

## **Minimizing Corruption in Singapore: Lessons for Latin American Countries**

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## Abstract

Singapore is the least corrupt Asian country according to Transparency International's 2013 Corruption Perceptions Index. Singapore has succeeded in curbing corruption because of the People's Action Party government's political will, which is reflected in the allocation of sufficient legal powers, budget, personnel and operational autonomy to the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau to enforce the anti-corruption laws impartially, regardless of the offenders' status, position or political affiliation. Latin American countries can learn these five lessons from Singapore's effective anti-corruption strategy: (1) political will is critical for success in curbing corruption; (2) rely on a single anti-corruption agency (ACA) instead of multiple ACAs to combat corruption; (3) enforce the anti-corruption laws impartially, not selectively; (4) cut red tape to reduce the opportunities for corruption; and (5) enhance public trust in politicians and civil servants by curbing corruption.

## 9 Introduction

Corruption is a serious problem in many countries around the world, as reflected in the perceived levels of corruption in the 177 countries included in Transparency International's 2013 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). Table 9.1 shows the performance of the 26 Asian and 30 Latin American countries included in the 2013 CPI.

Corruption is evident in many Asian and Latin American countries, as an analysis of their 2013 CPI scores in Table 9.2 reveals that only 8 (31 percent) of the 26 Asian countries and 9 (30 percent) of the 30 Latin American countries have CPI scores above 50. This means that 18 Asian countries (69 percent) and 21 Latin American countries (70 percent) have CPI scores below 50, ranging from 8 for Afghanistan and North Korea to 46 for Cuba. In his review of anti-corruption trends in Latin America and the Caribbean, Miguel Penailillo (2012, 24) observes that this region is "widely affected by corruption" and "characterized by high levels of corruption." Thus, it is not surprising that Stephen D. Morris and Charles H. Blake (2010, 13) have described corruption in Latin America as "the glue that holds power together or the grease that oils the machinery for dictators and civilian authorities alike." Many Latin American presidential candidates have promised to curb corruption by implementing serious reforms, including the creation of high-profile anti-corruption agencies (ACAs), but such efforts have been ineffective (Morris and Blake, 2010, 25-26).

**Table 9.1: Performance of 26 Asian and 30 Latin American Countries on 2013 CPI**

Rank	Country	Score*	No. of Surveys**
5	Singapore	86	9
15	Barbados	75	3
15	Hong Kong SAR	75	8
18	Japan	74	9
19	Uruguay	73	9
22	The Bahamas	71	3
22	Chile	71	9
22	St Lucia	71	3
31	Bhutan	63	4
33	Puerto Rico	62	3
33	St Vincent & Grenadines	62	3
36	Taiwan	61	7
38	Brunei	60	3

41	Dominica	58	3
46	South Korea	55	10
49	Costa Rica	53	5
53	Malaysia	50	9
63	Cuba	46	4
72	Brazil	42	8
80	China	40	9
83	El Salvador	38	6
83	Jamaica	38	6
83	Mongolia	38	7
83	Peru	38	7
83	Trinidad & Tobago	38	4
91	Sri Lanka	37	7
94	Colombia	36	7
94	India	36	10
94	Philippines	36	9
94	Surinam	36	3
102	Ecuador	35	8
102	Panama	35	6
102	Thailand	35	8
106	Argentina	34	8
106	Bolivia	34	7
106	Mexico	34	9
114	Indonesia	32	9
116	Nepal	31	5
116	Vietnam	31	8
119	Timor-Leste	30	3
123	Dominican Republic	29	6
123	Guatemala	29	6
127	Nicaragua	28	7
127	Pakistan	28	8
136	Bangladesh	27	7
136	Guyana	27	4
140	Honduras	26	6
140	Laos	26	4
144	Papua New Guinea	25	5
150	Paraguay	24	5
157	Myanmar	21	6
160	Cambodia	20	7
160	Venezuela	20	7
163	Haiti	19	5
175	Afghanistan	8	3
175	North Korea	8	3

\*The score ranges from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).

\*\*A country requires three independent surveys to be included in the CPI.

Source: Compiled from Transparency International (2013).

**Table 9.2: Performance of Asian and Latin American Countries by 2013 CPI Scores**

<b>CPI Score</b>	<b>Asian Countries</b>	<b>Latin American Countries</b>
A (80-100)	1 (3.8%)	0
B (70-79)	2 (7.7%)	5 (16.7%)
C (60-69)	3 (11.5%)	2 (6.7%)
D (50-59)	2 (7.7%)	2 (6.7%)
E (40-49)	1 (3.8%)	2 (6.7%)
F (30-39)	9 (34.6%)	11 (36.7%)
F (20-29)	6 (23%)	7 (23.3%)
F (0-19)	2 (7.7%)	1 (3.3%)
Total	26 (100%)	30 (100%)

*Source:* As in Table 9.1.

As Singapore is perceived to be the least corrupt Asian country according to Transparency International's CPI from 1995-2013, the purpose of this chapter is twofold: (1) to explain why Singapore has succeeded in curbing corruption; and (2) to identify the five lessons which Latin American countries can learn from Singapore's experience to enhance their anti-corruption efforts. To address these two objectives, it is necessary to analyze Singapore's effective anti-corruption strategy first before drawing the relevant lessons for Latin American countries.

## **9.1 Singapore's Effective Anti-Corruption Strategy**

### **Corruption during British colonial period and Japanese Occupation**

Corruption was a way of life in Singapore during the British colonial period because of the government's lack of political will and the ineffective anti-corruption measures adopted. Police corruption was rampant during the colonial period because of their low salaries, the ample opportunities for corruption, and the ineffective Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB). Police corruption was prevalent even though corruption was made illegal with the enactment of the Penal Code of the Straits Settlements of Malacca, Penang and Singapore in 1871. The 1879 and 1886 Commissions of Inquiry confirmed the existence of extensive police corruption in Penang and Singapore but the British colonial government ignored their findings and did not introduce any anti-corruption law until December 1937, when the Prevention of Corruption Ordinance (POCO) was enacted (Quah, 2007, 9-14).

The junior police officers were poorly paid and made ends meet by moonlighting and/or accepting bribes from the illegal gambling house owners (Quah, 1979, 28-29). However, corruption in Singapore during the colonial period was not confined to the police as government agencies such as the customs, immigration, and internal revenue departments also provided more opportunities for corruption than those public agencies with limited contact with the public, and did not issue licenses or permits, or collect fees or taxes. Corruption deteriorated during the Japanese Occupation (February 1942 to August 1945) because the high inflation rate made it difficult for civil servants to live on their low wages. Furthermore, the scarcity of food and other basic commodities forced many people to trade in the black market. The Japanese Occupation exacerbated the problem of corruption as "bribery, blackmail, and extortion grew out of the violence and fear" that the Japanese used to rule Singapore (Lee, 2005, 205).

Conditions did not improve during the post-war period and corruption was widespread among civil servants because their low salaries, high inflation, and inadequate supervision by their superiors provided them with ample opportunities for corruption with a low probability of being caught (Quah, 1982, 161-162).

Consequently, corruption became a way of life for many Singaporeans and, the British Military Administration, which took over after the Japanese surrender in August 1945, was described derisively as the “Black Market Administration” because of its arbitrary requisition of private property, gross mismanagement of the distribution of rice, financial inefficiency, and “scandalous corruption” (Turnbull, 1977, 225).

The British colonial government failed to curb corruption because of the ineffective POCO and ACB. The POCO was ineffective because it 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 fine of S\$10,000 (US\$3,333) for those found guilty of corruption did not deter corrupt behavior. As the ACB was part of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Singapore Police Force (SPF), it was not surprising that the ACB was ineffective in curbing corruption, especially among policemen. To make matters worse, the ACB was inadequately staffed with only four senior officers and 13 junior officers. As the CID’s top priority was to solve serious crimes like murder and kidnapping, combating corruption was given lower priority because the ACB had to compete with other branches in the CID for limited manpower and resources. Within the ACB itself, corruption control was only one of its 16 duties (Quah, 1978, 9-10, 14-15). Faced with these constraints, it was not surprising that the ACB was ineffective in curbing corruption.

The British colonial government only realized its folly in making the ACB responsible for curbing corruption when it discovered that three police detectives and some senior police officers were involved in the robbery of 1,800 pounds of opium worth S\$400,000 (US\$133,333) in October 1951 (Tan, 1999, 59). This Opium Hijacking Scandal exposed the ACB’s weaknesses and its inability to curb police corruption. Consequently, the British colonial government established the CPIB as an independent agency in October 1952 to replace the ineffective ACB.

### **PAP government’s commitment to curb corruption**

During their campaign for the May 1959 general election, the People’s Action Party (PAP) leaders demonstrated their commitment to curbing corruption by exposing the acceptance of S\$700,000 (US\$233,333) by the Minister for Education, Chew Swee Kee, from some American donors (Quah, 2010, 218). The PAP’s exposure of the Chew Swee Kee Scandal enabled it to win the May 30, 1959 general election by capturing 43 of the 51 seats and 53.4 percent of the votes cast. Former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew explained in his memoirs why he and his colleagues were determined to keep Singapore free from corruption after assuming office in June 1959:

We were sickened by the greed, corruption and decadence of many Asian leaders. ... We had a deep sense of mission to establish a clean and effective government. When we took the oath of office ... in June 1959, we all wore white shirts and white slacks to symbolize purity and honesty in our personal behavior and our public life. ... We made sure from the day we 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. So from the very beginning we gave special attention to the areas where discretionary powers had been exploited for personal gain and sharpened the instruments that could prevent, detect or deter such practices (Lee, 2000, 182-184).

Corruption was a way of life in Singapore in June 1959 when the PAP government assumed office. Learning from the mistakes made by the British colonial government in curbing corruption, the PAP government demonstrated its commitment by enacting the Prevention of Corruption Act (POCA) on June 17, 1960 to replace the ineffective POCO and to strengthen the CPIB by providing it with more legal powers, personnel and funding.

The PAP government's determination to curb corruption was manifested by Ong Pang Boon, the Minister for Home Affairs, when he moved for the second reading of the Prevention and Corruption Bill in the Legislative Assembly on February 13, 1960:

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. ... 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 (quoted in Quah, 1978, 10).

The POCA has three important features to rectify the POCO's weaknesses and to enhance the CPIB's legal powers and increase its personnel. First, the penalty for corruption has been increased to imprisonment for five years and/or a fine of S\$10,000 to enhance the POCA's deterrent effect. Second, section 13 specifies that a person found guilty of accepting an illegal gratification has to pay the amount he has taken as a bribe in addition to any other punishment imposed by a court. The third important feature of the POCA is that it has given the CPIB more powers and a new lease of life. For example, section 15 gives CPIB officers powers of arrest and search of arrested persons. The CPIB's director and his senior officers are also empowered by section 18 to investigate the bank account, share account or purchase account of any person suspected of committing a corruption offense. Section 24 is perhaps the most important asset for the CPIB in its investigation of corruption offenses because "the fact that an accused person is in possession, for which he [or she] cannot satisfactorily account, of pecuniary resources or property disproportionate to his [or her] known sources of income" is evidence that he or she had obtained these pecuniary resources or property "corruptly as an inducement or reward" (Quah, 2010, 176-177).

To ensure the POCA's continued effectiveness, the PAP government has introduced, whenever necessary, amendments or new legislation to deal with unanticipated problems or to plug legal loopholes. For example, in 1966, the POCA was amended so that a person could be found guilty of corruption without actually receiving the bribe as long as he had shown the intention of doing so (section 9). The POCA was also amended in 1966 so that, according to section 37, Singapore citizens working for their government in embassies and other government agencies abroad would be prosecuted for corrupt offenses committed outside Singapore and would be dealt with as if such offenses had occurred in Singapore. In 1989, the fine for corrupt offenses was increased tenfold from S\$10,000 to S\$100,000 (US\$80,216 based on the exchange rate of US\$1=S\$1.24664 on May 8, 2014). On March 3, 1989, the Corruption (Confiscation of Benefits) Act 1989 was passed to enable the court to issue a confiscation order against the estate of a deceased defendant (Quah, 2010, 177-178).

Unlike the British colonial government, the PAP government has also demonstrated its political will in curbing corruption not only by enhancing the CPIB's legal powers but also by providing the CPIB with more personnel and budget during the past 55 years. Table 9.3 shows that the CPIB's personnel have grown by almost 11 times from 13 officers in 1952 to 138 officers in 2012. Similarly, as indicated in Table 9.4, the CPIB's budget has increased by about 25 times from S\$1,024,370 in 1978 to S\$25,358,454 in 2012.

**Table 9.3: Growth of CPIB's Personnel, 1952-2012**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Personnel</b>
1952	13
1959	8
1963	33
1965	36
1970	50
1976	61
1980	69
1998	79
2000	84
2004	83
2005	81
2006	89
2007	78
2008	86
2009	90
2010	90
2011	123
2012	138

*Sources:* Quah (2010, 179) and Republic of Singapore (2006, 168; 2007, 372; 2008, 374; 2009, 390; 2010, 382; 2011, 378; 2012, 359; 2013, 359; 2014, 359).

**Table 9.4: CPIB's Budget, 1978-2012**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Budget (S\$)</b>
1978	1,024,370
1987	4,147,230
1997	10,225,463
2004	13,447,079
2005	12,726,405
2006	12,856,565
2007	14,619,718
2008	15,790,811
2009	16,135,696
2010	19,981,596
2011	23,800,146
2012	25,358,454

*Sources:* Quah (2010, 180) and Republic of Singapore (2006, 167; 2007, 371; 2008, 373; 2009, 389; 2010, 382; 2011, 378; 2012, 359; 2013, 359; 2014, 359).

Unlike the situation during its first eight years, the CPIB has adopted a “total approach to enforcement” by dealing with both “big and small cases” of corruption in both the public and private sectors, “both giver and receiver of bribes” and “other crimes uncovered in the course of [the] corruption investigation” (Soh, 2008a, 1-2). In addition to its emphasis on investigation and enforcement, the CPIB also focuses on corruption prevention by reviewing the procedures and practices in those government agencies, where corruption has occurred and makes recommendations to remove the “loopholes and vulnerabilities.” The CPIB employs this review process to “identify potential problem areas and loopholes” in order to minimize the opportunities for corruption (Soh, 2008b, 8). Finally, the CPIB’s extensive outreach program is implemented by its Public Education Group, which conducts prevention and education talks for pre-university students, principals, teachers, newly appointed civil servants, law enforcement agencies like the police and immigration department, and the management and staff of major organizations in key industries (Quah, 2010, 181).



The CPIB's effectiveness in curbing corruption is reflected in Singapore's consistently high ranking on these three indicators: Transparency International's CPI from 1995-2013, the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy's (PERC's) survey on corruption from 1995-2013, and the World Bank's control of corruption indicator from 1996-2012. Table 9.5 shows that Singapore's rank on the CPI ranges from 1<sup>st</sup> position in 2010 to 9<sup>th</sup> position in 1997. Its CPI score varies from 8.66 in 1997 to 9.4 in 2003 and 2005. Singapore has also retained its first position on PERC's surveys from 1995-2013. Similarly, Singapore's percentile rank on the control of corruption varies from 96.1 in 1998 to 98.6 in 2010.

In sum, Singapore's success can be attributed to the PAP government's commitment and its favorable policy context namely, its small land area of 715.8 sq km, its political stability as the PAP government has been in power for 55 years, its high GDP per capita of US\$51,162, and its small population of 5.2 million in 2012 (Schwab, 2013, 405-406).

**Table 9.5: Singapore's Performance on Three Corruption Indicators, 1995-2013**

<b>Year</b>	<b>CPI Rank and Score (1995-2013)</b>	<b>PERC Rank and Score (1995-2013)</b>	<b>Control of Corruption Percentile Rank (1996-2012)</b>
1995	3 <sup>rd</sup> (9.26)	1 <sup>st</sup> (1.20)	NA
1996	7 <sup>th</sup> (8.80)	1 <sup>st</sup> (1.09)	96.6
1997	9 <sup>th</sup> (8.66)	1 <sup>st</sup> (1.05)	NA
1998	7 <sup>th</sup> (9.1)	1 <sup>st</sup> (1.43)	96.1
1999	7 <sup>th</sup> (9.1)	1 <sup>st</sup> (1.55)	NA
2000	6 <sup>th</sup> (9.1)	1 <sup>st</sup> (0.71)	96.6
2001	4 <sup>th</sup> (9.2)	1 <sup>st</sup> (0.83)	NA
2002	5 <sup>th</sup> (9.3)	1 <sup>st</sup> (0.90)	98.5
2003	5 <sup>th</sup> (9.4)	1 <sup>st</sup> (0.38)	98.0
2004	5 <sup>th</sup> (9.3)	1 <sup>st</sup> (0.50)	98.5
2005	5 <sup>th</sup> (9.4)	1 <sup>st</sup> (0.65)	98.0
2006	5 <sup>th</sup> (9.3)	1 <sup>st</sup> (1.30)	97.6
2007	4 <sup>th</sup> (9.3)	1 <sup>st</sup> (1.20)	98.1
2008	4 <sup>th</sup> (9.2)	1 <sup>st</sup> (1.13)	98.1
2009	3 <sup>rd</sup> (9.2)	1 <sup>st</sup> (1.07)	98.1

2010	1 <sup>st</sup> (9.3)	1 <sup>st</sup> (1.42)	98.6
2011	5 <sup>th</sup> (9.2)	1 <sup>st</sup> (0.37)	96.7
2012	5 <sup>th</sup> (87)	1 <sup>st</sup> (0.67)	97.1
2013	5 <sup>th</sup> (86)	1 <sup>st</sup> (0.74)	NA

Sources: Quah (2011, 225); *Asian Intelligence* (2013, 6); and World Bank (2012).

## 9.2 Five Lessons for Latin American Countries

### Lesson 1: Political will is critical for success in curbing corruption

The key factor responsible for combating corruption effectively in a country is the political will or commitment of its political leadership. Derick W. Brinkerhoff (2000, 242) defines political will as “the commitment of actors to undertake actions to achieve a set of objectives—in this case, anti-corruption policies and programs—and to sustain the costs of those actions over time.” Indeed, political will is critical for curbing corruption because politicians “can change a culture of corruption” since “they make the laws and allocate the funds that enable the laws to be enforced.” Consequently, if they have assumed power 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” (Senior, 2006, 184, 187). In other words, without political will, the probability of detection and punishment for corrupt offenses cannot be enhanced, and the resources required for a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy will not be allocated by the incumbent government.

How can the “political will” of a country in fighting corruption be assessed? Political will refers to the commitment of political leaders to minimize corruption in a country. More specifically, political will exists when these three conditions are met: comprehensive anti-corruption legislation exists; the independent ACA is provided with sufficient personnel and resources; and the anti-corruption laws are impartially enforced by the independent ACA (Quah, 2007, 37-38).

To assess whether the ACAs in nine Asian countries have been provided with adequate personnel and budgets by their governments to perform their functions, data on their personnel numbers and budgets for a selected year (2008) are used to calculate these two indicators: (1) per capita expenditure – that is, the ACA’s budget for 2008 in US\$ (to ensure comparability), divided by the total population in the country for the same year; and (2) staff-population ratio – that is, the ratio of the population in the country in 2008 to the number of ACA personnel in 2008 (Quah, 2011, 454-455).

Table 9.6 shows that Hong Kong’s Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) is the best funded with a per capita expenditure of US\$13.40, followed by Singapore’s CPIB (US\$2.32), South Korea’s Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC) (US\$1.26), Mongolia’s Independent Authority Against Corruption (IAAC) (US\$1.15), Thailand’s National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) (US\$0.33), Philippines’ Office of the Ombudsman (OMB) (US\$0.22), Taiwan’s Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau (MJIB) (US\$0.18), Indonesia’s *Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi* (KPK) (US\$0.14), and India’s Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) (US\$0.04).

Table 9.6 also shows that, in terms of staff-population ratio, Hong Kong's ICAC has the most favorable ratio of 1: 5,780, followed in turn by Taiwan's MJIB, Mongolia's IAAC, Singapore's CPIB, Thailand's NACC, Philippines' OMB, South Korea's ACRC, India's CBI, and Indonesia's KPK, which has the least favorable ratio of 1: 433,888.

Finally, Table 9.7 reaffirms the PAP government's political will in curbing corruption as the CPIB's staff-population ratio has improved from 1:53,086 to 1:37,681 with the addition of 57 personnel from 2005 to 2012. Similarly, the CPIB's per capita expenditure has also increased from S\$1.79 to US\$4.00, with the growth of its budget from US\$7.7 million to US\$20.8 million during the same period.

**Table 9.6: Comparative Analysis of Personnel & Budgets of Nine Asian ACAs, 2008**

ACA	Personnel	Budget	Population	Staff-population ratio	Per capita expenditure
Hong Kong ICAC	1,263	US\$97.7 m	7.3 m	1: 5,780	US\$13.40
Singapore CPIB	86	US\$11.2 m	4.83 m	1: 56,163	US\$2.32
South Korea ACRC	466	US\$61 m	48.4 m	1: 103,863	US\$1.26
Mongolia IAAC	90	US\$3.1 m	2.7 m	1: 30,000	US\$1.15
Thailand NACC	740	US\$21.3 m	64.3 m	1: 86,892	US\$0.33
Philippines OMB	1,007	US\$19.6 m	89.7 m	1: 89,076	US\$0.22
Taiwan MJIB	840	US\$4.02 m	22.9 m	1: 27,262	US\$0.18
Indonesia KPK	540	US\$31.8 m	234.3 m	1: 433,888	US\$0.14
India CBI	4,874	US\$52.1 m	1,186.2 m	1: 243,373	US\$0.04

Source: Quah (2011, 455-456).

**Table 9.7: CPIB's Staff-Population Ratio and Per Capita Expenditure, 2005-2012**

<b>CPIB</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2012</b>
Personnel	81	86	138
Budget	US\$7.7 million	US\$11.2 million	US\$20.8 million
Staff-Population Ratio	1:53,086	1:56,163	1:37,681
Per Capita Expenditure	US\$1.79	US\$2.32	US\$4.00

*Sources:* As in Tables 9.3, 9.4 and 9.6. The CPIB's staff-population ratio and per capita expenditure for 2005, 2008 and 2012 are calculated by the author.

## **Lesson 2: Rely on a single ACA instead of multiple ACAs to curb corruption**

In addition to political will, Singapore has succeeded in curbing corruption because of its reliance on the CPIB. An ACA is a specialized agency formed by a government to minimize corruption in the country by focusing on the prevention, investigation and prosecution of corrupt offenses, and the education of the public on the adverse consequences of corruption (Meagher, 2005, 70).

Consequently, an ACA has these advantages over other less-specialized agencies created to curb corruption: reduced administrative costs; reduced uncertainty over jurisdiction by avoiding duplication of powers and work; a high degree of specialization and expertise; a high degree of autonomy; separateness from the agencies and departments that they will be investigating; considerable public credibility and profile; established security protection; political, legal and public accountability; clarity in the assessment of its progress, successes and failures; and swift action against corruption because task-specific resources are used and officials are not subjected to the competing priorities of general law enforcement, audit and similar agencies (Nicolls *et al*, 2006, 476; and UNODC, 2004, 89-90).

On the other hand, those Asian countries like China, India, Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam, which rely on multiple ACAs, are less effective in curbing corruption. The Philippines provides the best illustration of the ineffectiveness of relying on multiple ACAs because it has relied on seven laws and 19 ACAs since the 1950s (Quah, 2011, 135). It now relies on these four ACAs: the OMB, the President Commission on Good Governance, the Inter-Agency Anti-Graft Coordinating Council, and the *Sandiganbayan* or Anti-Graft Court. Indeed, the reliance on multiple ACAs has not benefited the Philippines because the proliferation of these agencies has contributed to "duplication, layering and turf wars" (Quimson, 2006, 30). There is also no coordination or cooperation among the many ACAs, which compete for recognition, staff, and resources because they are under-staffed and inadequately funded (Quah, 2011, 145).

Similarly, China relies on these four ACAs: the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP), the Ministry of Supervision (MOS), and the National Corruption Prevention Bureau (NCPB) (Quah, 2013, 65). Among these ACAs, the CCDI and MOS have worked closely together for six years until their merger in 1993, as most of the government officials are members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). However, there is less cooperation and coordination between the CCDI and SPP because of their unequal relationship as the CCDI is the lead ACA in China (Quah, 2013, 77-78). According to Jeffrey Becker (2008, 287), the CCDI, MOS and SPP are ineffective because of "limited coordination between the three agencies, a lack of timely, actionable information, and narrow oversight capabilities all hinder anti-corruption work." As the NCPB was formed in September 2007 to enhance coordination and facilitate cooperation among the ACAs in China, Becker (2008, 297-299) is skeptical about the NCPB's ability to meet this objective because apart from its limited independence and minimal enforcement capabilities, it lacks the power to enforce its mandate of coordinating the work of the other three ACAs.

In short, to combat corruption effectively, the governments in Latin American countries should follow Singapore's example of establishing a single ACA and provide it with sufficient manpower, budget, and autonomy to implement the anti-corruption laws effectively instead of relying on ineffective multiple ACAs like China and the Philippines.

### **Lesson 3: Enforce the anti-corruption laws impartially, not selectively**

To combat corruption effectively, the anti-corruption laws in a country must be enforced by the ACA impartially as those found guilty of corruption offenses must be punished, regardless of their status, position or political affiliation. In other words, corrupt individuals should be punished according to the law, regardless of whether they are "big fish" (rich and famous) or "small fish." Indeed, rich and powerful individuals should not be protected from investigation and prosecution for corruption offenses.

**Table 9.8: CPIB's Investigation of PAP Leaders in Singapore, 1966-2014**

<b>Name and Designation</b>	<b>Details of Offense</b>	<b>Results of Investigation</b>
Tan Kia Gan (Minister for National Development)	Accused in August 1966 of assisting his friend in the sale of Boeing aircraft to Malaysian Airways.	Tan was not convicted as the witnesses did not give evidence against him but he was stripped of all his public appointments in November 1966.
Wee Toon Boon (Minister of State for Environment)	Accused in April 1975 of accepting bribes from a property developer.	Wee was found guilty and sentenced to four and a half years of imprisonment and ordered to pay a penalty of S\$7,023.
Phey Yew Kok (Member of Parliament for Boon Teck constituency and President of National Trades Union Congress)	Accused in May 1979 of criminal breach of trust involving S\$101,000.	Phey jumped bail on January 7, 1980 and fled abroad and remains a fugitive today.

Teh Cheang Wan (Minister for National Development)	Accused in November 1986 of accepting S\$1 million in bribes from two property developers.	Teh committed suicide in December 1986 before he could be charged in court.
Choo Wee Kiang (Member of Parliament from 1988-1999, and President of Singapore Table Tennis Association)	Accused in 1999 of cheating. In December 2011, he was charged with three counts of corruption and one count of criminal breach of trust.	Choo resigned from his position and the PAP in 1999 before pleading guilty. He was sentenced to two weeks' jail and fined S\$10,000. He was acquitted in July 2013 of criminal breach of trust, and in April 2014 of the three corruption charges.

*Sources:* CPIB (2003, 6.45-6.47); Sim (2011); and Chong (2014b, A2).

As mentioned earlier, Singapore's success in combating corruption can be attributed to the CPIB's adoption of a "total approach to enforcement." Soh Kee Hean (2008a, 2-3), a former CPIB Director, has attributed the CPIB's success to its reliance on skillful interview techniques, careful planning and execution of field operations, and computer forensics. More specifically, the CPIB's effective enforcement capacity is the result of its threefold emphasis on the capability building of its enforcement officers, building networks and partnerships with other public agencies in Singapore, and organizational excellence.

The CPIB has enforced the POCA impartially by not hesitating to investigate allegations of corruption against political leaders and senior civil servants in Singapore. Table 9.8 provides the relevant details of five PAP leaders who were investigated by the CPIB during 1966-2014 and the results of these investigations. Similarly, details of the eight senior civil servants in Singapore who were investigated by the CPIB from 1991-2014 are provided in Table 9.9, which also shows that seven of them were found guilty and sentenced to imprisonment terms ranging from three months to 22 years.

**Table 9.9: CPIB's Investigation of Senior Civil Servants in Singapore, 1991-2014**

Name and Designation	Details of Offense	Results of Investigation
Glenn Knight (Director of Commercial Affairs Department)	Accused in March 1991 of attempted cheating and giving false information to obtain a government car loan. He was also investigated in 1997 for misappropriating S\$2,720.	Knight was found guilty and sentenced to three months imprisonment. He was also found guilty of the second offense in September 1998, and was fined S\$10,000 and jailed for a day.
Yeo Seng Teck (Chief Executive Officer of Trade Development Board)	Accused in 1993 of cheating and forgery involving the purchase of Chinese antiques worth S\$2 million.	Yeo was found guilty and sentenced to four years imprisonment.

Choy Hon Tim (Deputy Chief Executive [Operations] of Public Utilities Board)	Accused in 1995 of accepting bribes amounting to S\$13.85 million from contractors.	Choy was found guilty and sentenced to 14 years jail and ordered to pay back S\$13.85 million.
Koh Seah Wee (Deputy Director of Technology and Infrastructure Department, Singapore Land Authority)	Accused in June 2010 of cheating and money laundering offenses amounting to S\$12.5 million.	Koh was found guilty and sentenced to 22 years jail in November 2011.
Ng Boon Gay (Director of Central Narcotics Bureau)	Accused in June 2012 of corruptly obtaining sexual favors from a sales manager.	Ng was acquitted in February 2013 because there was no evidence of his offense.
Peter Lim (Director of Singapore Civil Defense Force)	Accused in June 2012 of corruption involving sex with three female executives.	Lim was found guilty and sentenced to six months imprisonment in June 2013.
Edwin Yeo (Assistant Director of CPIB)	Accused in July 2013 of misappropriating S\$1.76 million from 2008-2012.	Yeo was found guilty and sentenced to 10 years jail in February 2014.
Lim Cheng Hoe (Chief of Protocol of Ministry of Foreign Affairs)	Accused in October 2013 of cheating government of S\$88,997	Lim was found guilty and sentenced to 15 months jail in February 2014.

*Sources:* CPIB (2003, 6.48-6.49); Singapore High Court (2011); Chong (2014a); Lim (2014); Sim (2013); and Tham and Lim (2013).

The impartial enforcement of the anti-corruption laws also implies that corruption should not be used by the incumbent government as a weapon against its political opponents. According to Dini Djalal (2001, 32-33), “the tendency to use corruption charges to settle political scores is widespread” in Southeast Asia as such charges are “increasingly used as a means to discredit rivals, rather than as an effort to clean politics” in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam.

In China, anti-corruption campaigns have been used against political opponents to undermine their power base in the CCP. Joseph Fewsmith (2001, 231) observed that “charging one’s opponents (or their close followers) with corruption—a charge that seems increasingly true of most officials—had become a weapon of choice for political maneuver.” Similarly, John Bryan Starr (2010, 80-81) indicates that in China “anti-corruption campaigns often have as much to do with settling intra-party rivalries as they do with reasserting public probity.” Indeed, senior CCP leaders like Chen Xitong, Chen Liangyu, and Bo Xilai were prosecuted for corruption not only because they were guilty of corrupt offenses, but more importantly, because they had threatened the consolidation of power of political leaders like Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping, respectively. It will be difficult for China to curb corruption if its political leaders continue to rely on using corruption as the weapon of choice against their political foes (Quah, 2013, 83).

Unlike China, Singapore has succeeded in curbing corruption as its government does not use corruption as a weapon against its political opponents because, as indicated above, any person found guilty of corruption is punished according to the law, regardless of his or her position, status, or political affiliation.

#### **Lesson 4: Cut red tape to reduce the opportunities for corruption**

Herbert Kaufman (1977, 5, 51-53) observes that “when people rail against red tape, they mean that they are subjected to too many constraints, that many of these constraints seem pointless, and that agencies seem to take forever to act.” More importantly, civil servants are tempted by “the opportunities to sell their official discretion and information” as well as “the opportunities to extort payments” because “permits can be delayed, licenses held up, deliberations protracted, proceedings prolonged, unless rewards are offered.” Red tape and cumbersome administrative procedures constitute an important cause of corruption because they provide civil servants with the excuse to extort bribes from those businessmen and citizens who are prepared to pay “speed money” to “cut” red tape and reduce delay by expediting their applications for permits or licenses (Quah, 2009, 820-821).

As unnecessary regulations provide opportunities for corruption, the PAP government has initiated various measures to reduce these opportunities in Singapore by cutting red tape. The Service Improvement Unit was formed in April 1991 to improve the quality of service in the Singapore Civil Service (SCS) and statutory boards by obtaining public feedback on the removal of unnecessary regulations. From April 1991 to March 1992, the review of more than 200 rules by the SCS and statutory boards resulted in the modification or abolition of 96 rules (Quah, 1995, 339-340). In May 1995, Public Service for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (PS21) was introduced to enhance 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” (Quah, 2010, 162).

**Table 9.10: Performance of Singapore and 29 Latin American Economies  
on the World Bank’s Doing Business Survey 2014**

<b>Economy</b>	<b>Ease of Doing Business Rank</b>	<b>No. of days to start a business</b>	<b>No. of days to obtain a construction permit</b>	<b>No. of days to enforce a contract</b>
Singapore	1	2.5	26	150
Chile	34	5.5	155	480
Puerto Rico	40	6.0	189	620
Peru	42	25	173	426



Colombia	43	15	54	1,288
Mexico	53	6	82	400
Panama	55	6	99.5	686
St Lucia	64	15	110	635
Trinidad & Tobago	66	37.5	265	1,340
Dominica	77	12	171	681
Guatemala	79	19.5	107	1,402
St Vincent & Grenadines	82	10	112	394
The Bahamas	84	23.5	178	427
Uruguay	88	6.5	256	725
Barbados	91	18	442	1,340
Jamaica	94	6	135	655
Costa Rica	102	24	123	852
Paraguay	109	35	137	591
Guyana	115	20	195	581
Brazil	116	107.5	400	731
Dominican Rep	117	18.5	216	460
El Salvador	118	16.5	144	786

Nicaragua	124	36	208	409
Argentina	126	25	365	590
Honduras	127	14	109	920
Ecuador	135	55.5	115	588
Suriname	161	208	239	1,715
Bolivia	162	49	275.5	591
Haiti	177	97	1,129	530
Venezuela	181	144	381	610

*Source:* Compiled by the author from World Bank (2013).

The PAP government has also relied on e-government to enhance transparency and reduce opportunities for corruption by simplifying the procedures for obtaining business licenses. In 2004, the On-Line Applications System for Integrated Services (OASIS) was launched to enable the public to “apply, renew or terminate 85 different types of licenses” online. Similarly, to reduce the opportunities for corruption and improve efficiency and transparency in procurement, the online procurement portal known as *GeBiz* was introduced to enable government procurement to be done through the Internet (Soh, 2008b, 7).

Singapore’s efforts to reduce red tape have reaped dividends as reflected in its being ranked first in the ease of doing business among the 175-189 economies included in the World Bank’s Doing Business surveys from 2007 to 2014. Table 9.10 shows the significant difference between Singapore and the 29 Latin American economies in reducing red tape in terms of the number of days taken to start a business, obtain a construction permit, and enforce a contract. For example, while Singapore requires 2.5 days to start a business, Venezuela, which is ranked 181<sup>st</sup> among the 189 economies in 2014, needs 144 days to do so.

In short, Latin American countries should follow Singapore’s example to reduce the opportunities for corruption by making greater efforts to reduce red tape and streamline the cumbersome administrative procedures in their civil services.

## Lesson 5: Enhance public trust in politicians and civil servants by curbing corruption

As citizens evaluate institutions on the basis of their past role performance and the trustworthiness of their staff, their level of trust in civil servants and government is enhanced if they perform effectively as expected. On the other hand, the level of citizen distrust in their government and civil servants increases if they fail to meet their expectations (Levi, 1998, 86). Margaret Levi (1998, 85-86) contends that the State creates interpersonal trust among its citizens by having the “capacity to monitor laws, bring sanctions against lawbreakers, and provide information and guarantees about those seeking to be trusted.” The level of public trust in their government is high if the latter performs effectively, as expected. Conversely, citizens are likely to distrust their government if it “breaks its promises, is incompetent, and antagonistic toward them” (Levi, 1998, 88).

Table 9.11 shows the level of public trust in politicians in Singapore and 25 Latin American countries, which are included in the *Global Competitiveness Report’s* survey of this indicator in 148 countries in 2013. As the PAP government in Singapore has been effective and incorrupt after 55 years in power, it is not surprising that Singaporeans have shown a high level of trust towards their political leaders and government, which is reflected in Singapore being ranked first consistently for the public trust in politicians from 1999-2013 on the *Global Competitiveness Report* during this period. By contrast, Table 11 also shows that the level of public trust in politicians in the 25 Latin American countries is much lower. Indeed, the extremely low scores (below 2.0) of Haiti, Honduras, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Paraguay, and Argentina in 2013, is the result of their governments’ failure to solve their countries’ problems, especially corruption, and their unfavorable policy contexts.

In sum, Singapore’s experience in curbing corruption illustrates the importance of the government earning the public trust by performing effectively to solve the country’s problems, especially corruption. If corruption is rampant in a country, this not only reflects the government’s inability to minimize it, but also increases the public distrust of politicians and civil servants. As corruption is widespread in many Latin American countries, this serious problem is a wake-up call to their political leaders and civil servants to clean up their act and for their citizens to elect more honest and competent persons to public office and to punish corrupt politicians for their misconduct by voting them out of office.

**Table 9.11: Public Trust in Politicians in Singapore & 25 Latin American Countries, 2013**

Rank	Country	Score*
1	Singapore	6.2
18	Uruguay	4.4
21	Barbados	4.2
34	Chile	3.8
57	Bolivia	3.2

59	Ecuador	3.1
63	Guyana	3.1
72	Puerto Rico	3.0
76	Nicaragua	2.8
79	Costa Rica	2.8
94	Panama	2.4
104	El Salvador	2.3
105	Mexico	2.3
111	Trinidad & Tobago	2.2
113	Jamaica	2.2
119	Suriname	2.1
125	Colombia	2.0
130	Guatemala	2.0
131	Peru	2.0
134	Haiti	1.9
135	Honduras	1.9
136	Brazil	1.9
143	Dominican Republic	1.7
144	Venezuela	1.6

145	Paraguay	1.5
147	Argentina	1.5

\*The score ranges from 1 (extremely low) to 7 (extremely high) to the question: “In your country, how would you rate the ethical standards of politicians?”

*Source:* Schwab (2013, 413).

### 9.3 Conclusion

Corruption is a difficult problem to minimize because those who benefit from it have a great deal to lose if they are detected and caught. Consequently, corrupt individuals, who are highly intelligent and motivated, could find legal loopholes to circumvent the anti-corruption laws and develop safeguards and defense mechanisms for avoiding detection, investigation, arrest and prosecution. Laurence Cockcroft (2012, 231-232) stresses the need for a sustained campaign against corruption to ensure victory because corruption is like “a snake which will frequently respond with poison, and will only die with repeated attack” and “only if severed at the head.”

**Table 9.12: Contextual Differences between Singapore and Latin American Countries**

Country	Land Area (sq km)	Population (2012)	GDP per capita (2012)	Political Stability (2012)
Singapore	715.8	5.2 m	US\$51,162	1.34 (96.68)
Barbados	432	0.3 m	US\$16,152	1.20 (91.94)
Uruguay	176,000	3.4 m	US\$14,614	0.71 (69.19)
Bahamas	13,878	0.3 m	US\$22,832	1.18 (91.00)
Chile	756,945	17.3 m	US\$15,410	0.35 (59.24)
St Lucia	617	0.2 m	US\$7,769	0.91 (75.83)
Puerto Rico	9,104	3.7 m	US\$27,451	0.63 (66.82)

St Vincent & Grenadines	389	0.1 m	US\$6,342	0.91 (75.83)
Dominica	750	0.07 m	US\$7,022	1.06 (87.68)
Costa Rica	51,000	4.7 m	US\$9,673	0.63 (67.30)
Cuba	109,884	11.1 m	US\$6,301	0.32 (57.82)
Brazil	8,511,965	196.7 m	US\$12,079	0.07 (47.87)
El Salvador	21,000	6.2 m	US\$3,823	0.21 (54.03)
Jamaica	11,000	2.7 m	US\$5,541	0.10 (50.24)
Peru	1,285,216	29.4 m	US\$6,530	-0.86 (19.91)
Trinidad & Tobago	5,000	1.3 m	US\$19,018	0.11 (51.18)
Colombia	1,141,748	46.9 m	US\$7,855	-1.40 (8.06)
Suriname	164,000	0.5 m	US\$8,686	0.08 (49.29)
Ecuador	272,000	14.7 m	US\$5,311	-0.60 (26.54)
Panama	77,000	3.6 m	US\$9,919	-0.15 (40.28)
Argentina	2,766,889	40.8 m	US\$11,576	0.07 (48.34)
Bolivia	1,099,000	10.1 m	US\$2,532	-0.50 (30.33)
Mexico	1,972,545	114.8 m	US\$10,247	-0.67 (24.17)
Dominican Republic	48,000	10.1 m	US\$5,763	0.23 (54.98)
Guatemala	109,000	14.8 m	US\$3,302	-0.65 (25.12)

Nicaragua	130,000	5.9 m	US\$1,757	-0.37 (36.49)
Guyana	215,000	0.8 m	US\$3,596	-0.48 (30.81)
Honduras	112,000	7.8 m	US\$2,242	-0.40 (34.60)
Paraguay	407,000	6.6 m	US\$3,903	-0.84 (20.38)
Venezuela	912,050	29.3 m	US\$12,956	-0.99 (17.54)
Haiti	28,000	10.1 m	US\$759	-0.79 (21.33)

*Sources:* Economist (2013), Schwab (2013, 405-406), Wikipedia (2014) and World Bank (2012).

Apart from the intractable nature of the corruption problem, a country's policy context (defined as its geography, history, economy, demography, and political system) might not be conducive for the effective implementation of anti-corruption measures (Quah, 2010, 16; 2011, 30). Indeed, those countries with large populations and territories, low GDP per capita, and which are politically unstable, would have more difficulty in combating corruption than those politically stable countries with smaller populations and territories, and higher GDP per capita. Table 9.12 provides data on the differences in policy contexts between Singapore and 30 Latin American countries and shows that Singapore has a favorable policy context for implementing its anti-corruption strategy because of its small land area and population, higher GDP per capita, and stable government.

Singapore is much smaller in terms of land area than most of the 30 Latin American countries. Only these three countries are smaller than Singapore: St Vincent and the Grenadines (389 sq km), Barbados (432 sq km), and St Lucia (637 sq km). Indeed, Singapore's land area of 715.8 sq km means that Brazil, with its vast territory of 8,511,965 sq km, is 11,892 times larger than Singapore. Similarly, Singapore is much more affluent as its GDP per capita of US\$51,162 is almost twice that of Puerto Rico's GDP per capita of US\$27,451, which is the highest in Latin America. At the other extreme, Singapore is 67 times richer than Haiti, which has the lowest GDP per capita of US\$759.

Singapore's population of 5.2 million is smaller than the populations of 17 countries, ranging from 5.9 million for Nicaragua to 196.7 million for Brazil. On the other hand, the 13 countries with smaller populations are: Dominica (71,293), St Vincent and the Grenadines (103,220), St Lucia (200,000), Barbados (277,821), Bahamas (319,013), Suriname (500,000), Guyana (800,000), Trinidad and Tobago (1.3 million), Jamaica (2.7 million), Uruguay (3.4 million), Panama (3.6 million), Puerto Rico (3.7 million) and Costa Rica (4.7 million). Finally, in terms of political stability, Singapore has been governed by the PAP government for 55 years after its assumption of power in June 1959. Its higher level of political stability is reflected in its score of 1.34 (96.68 percentile rank) on the World Bank's governance indicator of political stability in 2012. By contrast, the performance of the 30 Latin American countries on the same indicator varies from Colombia's lowest score of -1.40 (8.06 percentile rank) to Puerto Rico's highest score of 1.20 (91.94 percentile rank).

Singapore's favorable policy context as reflected in its smaller land area and population, higher GDP per capita, and political stability, combined with the political will of the PAP government have contributed to the CPIB's effectiveness in combating corruption. On the other hand, the less favorable policy contexts of many Latin American countries are reflected in their generally larger land areas and populations, lower GDP per capita, and political instability. These contextual constraints coupled with the lack of political will of their governments might make it more difficult for many Latin American countries to apply the five lessons drawn from Singapore's effective anti-corruption strategy. In sum, Singapore's experience shows that corruption can be defeated if the government has the political will to implement the necessary anti-corruption reforms. This chapter has identified five lessons which Latin American countries concerned with improving their anti-corruption efforts can learn from Singapore's effective anti-corruption strategy. The most important lessons are that Latin American countries will only succeed in combating corruption if their governments demonstrate the political will to establish single ACAs and provide them with the required personnel, budget and operational autonomy to enforce the anti-corruption laws impartially, regardless of the offenders' status, position, or political affiliation. Furthermore, these governments must also reduce the opportunities for corruption by cutting red tape and streamlining the cumbersome administrative procedures in their civil services. Above all, they must take into account their contextual constraints and enhance their effectiveness by resolving their countries' problems in order to increase the level of their citizens' trust in politicians and bureaucrats. Failure to minimize the problem of corruption in Latin American countries will perpetuate the continuous cycle of public distrust of politicians and governments, and political instability.

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