that might otherwise remain concealed. However, their effectiveness hinges on both technological and institutional factors.

The technological architecture of these platforms must prioritize anonymity and security, ensuring the protection of whistleblowers while enabling ongoing communication with relevant authorities. Platform providers face the delicate task of striking a balance between raising awareness and managing the volume of reports, ensuring that the system maintains high-quality standards and the capacity to handle reports promptly and professionally.

| 4. | Transparency portals | Transparency portals, managed by governments or NGOs, share information on government operations, promoting citizen oversight and downward transparency. However, their effectiveness relies on rigorous data collection, hindered by limited resources and logistical challenges in many countries. There is a lack of solid empirical evidence regarding the direct impact of transparency portals on corruption. Nevertheless, frequent assessments of open data practices reveal that what is often described as open data is, in reality, either not fully open or only partially accessible. |
| 5. | Distributed ledger technology (DLT) and blockchain | Blockchain, a decentralized and synchronized database maintained by a peer-to-peer network, is a potential solution for managing public information and preventing fraud and corruption. It can be used by governments to store public transactions, track budget spending, and save land records. Blockchain can also establish direct links between societal actors, eliminating the need for individuals to interact with bureaucrats. This can help in international development cooperation by allowing donors to fund utility costs for schools using bitcoin cryptocurrency. However, blockchain is not a panacea and requires a well-planned policy and coordinated effort from all stakeholders. It may also pose a threat to anti-corruption efforts due to its anonymity and encryption, which could be used for embezzlement or fraudulent deals. The complexity of DLT technologies may raise suspicion in citizens, especially in countries with endemic distrust in government. The utilization of blockchain technology in the fight against corruption is still primarily in the developmental and pilot phase, with a notable absence of substantial studies examining its impact on reducing corruption. |
| 6. | AI technologies | AI technologies, like neural networks, can predict and uncover hidden relationships from large datasets, making them valuable in policy making and implementation. One tool is a self-organizing map that can extract patterns from large datasets to predict corruption. This could be used by public authorities to uncover collusion and corruption, improving efficiency and effectiveness. However, AI technologies may replicate past biases and miss new developments. The literature concerning AI and corruption is sparse, but previous studies have employed data-mining techniques and neural networks to anticipate patterns in areas like crime, credit risk evaluation, and fraud detection. |

5. Anti-Corruption Measures and Institutions

The implementation of anticorruption measures in Uzbekistan has led to significant political, social, and economic changes. On the political front, these measures have enhanced the government's legitimacy and credibility, addressing the
longstanding issue of corruption undermining public trust. This has also led to shifts in political competition and intraelite relationships, resulting in the removal of corrupt high-ranking officials. In the social sphere, anticorruption efforts have improved public trust in government institutions, encouraging civic engagement and societal development. This increased trust has contributed to strengthening the social fabric of Uzbekistan. Economically, the fight against corruption has created a more equitable environment for businesses and foreign investors, attracting increased foreign investments. The reputation of Uzbekistan as a reliable and transparent trading partner has improved, leading to significant economic benefits. By combatting corruption, Uzbekistan has laid the foundation for a stable and sustainable future, promising lasting prosperity for its citizens (Ismailov, 2020).

Governance free from corruption fosters economic growth by attracting foreign investments, creating a favorable business climate, and promoting socioeconomic development. Corruption impedes economic progress by distorting resource allocation, perpetuating market inefficiencies, and eroding the rule of law. In corrupt systems, essential services become the privilege of the affluent, exacerbating economic disparities. Conversely, corruption-free governance ensures the impartial allocation of public resources, reduces poverty, improves healthcare and education, and fosters inclusive economic growth. Efforts against corruption also facilitate international collaboration and domestic stability, enhancing partnerships with other nations and promoting long-term peace and prosperity. Therefore, investing in anticorruption frameworks and transparency in governance is crucial for governments worldwide.

Transforming Uzbekistan's image from a corrupt nation requires sustained anticorruption efforts involving all segments of society. The government must strengthen institutional frameworks for preventing and punishing corruption while promoting transparency and accountability. The private sector should prioritize ethics and social responsibility, particularly in combating bribery and corrupt practices that undermine fair competition. Civil society can contribute by educating and advocating for anticorruption values and fostering cultural change. International actors should prioritize partnerships that support Uzbekistan's anticorruption initiatives, including capacity building, technical assistance, and financial support.

Given the complexity of Uzbekistan's socioeconomic and political landscape, eradicating corruption requires a comprehensive, long-term strategy addressing root causes and institutional structures. This strategy should involve diverse stakeholders and robust international engagement to share experiences and best practices. In conclusion, the fight against corruption in Uzbekistan necessitates persistent and collaborative effort, guided by India's experiential insights and adaptation to Uzbekistan's unique context (Santen, 2018).

5.1. State Anti-corruption Agencies

In India, the primary agency responsible for combating corruption and investigating cases of corruption involving government officials, politicians, and public servants is the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The CBI is the premier investigating agency in India and operates under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions. In Uzbekistan, the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Agency stems from the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, dated June 29, 2020, titled ‘On additional measures to enhance the anti-corruption system in the Republic of Uzbekistan.’ This agency holds a unique position as a specially designated government entity entrusted with the formulation and execution of state policies aimed at preventing and addressing corruption.

Notably, the Anti-Corruption Agency operates under a framework of accountability, reporting directly to the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan while maintaining responsibility toward the chambers of the Oliy Majlis. This structural arrangement ensures a robust and transparent approach to the coordination of anticorruption efforts, aligning with the obligations outlined in the UN Convention against Corruption. It is worth noting that the primary authority engaged in the fight against corruption in the country is the Department for the Fight against Economic Crime and Corruption, operating under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Prosecutor General, with a primary focus on detecting, investigating, and prosecuting corruption-related offenses (Meagher, 2004).

Beyond the law enforcement sphere, two noteworthy bodies play vital roles in anticorruption efforts. First, the Accounts Chamber functions as an independent auditing entity. Second, the principal Control and Revision Division (KRU) within the Ministry of Finance holds significant authority, including the ability to suspend or terminate public procurement tenders and to initiate financial investigations pertaining to budgetary organizations. It is worth noting that similar KRUs also exist within defense and interior ministries, as well as within the National Security Service (NSS).

The system of law enforcement assumes a pivotal role within the broader framework of state and elite corruption in the nation. On paper, both the National Security Service (NSS) and the Department for Combating Corruption, Extortion, and Racketeering within the Ministry of the Interior are entrusted with the responsibility of addressing economic crimes and corruption. The available empirical evidence, as gleaned from media reports and human rights accounts, suggests that there have been instances where state law enforcement authorities have been utilized in ways that raise concerns. These examples include potential involvement in corrupt activities, actions that appear to target political and business opponents, and the apprehension and prosecution of corporate executives in circumstances that may be seen as part of extortion or expropriation mechanisms.
The NSS, recognized as the most influential agency orchestrating anticorruption endeavors, has, according to opposition activists and independent investigative reports, purportedly been involved in a diverse array of informal business and economic networks. Moreover, the NSS has been implicated in raids on business enterprises, especially since its acquisition of the mandate to combat ‘economic crimes’. In 2012, a journalist alleged that the NSS had designated or newly constructed a series of edifices for the coercion and intimidation of business magnates, forming a facility reminiscent of a fortress. Within its inner courtyard, luxury vehicles previously owned by erstwhile business leaders and prominent investors were impounded, symbolizing the precariousness of any wealth accumulated within Uzbekistan. Media accounts also spotlighted anticorruption campaigns that targeted NSS officers, resulting in the dismissal or arrest of numerous high-ranking NSS personnel in 2014.

Investigations into companies accused of malfeasance have typically been accompanied by aggressive raids conducted by the NSS or other law enforcement agencies. During these operations, employees are frequently detained and subjected to self-incriminating interrogations. A report in 2012 meticulously documented the conduct of law enforcement officers during a campaign against Uzdunrobita, revealing the application of severe psychological coercion aimed at eliciting self-incriminating statements. These questioning sessions were often conducted during nocturnal hours, legal defense representatives were not consistently granted access to their clients, and investigators allegedly issued threats to one of the company’s personnel, indicating an intent to search his home and discover illicit substances. Raids on business establishments are usually carried out by masked individuals bearing arms and employing aggressive tactics against the workforce. In one particular incident involving a German bakery company, it was reported that ‘employees were physically assaulted, and company equipment was vandalized’. Notably, the German ambassador Wolfgang Neuen was even embroiled in a raid conducted at the company’s Tashkent offices (Meagher, 2005).

Corruption pervades the ranks of law enforcement agencies, albeit with distinctions in modus operandi. While the NSS is frequently embroiled in business disputes, ordinary police officers are inclined toward less intricate forms of extortion, such as soliciting bribes from motorists. Furthermore, police personnel are frequently accused of extorting funds from criminal suspects, including individuals convicted of religious radicalism. In line with other segments of the state apparatus, bribes are alleged to funnel upward through the hierarchy to senior officers, constituting a hierarchical structure of control and corruption (Doig, A., 2012). Efforts to combat corruption in Uzbekistan can be summarized as follows (Akmal Burkhanov, 2021).

Legal Framework and Reforms:
- Adoption of numerous legal documents aimed at preventing corruption.
- The establishment of laws promoting openness and public control.
- Create a system to rate the effectiveness of anticorruption efforts.

Institutional Structures
- The formation of committees and agencies dedicated to combating corruption.
- Establishment of the Anti-Corruption Agency.
- Introduction of the Judicial Inspectorate to ensure judicial independence and prevent corruption.
- Focus on recruitment based on meritocracy in public service.

Education and training:
- Introduction of specialized courses in "Combating Corruption."
- Collaboration with international organizations for training and expertise.

Public Engagement:
- Conducting social surveys to gauge public perceptions of corruption.
- Engagement of civil society organizations in the National Anti-Corruption Council.
- The "Openness and Transparency in Uzbekistan" Analytical Center was established.
- Initiatives to involve NGOs and the general public in anticorruption efforts.

Information Dissemination:
- Publication of the Uzbekistan Anti-Corruption Digest online magazine.
- Promotion of anticorruption through contests, hackathons, and educational programs.

International Cooperation:
- Collaboration with the UNDP and other international organizations on anticorruption projects.

These comprehensive efforts aim to create an environment of intolerance toward corruption, enhance transparency, and strengthen the legal and institutional framework to combat corruption effectively in Uzbekistan.
6. Final Considerations

In conclusion, Uzbekistan’s complex battle against corruption and criminal activities within its criminoverse requires a multifaceted and comprehensive strategy. The commitment demonstrated by the current government in implementing anticorruption measures is commendable, but there is still a substantial journey ahead. Integrating India’s experiential insights, as discussed in this paper, offers a promising path to strengthen Uzbekistan’s anticorruption efforts. However, it is crucial to address corruption at both the highest levels of government and the grassroots level, involving the public in the fight against corruption. By adopting a holistic approach that encompasses all levels of society, Uzbekistan can make significant strides in reducing widespread corruption.

Moreover, recognizing the significance of shared knowledge and experiences in combating corruption is essential. Uzbekistan can learn from India’s journey toward establishing a transparent and accountable governance system. This collaborative exchange between the two nations not only fosters the sharing of best practices but also strengthens diplomatic relations. In conclusion, incorporating India’s experiences into Uzbekistan’s anticorruption efforts is a critical step in addressing the country’s persistent corruption issue. By learning from India’s successes and challenges, Uzbekistan can develop effective strategies and policies for its own fight against corruption.

To realize this vision, Uzbekistan’s authorities must demonstrate unwavering resolve in combatting corruption, placing its eradication above personal interests and gains. Simultaneously, civil society must actively engage in exposing and condemning corrupt practices while advocating for transparency and accountability. Only through collective effort and a commitment to moral and ethical principles can Uzbekistan build a sustainable, prosperous, and just society for its citizens. Looking forward, Uzbekistan faces both promise and formidable challenges beyond the criminoverse. The nation has embarked on substantial reforms in its legal and economic systems and on its fight against corruption. However, it must also address human rights issues, political liberties, and economic diversification. The government should persist in fostering a more inclusive and transparent political framework, granting greater independence to the judiciary, and promoting a dynamic private sector. Additionally, diversifying export markets and enhancing the quality of the education system are pivotal imperatives. With an unwavering commitment to reform, Uzbekistan has the potential to evolve into a thriving, democratic nation that sets an example for the region.

In conclusion, as discussed and empirically elaborated in Table 2 “Tech Impact on Corruption & Governance” emerging technologies hold the promise of being powerful tools in the ongoing battle against corruption. E-government services offer increased transparency and accountability, particularly for newly established governments. Crowdfunding platforms and whistleblowing tools have the potential to empower citizens and expose corrupt practices, although there is a need for more comprehensive empirical research to assess their impact accurately. Transparency portals, while promoting oversight, face challenges in terms of data collection and accessibility. Distributed ledger technology (DLT) and blockchain, despite their potential benefits, are still in the developmental phase and require coordinated efforts and careful policy planning to mitigate risks. With their data-mining capabilities, AI technologies have the potential to uncover hidden patterns of corruption, but further exploration is needed. In essence, these technologies can be valuable assets in the fight against corruption, but their effectiveness depends on a range of factors, and continuous research and evaluation are essential to harness their full potential and address associated risks.

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my professor for his mentorship and Tashkent State University of Law for providing me the opportunity to conduct legal research through the prestigious Central Asia Legal Research Fellowship. It has been an invaluable learning experience that has greatly benefited my professional development.

Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Funding

This research did not receive any financial support.

Reference

