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## COMBATING CORRUPTION SINGAPORE-STYLE: LESSONS FOR OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES

Jon S.T. Quah

SCHOOL OF LAW  
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Jon S.T. Quah\*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a serious problem in many Asian countries, judging by the rankings and scores of the 23 Asian countries on Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) as shown in Table 1. However, corruption is not a serious problem in Singapore, which has been consistently perceived as the least corrupt Asian country with the highest score on Transparency International's CPI from 1995-2007, as indicated in Table 2. Why has

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\* Jon S.T. Quah, Ph.D., is an Anti-Corruption Consultant based in Singapore. He was Professor of Political Science at the National University of Singapore and Co-editor of the *Asian Journal of Political Science* until his retirement in June 2007. He has published extensively on anti-corruption strategies and civil service reforms in Asian countries and is the author of *Curbing Corruption in Asia: A Comparative Study of Six Countries* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2003). Email: jonstquah@gmail.com.

Editorial note: The exchange rate between the U.S. dollar and the Singapore dollar has fluctuated over the years. In 1959, US\$1 = S\$3, while in 2007 US\$1 = S\$1.5. The author has provided contemporary exchange rates for the years that the data was collected for most of the tables included in this article.

Singapore been effective in curbing corruption when many other Asian countries have failed to do so? Can these countries improve their anti-corruption strategies by learning from Singapore's success in minimizing corruption?

This monograph addresses these two questions by first describing Singapore's policy context in terms of its geography, history, economy, demography, and political system. Singapore's favorable policy context is important, as it is conducive for the effective implementation of the anti-corruption measures. Following this analysis, the causes of corruption during different periods can be properly identified.

Before proceeding to discuss Singapore's policy context, it is necessary to define corruption. According to Arnold J. Heidenheimer, corruption has been defined in terms of its emphasis on the public office, market, or public interest.<sup>1</sup> This monograph adopts the United Nations Development Programme's definition of corruption as "the misuse of public power, office or authority for private benefit—through bribery, extortion, influence peddling, nepotism, fraud, speed money or embezzlement."<sup>2</sup> This definition has been chosen for two reasons: it identifies the major forms of corruption and is applicable to both the public and private sectors.

Corruption is a way of life in a country when it is rampant, occurs at all levels, and is the norm rather than the exception. In contrast, corruption is a fact of life in a country when cases of corruption are the exception rather than the rule. Apart from its extent, corruption can also be classified according to its level: grand corruption or corruption by political leaders and senior civil servants; and petty or "survival" corruption, which is practiced by underpaid junior civil servants demanding bribes from those who wish to expedite their applications or perform other favors.<sup>3</sup>

Singapore's comprehensive anti-corruption strategy is analyzed first by explaining the history of the Singaporean government's efforts in combating corruption. This history begins with the Opium Hijacking Scandal of October 1951, which led to the formation of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) in October

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1. Arnold J. Heidenheimer, "Terms, Concepts, and Definitions: An Introduction," in Arnold J. Heidenheimer, Michael Johnston and Victor T. LeVine, eds., *Political Corruption: A Handbook*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989, pp. 8-11.

2. United Nations Development Programme, *Fighting Corruption to Improve Governance*, New York: UNDP, 1999, p. 7.

3. Jon S.T. Quah, *Curbing Corruption in Asia: A Comparative Study of Six Countries*, Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2003, p. 7.

1952. By the end of the decade, however, it became evident that the CPIB was handicapped by its lack of resources and powers, so the freshly empowered People's Action Party (PAP) government enacted the Prevention of Corruption Act (POCA) in June 1960 to enhance the CPIB's effectiveness. The PAP government's political will is reflected in the impartial enforcement of the POCA and

**Table 1. Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index of 23 Asian Countries**

Country	CPI Rank	CPI Score*	No. of Surveys**
Singapore	4th	9.3	9
Hong Kong	14th	8.3	8
Japan	17th	7.5	8
Macao	34th	5.7	4
Taiwan	34th	5.7	9
Malaysia	43rd	5.1	9
South Korea	43rd	5.1	9
Bhutan	46th	5.0	5
China	72nd	3.5	9
India	72nd	3.5	10
Thailand	84th	3.3	9
Sri Lanka	94th	3.2	7
Mongolia	99th	3.0	6
Vietnam	123rd	2.6	9
Nepal	131st	2.5	7
Philippines	131st	2.5	9
Pakistan	138th	2.4	7
Indonesia	143rd	2.3	11
Bangladesh	162nd	2.0	7
Cambodia	162nd	2.0	7
Laos	168th	1.9	6
Afghanistan	172nd	1.8	4
Myanmar	179th	1.4	4

Source: [http://www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2007](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2007)

\*The score ranges from 0 (most corrupt) to 10 (least corrupt).

\*\*To be included in the CPI, a country must have at least three independent surveys.

other anti-corruption legislation by the CPIB in the 48 years since the initial execution of the POCA.

After evaluating Singapore's anti-corruption strategy, this monograph identifies the four lessons that other Asian countries can learn from Singapore's experience in curbing corruption. Even though Singapore's policy context is more favorable than those of other Asian countries, the critical ingredient for an effective anti-corruption strategy remains the political will of the incumbent government. This is followed in greater detail with other lessons that countries can use in their anti-corruption policies.

**Table 2. Singapore's Ranking and Score on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, 1995-2007**

Year	CPI Rank	CPI Score	No. of Countries
1995	3rd	9.26	41
1996	7th	8.80	54
1997	9th	8.66	52
1998	7th	9.1	85
1999	7th	9.1	99
2000	6th	9.1	90
2001	4th	9.2	91
2002	5th	9.3	102
2003	5th	9.4	133
2004	5th	9.3	146
2005	5th	9.4	159
2006	5th	9.4	163
2007	4th	9.3	180
Average	5.5th	9.2	—

Source: Compiled from the 1995-2007 CPI in <http://www.transparency.org>.

## II. SINGAPORE'S POLICY CONTEXT

Singapore has changed a great deal during the past five decades since its attainment of self-government from the British on June 3, 1959. Table 3 summarizes the major changes in the country's policy context during 1959 to 2007 which are relevant for the analysis of Singapore's anti-corruption strategy.

**Table 3. Changes in Singapore's Policy Context, 1959-2007**

Indicator	Policy Context in 1959	Policy Context in 2007	Change
Land Area	581.5 sq km	704 sq km	+ 122.5 sq km (x 0.21)
Population	1.58 million	4.58 million	+ 3 million (x 2.9)
Gross Domestic Product per capita	S\$1,330 (US\$443)*	S\$52,994 (US\$35,163)	+ S\$51,664 (x 40)
Unemployment Rate	5%	3.1%	- 1.9% (x - 0.7)
Official Foreign Reserves	S\$1,151.4 million** (US\$383.8 million)	S\$234,545.6 million (US\$155,627.1 million)	+ S\$233,394.2 million (x 203)
Population living in Public Housing	9%	82%***	+ 73% (x 9)
Government Expenditure on Education	S\$63.39 million (US\$21.13 million)	S\$6,966 million*** (US\$4,384.2 million)	+ S\$6,902.61 million (x 110)
Extent of Corruption	High	Low	Minimized

Source: *Economic and Social Statistics Singapore 1960-1982*, Singapore: Department of Statistics, 1983, pp. 4, 7, 118, 172, and 248; "Key Annual Indicators" available from <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/stats/keyind.html>; and *Yearbook of Statistics Singapore 2007*, Singapore: Department of Statistics, 2007, Table 19.20.

\*Exchange rate: US\$1 = S\$3 (1959 and 1963); S\$1.58(2006); S\$1.50 (2007)

\*\*1963 figure \*\*\*2006 figure

### *Geography: The Advantages of Small Countries*

Geography can be an obstacle if the physical location, size, or topography of a country hinders the implementation of policies. When Singapore attained self-government from the British in June 1959, its land area was only 581.5 sq km. Because of land reclamation, its size has increased during the past 48 years though its total land mass is still only 704 sq km. Singapore's small territorial boundaries are advantageous for the formulation and implementation of policies, as communication is not a serious problem and often facilitates political control by the leadership. A second advantage is that Singapore's small size enhances administrative coordination and promotes responsiveness by public officials. In contrast to larger Asian countries like India and Indonesia, Singapore's compactness has contributed to a highly centralized public bureaucracy, which does not face the same problems afflicting a federal civil service in its interaction with the state, provincial or local-level

bureaucracies. Indeed, the absence of a large rural sector in Singapore not only reinforces the centralized nature of its civil service, but also means that it is not burdened by problems arising from implementing reforms in the rural areas or provinces.<sup>4</sup>

### *History: The Enduring Legacy of British Colonial Rule*

The British colonial government introduced two important reforms during the early 1950s which have strengthened the contemporary civil service tremendously. First, in January of 1951, the British introduced a system of meritocracy to Singapore with the establishment of the Public Service Commission (PSC). This commission was established with the dual purposes of keeping politics out of the civil service by rejecting the spoils system, and accelerating the localization of the civil service by recruiting qualified local candidates. The PAP government has retained the PSC, which has attracted the “best and brightest” Singaporeans to join the civil service by awarding scholarships to the best students in each cohort.<sup>5</sup>

Second, the British colonial government was also responsible for creating the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) in October 1952 to replace its ineffective predecessor, the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) of the Criminal Investigation Department in the Singapore Police Force (SPF). After the highly publicized Opium Hijacking Scandal involving the SPF, the British colonial government realized the folly of relying on the ACB to curb corruption when there was extensive police corruption, and corrected its mistake by establishing the CPIB as an agency independent of the SPF.

### *Economic Growth: From Poverty to Affluence*

A country’s economy can hinder national development if financial resources are scarce and if there are inadequate trained personnel. Indeed, scarcity of resources is the most important economic obstacle to development which requires the investment of much time, effort and resources. On the other hand, an affluent country will have less difficulty in implementing development programs as it has the required financial and human resources.

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4. Jon S.T. Quah, “The Public Policy-Making Process in Singapore,” *Asian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (December 1984), pp. 109-110.

5. Jon S.T. Quah, “The Public Service Commission in Singapore: An Evaluation of its First Fifty Years,” in Akira Nakamura, ed., *Public Reform, Policy Change, and New Public Management*, Tokyo: EROPA Local Government Center, 2004, pp. 81 and 95.



Singapore's tremendous improvement in its standard of living and growth in its GDP per capita during the past 48 years and its transformation from a Third World country to a First World country has been an asset in implementing development programs. The housing shortage inherited by the government of the People's Action Party has been solved by the Housing and Development Board's effective public housing program which has increased the proportion of the population living in public housing from 9% in 1959 to 82% in 2006. The lack of natural resources has also compelled the PAP government to focus on education to improve the quality of human resources in Singapore. Accordingly, it is not surprising that government expenditure on education has increased by 110 times from S\$63.39 million in 1959 to S\$6,966 million in 2006.

Thus, Singapore's economic affluence means that the PAP government will be able to allocate sufficient personnel and budget to the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau to enable it to implement the anti-corruption measures effectively.

#### *Demography: A Multi-Racial Society*

In June 2007, Singapore had a total population of 4,588,600 persons, with 3,583,100 of them (78%) as residents and a population density of 6,518 persons per sq km.<sup>6</sup> Singapore's population is heterogeneous in terms of ethnic group, language, and religion. The Chinese constitute 75.2% of the resident population, followed by the Malays (13.6%), Indians (8.8%), and Others (2.4%).<sup>7</sup> Apart from the four official languages of English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil, there are several Chinese dialects and a few languages among the Indians. In terms of religion, 51% of the population were Buddhist or Taoist in 2000, 14.9% were Muslims, 14.8% had no religion, 14.6% were Christian, 4% were Hindu, and 0.6% belonged to other religions.

The population's heterogeneity in race, language and religion, imposes on the PAP government two important obligations to its citizens. First, it must promote nation building in Singapore by formulating and implementing policies to ensure racial harmony. The second obligation of the PAP government is to prevent and minimize discrimination against the minority groups by ensuring that

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6. "Key Annual Indicators" available from <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/stats/keyind.html>

7. *Yearbook of Statistics Singapore 2007*, Singapore: Department of Statistics, 2007, Table 3.4.

both public and private organizations are fair and impartial in their treatment of all citizens, regardless of their ethnic origin, language or religion.<sup>8</sup> This means that anyone found guilty of corruption in the multiracial country of Singapore is punished, regardless of his or her ethnic group, language or religion.

*Political Stability and Continuity of the PAP Government*

The government of the People's Action Party has been in power for the 49 years since it first assumed office in June 1959 after winning the May 1959 general election. It was re-elected for the 11th time when it won the May 2006 general election. The PAP government's predominance in Singapore politics can be attributed to four factors. First, it ensured Singapore's survival after separation from Malaysia in August 1965 by minimizing the economic effects of the withdrawal of the British military forces in 1971 by encouraging foreign investment; and by strengthening the country's armed forces through the introduction of compulsory military service and the acquisition of military hardware. Second, the PAP government gained legitimacy among Singaporeans through its effective response to the communist and communal threats and the problem of corruption. It introduced the Prevention of Corruption Act in 1960 to strengthen the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau and enabled it to curb corruption effectively. Third, the vast improvement in living standards by the PAP government during the past 48 years demonstrates clearly that it has the ability to adequately perform its role to the satisfaction and benefit of its people. Finally, the PAP government has dominated Singapore politics because the many opposition political parties are weak and ineffective and are not viewed as viable alternatives.<sup>9</sup>

Singapore's political stability and continuity is an important asset for the PAP government as it is highly conducive for attracting foreign investment and for enhancing the effective implementation of public policies as the political leaders can focus on meeting the long term goals instead of being constrained by short-term considerations. The continuity of the PAP government and its commit-

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8. Jon S.T. Quah, "Public Administration in Singapore: Managing Success in a Multi-Racial City-State," in Ahmed Shafiqul Huque, Jermain T.M. Lam and Jane C.Y. Lee, eds., *Public Administration in the NICs: Challenges and Accomplishments*, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1996, p. 61.

9. Jon S.T. Quah, "Singapore: Meritocratic City-State," in John Funston, ed., *Government and Politics in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001, pp. 302-306.

ment to curbing corruption for the past 48 years has certainly enhanced the effectiveness of its anti-corruption strategy.

In sum, Singapore has a favorable policy context as its small size and population, commitment to meritocracy and racial harmony, economic affluence, and political stability, have contributed to the successful implementation of many public policies, including the anti-corruption policy.

### III. CAUSES OF CORRUPTION DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

Singapore's battle against corruption began in 1871, when corruption was made illegal with the enactment of the Penal Code of the Straits Settlements of Malacca, Penang and Singapore. In 1879, a Commission of Inquiry into the causes of inefficiency of the Straits Settlements Police Force found that corruption was prevalent among the European inspectors and the Malay and Indian junior officers. Similarly, the 1886 Commission of Inquiry into the extent of public gambling in the Straits Settlements confirmed the existence of systematic corruption in the police forces in Singapore and Penang.<sup>10</sup> An analysis of the 172 reported cases of police corruption in Singapore during 1845-1921 found that bribery was the most common form (63.4%), followed by direct criminal activities (24.4%), opportunistic theft (5.8%), corruption of authority (5.2%), and protection of illegal activities (1.2%).<sup>11</sup>

#### *Low Salaries*

The most important factor responsible for police corruption in colonial Singapore was the low salaries of members of the Singapore Police Force, especially those in the lower ranks. Table 4 shows the range of salaries for both European and local members of the SPF in 1887. The discrimination in monthly salary between the European and non-European local policemen is clearly demonstrated in Table 4 as the European officers earned much more than their local counterparts. For example, the monthly salary of the most junior rank of constable among the European contingent was S\$40 or nearly three times that of the monthly salary of the highest rank of sergeant (S\$15) for the local contingent.

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10. Jon S.T. Quah, "Police Corruption in Singapore: An Analysis of Its Forms, Extent and Causes," *Singapore Police Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (January 1979), pp. 24-26.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 24, Table 6.

Apart from the discrepancy between the two sets of salaries, the local policemen were not fully provided with local rations. In contrast, all the European policemen except for those with the rank of Inspector 1st Class, received between S\$5-S\$10 worth of rations. The lack of provision of rations for the local policemen made life more difficult for them with the increase in food prices.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the local policemen had to pay for their own uniforms, which were relatively expensive in view of their low salaries. For example, a peon (1st class) had to pay S\$3.50 for his uniform from his monthly salary of S\$5.<sup>13</sup> With such conditions prevailing in the SPF, it is not surprising that the *Straits Times* observed that: "It is at once evident that the native constables and the European police of the Inspector class are so underpaid that scandals are unavoidable."<sup>14</sup>

**Table 4. Monthly Salary in the Singapore Police Force in 1887**

Rank	Monthly Salary
<b>European Contingent</b>	
Inspector 1st Class	S\$100 (no rations)
Inspector 2nd Class	S\$80 (S\$5 rations)
Inspector 3rd Class	S\$60 (S\$10 rations)
Sergeant	S\$50 (S\$10 rations)
Constable	S\$40 (S\$10 rations)
<b>Local Contingent</b>	
Sergeant	S\$15
Corporal	S\$12
Constable 1st Class	S\$10
Constable 2nd Class	S\$9
Constable 3rd Class	S\$8
Peon 1st Class	S\$5
Peon 2nd Class	S\$4

Source: *Straits Times* (Singapore), October 4, 1887, quoted in Jon S.T. Quah, "Police Corruption in Singapore: An Analysis of Its Forms, Extent and Causes," *Singapore Police Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (January 1979), p. 28.

#### *Ample Opportunities for Corruption*

In addition to low salaries, the lack of control over the police force in areas that were most susceptible to corruption also provided many opportunities for policemen to engage in corrupt practices. Indeed, the many cases of police involvement in illegal

12. *Straits Times* (Singapore), July 6, 1878.

13. *Straits Times* (Singapore), May 13, 1848.

14. *Straits Times* (Singapore), October 4, 1887.

gambling reflected the lack of control over those inspectors and constables who accepted bribes from the gambling house owners. In April 1846, a European constable, Charles Cashin, was convicted of receiving bribes from illicit gambling dens and sentenced to 18 months imprisonment and a fine of S\$1,000. Cashin reported that for the past three years all the SPF constables had received S\$20 each monthly, and that the constable who had brought the charge against him had also received bribes himself. The Deputy Superintendent of Police, Thomas Dunman, admitted in court that the police were in the regular pay of gambling promoters and that it was difficult to rectify the situation.<sup>15</sup> Three years later, the *Straits Times* revealed that the police did not take action to suppress gambling activities conducted within 50 yards of a police station in town because the policemen were paid for their silence.<sup>16</sup> Finally, it is surprising that even though the 1886 Commission of Inquiry had confirmed the existence of widespread police corruption in gambling activities, nothing was done by the SPF to prevent the policemen from getting involved in such activities.

Another reason why the local policemen had ample opportunities for corruption during the colonial period was that though they were not legally permitted to take on second jobs in addition to their policemen duties, their low salaries forced them to seek alternative sources of income to supplement their meager salaries from the police force. Many of the local policemen who owned buffalo carts and food stalls were unable to perform their official duties impartially as they were exposed to more opportunities for misbehavior.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the Singapore Police Force, other government agencies in colonial Singapore including the customs, immigration and internal revenue departments, provided more opportunities for corruption than those public agencies that had limited contact with members of the public, did not issue licenses or permits, and collected fees or taxes. A former Director of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau, YOONG Siew Wah, observed that "the areas in which corruption was widespread were in almost all the licensing activity, food and price control action, the protection rackets con-

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15. Charles Burton Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore*, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965, pp. 446-447.

16. *Straits Times* (Singapore), June 13, 1849.

17. Quah, "Police Corruption in Singapore," *supra* note 10, pp. 29 and 31.

nected with the smuggling of gold bars and opium, and gambling.”<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the Singapore Improvement Trust’s failure in providing low-cost public housing could be attributed in part to the corruption of its senior expatriate officers and local junior officers in contracts procedure, planning and development control, and the allocation of housing units.<sup>19</sup> Thus, corruption in colonial Singapore was not confined to the SPF, but was widespread throughout the entire public bureaucracy.

### *Low Risk of Detection and Punishment*

As an illegal offense in virtually all countries, individuals found guilty of corruption should be punished accordingly. However, in reality, the probability of detection and punishment of corrupt offenses varies in different Asian countries. Corruption typically thrives in Asian countries where the public perceives it to be a “low risk, high reward” activity, as corrupt offenders are unlikely to be detected and punished. Meanwhile, corruption is a far less serious problem in Asian countries where corruption is perceived as a “high risk, low reward” activity, as those involved in corrupt behavior are likely to be caught and severely punished.<sup>20</sup> In Singapore, corruption thrived during the colonial period when it was perceived by the public to be a low risk, high reward activity, as corrupt offenders were unlikely to be detected and punished.

The British colonial government’s efforts to curb corruption failed because its existing Prevention of Corruption Ordinance (POCO) policy was ineffective. Even though corruption was made illegal in 1871, the British colonial government took another 66 years to introduce the first anti-corruption law with the enactment of the POCO in December 1937. The POCO’s aim was to prevent “bribery and secret commissions in public and private business.” However, the POCO was ineffective for two reasons: its offenses were not seizable and limited the powers of arrest, search and investigation of police officers as warrants were required before arrests could be made; and the penalty of imprisonment for two years and/or a S\$10,000 fine for those found guilty of corruption did not

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18. YOONG Siew Wah, “Some Aspects of Corruption,” *National Youth Leadership Training Institute Journal*, (January 1972), p. 56.

19. Jon S.T. Quah, *Administrative Reform and Development Administration in Singapore: A Comparative Study of the Singapore Improvement Trust and the Housing and Development Board*, Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Government, Florida State University, 1975, pp. 281-290.

20. Quah, *Curbing Corruption in Asia*, *supra* note 3, p. 13.

deter corrupt behavior.<sup>21</sup> It took another nine years before the POCO was amended in 1946 to increase the penalty to a prison term of three years, thus making corrupt offenses seizable and automatically giving police officers “much wider powers of arrest, search and investigation.”<sup>22</sup>

The problem of corruption deteriorated during the Japanese Occupation (February 1942 to August 1945) because the rampant inflation made it difficult for civil servants to live on their low wages. Trading in the black market seemed to be a “way of life” as LEE Gek Boi describes everyone to have been “surviving on some sort of black marketing.”<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, nepotism and corruption were “perfectly acceptable,” as everyone resorted to “connections, friends and relatives” in order to get jobs.<sup>24</sup>

The Japanese Occupation bred corruption into Singaporean society, as practices of “bribery, blackmail, and extortion grew out of the violence and fear” that the Japanese used to rule their occupied territories.<sup>25</sup> As LEE Gek Boi further recounted:

Bribery worked wonders. From generals to the ordinary soldier, gifts and money smoothed the way. Nothing was transparent and everything was about connections and payoffs. Nothing was impossible with the right connections. . . . Shortages created the black market and a culture of thievery to fuel the market. Everyone—the Japanese included—did black marketing. The Japanese Occupation culture brought out the basic survival instincts in people and produced a society where all manner of evils could be justified because it was all about survival. . . . It would take years to undo the corruption and address the social evils that Japanese military occupation bred in Singapore.<sup>26</sup>

Conditions worsened after World War II and corruption spread among civil servants as a result of their meager salaries and inflation, as well as their inadequate supervision by their superiors,

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21. Jon S.T. Quah, *Administrative and Legal Measures for Combating Bureaucratic Corruption in Singapore*, Singapore: Department of Political Science, University of Singapore, Occasional Paper No. 34, 1978, p. 9.

22. Colony of Singapore, *Twentieth Meeting of the Advisory Council*, Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1947, p. 4.

23. LEE Gek Boi, *The Syonan Years: Singapore Under Japanese Rule 1942-1945*, Singapore: National Archives of Singapore and Epigram, 2005, p. 142.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

26. *Ibid.*

which provided them with many opportunities for corruption with a low probability of being caught.<sup>27</sup> Corruption had become a way of life for many Singaporeans to enable them to cope with their low salaries and rising inflation during the post-war period.<sup>28</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that the British Military Administration (BMA), which took over after the Japanese surrender in August 1945, was also referred to derisively as the "Black Market Administration."

#### IV. THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION BRANCH

The Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) was established within the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in December 1937 by the British colonial government to curb corruption in Singapore. However, the ACB was ineffective in combating corruption in Singapore, which can be explained by three reasons. First, as a small police unit, the ACB was clearly inadequate in performing the difficult task of eradicating corruption in the Singapore Civil Service, including the Singapore Police Force. In her speech to the Second Legislative Council on February 20, 1952, Mrs. Elizabeth Choy, expressed her surprise to find that the ACB only had four officers, and thirteen rank and file, to handle the "vice" of corruption, which she described had "gripped, and is waxing fat on the Government, and, in some instances, commercial enterprise."<sup>29</sup> Because the CID was mainly concerned with the detection and solving crimes deemed to be more serious, such as murder and kidnapping, the elimination of corruption was accordingly given much lower priority. This meant that the ACB had to compete with other branches of the CID for limited manpower and other resources.<sup>30</sup>

Second, the ACB was ineffective because the CID had many priorities, and the function of minimizing corruption was only one of the 16 duties of the Assistant Commissioner of the CID in May 1952. Thus, in addition to curbing corruption, he was also responsible for the following duties: secret societies, gambling promoters, fraud (commercial crime), anti-vice (traffickers), pawnshops, second-hand dealers, narcotics (traffickers), criminal records, banish-

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27. Jon S.T. Quah, "Bureaucratic Corruption in the ASEAN Countries: A Comparative Analysis of Their Anti-Corruption Strategies," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 13 (1982), pp. 161-162.

28. YOONG "Some Aspects of Corruption," *supra* note 18, pp. 55-56.

29. Quoted in Quah, *Administrative and Legal Measures for Combating Bureaucratic Corruption in Singapore*, *supra* note 21, p. 14.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 15.



ment, naturalization, missing persons, fingerprints, photography, Police Gazette, and house-to-house and street collections.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, it was not surprising that corruption control was not the CID's top priority especially when the police was corrupt itself.

Finally, the most important reason for the ACB's ineffectiveness was the prevalence of rampant corruption within the Singapore Police Force (SPF). As indicated earlier, the 1879 and 1886 Commissions had confirmed the existence of widespread corruption in the SPF. In his 1950 Report, the Commissioner of Police, J.P. Pennefather-Evans, stated that corruption was rife in government departments in Singapore. A few days later, the ACB Chief admitted that the problem of corruption was "getting worse."<sup>32</sup> In view of the ACB's ineffectiveness in curbing corruption in Singapore, it was not surprising that Mrs. Elizabeth Choy had criticized the British colonial government for its "weak and feeble attempt" to fight corruption in Singapore. In her speech to the Second Legislative Council on February 20, 1952, she urged the government to implement quickly the following proposals by the ACB:

. . . amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Ordinance to allow Police Officers above the rank of A.S.P. [Assistant Superintendent] to investigate into the bank and Post Office accounts of any public servant; to use such findings as evidence in Court; *to divorce the Anti-Corruption Branch from the Police*; to increase the strength of the Branch considerably.<sup>33</sup>

However, the triggering mechanism<sup>34</sup> for the CPIB's formation was the discovery by the British colonial government that some police officers were implicated in the Opium Hijacking Scandal in October 1951. As described by former CPIB Deputy Director TAN Ah Leak, a gang of robbers hijacked a shipment of 1,800 pounds of

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31. Colony of Singapore, *Distribution of Work 1st May, 1952*, Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1952, p. 31.

32. Quoted in Quah, *Administrative and Legal Measures for Combating Bureaucratic Corruption in Singapore*, *supra* note 21, p. 14.

33. Quoted in *ibid.*, emphasis added.

34. Larry N. Gerton has defined a triggering mechanism as "a critical event (or set of events) that converts a routine problem into a widely shared, negative public response." See Larry N. Gerton, *Public Policy Making: Process and Principles*, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1997, p. 23.

opium worth about S\$400,000 [US\$133,330].<sup>35</sup> Three police detectives were among the hijackers, and investigations by the ACB later revealed that some senior police officers were involved not only with the hijackers, but also with the importers of the opium.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the conclusion of this report, the ACB investigation only led to the dismissal of an assistant superintendent of police, and the pressured retirement of another officer. The colonial government was unhappy with the results of this investigation, and thereby formed its own “special team,” which submitted its own inquiry in September 1952. Satisfied by the results of this second inquiry, the government ultimately decided to replace the ACB with this team, which then became the CPIB.<sup>37</sup>

In sum, the ineffectiveness of the ACB in curbing corruption during the colonial period and the prevalence of police corruption made the British colonial government realize that it had made a serious mistake by relying on the ACB to minimize corruption. Accordingly, it established the CPIB as Singapore’s first independent anti-corruption agency in October 1952, almost 15 years after the ACB’s formation.

## V. SINGAPORE’S ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY

The People’s Action Party won the May 1959 general election and assumed office on June 3, 1959, when Singapore was granted self-governing status by the British government. As corruption was a serious problem when the PAP government took over the reins of government, it realized that the problem of corruption had to be curbed to ensure that the Singapore Civil Service and the statutory boards would attain Singapore’s development goals. Former Prime Minister LEE Kuan Yew expressed being “sickened” by the greed, corruption, and decadence” of many of the leaders of Asia when his party originally took office in 1959.<sup>38</sup> In a symbolic gesture that the new government would make it a mission to establish a clean and effective government, each member of the PAP government wore white shirts and white pants to demonstrate their purity and hon-

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35. TAN Ah Leak, “The Experience of Singapore in Combating Corruption,” in Rick Stapenhurst and Sahr J. Kpundeh, eds., *Curbing Corruption: Toward a Model for Building National Integrity*, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1999, p. 59.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. LEE Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story, 1965-2000*, Singapore: Times Media Private Ltd., 2000, p. 182.

esty when they took their oaths of office in June of that year.<sup>39</sup> LEE recounted in later years that on this occasion, the PAP government “made sure from the day [they] took office in June 1959 that every dollar in revenue would be properly accounted for and would reach the beneficiaries at the grass roots as one dollar, without being siphoned off along the way.”<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, the PAP government also realized that it was futile to curb corruption by relying on the British colonial government’s incremental anti-corruption strategy for two reasons. First, the existing legislation—the Prevention of Corruption Ordinance—was inadequate because of its limited scope and powers as it had only 12 sections and imposed a penalty of three years imprisonment (after the 1946 amendment) and/or a fine of S\$10,000 for those found guilty of corruption. Second, while the decision to transfer the task of corruption control from the ACB to the CPIB in October 1952 was correct, the problem was that the CPIB also lacked both staff and enforcement powers to perform its duties effectively.

At the time that the PAP government assumed office, corruption was a way of life and perceived by the population as “a low risk, high reward” activity. Indeed, it faced a daunting task of trying to minimize corruption and to change the public perception of Singaporeans of corruption to “a high risk, low reward” activity.

Accordingly, the PAP government initiated a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy in 1960 by enacting the Prevention of Corruption Act (POCA) and strengthening the CPIB. This new strategy was based on the “logic of corruption control”: as corruption is caused by *both* the incentives and opportunities to be corrupt, “attempts to eradicate corruption must be designed to minimize or remove the conditions of both the incentives and opportunities that make individual corrupt behavior irresistible.”<sup>41</sup>

When the PAP government assumed office in June 1959, it inherited a budgetary deficit of S\$14 million, which it sought to reduce by removing the variable allowances of senior civil servants.<sup>42</sup>

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39. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

41. Jon S.T. Quah. “Singapore’s Experience in Curbing Corruption,” in Heidenheimer, Johnston and LeVine, eds., *Political Corruption*, *supra* note 1, p. 842.

42. Jon S.T. Quah, “Paying for the ‘Best and Brightest’: Rewards for High Public Office in Singapore,” in Christopher Hood and B. Guy Peters with Grace O.M. Lee, eds., *Reward for High Public Office: Asian and Pacific Rim States*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 148.

As it could not afford to raise the salaries of the civil servants, the PAP government began by strengthening the existing legislation to reduce the opportunities for corruption and to increase the penalty for corrupt offenses. Its commitment to curb corruption was unequivocally stated by ONG Pang Boon, the then Minister for Home Affairs, in the Legislative Assembly on February 13, 1960, when he moved for the second reading of the Prevention of Corruption Bill:

The Prevention of Corruption Bill is in keeping with the new Government's determination to stamp out bribery and corruption in the country, especially in the public services. The Government is deeply conscious that a Government cannot survive, no matter how good its aims and intentions are, if corruption exists in its ranks and its public services on which it depends to provide the efficient and effective administrative machinery to translate its policies into action.

. . . Therefore, this Government is determined to take all possible steps to see that all necessary legislative and administrative measures are taken *to reduce the opportunities of corruption*, to make its detection easier and to deter and punish severely those who are susceptible to it and who engage in it shamelessly.

Therefore, in this bill, the government is asking for new and wider powers to fight bribery and corruption. As stated in the Explanatory Statement, the object of this bill is to provide for the more effective prevention of corruption by remedying various weaknesses and defects which experience has revealed in the existing Prevention of Corruption Ordinance. The bill, while directed mainly at corruption in the public service, is applicable also to corruption by private agents, trustees and others in a fiduciary capacity.<sup>43</sup>

The PAP government's anti-corruption strategy focuses on reducing *both* the opportunities and incentives for corruption. The aim of the POCA and CPIB is to curb corruption by reducing the opportunities for corruption and by increasing the penalty to be paid for corrupt behavior if one is caught. Accordingly, the follow-

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43. State of Singapore, *Legislative Assembly Debates*, First Session of the First Legislative Assembly, Vol. 12, Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1960, 13 February 1960, cols. 376-377.

ing two sections will focus on the POCA and CPIB respectively, before discussing the PAP government's reliance on periodic salary revision to reduce the incentive for corruption.

## VI. PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION ACT

The Prevention of Corruption Act (POCA) was enacted on June 17, 1960, and had five important features which removed the deficiencies of its predecessor, the Prevention of Corruption Ordinance (POCO), and gave the CPIB additional powers for performing its functions. First, the POCA's scope was broader, as it had 32 sections in contrast to the POCO's 12 sections.<sup>44</sup> Second, corruption was explicitly defined in terms of the various forms of "gratification" in section 2, which also identified for the first time the CPIB and its Director. Third, to increase the deterrent effect of the POCA, the penalty for corruption was raised to imprisonment for five years and/or a fine of S\$10,000 (section 5).<sup>45</sup> Fourth, a person found guilty of accepting an illegal gratification had to pay the amount he had taken as a bribe in addition to any other punishment imposed by a court (section 13).

Finally, the fifth and most important feature of the POCA was that it gave the CPIB more powers and a new lease of life. Section 4 gave the CPIB's Director the power to appoint senior special investigators and special investigators. Section 15 granted CPIB officers powers of arrest and search of arrested persons as they did not have such powers during the first eight years of the CPIB's operation. Section 17 empowered the Public Prosecutor to authorize the CPIB's Director and senior special investigators to investigate "any bank account, share account or purchase account" of any person suspected of having committed an offense against the POCO. Section 18 provided for the inspection by CPIB officers of a civil servant's banker's book and those of his wife, child or agent, if necessary.

Police officers and CPIB officers were given powers of search and seizure by section 20 which enabled them to enter any suspected place and search, seize and detain incriminating documents under a warrant issued by a magistrate or the CPIB's Director. Section 20 also empowered the court to require those charged with an

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44. The POCA has 37 sections now as a result of subsequent amendments. See "Prevention of Corruption Act (Chapter 241)" Revised edition 1993, Singapore: Government Printer, 1993.

45. The fine was increased to S\$100,000 in 1989. See *ibid.*, p. 4.

offense under the POCA to appear as witnesses for the prosecution. Section 27 enabled the CPIB to deal with offenders more swiftly and effectively as it specified that all offenses under the POCA would be seizable offenses. Finally, the CPIB was also assisted by section 31, which protected informers by keeping their identities confidential.<sup>46</sup> In short, the POCA gave the CPIB a new lease of life by entrusting it with additional powers for performing its duties.

The PAP government ensures that the POCA is effective by introducing, whenever necessary, amendments or new legislation to deal with unanticipated problems. In 1963, the POCA was amended to give CPIB officers the power to require the attendance of witnesses and to examine them. The aim of this amendment was to enable the CPIB officers to obtain the cooperation of witnesses to help them in their investigations. In 1966, two important amendments were introduced to strengthen the POCA. First, section 28 indicated that a person could be found guilty of corruption even though he did not actually receive the bribe, as the intention to commit the offense would provide sufficient grounds for his conviction. Second, section 35 was directed at those Singaporeans working for their government in embassies and other government agencies abroad as Singapore citizens would be prosecuted for corrupt offenses committed outside Singapore and would be dealt with as if such offenses had occurred within Singapore.<sup>47</sup>

In 1981, the POCA was amended a third time in order to increase its deterrent effect by requiring those convicted of corruption to repay all the money received in addition to facing the usual court sentence. Those who were unable to make full restitution would be given heavier court sentences.<sup>48</sup> In 1989, the penalty for corrupt offenses was further enhanced when the original fine of S\$10,000 was increased by ten times to S\$100,000.

A complicated issue arose on December 14, 1986, when the Minister for National Development, TEH Cheang Wan, committed suicide 12 days after he was interrogated for 16 hours by two senior CPIB officers. He was accused of accepting two bribes amounting to S\$1 million in 1981 and 1982 from two developers to enable one of them to retain his land which had been acquired by the govern-

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46. Quah, *Administrative and Legal Measures for Combating Bureaucratic Corruption in Singapore*, *supra* note 21, pp. 11-13.

47. *Ibid.*, p.13.

48. *Straits Times* (Singapore), October 26, 1981, p. 1.

ment, and to assist the other developer to purchase State land for private development.<sup>49</sup>

Following Teh's suicide, the Singaporean government enacted the Corruption (Confiscation of Benefits) Act 1989 on March 3, 1989.<sup>50</sup> Section 4 indicated that the court should issue a confiscation order against the defendant in respect of "benefits derived from him from corruption if the court is satisfied that such benefits have been so derived."<sup>51</sup> If a defendant is deceased, the court would still issue a confiscation order against the deceased defendant.<sup>52</sup> Finally, a deceased defendant is considered to have derived benefits if he had held any property or interest "disproportionate to his known sources of income, the holding of which cannot be explained to the satisfaction of the court" at any time in the six years prior to his death.<sup>53</sup>

## VII. THE CORRUPT PRACTICES INVESTIGATION BUREAU

The CPIB is the anti-corruption agency responsible for enforcing the POCA in Singapore. More specifically, it performs three functions: (1) to receive and investigate complaints concerning corruption in the public and private sectors; (2) to investigate malpractices and misconduct by public officers; and (3) to examine the practices and procedures in the public service to minimize opportunities for corrupt practices.<sup>54</sup>

The Corrupt Practices Investigation Program is described in the Budget as the administration of the CPIB, the investigation of corruption and malpractices, and the review of administrative weaknesses in the public sector that "provides avenues for corruption and the screening of officers for appointment in the public sector."<sup>55</sup> Thus, in addition to the three functions mentioned above, the CPIB also ensures that candidates selected for positions in the Singapore Civil Service and statutory boards in Singapore are

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49. *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Investigations Concerning the Late Mr. TEH Cheang Wan*, Singapore: Singapore National Printers, 1987, pp. 1 and 36.

50. This Act was expanded and renamed as the Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Serious Crimes (Confiscation of Benefits) Act, Chapter 65A in 1999.

51. Republic of Singapore, *Government Gazette Acts Supplement*, No. 13, Singapore: Singapore National Printers, 1989, pp. 107 and 110.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

54. *Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau*, Singapore: CPIB, 2004, p. 3.

55. Republic of Singapore, *The Budget for the Financial Year 1994/95*, Command 2 Of 1994, Singapore: Budget Division, Ministry of Finance, 1995, p. 638.

screened to ensure that only those candidates without any taint of corruption or misconduct are actually recruited.

*Personnel, Organizational Structure and Budget*

The CPIB has grown by 16 times from a small staff of five officers in 1952 to its current strength of 82 officers. Even though the CPIB has increased its manpower during the last 56 years, it is still a relatively small agency on two counts: first, in proportion to the overall size of the Singapore Civil Service in 2005 (62,792),<sup>56</sup> as the CPIB's personnel constitute only 0.13%; and secondly, compared to Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), which has 1,194 personnel, the ICAC has 15 times more staff members than the CPIB.<sup>57</sup> Yet despite its heavy workload, the CPIB does not need a staff size that is comparable to the ICAC, as both the CPIB's location within the Prime Minister's Office as well as its own legal powers enabled the CPIB to obtain the required cooperation from both public and private organizations.<sup>58</sup>

The CPIB's organizational structure was originally divided into three branches. The largest branch was the Investigation Branch, which consisted of four units, each headed by a director, who was responsible for directing and supervising the investigations undertaken by his subordinates. Investigation papers prepared by the investigators were submitted to the director, who reviewed the evidence and made appropriate recommendations to the Public Prosecutor, whose consent was required for prosecution under the POCA. When there was insufficient evidence to prosecute civil servants in court, these officials were referred to their head of department for disciplinary action.<sup>59</sup>

The Data Management and Support Branch managed the CPIB's Computer Information System, which enabled the CPIB to formulate its corruption prevention strategies and to screen candidates for public appointments, promotions, scholarships and training courses, applicants for citizenship, and contractors competing for government contracts. The Research Unit of this Branch re-

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56. *Yearbook of Statistics 2006*, Singapore: Department of Statistics, 2006, p. 45.

57. Independent Commission Against Corruption, *2005 Annual Report by the Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Hong Kong Special Administrative Region*, Hong Kong: ICAC, 2006, p. 28.

58. Jon S.T. Quah, "Controlling Corruption in City-States: A Comparative Study of Hong Kong and Singapore," *Crime, Law and Social Change*, Vol. 22 (1995), p. 397.

59. *The Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau: An Introduction*, Singapore: CPIB, 1990, pp. 3-4.



viewed the work procedures of corruption-prone departments to reduce the opportunities for corruption and examined completed cases to identify the *modus operandi* of corrupt civil servants.<sup>60</sup> The Administration Branch provided secretarial support to the other two branches and was responsible for the financial and personnel administration of the CPIB.<sup>61</sup> Unlike the ICAC of Hong Kong, the CPIB does not have a Community Relations Department to publicize its activities or educate the public on the negative consequences of corruption.

The CPIB is currently divided into the Operations Division and the Administration and Specialist Support Division. The Operations Division is sub-divided into the Operations Branch and the Operations Support Branch, which includes the Intelligence Unit. The Operations Branch consists of the Special Investigation Team, which handles major and complex cases, and three other units. The Administration and Specialist Support Division has four units: Administration Unit, Prevention and Review Unit, Computer Information System Unit, and the Plans and Projects Unit.<sup>62</sup>

In terms of resources, the CPIB's budget has grown by 19 times from S\$1,024,370 in 1978 to S\$19,788,317 in 2003. Table 5 shows that the CPIB's budget increased gradually from S\$1,024,370 in 1978 to S\$4,147,230 in 1987, to S\$10,225,463 in 1997, and to S\$19,788,317 in 2003. However, the CPIB's budget was reduced to S\$13,447,079 in 2004 and to S\$12,726,405 in 2005.

### *Independence of the CPIB*

When the CPIB was formed in October 1952, it came under the jurisdiction of the Attorney-General. From 1959-1962, the CPIB was under the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The CPIB was then moved under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) from 1963-1965 and under the purview of the Attorney-General again from 1965-1968. However, since 1969, the CPIB has been under the supervision of the PMO.<sup>63</sup> Because the CPIB's Director reports to the Prime Minister in Singapore, policy-makers who are interested in adopting Singapore's anti-corruption strategy are concerned with the CPIB's independence and the pos-

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60. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

62. *Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau*, *supra* note 54, pp. 3-4.

63. CPIB, *Swift and Sure Action: Four Decades of Anti-Corruption Work*, Singapore: CPIB, 2003, p. 16.109.

**Table 5. Budget of the CPIB, 1978-2005**

Year	Budget (S\$)
1978	\$1,024,370 (US\$474,245)*
1982	\$2,256,900 (US\$1,079,856)
1987	\$4,147,230 (US\$1,974,871)
1989	\$5,094,613 (US\$2,612,622)
1993	\$6,525,834 (US\$4,053,313)
1995	\$8,087,308 (US\$5,735,679)
1997	\$10,225,463 (US\$6,909,097)
2002	\$15,357,665 (US\$8,579,701)
2003	\$19,788,317 (US\$11,372,595)
2004	\$13,447,079 (US\$7,956,851)
2005	\$12,726,405 (US\$7,666,509)

Source: Republic of Singapore, *The Budget for the Financial Years 1978-2005*, Singapore: Budget Division, Ministry of Finance, 1978-2005, various pages.

\*The exchange rate for the US\$ has declined from US\$1 = S\$2.16 in 1978 to US\$1 = S\$1.66 in 2005. Details of the exchange rates of the US dollar from 1984 to 2005 are available from the Monetary Authority of Singapore website at <https://secure.sgs.gov.sg/apps/msbs/exchangeRatesForm.jsp>

sibility that the Prime Minister or President can use the CPIB-style agency against the opposition political parties.<sup>64</sup>

There are two committees which review the CPIB's activities. In 1973, the Anti-Corruption Advisory Committee (ACAC) was formed on the Prime Minister's advice to enhance the CPIB's efforts to curb corruption in the Singapore Civil Service (SCS). The ACAC was chaired by the Head of the SCS and included all of the permanent secretaries as its members. Then in 1975, the ACAC was dissolved but later revived in 1996 on the recommendation of the Anti-Corruption Review Committee (ACRC) to review the CPIB's investigative and preventive measures. The ACRC was itself only established in 1996 to review Singapore's anti-corruption measures. Like the ACAC, it consists of senior civil servants and is chaired by the Head of the SCS.<sup>65</sup>

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64. These questions were posed to the author by some Mongolian policy-makers during his visit to Ulaanbataar in October 1998 as the lead consultant for the UNDP mission to Mongolia.

65. TAN, "The Experience of Singapore in Combating Corruption," *supra* note 35, p. 61 and CPIB, *Swift and Sure Action*, *supra* note 63, p. 8.71.

As the CPIB has been under the PMO's purview since 1969, it has investigated all allegations of political corruption in Singapore as the PAP government is committed to minimizing corruption. Indeed, the CPIB has not hesitated to investigate allegations of corruption against political leaders and senior civil servants in Singapore. For example, the CPIB has investigated and prosecuted these political leaders and senior bureaucrats:

1. TAN Kia Gan, the Minister for National Development, who was investigated in 1966 for assisting his close friend to clinch the sale of Boeing aircraft to Malaysian Airways. However, as the witnesses did not give evidence against him, he was only punished by being stripped of all his public appointments by the government.
2. WEE Toon Boon, a Minister of State, was investigated in 1975 for accepting bribes from a property developer, and was later sentenced to four years and six months imprisonment.
3. PHEY Yew Kok, a Member of Parliament and a senior trade unionist, was investigated in 1979 and charged in court for criminal breach of trust and other offenses. However, he jumped bail by fleeing abroad and is still a fugitive.
4. TEH Cheang Wan, the Minister for National Development, was investigated in 1986 for accepting bribes from two property developers. However, he committed suicide before he could be charged in court.
5. Glen Jeyasingham Knight, a senior state counsel, and the Director of the Commercial Affairs Department, was investigated in 1991 and jailed and fined after being charged for corruption and cheating.
6. YEO Seng Teck, the Chief Executive Officer of the Trade Development Board, was investigated in 1993 and charged in court for corruption, cheating and forgery. He was sentenced to four years' imprisonment.
7. CHOY Hon Tim, the Deputy Chief Executive of the Public Utilities Board (PUB), was investigated in 1995 and charged for accepting bribes of S\$13.85 million (US\$9.82 million) from PUB contractors. He was sen-

tenced to 14 years imprisonment and ordered to pay back the S\$13.85 million that he accepted in bribes.<sup>66</sup>

In his speech to Parliament on March 30, 1993, then Prime Minister GOH Chok Tong declared:

I have every intention to make sure that Singapore remains corruption free. . . . And everybody should know that corruption in any form will not be tolerated. I expect all Ministers, all MPs and all public officers to set good examples for others to follow. . . . *If there is any allegation against any MP [Member of Parliament] or Minister of assets wrongfully gained or corruptly gained, the CPIB will investigate.* If the MP concerned is unable to explain how he had acquired these assets, or why he had not declared them, he will be charged for corruption.<sup>67</sup>

The introduction of the Elected President in 1991 has enhanced the CPIB's independence, as article 22G of the Constitution of Singapore empowers the CPIB's Director to continue his investigations of ministers and senior civil servants even if he does not have the Prime Minister's consent to do so if he obtains the consent of the Elected President.<sup>68</sup> LEE Hsien Loong, who was then Deputy Prime Minister highlighted this provision in his speech to Parliament on March 13, 2003, as he stated that the Prime Minister was responsible for the integrity of the entire civil service, public sector, Judges, and Ministers. With this Constitutional provision in place, Lee felt that Singapore had a proper safeguard for preventing a corrupt Prime Minister from rising to power, as the CPIB could even investigate the Prime Minister if it received permission to proceed its case by the Elected President.<sup>69</sup>

In short, while the CPIB's Director can obtain the consent of the Elected President to investigate allegations of corruption against ministers, members of parliament, and senior civil servants if the Prime Minister withholds his consent, the fact remains that the CPIB is not immune from the Prime Minister's influence and control as it comes under his jurisdiction. While the PAP govern-

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66. For more details of these and other cases, see CPIB, *Swift and Sure Action*, *supra* note 63, pp. 6.45-6.52.

67. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 2.17, emphasis added.

68. THIO Li-ann, "The Elected President and the Legal Control of Government: *Quis custodiet ipsos custodiet*," in Kevin Y.L. Tan and LAM Peng Er, eds., *Managing Political Change in Singapore: The Elected Presidency*, London: Routledge, 1997, p. 114.

69. Quoted in CPIB, *Swift and Sure Action*, *supra* note 63, p. 2.16.

ment has remained committed to minimizing corruption and has not used the CPIB as a weapon against opposition political leaders during the past 49 years, the CPIB's lack of complete independence from the Prime Minister's Office makes it an unattractive model for those Asian countries which are concerned about the possibility of their political leaders using a CPIB-style agency against their political foes. In other words, the concern is whether the political leaders in other Asian countries will resist the temptation of employing the CPIB-style agency against their political rivals.

### VIII. IMPROVING SALARIES OF POLITICAL LEADERS AND CIVIL SERVANTS

As indicated earlier, the PAP government could not afford to increase the low salaries of the political leaders and civil servants when it assumed office in June 1959. Instead, it had to reduce the budgetary deficit by removing the variable allowances of the senior civil servants, which resulted in a savings of S\$10 million (US\$3.33 million).<sup>70</sup> The government restored the variable allowances of the senior bureaucrats in September 1961 as the budgetary situation had improved.<sup>71</sup>

In 1968, the Harvey Report on public sector salaries recommended salary increases for five grades in the Division I superscale salaries. However, the government did not implement this recommendation until 1973 for two reasons: the economy could not afford a major salary revision; and at that time, there was not a serious exodus of talented civil servants to the private sector. As the economy improved in the 1970s, the higher salaries in the private sector contributed to a greater number of employees leaving the civil service for the private sector.

In February 1972, the PAP government formed the National Wages Council (NWC) to make recommendations on wage policies and annual wage adjustments. The NWC recommended the payment of the Annual Wage Supplement (AWS) of one month's salary to all civil servants to reduce the gap between salaries in the public and private sectors. The aim of the AWS was not to curb

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70. George E. Bogaars, "Public Services," in *Towards Tomorrow: Essays on Development and Transformation in Singapore*, Singapore: National Trades Union Congress, 1973, p. 80.

71. SEAH Chee Meow, *Bureaucratic Evolution and Political Change in an Emerging Nation: A Case Study of Singapore*, Ph.D. thesis, Faculty of Economic and Social Studies, Victoria University of Manchester, 1971, p. 91.

corruption but to minimize the loss of qualified individuals from the Singapore Civil Service to the private sector.

Because the low salaries of civil servants of both Singapore during the colonial period and other Asian countries was a major cause of corruption, Singapore's anti-corruption strategy also relies on reducing the incentive for corruption among political leaders and civil servants by paying them adequate salaries. On March 22, 1985, the then Prime Minister LEE Kuan Yew urged Parliament to increase the salaries of the cabinet ministers. He argued that political leaders should be paid the top salaries that they deserved in order to ensure a clean and honest government. Meanwhile, he warned that if they were underpaid, they would succumb to temptation and indulge in corruption. Singapore needed a corruption-free administration and an honest political leadership to preserve its most precious assets. Lee concluded that the best way of dealing with corruption was "moving with the market," which he felt was an "honest, open, defensible and workable system" instead of hypocrisy, which resulted in duplicity and corruption.<sup>72</sup> In his memoirs fifteen years later, he reiterated the importance of paying capable leaders competitive salaries to attract them to assume political office by saying that as underpaid ministers and public officials have "ruined many governments in Asia," it was vital to provide "adequate remuneration" to ensure "high standards of probity" in both political leaders and senior civil servants.<sup>73</sup>

Since Singapore was unable to raise the salaries of the political leaders and civil servants until 1972, it is interesting to note that the PAP government succeeded in curbing corruption during this period by ensuring that the CPIB had enforced the POCA impartially. Accordingly, the PAP government raised salaries periodically beginning from March 1972 to January 1994 not to curb corruption but to stem the brain drain from the civil service to the private sector. In October 1994, a White Paper on *Competitive Salaries for Competent and Honest Government* was presented to Parliament to justify the pegging of the salaries of ministers and senior civil servants to the average salaries of the top four earners in six private sector professions: accounting, banking, engineering, law, local manufacturing companies, and multi-national corporations. The White Paper recommended the introduction of formal salary benchmarks for ministers and senior civil servants, additional salary

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72. *Straits Times* (Singapore), March 23, 1985, pp. 14-16.

73. LEE, *From Third World to First*, *supra* note 38, p. 193.

grades for political appointments and annual salary reviews for the Singapore Civil Service.<sup>74</sup>

An International Labor Office expert, David Chew, indicated that Singapore's high salaries for its civil servants sent a clear signal to both the civil servants and society in general that the government "values greatly and is prepared to pay very generously a few key bureaucrats for their services to the country."<sup>75</sup> Table 6 provides details of the salaries of the Prime Minister, Minister, Permanent Secretary, and Deputy Secretary after the June 2000 salary revision.

**Table 6. Salaries of Selected Ministers and Civil Servants in Singapore, June 2000**

Grade	Monthly Salary	Annual Salary	Revised Monthly Salary	Revised Annual Salary
Prime Minister	S\$85,000 (US\$49,419)*	S\$1.69 million (US\$982,558)	S\$85,300 (US\$49,593)	S\$1.94 million (US\$1.13 million)
Minister Staff Grade II	S\$48,900 (US\$28,430)	S\$1.13 million (US\$656,977)	S\$55,700 (US\$32,384) S\$49,900 (US\$29,012) S\$44,600 (US\$25,930)	S\$1.42 million (US\$825,581) S\$1.27 million (US\$738,372) S\$1.13 million (US\$656,977)
Minister Staff Grade I	S\$37,800 (US\$21,977)	S\$861,000 (US\$500,581)	S\$47,400 (US\$27,558) S\$37,900 (US\$22,035)	S\$1.21 million (US\$703,488) S\$968,000 (US\$562,791)
Permanent Secretary Superscale B	S\$28,000 (US\$16,279)	S\$638,000 (US\$370,930)	S\$39,800 (US\$23,140) S\$28,800 (US\$16,744)	S\$1.01 million (US\$587,209) S\$736,000 (US\$427,907)
Deputy Secretary Superscale G	S\$13,400 (US\$7,791)	S\$242,000 (US\$140,698)	S\$18,800 (US\$10,930) S\$17,500 (US\$10,174)	S\$390,000 (US\$226,744) S\$363,000 (US\$211,047)

Source: *Straits Times* (Singapore), June 30, 2000, p. 53.

\*The U.S. exchange rate in 2000 was US\$1 = S\$1.72

74. Republic of Singapore, *Competitive Salaries for Competent and Honest Government: Benchmarks for Ministers and Senior Public Officers*, Command 13 of 1994. White Paper presented to the Parliament of Singapore on October 21, 1994, Singapore: Prime Minister's Office, 1994, pp. 12-13.

75. David C.E. Chew, "Economic Restructuring and Flexible Civil Service Pay in Singapore," in Christopher Colclough, ed., *Public-Sector Pay and Adjustment: Lessons from Five Countries*, London: Routledge, 1997, p. 37.

However, it should be noted that these salaries were later reduced by 17% as a consequence of the 2001 recession.

In short, the PAP government's policy of ensuring competitive pay for ministers and senior civil servants by benchmarking their salaries with those of six private sector professions has enabled the Singapore Civil Service to minimize the loss of talented civil servants to the private sector as well as reinforce its commitment to reducing the incentive for corruption.

### IX. EVALUATING SINGAPORE'S ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY

The effectiveness of Singapore's anti-corruption strategy is reflected not only in Singapore's consistently high ranking and score on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index from 1995-2007 (Table 2), but also in its high ranking by the Hong Kong-based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC), and the World Bank on its sixth governance indicator, the control of corruption.

In 1996, PERC ranked Singapore as the third least corrupt country in the world, after Switzerland and Australia, and the least corrupt of the 12 Asian countries surveyed in the study.<sup>76</sup> Singapore's high ranking was attributed by PERC to its effectiveness in applying laws strictly and consistently as corrupt officials, particularly high-ranking ones, were dealt with a "severity rarely seen elsewhere."<sup>77</sup> Since then, Singapore has consistently retained its rank of being the least corrupt country in Asia on the PERC ranking.

Since 1996, the World Bank has provided data on the governance of 212 countries according to their percentile ranks for these six indicators: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption.<sup>78</sup> Table 7 indicates that Singapore's percentile rank on the governance indicator on the control of corruption from 1996-2006 ranges from 97.6 to 100, with an average percentile rank of 99. Not surprisingly, Singapore's percentile rank

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76. *Straits Times* (Singapore), April 9, 1996, p. 3.

77. *Ibid.*

78. For the definitions of these six indicators, see Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay and Massimo Mastruzzi, "Governance Matters VI: Governance Indicators for 1996-2006" World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 4280 (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, July 2007). Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=999979>. See [http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi2007/sc\\_chart.asp](http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi2007/sc_chart.asp) for data on the governance indicators for 212 countries.



on the control of corruption is also the highest among all the Asian countries included in the World Bank's survey on governance indicators.

**Table 7. Singapore's Percentile Rank on the World Bank's Governance Indicator on the Control of Corruption, 1996-2006**

Year	Percentile Rank	Number of Sources
1996	97.6	7
1998	100.0	9
2000	99.5	9
2002	99.5	10
2003	99.0	10
2004	99.5	11
2005	99.0	11
2006	98.1	12
Average Percentile Rank	99.0	—

Source: Compiled from [http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi2007/sc\\_chart.asp](http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi2007/sc_chart.asp).

Singapore's effectiveness in curbing corruption can be attributed to a large extent to the CPIB's effectiveness in impartially enforcing the POCA as reflected in its performance indicators and data during 1997-2002 in Table 8. Furthermore, Table 9 summarizes the major findings of the October 2002 public perception survey of a random sample of 1,000 Singaporeans between 16 to 60 years old conducted by Forbes Research for the CPIB. Table 9 shows that first, 13% of the respondents rated corruption control in Singapore as excellent, 42% as very good, 39% as good, and only 7% as fair, indicating a favorable public perception of Singapore's anti-corruption policies.

Second, it can be seen that 71% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the CPIB had done well in solving corruption offenses; 61% of them trusted the CPIB to keep Singapore corruption free; and 56% of them agreed or strongly agreed that the CPIB was world-class in curbing corruption. Third, when the respondents were asked whether the CPIB was impartial or fair in its investigations, Table 9 shows that 69.9% said that it was impartial or fair, 5.6% said that it was partial or not fair, and 24.5% did not know or did not have an opinion.

**Table 8. CPIB's Performance Indicators and Data, 1997-2002**

Performance Indicator	Definition	Performance Data
1. Cycle time	Time taken to complete an investigation	Exceeded target of completing 62% of its investigations within 30 days by an average of 31.3% during 1999-2002
2. Completion rate	Percentage of cases completed in a year	Exceeded target of completing 90% of cases in a year from 1999-2002
3. Prosecution rate	Percentage of cases resulting in prosecution	Increased from 47% in 2000 to 60% in 2002
4. Conviction rate	Percentage of cases convicted in court	Increased from 97% in 2000 to 99% in 2002
5. Attendance to visitors	Target is to attend to 80% of its visitors within five minutes	Exceeded target by 1% to 6% from 1997 to 2000
6. Proportion of reports investigated	Percentage of reports investigated	Average of 60% during 1998-2002
7. Number of persons charged and disciplined	Number of persons charged and the number of public officers disciplined	680 persons were charged and 293 public officers were disciplined from 2000-2002

Source: Compiled from CPIB, *Swift and Sure Action: Four Decades of Anti-Corruption Work*, Singapore: CPIB, 2003, pp. 3.24, 3.25, 14.96, 5.36.

Similarly, when the respondents were asked whether the CPIB had abused its investigation powers, it can be seen from Table 9 that 65% of the respondents said that it had not, 7.2% said that it had done so, and 27.8% had no opinion or did not know. Finally, 66% of the respondents believed that the CPIB would keep the corruption reports it received confidential and only 10% said that it would not do so.

In December 2005, the CPIB commissioned its second public perception survey covering 1,000 Singapore citizens, permanent residents and non-residents who have stayed in Singapore for at least one year and aged between 16 to 60 years. The 2005 survey confirmed the positive public assessment of the CPIB as in terms of the perceived level of corruption control, 89% of the respondents observed that corruption was very much under control in Singapore, and 48% of them agreed that the level of corruption control had improved during the past three years. Furthermore, 86% of the re-

**Table 9. Public Perceptions of CPIB's Performance in 2002**

Survey Item	Survey Findings
1. How would you rate corruption control in Singapore?	Excellent = 13%; Very Good = 42% Good = 39%; Fair = 7%; Poor = 0
2. CPIB has done well in solving corruption offences	Strongly agree = 20%; Agree = 51% Not sure = 28%; Disagree = 2% Strongly disagree = 0
3. CPIB can be trusted to keep Singapore corruption-free	Strongly agree = 24%; Agree = 37% Not sure = 32%; Disagree = 6% Strongly disagree = 1%
4. CPIB is world-class in fighting corruption	Strongly agree = 17%; Agree = 39% Not sure = 36%; Disagree = 7% Strongly disagree = 1%
5. Do you think CPIB is impartial/fair in its investigations?	Yes = 69.9%; No = 5.6%; Don't know/no opinion = 24.5%
6. Do you think CPIB has abused its investigation powers?	No = 65%; Yes = 7.2%; Don't know/no opinion = 27.8%
7. Do you think CPIB will keep corruption reports it receives confidential?	Yes = 66%; No = 10% Don't know/no opinion = 24%

Source: CPIB, *Swift and Sure Action: Four Decades of Anti-Corruption Work*, Singapore: CPIB, 2003, pp. 5.40 and 14.97

spondents felt that corruption control in Singapore was better than other countries. According to the respondents, the low level of corruption in Singapore could be attributed to the political will to keep corruption under control; the heavy punishment for corruption offenses; and the effectiveness of the anti-corruption law.<sup>79</sup>

However, both the 2002 and 2005 surveys had identified the CPIB's neglect of public relations as an area requiring improvement. When the 2002 respondents were asked: "What new services relevant to CPIB's role should it be providing?" the 79 respondents who answered the question made nine suggestions, seven of which focus on the need for the CPIB to educate the public and to improve its relationship with them. Furthermore, when these respondents were asked whether they would report corruption if they were aware of it, only 39.2% said they would, 13.6% would not do so, 19.9% were unsure, and 27.3% had no opinion. This important finding that only 39% of the respondents would report corruption if

79. CPIB, "CPIB's Public Perception Survey 2005," Singapore: CPIB, 2006, pp. 1-2.

they were aware of it shows that the CPIB's policy of adopting a low profile and neglecting public relations is a mistake and should be rectified immediately. The CPIB has responded to these survey findings by stressing that it would play "a more active role in promoting the organization and its work to the general public" so that the public would understand its work and role and be "more forthcoming in reporting corruption and more willing to co-operate with the bureau in solving cases."<sup>80</sup>

However, the 2005 survey also found that while most of the respondents said that the CPIB was adequate in providing services, they also felt that the CPIB could be more active in publicly advertising its work and role in society through the mass media, leaflets, and the "Crimewatch" television program. These respondents argued that corruption would be reduced by enhancing public awareness and educating the population.<sup>81</sup>

Indeed, an analysis of the CPIB's expenditure on public relations from 1986-2005, as shown in Table 10, confirms that the CPIB has not devoted adequate resources to public relations as the amount spent by it on public relations is the least for its other operating expenditure. Table 10 also shows that in 1986, the amount spent by the CPIB on public relations was S\$240 or 0.016% of its other operating expenditure.<sup>82</sup> The highest amount devoted to public relations by the CPIB was S\$11,221 (or 0.417% of other operating expenditure) in 1999.<sup>83</sup> In short, the CPIB should modify its primary emphasis on investigation and enforcement and focus also on educating the public on its role in curbing corruption by improving its public relations.

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80. CPIB, "CPIB's Public Perception Survey 2002," Singapore: CPIB Press Release, April 4, 2003, p. 7.

81. CPIB, "CPIB's Public Perception Survey 2005," *supra* note 79, pp. 2-3.

82. Before 1986, there was no provision for public relations in the other operating expenditure of the CPIB.

83. Republic of Singapore, *The Budget for the Financial Year 2001/2002*, Command 3 of 2001, Singapore: Budget Division, Ministry of Finance, 2001, p. 489.

**Table 10. CPIB's Expenditure on Public Relations, 1986-2005**

Financial Year	Amount spent on Public Relations	Other Operating Expenditure
1986	S\$240 (0.016%)	S\$1,431,670
1987	S\$190 (0.012%)	S\$1,482,960
1988	S\$306 (0.018%)	S\$1,675,269
1989	S\$306 (0.016%)	S\$1,827,782
1990	S\$225 (0.011%)	S\$2,044,848
1991	S\$384 (0.017%)	S\$2,153,963
1992	S\$354 (0.016%)	S\$2,211,956
1993	S\$281 (0.011%)	S\$2,446,941
1994	S\$529 (0.020%)	S\$2,593,168
1995	S\$425 (0.011%)	S\$3,628,299
1996	S\$1,360* (0.036%)	S\$3,721,210*
1997	S\$7,121 (0.192%)	S\$3,701,009
1998	S\$3,290 (0.108%)	S\$3,042,143
1999	S\$11,221 (0.417%)	S\$2,688,508
2000	S\$6,500** (0.201%)	S\$3,221,580**
2001	S\$5,299 (0.156%)	S\$3,391,746
2002	S\$7,205 (0.184%)	S\$3,895,815
2003	S\$2,815 (0.064%)	S\$4,349,299
2004	S\$3,910 (0.088%)	S\$4,442,265
2005	S\$5,940 (0.098%)	S\$6,044,729

Source: Republic of Singapore, *The Budget for the Financial Years 1986-2005*, Singapore: Budget Division, Ministry of Finance, 1986-2005, various pages.

\*Revised figure\*\*Estimated figure

N.B. The exchange rate for the US\$ has declined from US\$1 = S\$2.17 in 1986 to US\$1 = S\$1.66 in 2005.

## X. LESSONS FOR OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES

Why has the CPIB been effective in minimizing corruption in Singapore where the anti-corruption agencies in other Asian countries have failed to do so? TAN Ah Leak, a former CPIB Deputy Director, has attributed the CPIB's success in curbing corruption to these five factors: Singapore's cultural climate which opposes corruption; a well-paid civil service which discourages civil servants from being corrupt; effective administrative measures such as disci-

plinary proceedings by the Public Service Commission, careful scrutiny of government expenditures by the Auditor-General's Department and the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament, and the Ministry of Finance's control of public spending; a highly literate and sophisticated society, which readily reports corrupt behavior with no fear of reprisal; and the CPIB's ability to investigate prominent persons, which in turn has enhanced its credibility among Singaporeans.<sup>84</sup>

More importantly, Singapore's success in minimizing corruption can be attributed to the political will of the PAP government to impartially implement its comprehensive anti-corruption strategy of reducing both the opportunities and incentives for corruption. Former Prime Minister LEE Kuan Yew identified the five factors responsible for Singapore's effective anti-corruption strategy in his statement to Parliament in January 1987 during the TEH Cheang Wan Commission of Inquiry. Among these factors included (1) the law against corruption contained in Prevention of Corruption Act; (2) a "vigilant" public that was ready to report all suspected corruption; (3) a CPIB which was "scrupulous, thorough, and fearless" in its investigations; (4) the fact that the CPIB had the "full backing" of the Prime Minister; and (5) a public opinion that "censures and condemns" corruption that brands a guilty party with a stigma of corruption that "cannot be washed away by serving a prison sentence."<sup>85</sup>

What lessons can other Asian countries learn from Singapore's experience in curbing corruption? Two important aspects must be considered before answering this question. First, whether it is desirable for other Asian countries to adopt Singapore's anti-corruption strategy. A comparative study of the anti-corruption strategies of Asian countries shows that the first pattern of relying on a single, independent anti-corruption agency is the most effective if the political leaders are committed to curbing corruption, as in the cases of Singapore and Hong Kong. On the other hand, the second pattern of relying on multiple anti-corruption agencies in Cambodia, China, Philippines and Vietnam is less effective as their anti-corruption efforts have been diluted and hindered by the competition between the separate agencies for the same pool of resources, as well

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84. TAN, "The Experience of Singapore in Curbing Corruption," *supra* note 35, p. 64.

85. Quoted in *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Investigations Concerning the Late Mr. TEH Cheang Wan*, *supra* note 49, p. 2.

as lack of coordination, and substantial overlap among these agencies.<sup>86</sup>

The second important aspect is that, assuming that the political leaders of other Asian countries find it desirable to introduce Singapore's anti-corruption strategy to their own countries, one must consider the feasibility of doing so. Richard Rose has written that even if a policy appears desirable and action is demanded by the people, there are still three prerequisites before a country can adopt the policy lesson. First, there must be room in the already crowded set of government commitments to introduce the policy. Secondly, the government must have the resources to seriously implement the strategy. Finally, there must not be cross-cultural misunderstandings that lead to a "mismatch between what a lesson requires and the beliefs and practices of the government adopting it."<sup>87</sup>

Bearing these twin concerns of the desirability and feasibility<sup>88</sup> of adopting Singapore's anti-corruption strategy in other Asian countries in mind, what lessons can they learn?

*Lesson No. 1: Political Will is the Critical Ingredient for Success*

The political leaders in other Asian countries must be sincerely committed to the eradication of corruption by demonstrating exemplary conduct, adopting a modest life-style, and avoiding corrupt behavior themselves. Anyone found guilty of corruption must be punished, regardless of his or her position or status in society. If the "big fish" (rich and famous persons) are protected from prosecution for corruption, and the anti-corruption agency focuses its energies on catching only "small fish" (ordinary people), the anti-corruption strategy lacks credibility and is doomed to failure.<sup>89</sup>

In addition to the impartial enforcement of the anti-corruption laws by the anti-corruption agency, there are two other indicators of a government's political will in curbing corruption. First, there must be comprehensive anti-corruption legislation to prevent loopholes and periodic review of such legislation to introduce amendments whenever necessary. Second, the anti-corruption agency

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86. Jon S.T. Quah, "Regional Overview Report," in *National Integrity Systems in East and Southeast Asia*, Berlin: Transparency International, 2007, p. 9.

87. Richard Rose, *Learning from Comparative Public Policy: A Practical Guide*, London: Routledge, 2005, p. 103.

88. For an excellent analysis of these two concerns, see *ibid.*, pp. 90-116.

89. Quah, "Controlling Corruption in City-States," *supra* note 58, p. 408.

must be provided with sufficient legal powers, personnel and budget to perform its functions effectively. Indeed, Richard Rose has stressed the critical importance of resources in lesson-drawing as the application of a policy lesson requires “a multiplicity of resources involving legislation, money, personnel, and organizations.”<sup>90</sup>

Table 11 shows that of the eight anti-corruption agencies with published data on their budgets and personnel in 2005, Macao’s Commission Against Corruption (CAC) fares the best with a per capita expenditure of US\$21.72, followed by Hong Kong’s ICAC (US\$12.32), and Singapore’s CPIB (US\$1.71). The CAC’s staff-population ratio of 1:4,358 is also the most favorable. On the other hand, the other five anti-corruption agencies of this study are all poorly funded and understaffed, with Indonesia’s Corruption Eradication Commission (CEC) at the bottom with a per capita expenditure of US\$0.08 and a staff-population ratio of 1:729,836. The per capita expenditure for the other four anti-corruption agencies is also low: US\$0.37 for the Korea Independent Commission Against Corruption (KICAC); US\$0.28 for India’s Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI); US\$0.15 for the *Tanodbayan* or Ombudsman in the Philippines; and US\$0.14 for the National Counter Corruption Commission (NCCC) in Thailand. Similarly, their staff-population ratios are also unfavorable, with a ratio of 1:234,146 for the KICAC; 1:229,505 for the CBI; 1:90,585 for the NCCC; and 1:85,057 for the *Tanodbayan*.

The comparative data on the personnel and budget of the anti-corruption agencies in South Korea, India, Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia show that the political leaders in these countries must demonstrate their political will in curbing corruption by increasing substantially the legal powers, personnel, and budget of their anti-corruption agencies. In the example of South Korea, the KICAC is not a full-fledged anti-corruption agency as it does not perform the major function required of an anti-corruption agency which is the investigation of corruption offences. The KICAC’s second limitation is that its scope is restricted to dealing with public sector corruption only.<sup>91</sup> The political leaders in South Korea must remove these two serious obstacles to the KICAC’s effective per-

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90. Rose, *Learning from Comparative Public Policy*, *supra* note 87, p. 103.

91. Joongi Kim, *National Integrity Systems Transparency International Country Study Report Republic of Korea 2006*, Berlin: Transparency International, 2007, pp. 8-10 and 35.



**Table 11. Comparative Analysis of the Personnel and Budgets of Eight Anti-Corruption Agencies in Asian Countries in 2005**

ACA	Personnel	Budget	Population	Staff-Population Ratio	Per Capita Expenditure
Macao CAC	112	US\$10.6 m	488,100	1:4,358	US\$21.72
Hong Kong ICAC	1,194	US\$85 m	6.9 m	1:5,779	US\$12.32
Singapore CPIB	82	US\$7.7 m	4.5 m	1:55,556	US\$1.71
South Korea KICAC	205	US\$17.8 m	48 m	1:234,146	US\$0.37
India CBI	4,711	US\$30.3m	1,081.2 m	1:229,505	US\$0.28
Philippines <i>Tanodbayan</i>	957	US\$12 m	81.4 m	1:85,057	US\$0.15
Thailand NCCC	701*	US\$8.6 m*	63.5 m	1:90,585	US\$0.14
Indonesia CEC	305	US\$18 m	222.6 m	1:729,836	US\$0.08

Source: Commission Against Corruption, *2005 Annual Report of the Commission Against Corruption of Macao*, Macao: CAC, 2006, pp. 119 and 123; Independent Commission Against Corruption, *2005 Annual Report by the Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Hong Kong Special Administrative Region*, Hong Kong: ICAC, 2006, p. 28; Republic of Singapore, *The Budget for the Financial Year 2007/2008*. Singapore: Ministry of Finance, 2007, pp. 371-372; Central Bureau of Investigation, *Annual Report 2005*, New Delhi: CBI, 2006, pp. 38 and 44; Korea Independent Commission Against Commission, *Annual Report 2005*, Seoul: KICAC, 2006, p. 6; Office of the Ombudsman, *2005 Annual Report*, Quezon City, 2006, pp. 73 and 91; Office of the National Counter Corruption Commission, *The National Counter Corruption Commission*, Bangkok: ONCCC, 2006, pp. 85 and 87; and Soren Davidsen, Vishnu Juwono, and David G. Timberman, *Curbing Corruption in Indonesia 2004-2006: A Survey of National Policies and Approaches*, Jakarta and Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies and United States-Indonesia Society, 2006, p. 52.

\*2004 data for the NCCC in Thailand as the 2005 data are not available.

formance if they are committed to minimizing corruption in their country.

### *Lesson No. 2: The Anti-Corruption Agency must be Independent from the Police and from Political Control*

As discussed above, the history of fighting corruption in Singapore clearly shows the importance of not allowing the police force to be solely responsible for corruption control. In other words, the police force was the biggest obstacle to curbing corruption in Singapore before the establishment of the CPIB in October 1952 because

of the prevalence of police corruption within its own ranks. Accordingly, the CPIB's success in combating corruption has proven that an effective practice in curbing corruption is simply to not let the police handle the task of controlling corruption, as this would be like giving candy to a child and expecting him or her not to eat it.<sup>92</sup>

Singapore has taken 15 years (1937-1952) and Hong Kong has taken 26 years (1948-1974) to learn this important lesson. Unfortunately, many Asian countries like India, Japan and Mongolia have still not learnt this lesson yet as they continue to rely on the police to curb corruption. For example, the CBI in India is still not presently independent of the police as the CBI's Director is also the Inspector-General of Police. In view of the prevalence of police corruption in India, it is surprising that the government has continued to rely for the past 45 years on the CBI (established in 1963) to curb corruption even though this traditional British method of relying on the police for corruption control has been shown to be ineffective. Thus, the political leaders in India must demonstrate their political will in curbing corruption by removing the CBI from the jurisdiction of the police.

Apart from independence from the police, the anti-corruption agency must also be independent from control by the political leaders as well. First, the political leaders must not interfere in the daily operations of the anti-corruption agency. Second and more importantly, the anti-corruption agency must be able to investigate all political leaders and senior civil servants without fear or favor. As discussed earlier, the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau's location within the Prime Minister's Office since 1969 has raised concern that Asian political leaders who are not committed to curbing corruption can use the CPIB-style agency against their political rivals.

However, this concern is unwarranted in Singapore's case as the CPIB has investigated all allegations of political corruption in Singapore during the past 48 years. Indeed, as shown earlier, the CPIB has not hesitated to investigate allegations of corruption against political leaders and senior civil servants in Singapore. Even though the CPIB's Director can obtain the consent of the Elected President to investigate allegations of corruption against ministers,

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92. Jon S.T. Quah, "Best Practices for Curbing Corruption in Asia," *The Governance Brief*, Issue 11, June 2004, p. 1. See <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Periodicals/GB/GovernanceBrief11.pdf>.

MPs and senior civil servants if the Prime Minister withholds his consent, it should be noted that the CPIB is not immune from the Prime Minister's influence and control as it comes under his jurisdiction.

However, so far the PAP government has remained committed to minimizing corruption and has not used the CPIB as a weapon against the opposition political leaders during the past 48 years. Nevertheless, the CPIB's lack of complete independence from the Prime Minister's Office makes it a less attractive model for those Asian countries which are concerned that their political leaders might be tempted to use the CPIB-style agency against their political foes. In other words, corrupt political leaders will use the powerful anti-corruption agency as a weapon against their political opponents instead of strengthening their countries' anti-corruption strategies.

*Lesson No. 3: The Anti-Corruption Agency must be Incorruptible*

The anti-corruption agency must be incorruptible for two reasons. First, if the anti-corruption agency's personnel are corrupt, its legitimacy and public image will be undermined as its officers have broken the law by being corrupt themselves when they are required to enforce the law. Second, corruption among the anti-corruption agency's staff not only discredits the agency but also prevents them from performing their duties impartially and effectively. For example, the Board of Inspection and Follow-up of Government Operations, Thailand's first anti-corruption agency, was dissolved after one year in October 1973 because all five of its members were found guilty of corruption.<sup>93</sup>

A second example is provided by the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) in the Philippines, which was established by President Corazon Aquino in February 1986. However, the PCGG became a target for charges of corruption, favoritism, and incompetence, and by June 1988, five agents within the PCGG itself faced graft charges, while 13 more were under investigation.<sup>94</sup>

To ensure its integrity, the anti-corruption agency must be staffed by honest and competent personnel. Overstaffing should be avoided and any staff member found guilty of corruption must be

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93. Quah, "Bureaucratic Corruption in ASEAN Countries," *supra* note 27, p. 172.

94. David G. Timberman, *A Changeless Land: Continuity and Change in Philippine Politics*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991, pp. 233-234.

punished and dismissed. Details of the punishment of corrupt staff must be widely publicized in the mass media to serve as a deterrent to others, and to demonstrate the anti-corruption agency's integrity and credibility to the public. For example, after a senior CPIB officer was caught cheating a businessman in Singapore in 1997, the CPIB's Director, CHUA Cher Yak, ordered polygraph tests for all his staff, including himself, to demonstrate their integrity. Indeed, the CPIB's reputation remained untainted as Chua and his staff passed the polygraph tests.<sup>95</sup>

*Lesson No. 4: Minimize Corruption by Tackling its Major Causes*

Corruption is often caused by the low salaries of civil servants and politicians, providing ample opportunities for corruption in vulnerable government agencies and the low probability of detection and punishment of corrupt offenders. Corruption can only be minimized in a country if its government introduces reforms to remove these major causes.

*Improving Salaries*

Civil servants and political leaders are more vulnerable to corruption if their salaries are meager or not commensurate with their positions and responsibilities. It is unrealistic to expect them to remain honest if they are paid low salaries which are inadequate for meeting their daily needs. Accordingly, they should be paid decent salaries instead of "starvation wages" to insulate them from bribery and patronage. However, three qualifications must be made.

First, raising salaries is expensive, and only countries that have sustained economic growth can afford to do. In Singapore's case, it should be noted that the PAP government could not afford to raise the salaries of the political leaders and civil servants from June 1959 to February 1972. Accordingly, the focus of Singapore's anti-corruption strategy during this period was the impartial enforcement of the Prevention of Corruption Act by the CPIB, which has enhanced the credibility of both the PAP government and the CPIB.

Singapore's experience shows that it is possible to curb corruption by impartially enforcing the anti-corruption laws without raising the salaries of civil servants and politicians. As was discussed earlier, salaries of the bureaucrats and political leaders in Singapore

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95. Tanya Fong, "The day anti-graft chief took lie test," *Straits Times* (Singapore), June 30, 2005, p. H7.

were raised from March 1972 onwards in order to prevent the brain drain of talented civil servants to the private sector, rather than as a mechanism to curb corruption. However, the PAP leaders have emphasized the need to pay senior bureaucrats and ministers competitive salaries to attract the “best and brightest” and to keep those who have been attracted to the Singapore Civil Service and the government honest and incorruptible.

Second, increasing salaries minimizes petty corruption as it reduces the incentive for corruption among junior officials but does not eliminate grand corruption among senior civil servants and politicians. In other words, salary revision is ineffective in curbing grand corruption which is motivated by greed and not need, when it is prevalent among the political leaders and senior bureaucrats.

Third, raising salaries alone is ineffective in solving the problem of corruption if the incumbent government lacks the political will to do so, if the anti-corruption agency is ineffective, if corrupt officials are not punished, and if opportunities for corruption are not reduced in vulnerable public agencies. Thus, salary revision is a necessary but insufficient condition for curbing corruption if other reforms are not undertaken also.

### *Cutting Red Tape*

The role of the public bureaucracy in national development in many Asian countries has also increased the opportunities for administrative discretion and corruption as regulations governing access to goods and services can be exploited by civil servants in extracting “rents” from groups “vying for access to such goods and services.”<sup>96</sup> To minimize the opportunities for corruption created by the growing public bureaucracy, the incumbent government should streamline the bureaucracy by reducing red tape and reviewing the cumbersome administrative procedures in corruption-prone agencies.

Corrupt civil servants in many countries love the complicated bureaucratic processes because it provides them with opportunities to solicit or accept bribes from business persons or the public to expedite the processing of their applications or to “jump the queue.” Corruption can be minimized in the civil service if red tape is cut and its efficiency is improved. The Singapore Civil Service

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96. David J. Gould and Jose A. Amaro-Reyes, *The Effects of Corruption on Administrative Performance: Illustrations from Developing Countries*, Washington, D.C.: World Bank Staff Working Paper No. 580, 1983, p. 17.

(SCS) has initiated these measures to reduce bureaucratic process and improve its productivity and efficiency:

1. The Productivity Movement was launched on October 7, 1971 with the formation of the Central Productivity Steering Committee and Work Improvement Teams in the ministries and departments.<sup>97</sup>
2. The Civil Service Computerization Program was introduced in September 1981 to improve the efficiency and productivity in the SCS by promoting the widespread use of computers among civil servants.<sup>98</sup>
3. The Service Improvement Unit was formed in April 1991 to improve the quality of service in the SCS and statutory boards by obtaining public feedback on the removal of unnecessary regulations.<sup>99</sup>
4. Public Service for the 21 st Century (PS21) was initiated on May 5, 1995 to improve the quality of service and prepare the SCS to welcome and accept change. As part of PS21, the Cut Waste Panel was formed on September 1, 2003 “to receive suggestions from the public on where the government can cut waste, remove frills and make savings in the delivery of public services.”<sup>100</sup>

All the above measures have enabled the SCS and statutory boards to reduce bureaucratic practices and improve their efficiency and productivity. Singapore’s success in cutting red tape is clearly reflected in its number 1 ranking among 178 countries in the World Bank’s *Doing Business Survey* in 2008.<sup>101</sup> By implementing these measures, the PAP government has reduced the opportunities

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97. Jon S.T. Quah, “Improving the Efficiency and Productivity of the Singapore Civil Service,” in John P. Burns, ed., *Asian Civil Service Systems: Improving Efficiency and Productivity*, Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1994, p. 156.

98. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

99. Jon S.T. Quah, “Sustaining Quality in the Singapore Civil Service,” *Public Administration and Development*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (August 1995), pp. 339-340.

100. Jon S.T. Quah, “Administrative Reform in Singapore: An Evaluation of Public Service 21 (1995-2004),” in Dimitrios Argyriades, O.P. Dwivedi and Joseph G. Jabbara, eds., *Public Administration in Transition: Essays in Honor of Gerald E. Caiden*, London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007, pp. 167-168.

101. See *Doing Business 2008* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2007), pp. 4-6, available at [http://www.doingbusiness.org/documents/FullReport/2008/DB08\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](http://www.doingbusiness.org/documents/FullReport/2008/DB08_Full_Report.pdf).

for corruption through the elimination of red tape and the streamlining of cumbersome administrative procedures.

As not all public agencies are equally vulnerable to corruption, a realistic anti-corruption strategy requires the identification of those agencies that are prone to corruption so that the opportunities for corruption in such agencies can be reduced by cutting unnecessary red tape and improved monitoring of their operations. Apart from the police, the other vulnerable public agencies are the customs, immigration, education, health, public works, and tax departments.

### *Punishing the Corrupt Offenders*

As corruption is a crime, the most effective way to curb it is to punish those found guilty of corrupt offences. Indeed, Singapore's experience demonstrates the importance of punishing corrupt offenders, regardless of their status or position, in order to deter others from being involved in corruption. During the British colonial period, corruption was perceived by the population as a "low risk, high reward" activity as the probability of being detected and punished for corrupt offences was low because of the ineffectiveness of the Anti-Corruption Branch. However, the empowerment of the CPIB by the enactment of the POCA in 1960 by the PAP government, which was committed to eradicating corruption, led to the transformation of the public perception of corruption in Singapore to a "high risk, low reward" activity. In short, Singapore has succeeded in curbing corruption during the past 48 years because the CPIB enforces the POCA impartially so that those found guilty of corrupt offenses are punished, regardless of who they are.

Thus, to minimize corruption and to deter those who are not involved in corrupt practices from doing so, honesty and incorruptibility among civil servants and political leaders must be recognized and rewarded instead of being punished. The lack of punishment of corrupt civil servants and political leaders in a country sends the wrong signal to their honest counterparts and the population at large as it makes a mockery of the anti-corruption laws and encourages others to become corrupt as the probability of being caught and punished is low. In other words, the political system in a country plagued with corruption rewards those who are corrupt and punishes those who are honest. Needless to say, this system of reward and punishment must be reversed by punishing the corrupt offenders and rewarding those who have abstained from being corrupt.

Summarizing, the fourth important lesson which other Asian countries can learn from Singapore's effective anti-corruption strategy is the need to deal with the major causes and not the symptoms of corruption by improving the salaries of civil servants and political leaders (if the country can afford to do so), by reducing red tape and the opportunities for corruption in corruption-prone public agencies, and by punishing those who are guilty of corruption, no matter who they are.

## XI. CONCLUSION

In his perceptive study on the anti-corruption policies of various governments, Ian Senior has astutely observed that:

The principal people who can change a culture of corruption if they wish to do so are politicians. This is because they make the laws and allocate the funds that enable the laws to be enforced. If, however, politicians at the top of the hierarchy have routinely worked their way up by accepting bribes to fund their parties and themselves, there is little prospect that they will wish to cleanse their colleagues or their nation of corruption. . . . The very people who are the greatest beneficiaries of corruption have the greatest power and use the corrupt nature of government to maintain that power.<sup>102</sup>

This means that if an incumbent government is committed to curbing corruption in the country, it should demonstrate its political will by providing the anti-corruption agency with adequate staff and funding to enforce the anti-corruption laws impartially. On the other hand, Ian Senior has also correctly indicated that corrupt political leaders are unlikely to demonstrate the required political will to curb corruption as they would be "killing the goose that lays the golden eggs."

Singapore's experience shows that curbing corruption is not an impossible dream but an attainable reality if the political leaders have the political will to establish an independent anti-corruption agency with the required legal powers, personnel and budget to enforce impartially the comprehensive anti-corruption laws. Unlike many Asian countries, Singapore has a favorable policy context and

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102. Ian Senior, *Corruption—the World's Big C: Cases, Causes, Consequences, Cures*, London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 2006, pp. 184 and 187.



political leaders who have been committed to combating corruption for the past 48 years.

Can those Asian countries with unfavorable policy contexts and corrupt political leaders escape from the tentacles of corruption? Or are these countries condemned to an endless quagmire of rampant corruption? In his analysis of the systemic corruption in Cameroon, Tim Hartford has admitted that “these problems cannot be fixed overnight.”<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, he has also expressed optimism that there are simple reforms that some poor countries like Cameroon could take in order to move their country in the right direction. For example, by cutting the red tape and allowing small businesses to be legally established, it would make it easier for the entrepreneurs of the country to expand and borrow money. Hartford further adds that the necessary legal reforms are often trivial, and that “a single minister with his head and his heart in the right place” could easily implement such reforms.<sup>104</sup>

Sharing Hartford’s optimism, it is possible for other Asian countries to follow Singapore’s experience in curbing corruption if their citizens do not tolerate corruption and if they show such intolerance by electing into public office honest political leaders who are committed to clean and honest government. So far, however, the record of these countries in fighting corruption has not been impressive as “many leaders have adopted ‘hopeless’ strategies that perpetuate corruption instead of stifling it.”<sup>105</sup> Whether these Asian countries will succeed in curbing corruption in the future will depend on how committed their political leaders and citizens are in attaining this objective. In the final analysis, Singapore has been effective in minimizing the scourge of corruption because its political leaders and citizens have demonstrated the political will to do so. Similarly, without political will, the political leaders and citizens of other Asian countries will not be able to combat corruption effectively.

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103. Tim Hartford, *The Undercover Economist*, London: Little, Brown Book Group, 2006, p. 201.

104. *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

105. Jon S.T. Quah, “Curbing Asian Corruption: An Impossible Dream?” *Current History*, Vol. 105, No. 690 (April 2006), p. 179.

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACAC	Anti-Corruption Advisory Committee
ACRC	Anti-Corruption Review Committee
ACB	Anti-Corruption Branch
BMA	British Military Administration
CAC	Commission Against Corruption
CBI	Central Bureau of investigation
CEC	Commission Eradication Commission
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
CPIB	Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau
ICAC	Independent Commission Against Corruption
KICAC	Korea Independent Commission Against Corruption
MP	Member of Parliament
NCCC	National Counter Corruption Commission
NWC	National Wages Council
PAP	People's Action Party
PCGG	Presidential Commission for Good Government
PERC	Political and Economic Risk Consultancy
POCA	Prevention of Corruption Act
POCO	Prevention of Corruption Ordinance
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
PSC	Public Service Commission
PS21	Public Service for the 21st Century
PUB	Public Utilities Board
SCS	Singapore Civil Service
SPF	Singapore Police Force
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

**GLOSSARY OF CHINESE NAMES\***

Choy, Hon Tim 蔡韩定 (蔡韓定, 音译)

Chua, Cher Yak 蔡子益

Goh, Chok Tong 吴作栋 (吳作棟)

Lee, Geok Boi 李玉美

Lee, Hsien Loong 李显龙 (李顯龍)

Lee, Kuan Yew 李光耀

Phey, Yew Kok 彭由国 (彭由國)

Seah, Chee Meow 余志淼

Tan, Ah Leak 陈亚烈 (陳亞烈, 音译)

Tan, Kia Gan 陈家彦 (陳家彥)

Teh, Cheang Wan 郑章远 (鄭章遠)

Thio, Li-ann 张丽安 (張麗安)

Wee, Toon Boon 黄循文

Yeo, Seng Teck 杨成德 (楊成德)

Yoong, Siew Wah 熊修华 (熊修華, 音译)

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