

HO CHI MINH NATIONAL ACADEMY OF POLITICS

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**TECHNOCRATIC ELITES IN THE POLITICAL
LIFE OF SELECTED COUNTRIES
AROUND THE WORLD**

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

1. The urgency of researching this topic

Profound transformations in the contemporary world are fundamentally challenging traditional models of political organization and the exercise of power. Globalization, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and especially the explosive development of artificial intelligence, digital technology, quantum technology, and new technologies are creating epochal changes. Along with the increase in global risks such as financial crises, pandemics, climate change, cybersecurity, and populism, these not only increase the complexity of national governance but also reveal the increasingly evident limitations of purely representative political decision-making mechanisms. In this context, the need for policy decisions based on expertise, scientific evidence, and empirical data is becoming increasingly urgent, leading to renewed interest in technocratization and the role of technocratic elites in modern political life.

Technocratic elites, possessing in-depth knowledge, modern management skills, and the ability to formulate policies based on scientific principles, are increasingly exerting significant influence on decision-making and the operation of government in many countries. However, the limitations of technocratic elites also raise theoretical and practical issues that spark debate.

In practice, Japan, Singapore, and China are three prime examples of different approaches to the formation, operation, and development of technocratic elites. However, these successful cases also demonstrate that technocracy is not an unlimited solution.

Vietnam is currently undergoing a period of accelerated industrialization and modernization, aiming to become a developed, high-income country by 2045. Meeting the demands of development in this new era requires correctly identifying and leveraging the role and influence of the staff are highly qualified in science and technology, and possess strong management capabilities to serve the nation. Therefore, studying the influence of technocratic elites in Japan, Singapore, and China not only contributes to supplementing and enriching scientific knowledge about technocracy in modern political life, but also provides theoretically and practically grounded suggestions for Vietnam in approaching and applying technocratic elements cautiously, effectively, and appropriately to its specific socio-political conditions in the process of reforming state governance and national development.

Based on the theoretical and practical issues mentioned above, the author chose the topic "*Technocratic Elites in the Political Life of Several Countries Around the World*" as the subject of his doctoral dissertation in Political Science.

2. Purpose and research objectives of the thesis

2.1. Research Objectives

This study clarifies the theoretical and practical issues concerning technocratic elites and their role in the political life of Japan, Singapore, and China, Assessing the prospects and challenges of technocratic elites in the contemporary global context, and draws some conclusions for Vietnam.

2.2. Research Objectives

Firstly, to provide an overview, systematize, and critically evaluate domestic and international research related to technocracy, technocratic elites, and the role of technocratic elites in the political life of various countries; to clarify the main approaches, achievements, and issues requiring further research.

Secondly, it is necessary to clarify the theoretical basis of technocracy and the technocratic elite in modern political life, including the concept, characteristics, formation mechanisms, operation, and influence of the technocratic elite.

Thirdly, the study analyzes the practical role and influence of technocratic elites in the political life of Japan, Singapore, and China, highlighting similarities and differences in these various institutional contexts.

Fourth, assess the opportunities and challenges for the development of technocratic elites in Japan, Singapore, and China in the new context; based on this, draw some suggestions and valuable lessons for Vietnam.

3. Subject and scope of the thesis

3.1. Research Subject of the Thesis

This dissertation examines the role of technocratic elites in the political life of Japan, Singapore, and China.

3.2. Scope of the thesis

In terms of content: The dissertation studies theoretical issues concerning technocracy and the technocratic elite; analyzes the role and influence of the technocratic elite in political life; and clarifies the opportunities, challenges, and trends of the technocratic elite in the new context.

In terms of scope, the thesis studies the technocratic elite in political life in Japan, Singapore, and China, three representative countries with different models and modes of operation of technocracy.

In terms of timeframe, the thesis focuses on the period from the beginning of the 21st century to the present.

In terms of approach, the thesis addresses the issue from a political and power perspective, without delving into detailed analysis of micro-management techniques, operational procedures, or evaluating the effectiveness of specific policies.

4. Methodology and research methods of the thesis

4.1. Regarding methodology

This dissertation is based on the methodology of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, and the viewpoints of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

4.2. Regarding research methodology

Based on the aforementioned political science approach and methodology, the dissertation will utilize research methods such as: analytical-synthetic method; historical -logical method; case – study method; comparative method; case study method... to address the issues raised in the research of the dissertation topic.

5. New scientific contributions of the thesis

- The dissertation systematically presents fundamental theoretical issues concerning technocracy and the technocratic elite, thereby summarizing the most common characteristics and analyzing the influence of the technocratic elite on political life.

- This dissertation combines comparative political science research methods, institutional analysis, and case study analysis to research the technocratic elite in Japan, Singapore, and China, thereby forming an in-depth approach to examining a complex and volatile political phenomenon like the technocratic elite.

- This dissertation analyzes the context and influencing factors, predicts the trends in the movement of the technocratic elite, and offers suggestions for Vietnam in developing its current technocratic workforce.

6. Scientific and practical significance of the thesis

6.1. In terms of theory

Firstly, this dissertation is one of the few domestic works that approaches the technocratic elite as a political-institutional power phenomenon. On that basis, the dissertation not only systematizes the concept, characteristics, and operating mechanisms of the technocratic elite, but also places this phenomenon in a structural relationship with political power, legitimacy, and the control of power, thereby expanding the scope of theoretical approach compared to existing studies in Vietnam, which tend to be descriptive or normative.

Secondly, the thesis deepens and concretizes the theoretical debate on the relationship between technocracy and democracy in the context of modern politics; it contributes a critical perspective to the theoretical system of technocracy in Vietnamese political science.

Thirdly, the thesis constructs and applies a multidimensional analytical framework to study the technocratic elite, simultaneously combining four groups of factors: (i) institutional structure and mechanisms, (ii) political traditions and culture, (iii) level of socio-economic development, and (iv) endogenous reform dynamics of the political system. This analytical framework allows for overcoming a linear approach (only institutions or only culture), while also providing a basis for systematic cross-national comparisons.

6.2. In practice

Firstly, the thesis provides a systematic comparative study of technocratic elites in Japan, Singapore, and China – three representative but profoundly different cases in terms of political institutional models; the thesis clearly demonstrates the

different operating models of technocratic elites, as well as the institutional conditions that determine the extent of their influence and the limits of their power in each national context.

Secondly, the thesis clarifies the new dynamics of the technocratic elite in the context of globalization, digital transformation, and increasing non-traditional risks, particularly the changes in the mechanisms of selection, utilization, control, and accountability of the technocratic elite. Through this, the thesis shows that the technocratic elite is not only a "driving force for reform," but also faces structural and political challenges, such as the risk of closed power, declining legitimacy, and pressure from public opinion and populism.

Thirdly, based on comparative analysis, the thesis provides valuable insights for Vietnam in identifying the role, conditions for development, and limitations of the technocratic elite in the process of reforming and modernizing state governance. These insights are built on a foundation of scientific and critical analysis, avoiding a model-copying approach, while emphasizing the need for harmony between improving governance efficiency and ensuring legitimacy and checks and balances.

Fourth, the research findings of this thesis have direct applicability in research and teaching in Political Science, Public Administration, and related social sciences and humanities fields. They also contribute to supplementing in-depth reference materials on technocracy and the technocratic elite – a relatively new topic that has not been systematically studied in Vietnamese political science.

7. Structure of the thesis

Besides the introduction, conclusion, bibliography, and appendices, the thesis is divided into 4 chapters and 13 sections.

Chapter 1

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH RELATED TO THE TOPIC

1.1. RESEARCH ON TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNOCRATIC ELITES BY FOREIGN AUTHORS

1.1.1. Research on technocracy

Since the early 1980s, there has been renewed interest in technocracy in the political life of many countries around the world . Accordingly, numerous studies have been conducted on this issue using various approaches. Notable authors include Anders Esmark , Daniele Caramani, Eri Bertsou , and Jürgen Habermas.

1.1.2. Research on elites and technocratic elites

The study of elites is one of the major topics in political science, beginning with the important works of Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto, and Robert Michels , followed by works that clarify and deepen arguments about elites, including some notable authors such as Matias López , John Higley , and Masamichi Sasaki . Regarding technocratic elites, many works have addressed the concepts and influence of technocratic elites. Notable examples include works by authors such as Frank Fischer , Frank W. Heuberger, Hansfried Kellner , Tod S. Van Gunten , Patrick Silva , and James G. McGann.

1.1.3. Research on technocracy and the technocratic elite in Japan, Singapore, and China

Studies on Japanese technocracy and its elite have placed the technocratic elite at the center of the Japanese administrative system and have compared the Japanese technocratic elite with those of other countries, notably the works of the following authors: BC Koh ; Janis Anne Mimura ; Joel D.Aberbach, Ellis S.Krauss, Michio Muramatsu and Bert A.Rockman

Studies on technocracy and the technocratic elite of Singapore have highlighted the characteristics and role of Singapore's technocratic elite, with works by authors such as: RS Milne ; Jon ST Quah ; Parag Khanna ; Michael D. Barr ; Diane K. Mauzy and RS Milne

Studies on technocracy and the technocratic elite in China include works by authors such as Gang Chen and Zhiyue Bo.

1.2. RESEARCH ON TECHNOLOGY AND THE ESSENCE OF TECHNOLOGY BY VIETNAMESE AUTHORS

In Vietnam, there are not many studies on elites, technocracy, and the technocratic elite. Regarding the Vietnamese revolutionary elite, there is the work of author Ha Dang; on technocracy and the relationship between politics and technocracy, there are works by authors such as Nhi Le and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Van Vinh; and on the technocratic elite, there is the work of author Nguyen Xuan Xanh...

1.3. RESULTS OF THESE STUDIES AND THE ISSUES FOCUSED ON BY THE THESIS

1.3.1. Results of research reviews

From an overview of research both domestically and internationally, it can be seen that the issues of elites, technocracy, and the technocratic elite have been approached from various angles and have yielded some important results.

Firstly, although stemming from different theoretical approaches (political science, sociology, public administration, political economy, etc.), research works have generally achieved a relative consensus on the concept of technocracy and its role in modern political life. Many studies have clarified the characteristics of technocracy associated with specialized knowledge, management capacity, and rationality and efficiency in planning and implementing public policies, while also analyzing the technocratic model according to the specific institutional and political culture of each country. In particular, the relationship between technocracy and democracy is one of the central issues of deep concern, with many works presenting different scenarios to reconcile the requirements for effective governance with the requirements for representation, accountability, and public participation.

Secondly, technocratic elites are considered by researchers as a crucial component of the elite in general, and as the core force operating the technocratic regime in practice. Many studies have shown that technocratic elites do not exist as a

homogeneous group, but rather form a complex network of power, exhibiting both consensus and cooperation, as well as competition and conflicts of interest with other elite groups, especially political elites. Through key positions in the state apparatus, policy-making bodies, and governance institutions, technocratic elites exert significant influence on political decision-making, leadership styles, and the structure of power relations in society.

Thirdly, numerous case studies of Japan, Singapore, and China have clarified the formation, development, and prominent characteristics of technocracy and technocratic elites within their respective national contexts. These works demonstrate that the rise of technocratic elites is closely linked to the demands of state modernization, economic development, and improved governance. Consequently, many studies consider the technocratic elite as one of the key factors contributing to the successful development of these countries, although the degree and manner of their manifestation may differ depending on the political system.

Fourth, in the contemporary context, many studies have placed the issue of technocracy and the technocratic elite within the context of populism, democratization, globalization, and the rapid development of science and technology. These studies indicate that profound changes in the socio-political environment are placing increasingly demanding adaptation requirements on the technocratic elite, while also increasing challenges related to legitimacy, accountability, and public relations.

Besides the achievements, the overall research also reveals some gaps and unresolved issues.

Firstly, although there have been many studies on elites in general, no work has yet developed a complete and systematic analytical framework on the formation process, structural characteristics, and influencing factors of technocratic elites at an international comparative level.

Secondly, although some studies have directly addressed technocratic elites, the majority of works still focus on political elites, while the specific influence of technocratic elites on political life, especially on the process of public policy planning and implementation, has not been analyzed in depth and independently.

Thirdly, studies addressing the impact of the international context and new demands placed on the technocratic elite are fragmented, unsystematic, and not closely linked to current geopolitical and technological changes, especially in the context of increasing strategic competition and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

1.3.2. Research issues of the dissertation

Based on the overall findings of various studies, this thesis poses research questions and hypotheses to clarify the influence of technocratic elites in political life through the cases of Japan, Singapore, and China.

Research question

First, why is it that while technocratic elites are often seen as representing rationality and efficiency in governance, their position, role, and level of influence differ significantly across political systems; and can technocrat be considered a universal governance model, or is it essentially a form of power strongly shaped by national institutions, political culture, and governance traditions?

Secondly, will the increasing involvement of technocratic elites in the planning and implementation of public policy change the political power structure towards "technocratization"? And how will this change affect the relationship between effective governance, democratic legitimacy, and mechanisms for checking and controlling power?

Third, in the case studies of Japan, Singapore, and China, why do the coexistence and operation of technocratic elites lead to vastly different political and administrative models and levels of influence? What are the key factors determining these differences?

Fourth, in the context of globalization, digital transformation, and the rise of populism, can technocratic elites continue to play a driving role in reforming and modernizing public administration, or are they increasingly being forced into a defensive position against structural and political constraints?

Research hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Technocratic elites do not exist as a universal model of governance, but their position, role, and level of influence depend on the political institutional structure, political culture, and national governance traditions; therefore, the same technocratic logic can create very different forms of power in different political systems.

Hypothesis 2: The increasing role of technocratic elites in public policy planning and implementation promotes the technocratization of state power, thereby transforming the relationship between governance efficiency, political legitimacy, and mechanisms for checking power; however, the extent and consequences of this trend depend on the specific institutional characteristics and political context of each country.

Hypothesis 3: Differences in operating models and the level of influence of technocratic elites in Japan, Singapore, and China are primarily determined by a combination of: (i) political institutions, (ii) administrative structures, (iii) mechanisms for selecting and employing technocratic personnel, and (iv) the role of political parties and leadership, rather than by the purely technical expertise or capabilities of the technocrats.

Hypothesis 4: In the context of globalization, digital transformation, and the rise of populism, the role of the technocratic elite as a driving force for reform and modernization of state governance is conditional, both expanded by the need for

knowledge- and technology-based governance and limited by political, social constraints and requirements for legitimacy.

Based on the research question and hypothesis above, this thesis focuses on the following issues:

This study systematizes and clarifies several theoretical issues concerning elites, technocracy, and technocratic elites, contributing to the supplementation and refinement of the theoretical analytical framework for the study of technocracy in modern political science.

This study analyzes the formation process, characteristics, influencing factors, and influence of technocratic elites on the political life of several representative countries around the world, thereby clarifying the role and limitations of technocratic elites in different political models.

This study clarifies the opportunities, challenges, and evolving trends of the technocratic elite in the context of rapidly changing global geopolitics, increasingly fierce strategic competition, and the far-reaching impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, thereby offering theoretical and practical implications for research and policy planning.

From the above content, it can be affirmed that the thesis does not repeat existing domestic studies on the elite in general or political elites in particular, but focuses on clarifying the technocratic elite as a relatively independent subject in political life. Through the construction of a systematic analytical framework on the formation process, structural characteristics, influencing factors, and influence of the technocratic elite, the thesis contributes to filling the current theoretical gap, as most domestic studies only stop at a general approach or integrate technocracy into research on state governance and administrative reform.

Simultaneously, by employing a comparative approach involving several representative countries and placing the technocratic elite within the context of geopolitical shifts, strategic competition, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the thesis not only clarifies the specific characteristics and evolving trends of the technocratic elite but also enhances the generalizability and reference value of its research conclusions. Through this, the thesis contributes both theoretically and practically, deepening the study of technocracy and the technocratic elite in contemporary political science.

Chapter 2

SOME THEORETICAL ISSUES REGARDING TECHNOCRATIC ELITES IN POLITICAL LIFE

2.1. SOME THEORETICAL ISSUES ON TECHNOCRACY

2.1.1. Concept of Technocratic Management

The term technocrat originates from the Greek words τέχνη (tekhne – skill) and κράτος (kratos – power), reflecting from the outset the connection between

specialized knowledge and the exercise of power. This concept emerged very early in classical political thought. Plato, when discussing the ideal model of the state, emphasized the power of wisdom, laying the foundation for the notion that the legitimacy of power can stem from specialized knowledge, not solely from the will of the majority.

Entering the modern and contemporary period, according to Saint-Simon, industrial society formed a new "industrial" class comprising workers, artists, engineers, scientists, managers, and owners. This concept marked a significant shift: from the image of "philosopher-king" to a management model based on technical and organizational capabilities, closely linked to the process of industrialization.

The term "technocratic" in its modern sense was officially established at the beginning of the 20th century. Technocratic is understood as a model in which the exercise of power and political decision-making are based primarily on scientific and technical knowledge, with the decisive influence belonging to technicians in the administrative and economic apparatus, or more broadly, a governance system where technical experts hold dominant positions in economic and political institutions.

As society enters the post-industrial era, knowledge, science and technology, data, and complex governance become central resources, and technocratization is no longer merely a technical organizational logic but gradually becomes a governance method. In practice, technocratization rarely exists as a pure regime; instead, it is realized in parts, through principles, mechanisms, and expert roles interwoven within various political models.

2.1.2. The Development Process of Technology

The formation and development of technocracy is closely linked to industrialization and the industrial revolutions, beginning with early technocracy associated with the French Revolution and continuing through the second technocratic revolution in the United States after World War I, coined by Smyth's introduction of the term "technocrat." The third technocratic revolution – the golden age after World War II – is linked to the third industrial revolution and the bipolar world order, and the fourth technocratic revolution in post-industrial society.

Thus, through its stages of development, technocracy has shifted from its rudimentary form based on industrial engineers to post-industrial technocracy based on high-level scientific and technological knowledge, asserting its position as a modern governance logic, operating in an intertwined and balanced relationship with political power.

2.1.3. Technocratic Approaches

Firstly, technocracy is approached as a method of decision-making.

Secondly, technocracy is considered a type of government where technocrats hold the highest positions of power in the state apparatus and directly formulate and implement policies within the framework of the constitution.

Third, technocracy is approached as a kind of informal regime.

Based on the above approaches, technocracy is viewed as a multifaceted and multidimensional concept, encompassing both a decision-making method and a political power configuration, as well as a set of management ideas and practices. Technocracy describes a form of power organization in which decisions are made by a group of specialized elites, relatively independent of political parties, in order to maximize the long-term welfare of the community. The core characteristics of technocracy include: (1) elitism based on knowledge, expertise, and experience; (2) a relative degree of independence of technocratic power from partisan competition; (3) an anti-pluralistic tendency, opposing decision-making based on the synthesis of interests of different social groups; and (4) a commitment to positivism, considering optimal solutions to be attainable through scientific and rational analysis.

2.1.4. The relationship between “technocratic” and “democracy”

In classical thought, technocracy is understood as the rule of a minority who possess and control knowledge and technical expertise. This characteristic is in contrast to the fundamental principle of democracy – majority decision-making and collective governance.

However, in reality, the relationship between technocracy and democracy is more complex and flexible. When technocracy is understood as a type of cabinet or a specific power configuration within government, it can exist in both democratic and non-democratic contexts. Accordingly, democracy does not necessarily exclude technocracy, but is capable of adapting and integrating technocratic elements under certain conditions.

2.2. SOME FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES REGARDING ELITES AND TECHNOLOGICAL ELITES

2.2.1. Some basic issues concerning the elite.

The concept of "Elite" and the basic principles of elite theory (2.2.1.1.):

"The elite" is a concept referring to a group of exceptional individuals who possess outstanding qualities, wield political power or have high professional qualifications, hold significant power, influence, and resources in society, have a profound impact, and are capable of leading society's development in a particular direction.

Elite theory is a theory in political science and sociology that emphasizes that in any society, whether democratic or authoritarian, power is always concentrated in a small group, or "elite," rather than the entire population. These elites can come from various fields such as politics, economics, the military, or culture, and they have the ability to make decisions that influence the nation's politics, economy, and society.

Western elite theories (2.2.1.2) : include: Classical elite theory; Modern elite theory and elite pluralism theory.

The Marxist-Leninist perspective on the vanguard of the working class and the problem of "functional elites" (2.2.1.3) : Approaching from the broad perspective of elite theory, with elites understood as the superior group that plays a

leading role in society, Marxism-Leninism does not deny the existence of elite forces, but approaches this issue through the concept of the vanguard of the working class. This is a distinctly class- and political approach, fundamentally different from Western elite theories which view elites as a force relatively separate from society.

From the perspective of studying technocratic elites, this viewpoint offers an important supplementary insight: it reveals the existence of a form of “political-functional elite,” in which theoretical knowledge, organizational capacity, and political responsibility are the core criteria, rather than material interests or social status. This is the theoretical premise for examining the combination of technocratic and political elites in contemporary socialist states.

2.2.2. Concepts and characteristics of the technocratic elite

Concept of Technocratic Elites (2.2.2.1): Technocratic elites can be understood as individuals with high professional qualifications, holding key positions in the state apparatus or related institutions, and capable of regularly and systematically influencing political outcomes. Outside the political system, technocratic elites are primarily present in the scientific community and think tanks. Inside the political system, technocratic elites are mainly concentrated in the executive branch, parliament, and political parties.

Conditions for Formation and Characteristics of Technocratic Elites (2.2.2.2) : Technocratic elites are formed from the increasing complexity of the economy and technology, which is a fundamental condition for the emergence of technocratic elites; from the expansion of the functions and scope of intervention of the modern state, creating an inevitable need for experts; from the rationalization and specialization of the administrative apparatus, which is a prerequisite for the formation of technocratic elites; from the increasing uncertainty and risk in modern governance, which also promotes the role of technocratic elites; from the development of science and technology and knowledge systems, which creates a supply of human resources for technocratic elites ; finally , the limitations and crises of representative politics are also conditions that promote the rise of technocrats.

Technocratic elites are characterized by: objectivity in political decisions, knowledge and expertise; a long-term vision, and the ability to apply technology and innovation.

2.3. POLITICAL LIFE AND TECHNOCRATIC ELITES IN POLITICAL LIFE

2.3.1. Concept of political life

Political life is an integral part of social life, closely linked to the process of forming, distributing, exercising, and controlling political power in order to realize the political and social interests of various entities. The core content of political life is the conscious and purposeful political activity of individuals and social communities in participating in social management and shaping social development.

2.3.2. Areas of Impact of technocratic elites in political life

Technocratic elites exert influence within the political system and power institutions; in the policymaking process; influencing socio-economic development and the process of industrialization and modernization; and affecting the balance of political power through interaction with actors in political relations and the democratization process in countries.

Conclusion of Chapter 2

Chapter 2 focused on systematizing and clarifying core theoretical issues concerning technocratic elites within the context of modern political theory. Through the analysis of concepts, origins, and identifying characteristics, the thesis outlined the portrait of a unique social group – those who hold power based on their intellectual superiority, expertise, and systemic management thinking. Accordingly, technocratic elites do not exist in isolation but are an inevitable product of modernization and the increasing complexity of national governance; the relationship between technocratic elites and political elites is a dialectical one, both supporting and restraining each other; although possessing superior advantages in scientific thinking and objectivity, technocratic elites also face internal challenges regarding democracy, social empathy, and the risk of alienation from the masses. These are theoretical "blind spots" that need to be carefully considered when applying the technocratic model to practice.

The theoretical frameworks and identification criteria established in this chapter serve as a guide, providing a solid scientific foundation for the thesis to further investigate and assess the current state of this workforce in the specific context in Chapter 3. This forms the basis for identifying similarities, differences, and unique local characteristics when comparing international theories with the objective reality of the research area.

Chapter 3

THE ELITE OF TECHNOLOGY IN POLITICAL LIFE IN JAPAN, SINGAPORE, AND CHINA

3.1. The Technocratic Elite in Japanese Political Life

3.1.1. Overview of Japan's Political System

Japan is a constitutional monarchy operating under a modern parliamentary democracy model, in which the Emperor holds a symbolic head of state, while real state power is exercised through the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The 1947 Constitution established the principle of popular sovereignty, ensuring the separation of powers among the branches of government, and placed the Parliament (Diet) at the center of the political system. Within this structure, the government, headed by the Prime Minister, is formed by a majority vote of parliament and is accountable to the Parliament.

3.1.2. The Formation and development Process of the Technocratic Elite in Japan

The technocratic elite in the Japanese political system (3.1.2.1.) was formed during the period The Meiji Restoration and the emergence of state technocracy (1868–1912), which subsequently expanded during the period of industrial and military technocracy (1912–1945) and was consolidated during the period of development states (1945–late 1970s). From the 1980s to the present, it has been a period of transition and adaptation: from growth technocracy to strategic technocracy.

The technocratic elite outside of Japan's political system began to form in the 1970s (3.1.2.2.). 1970 is known as the year of Japanese think tanks. During the 1980s and 1990s, Japanese think tanks continued to develop strongly. However, from the 2000s onwards, Japanese think tanks faced a relative decline.

Overall, the development of the technocratic elite outside the Japanese political system reflects changes in policy consultation needs across different stages of socio-economic development. Despite efforts to establish independent think tanks, cultural and institutional barriers have generally kept the technocratic elite outside the Japanese political system closely tied to the state and large corporations, creating a unique model of semi-independent technocracy.

3.1.3. Characteristics of Japan's Technocratic Elite

Characteristics of the technocratic elite in the Japanese political system (3.1.3.1) include: The technocratic elite in the Japanese political system has a high level of education and expertise; there is a combination of a technocratic civil service system and a meritocratic system; a high sense of responsibility and professional ethics; and a relatively high degree of conservatism .

Characteristics of the technocratic elite outside the Japanese political system (3.1.3.2 .) are considered in the following think tank groups: Think tanks led by or supported by the government; think tanks affiliated with businesses; independent non-governmental think tanks: This type of think tank operates quite flexibly, often researching emerging issues of socio-political life with a rigorous research process and early publication of research results; think tanks of prestigious universities: This is an important force bringing academic research and providing services to the community through participation in government-commissioned projects, publishing influential academic journals, and providing policy advice to the government.

3.1.4. Technocratic elites in Japanese political life

The influence of technocratic elites in the political system on Japanese political life (3.1.4.1.) affects the policy-making process ; influences the economic development and industrialization and modernization process of Japan; and influences the field of administrative reform and state management.

The influence of technocratic elites outside the political system on Japanese political life

(3.1.4.2.) is the process of participating in policy-making; shaping public opinion and policy ideology; disseminating research and enhancing international exchange among think tanks.

3.2. TECHNOCRATIC ELITES IN SINGAPORE'S POLITICAL LIFE

3.2.1. Overview of Singapore's Political System

Singapore is a unitary state with a Westminster-style parliamentary system, where state power is centralized, with Parliament holding legislative power and the Cabinet holding executive power, headed by the Prime Minister. However, a prominent characteristic of Singapore's political system lies in the fact that the parliamentary system operates within the framework of a single ruling party, with the People's Action Party (PAP) continuously in power from 1959 to the present. The combination of the parliamentary structure, the concentration of executive power, and the dominant role of the PAP has created a stable, consistent institutional model with a high degree of policy coordination.

3.2.2. The Formation and development Process of the Technocratic Elite in Singapore

The technocratic elite in Singapore's political system **(3.2.2.1.)** had a foundation in the pre-independence period (before 1965), then became technocratically institutionalized during the independence and state-building period (1965–1980) and consolidated and specialized (1980–2000). From 2000 to the present: Strategic technocratization in the context of globalization and digital technology.

The formation of a technocratic elite outside the political system in Singapore **(3.2.2.2.)** began shortly after Singapore's independence. Singapore believed it could utilize outstanding scholars and researchers to develop in-depth knowledge on this issue. They could provide the government with independent insights, viewed through alternative lenses, on the same issues that government officials had addressed. With perspectives that defined the importance of understanding the region and world trends for Singapore, think tanks were established: the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), established as an autonomous organization under the Act of Parliament 1968 [54, p.1] ; the Institute of International Affairs (SIIA), established in 1988...

3.2.3. Characteristics of Singapore's Technocratic Elite

Characteristics of the technocratic elite in the Singapore political system **(3.2.3.1):** The technocratic essence of Singapore's political system is formed from a combination of meritocracy and pragmatism; there is a close connection between politics and expertise, and there is a continuous training process.

Characteristics of the technocratic elite outside the Singaporean political system **(3.2.3.2)** : close ties to the government; focus on strategic research and policy direction; strong focus on data and evidence; high level of specialization.

3.2.4. The Influence of Technocratic Elites on Singaporean Political Life

The influence of technocratic excellence in the political system **on Singaporean Political Life (3.2.4.1):** Influence on policy planning; National strategic planning and long-term governance; Evidence-based public policy design and implementation; Macroeconomic management and social policy planning and implementation; Crisis management and national risks; Shaping foreign relations and global competitiveness; Maintaining the integrity and efficiency of the state apparatus.

Influence of technocratic elites outside the political system **on Singaporean Political Life (3.2.4.2.):** Building and spreading social consensus; Guiding economic and technological development; Enhancing international standing and influence.

3.3. The Technocratic Elite in Chinese Political Life

3.3.1. Overview of China's Political System

The People's Republic of China is organized as a socialist republic, in which state power is structured and operates on the basis of four main pillars: the Communist Party of China (CPC), the National People's Congress, the State Council, and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Within this system, the leadership of the Communist Party of China is established as a fundamental organizational principle and affirmed as the essential characteristic of the "socialism with Chinese characteristics" model. Therefore, the Chinese political system is highly unified, with the unification of political power, state power, and ideological orientation.

3.3.2. The Formation and Development of the Technocratic Elite in China

The process of formation and development of the technocratic elite in the political system in China (**3.3.2.1**) spans the following stages: Prerequisite stage (1949–1976); Consolidation and expansion period (1990–2012); Transition and adjustment period (from 2012 to present)

The formation and development of the technocratic elite outside the political system in China. (**3.3.2.2 .**) The stages are as follows: Initial stage (1978–1991): The rise of think tanks; Development and institutionalization stage (1992–2001): Think tanks in the context of a socialist market economy; Functional expansion stage (2002–2012): Think tanks and domestic governance pressures; Strategic transformation stage (from 2012 to present): Building a new type of think tank with Chinese characteristics.

3.3.3. Characteristics of China's Technocratic Elite

Characteristics of the technocratic elite in the political system. (**3.3.3.1):** Technocratic elite who are also politicians; High educational background and deep expertise; High flexibility and adaptability.

Characteristics of the technocratic elite outside the Chinese political system (**3.3.3.2.)** This is demonstrated through academic think tanks affiliated with universities; and independent think tanks.

3.3.4. The Influence of Technocratic Elites on Chinese Political Life

The technocratic elite in the Chinese political system (3.3.4.1.) is a group of high-ranking officials whose primary background is in science, technology, economics, or other specialized fields. They differ from the previous revolutionary leadership in that they rely on expertise and decision-making based on scientific analysis rather than ideological bias. The technocratic elite in the Chinese political system plays a crucial role in policy planning and implementation and has made significant contributions, helping to make China one of the world's leading economic and technological powers. China has also transitioned from a centrally planned economy to a socialist market economy, with a focus on industrialization and modernization. Currently, China has risen to become a leader in many technological fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), 5G technology, and electric vehicles. Furthermore, the technocratic elite within the Chinese political system contributes to strengthening the efficiency and stability of the leadership apparatus; guiding economic and technological development policies; and influencing the power structure and decision-making mechanisms.

The influence of technocratic elites outside the political system on Chinese Political Life (3.3.4.2.) is manifested through the process of policy shaping and strategic advisory provision; economic and technological development orientation; and enhancing international status and influence.

Conclusion of Chapter 3

Chapter 3 clarified the presence, role, and operational methods of technocratic elites in the political life of three representative East Asian countries: Japan, Singapore, and China. The empirical analyses of Japan, Singapore, and China in Chapter 3 demonstrated the undeniable power and influence of technocratic elites in shaping the regional political landscape. The lessons learned from the successes and challenges these countries face provide invaluable practical basis for the thesis to examine, evaluate, and propose solutions for building and developing a technocratic elite in Vietnam, which will be presented in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

SOME OBSERVATIONS, PROSPECTUS, AND CHALLENGES OF TECHNOCRATIC ELITES IN JAPAN, SINGAPORE, AND CHINA, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR VIETNAM

4.1. SOME OBSERVATIONS ON TECHNOCRATIC ELITES IN THE POLITICAL LIFE OF JAPAN, SINGAPORE, AND CHINA

4.1.1. Japan: Technocratic system in a multi-party democracy, emphasizing consensus.

The Japanese model prioritizes consensus, transparency, and multi-party consultation in the decision-making process. Technocrats play a significant role in promoting technological innovation and maintaining economic stability, but political power is not as concentrated as in Singapore or China. The democratic and multi-

party nature of the model may slow down decision-making, but it ensures greater sustainability and social balance. This model makes it difficult to rapidly implement large-scale projects or make abrupt policy adjustments as in centrally planned technocratic countries.

4.1.2. Singapore - A model of centralized, efficient, and transparent technocratization.

This model is distinguished by its high level of transparency and accountability, which helps build social and investor trust. A competitive compensation system attracts top talent, minimizes corruption, and increases governance efficiency. Close collaboration between the state, the private sector, and academia creates synergy in economic and technological development and social management. However, this model also presents challenges in its ability to accommodate diverse voices in society and maintain a balance between technocratic and democratic elements.

4.1.3. China: A technocratic-political alliance, centralized power.

This model enables the effective coordination of large-scale national development programs such as “Made in China 2025” and the construction of 5G digital infrastructure. The combination of technocratization and Party politics enhances the technical feasibility of policies while maintaining political stability. However, the high concentration of power also reduces transparency, creating a risk of accountability and limiting space for diverse social voices. This approach may struggle when addressing complex social issues requiring broad participation from all segments of the population.

4.1.4. Comparison of technocratic elites in China, Singapore, and Japan

Criteria	China	Singapore	Japan
Position in the power system	Playing a crucial role and under the leadership of the Communist Party of China.	They are almost completely integrated with the political leadership, especially within the PAP. There is no clear line between technocrats and politicians.	They are primarily within the professional bureaucratic system (Ministry of Finance, METI), rarely holding top political leadership positions, but maintaining influence through advisory roles.
Style and level of influence on policy	The focus is on project management, five-year plan implementation, and prioritizing cutting-edge industries, infrastructure, and technology. While	Focus on long-term planning, data-driven governance, and rapid response to change. Direct and	Indirect but lasting impact; ensuring the continuity of economic and technological policies regardless of

	directly impactful, this must align with central government political objectives.	highly concentrated impact.	changes in government.
Relationship with political and ideological factors	Previous phase: relatively independent in technical analysis. Current phase: closely tied to ideological priorities and power control.	Closely aligned with the PAP's political goals, but leaning more towards pragmatism than rigid ideology.	Relatively detached from partisan politics; prioritizing professional expertise and long-term national interests over ideological disputes.

4.2. NEW CONTEXT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNOCRATIC ELITES

4.2.1. The new context and its impact on the technocratic elite.

Populist trends and anti-elite reactions; Strategic competition between great powers and the need for technocratization; The impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

4.2.2. The development of the technocratic elite in the new context

- *Shifting from traditional technocracy to technology-driven technocracy.*

Characteristic	Technocratic excellence traditional	The pinnacle of technological innovation.
Area of expertise	They primarily come from backgrounds in economics, finance, public administration, law, and political science; focusing on institutional knowledge and macroeconomic management.	Coming from high-tech fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data, cybersecurity, blockchain, and biotechnology, they possess a deep understanding of technical systems and digital infrastructure.
Role in policy	Managing the macroeconomy, formulating public policies, maintaining financial and social stability; focusing on the legal framework and market regulation.	Shaping national technology development trends, controlling data infrastructure, monitoring cyberspace, and designing AI systems; these have the potential to directly impact privacy, security, and information power.
Management model	Governance is based on law, macroeconomics, and market principles; decision-making is based on quantitative socio-economic data and political considerations.	Governance based on real-time data, algorithms, and automation systems; prioritizing efficiency and speed over traditional political processes, which carry the risk of "algorithmic power."

Global impact	Participating in and influencing through traditional international economic and financial institutions such as the IMF, WB, and WTO; primarily through economic policies.	Connecting and collaborating with global technology corporations (Google, Microsoft, Meta, Tencent, Huawei, Alibaba, etc.); directly influencing data flows, technology standards, and global cybersecurity standards.
Relationships with politicians	They typically serve as advisors or policymakers within government agencies or international organizations; their power is dependent on the existing political system.	It is possible to directly influence politics through technology, controlling information infrastructure, social media platforms, and AI systems; power sometimes extends beyond the framework of traditional political oversight.

- *The new relationship between technocracy and politics*

The relationship between technocracy and politics has undergone significant changes throughout history. In the 20th century, technocracy played a supporting role in politics, providing expertise-based solutions for state administration, but remained subject to the control of political institutions. However, with the rise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0), the increase of Big Data, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and globalization, this relationship is profoundly changing. Technocracy is no longer merely a tool of politics but is gradually creating a new power space where technology and data experts can directly influence political decisions, even overshadowing the role of traditional politicians.

4.2.3 Challenges for technocratic elites in the new era

The conflict between technocracy and democracy, power competition with traditional politicians, the dominance of technology corporations, and the new power order.

4.3. PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FOR TECHNOCRATIC ELITES IN JAPAN, SINGAPORE, AND CHINA IN THE NEW CONTEXT

4.3.2. Prospects and Challenges for Technocratic Elites in Japan in the New Context

Prospects for Japan's technocratic elite: The long-standing expertise and prestige of the Japanese bureaucracy ensure that technocrats continue to play a key role in policy planning and implementation; the need for stability and continuity in development strategies still makes the Japanese government dependent on the knowledge and experience of technocrats; opportunities to expand influence through multi-sectoral cooperation are increasing.

The challenges facing Japan's technocratic elite include: pressure to react quickly to change; and competition from the private sector and non-governmental experts.

4.3.2. Prospects and Challenges for Technocratic Elites in Singapore in the New Context

Prospects for Singapore's Technocratic Elite: In the coming years, Singapore's technocratic elite will almost certainly continue to play an absolute pivotal role in national policy planning and administration. The close collaboration between the People's Action Party (PAP) and the technocratic class not only ensures institutional stability but also maintains continuity and discipline in development strategy. This forms the foundation for Singapore to continue leveraging its competitive advantages in key areas such as comprehensive digital transformation, green economic development, smart healthcare, energy security, and sustainable urban governance – areas of vital importance in an increasingly competitive international environment.

Challenges facing Singapore's technocratic elite include : excessive concentration of power in a small group of elite technocratic leaders could reduce diversity in policymaking; Singapore's technocratic model relies heavily on the prestige and achievements of the current team; pressure to adapt to new technologies and global trends requires technocrats to continuously upgrade their professional capabilities; while Singapore's integrated technocratic-political model creates high governance efficiency, it also carries the risk of "forced consensus," where decisions are subject to little external scrutiny or criticism.

4.3.3. Prospects and Challenges for Technocratic Elites in China in the New Context

Prospects for China's technocratic elite: Under the centralized leadership of the Party, the technocrats have the prospect of maximizing their strengths in transforming political vision into feasible plans, while simultaneously implementing projects at a rapid pace and on a large scale. This involves strategic integration between the state-run technocrat and the private technology sector. The trend toward military-civilian integration will expand the scope of technocratic activity to include advanced defense, creating a unique position compared to countries with a separate civil and military governance model.

The challenges facing China's technocratic elite: The autonomy of the technocratic elite is shrinking due to the absolute prioritization of political and ideological factors. Dependence on the state's technocratic apparatus also faces competitive challenges from the private technology sector , which is attracting top technological talent and innovating faster; tensions between technocrats with science and technology training and officials with social science and humanities backgrounds may escalate due to differences in their thinking and management styles.

4.4. SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR VIETNAM

4.4.1. The new context and the need for developing a team of The staff possesses professional scientific and technical qualifications and management capabilities.
in Vietnam.

In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the rapid development of digital technology, the methods of organizing and exercising state power are undergoing profound changes. For Vietnam, the comprehensive national reform process and deep international integration necessitate the continued reform of national governance towards a modern, scientific, effective, and efficient direction. National digital transformation, therefore, is not merely a technical-technological process, but a crucial component of reforming the development model and reforming the methods of state governance during the transition period to socialism.

Orientations for the development of technocratic cadres in Vietnam: building a socialist technocratic cadre must be under the comprehensive leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam; developing a technocratic cadre that harmoniously combines political qualities, public service ethics with professional competence, scientific thinking, and the ability to apply modern technology; forming and developing a technocratic cadre in conjunction with institutional reform and state governance methods; developing a technocratic cadre that must be linked to serving the people and ensuring social justice; harmoniously combining domestic training with attracting and effectively utilizing high-quality human resources.

4.4.2. Some suggestions for Vietnam from the experiences of Japan, Singapore, and China

Developing the staff possesses professional scientific and technical qualifications and management capabilities aligned with national strategic priorities; designing a supportive relationship between political power and technocratic capacity; balancing centralized power and professional autonomy; expanding the knowledge ecosystem; and strengthening the legitimacy of technocratic personnel through effectiveness and accountability.

Conclusion of Chapter 4

Through analyzing the characteristics and forecasting the development trends of the technocratic elite in Japan, Singapore, and China, this thesis clarifies the main dynamics of this social group within the modern power structure. The research shows that the technocratic elite does not exist as a rigid model, but continuously adjusts to adapt to the socio-economic context, level of development, and governance requirements of each country. Despite differences in their forms of expression, the technocratic elite remains central to ensuring governance capacity, institutional stability, and the state's ability to respond to global challenges.

The research findings simultaneously confirm that the effectiveness of technocratic elites is closely dependent on the institutional environment in which they operate. Competency-based selection mechanisms, transparent rule of law, and effective

checks and balances are prerequisites for limiting the tendency towards "intellectual authoritarianism" and ensuring a balance between professional effectiveness and political legitimacy. This is the core lesson learned from the models examined.

Based on comparison and contrast, the thesis offers meaningful suggestions for Vietnam in building the staff possesses professional scientific and technical qualifications and management capabilities

: reforming thinking on personnel work towards prioritizing the use of experts, perfecting the legal framework for attracting and utilizing talent, and modernizing the governance system so that the staff possesses professional scientific and technical qualifications and management capabilities

can genuinely participate in the policy-making process.

In summary, technocratic elites are not a fleeting phenomenon, but an essential component of modern national governance. Accurately identifying and appropriately leveraging the role of this force is crucial for enhancing governance capacity and achieving sustainable development in the 21st century, while also opening up avenues for further research on elites and power in contemporary society.

CONCLUDE

This dissertation approaches the issue of technocratic elites from a political science perspective, placing it within the dialectical relationship between the transformation of productive forces, methods of state governance, and the movement of political power in the modern context. The dissertation clarifies core theoretical and practical issues related to the formation, development, role, and challenges of technocratic elites in the contemporary political system, thereby drawing meaningful insights for Vietnam in its process of national governance reform.

Firstly, the thesis has contributed to clarifying the theoretical framework of technocratic elites in modern political science. Through the systematization and analysis of theoretical approaches to elites, technocracy, and political power, the thesis affirms that the technocratic elite is not merely a group of experts with technical knowledge, but a specific part of the power structure, closely linked to the development of the modern state and the process of administrative specialization. From a historical materialist standpoint, the emergence and expansion of the role of the technocratic elite is an inevitable result of the development of science and technology, the knowledge economy, and the increasing complexity of social management. However, the technocratic elite does not exist as a neutral force, but is always determined by class relations, political institutions, and the development orientation of each nation.

Secondly, the thesis deeply analyzes the formation and development of technocratic elites in typical political models, thereby clarifying the diversity and specificity of the technocratic phenomenon. Through the study of the cases of Japan, Singapore, and China, the thesis shows that technocratic elites are not a homogeneous

product, but are shaped by the historical context, political culture, development model, and power structure of each country. In Japan, the development of technocratic elites is linked to the development of the state and the transformation from "growth-oriented technocracy" to "strategic technocracy." In Singapore, technocracy has become a pillar of a governance model based on competence and efficiency, but is always under the tight control of political power. In China, technocracy is linked to the socialist modernization strategy, undergoing periods of ups and downs and transformations in a complex relationship with ideological factors and the concentration of power. These analyses show that the essence of technocratic governance has the potential to promote development, but also harbors negative consequences if there is a lack of mechanisms to control power and integrate it with society.

Thirdly, the thesis has highlighted the structural challenges facing technocratic elites in the contemporary context. The contradictions between technocracy and democracy, between expertise and legitimacy, and between governance efficiency and public participation are analyzed as inherent tensions in modern governance. Furthermore, the power struggle between technocratic elites and traditional politicians, as well as the increasing dominance of technology corporations and the trend of "governance by algorithms," have profoundly transformed the power structure and raised new issues concerning accountability, social justice, and national sovereignty. These challenges demonstrate that technocracy cannot be considered a panacea, but must be placed within a framework of appropriate political institutions and values.

Fourth, based on an analysis of Vietnam's practical situation, the thesis affirms the objective need to form and develop a team of the staff possesses professional scientific and technical qualifications and management capabilities

in the process of reforming state governance and national digital transformation. The process of promoting the construction of digital government, digital economy, digital society, and smart urban governance in Vietnam has placed high demands on the professional capacity, modern management thinking, and ability to apply science and technology of the team of officials and civil servants. However, the team of the staff possesses professional scientific and technical qualifications and management capabilities in Vietnam cannot develop according to a purely technocratic or apolitical "expert" model, but must be shaped as an organic part of the socialist socio-political system, under the leadership of the Party, the management of the State, and the supervision of the people.

Fifth, the thesis proposed a direction for building a team of The staff possesses professional scientific and technical qualifications and management capabilities in Vietnam based on the creative application of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, and the Party's guidelines. The team of socialist technocratic cadres in Vietnam must be a force that is both "politically sound and professionally

competent," closely combining political acumen, public service ethics, and professional competence; and integrating scientific thinking, modern management with the goal of serving the people and sustainable development. The development of this force needs to be linked to institutional reform, power control, increased accountability, and ensuring socialist democracy, avoiding the risk of forming a technocratic class detached from the masses or excessively dominating the political decision-making process.

Overall, the thesis shows that technocratic elites are an inevitable phenomenon in modern state governance, but not a neutral or universal model. The value and role of technocratic elites depend on the way power is organized, the development orientation, and the political value system of each country. For Vietnam, building a team of The staff possesses professional scientific and technical qualifications and management capabilities

is not about copying foreign models, but rather a process of critical selection, creative application, and placement within the framework of national independence linked with socialism. This is both a theoretical requirement and an urgent practical task to enhance national governance capacity, meeting the demands of rapid, sustainable, and inclusive development in a rapidly changing and unpredictable world.

LIST OF PUBLISHED WORKS BY THE AUTHOR RELATED TO THE THESIS

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