

Preventing Police Corruption in Singapore: The Role of Recruitment, Training and Socialisation

Jon S T Quah

Police corruption is a serious problem in many Asian countries. However, Singapore's case shows that it is possible to prevent and control police corruption if there is the political will to do so. After analysing various forms of police corruption, this article recognises that police corruption was rampant in Singapore during the British colonial period, but that since then, through the commitment of the People's Action Party government to curbing corruption in the country, the Singapore Police Force has succeeded in preventing and minimising police corruption. It has done this by improving its salaries and working conditions, its recruitment and selection procedures, its training programmes, and the socialisation of its members.

Introduction

Police corruption is a serious problem in many Asian countries as the police are usually perceived as one of the most corrupt agencies in these countries. For example, the National Survey of Corruption in Indonesia conducted by the Partnership for Governance Reform in Indonesia in March 2001 found that the sample of 2,300 respondents (consisting of 650 public officials, 1,250 households and 400 business enterprises) ranked the traffic police as the most corrupt public institution among a list of 35 public institutions (Partnership for Governance Reform in Indonesia 2001: 10-11). Similarly, a survey of corruption in five South Asian countries involving 16,525 respondents conducted by Transparency International (TI) between November 2001 and May 2002 found that the police was identified as the most corrupt sector in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and the third most corrupt sector after land administration and customs in Nepal (Thampi 2002: 12-17). More specifically, the TI survey found that:

1. In Bangladesh, "84% of respondents who interacted with the police department reported corruption. In 96% of the cases, bribes were paid for a release after arrest under a false pretext. While a third of the victims could not identify the facilitator, 24% identified duty officers and 19% investigating officers. Direct extortion of bribes was reported by 84% of

the victims. Lack of accountability (76%) and discretionary power (73%) were identified as the key facilitating factors."

2. In India, "53% of respondents reported that political intervention was the main form of corruption they faced in their interactions with the police department; 145 said that money was demanded for making an FRI (First Information Report). 505 of all those who interacted with the police admitted paying bribes. The police officer on duty (54%) was seen as the chief beneficiary."
3. In Nepal, "only seven percent of respondents reported interaction with the police sector during the past year. Almost half of those reporting interaction, 9 (48%) said they had encountered corruption in this sector. The police officer was found to be the main instigator of corruption, followed by the department clerk."
4. In Pakistan, "nearly a third (32%) of all respondents reported using the services of the police during the past year. All of those who interacted with the police reported encountering corruption; one in two victims identified the police officer as the key perpetrator. Extortion was reported by 74% of the respondents. A lack of accountability and low salaries were quoted as the major contributory factors."
5. In Sri Lanka, "all respondents who interacted with the police department during the past year reported encountering corruption. Police officers and investigating officers were identified as the key perpetrators of corruption; one-third of the respondents reporting of corruption paid bribes voluntarily. Discretionary powers and influence of powerful interest groups were cited as the major factors contributing to corruption in the police department" (Thampi 2002: 12-17).

A final example is provided by the *Report of the Royal Commission to Enhance the Operation and Management of the Royal Malaysia Police*, which found that "corruption regrettably has swept through, in varying degrees, all levels of the service" of the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) (Royal Malaysia Police 2005: 277). More specifically, the Royal Commission found that the following divisions in the RMP were "more susceptible to corrupt practices", namely "traffic police personnel, investigating officers and their supervisors, detectives, prosecuting officers and police enquiry office personnel" (p.279). Another finding was that corruption was "prevalent in the police lockup" as "many complainants alleged that detainees had to 'pay' for additional food, to receive and make phone calls, to see family members or friends and to be placed in 'good' cells" (p.280). Finally, it was also common for police officers "to bribe other officers to gain an advantage such as being

transferred to 'gold mine' postings" such as the "Commercial Crime Department, Traffic Branch, Criminal Investigation Department (D7 covering secret societies, anti-vice and gambling), Narcotics Department, Logistics Department (Procurement and Development) and Deployment and Promotions Division" (p.280).

Given the prevalence of police corruption in Asian countries, is it possible to control and prevent this problem? There are very few success stories, but the experiences of Singapore and Hong Kong in minimising police corruption indicate that it is possible to control and prevent police corruption if there is the political will to do so (Quah 2004a: 1).

This article focuses on the experience of the Singapore Police Force (SPF) in preventing and curbing corruption in the recruitment, training and socialisation of its officers. It does this in the context of various definitions and forms police corruption.

Meaning and Types of Police Corruption

In his pioneering study of four corrupt police departments in the United States, Sherman (1978: 30) defines police corruption as "an illegal use of organisational power for personal gain." He contends that this definition is "the most useful for studying police corruption as a form of deviance that can be both individual and organizational" (p.31). However, for present purposes, the preferred definition is one provided by Roebuck and Barker (1974: 118), namely that police corruption is "any type of proscribed behavior engaged in by a law enforcement officer who receives or expects to receive, by virtue of his official position, an actual or potential unauthorized material reward or gain."

Apart from providing a more detailed definition, Roebuck and Barker also identified eight types of police corruption on the basis of a content analysis of the literature on police corruption from 1960-1972 and the police work experience of one of the authors. The first form is corruption of authority, which occurs when a police officer "receives officially unauthorized, unearned material gain by virtue of his position as a police officer without violating the law per se" (p.119). The corruptors are usually "respectable" citizens who are showing their gratitude for efficient police work by rewarding the police officers with such gratuities as free meals, free goods, and cash payments. *The Knapp Commission on Police Corruption* (1978: 170) found that the acceptance of these gratuities by police officers was the most widespread pattern of corruption in New York City's Police Department.

Kickbacks are the second type of police corruption. Police officers usually receive kickbacks in the form of goods, services or money from legitimate businessmen for referring business to them. As the policeman interacts with many persons when on the beat, s/he appears to be the logical

"ally" for those businessmen who wish to sell their goods and services to those persons coming into contact with the policeman during a routine patrol. For example, in the United States, those providing kickbacks to police officers include owners of towing companies, garages, service stations and moving companies, as well as lawyers, doctors, bondsmen, undertakers and taxicab drivers (Roebuck & Barker 1974: 120).

The third form of police corruption involves opportunistic theft, which refers to those acts of confiscating money, merchandise or other property by police officers in the course of performing their routine duties. For example, policemen investigating burglaries may keep money or merchandise left behind by the thieves. Police officers may also confiscate items from unprotected property sites discovered during their patrols. Such items include money or merchandise from unlocked businesses, unguarded items from industrial or business organisations, and building materials from construction sites. In addition, policemen may be guilty of keeping such confiscated evidence discovered during vice raids as money, liquor, drugs and property (p.121). The Knapp Commission (1972: 184-186) identified the two types of opportunistic theft that were prevalent among the members of the New York City Police Department: stealing the personal belongings of a "DOA" (dead on arrival) and burglarising the premises if the deceased had been living alone; and stealing items left behind by thieves in burglarised premises.

Fourth, shakedowns or bribes occur opportunistically when policemen witness or are aware of criminal violations and violators and later accept bribes for not making arrests. In the United States, "clean" money has been distinguished from "dirty" money. "Clean" money refers to bribes obtained from transporters of contraband such as gambling paraphernalia and bootleg liquor, or from traffic violators. Policemen accepting such bribes are not viewed as deviant by their peer groups. In contrast, those officers who take bribes from drug pushers, burglars or robbers are guilty of accepting "dirty" money and considered to be deviant by their colleagues (Roebuck & Barker 1974: 122). The Knapp Commission (1972: 68-69) reported that policemen had received bribes from various sources: illegal gambling operators, narcotics law violators, prostitutes, unlicensed bars, food store owners, motorists with traffic violations, tow-truck companies and loansharks.

The fifth form of police corruption occurs when police officers provide protection for those involved in illegal activities in return for payment. For example, owners of such vice operations as gambling, narcotics and prostitution make payments to the police so that they will be allowed to continue their illegal activities without any harassment. Moreover, legitimate businessmen operating illegally also participate in this form of corruption. In the United States, taxi-drivers pay some police officers in return for certain privileges including "illegal permission to operate outside prescribed routes and areas, to pick up and discharge fares at unauthorized sites, to operate

cabs that do not meet safety and cleanliness standards, and to operate without proper licensing procedures" (Roebuck & Barker 1974: 122).

The sixth type of police corruption is the "fix" which refers to either the "quashing of prosecution proceedings following the offender's arrest" or the "taking up of" traffic tickets. Those who have been arrested make use of the fix to avoid court action and those found guilty of traffic violations resort to the same method to avoid blemishing their driving records. The fixer is either a detective or police officer conducting the investigation on which the prosecution proceedings will be based. In traffic cases, the fixer is usually the police officer who issues the traffic ticket and who later agrees to dispose of the ticket in return for payment (p.124).

The seventh form of police corruption becomes apparent when police officers indulge in direct criminal activities such as burglary and robbery. No corruptor is involved as the policemen are committing crimes against the person or property for their own material gain and in violation of both departmental and criminal norms. Needless to say, this type of police corruption is not condoned by most police peer groups or by the public at large (p.125).

The final type of police corruption is the internal payoff which involves police officers only. Policemen buy, barter or sell certain prerogatives (work assignments, off-days, holidays, vacation periods, control of evidence, and promotions) from or to their colleagues. For example, officers administering the distribution of assignments and personnel receive payoffs for assigning officers to certain divisions, precincts, units, details, shifts and beats; or for ensuring that certain officers are kept in, or excluded from, particular work assignments (p.125). As already mentioned, this practice of bribing other officers to ensure transfers to lucrative positions is also found in the Royal Malaysia Police.

As Roebuck and Barker's typology of police corruption is based solely on the United States' experience, how useful is it for analysing police corruption in Asian countries? Research done on police corruption in Hong Kong, India and Singapore has shown that some of the above forms of police corruption can also be found in these countries. For example, Bayley (1969: 290) found that the "most repugnant" form of police corruption in India was misconduct by the police in enforcing the criminal law by either applying the law improperly or refraining from applying the law at all. In Hong Kong, internal payoffs were an important form of police corruption especially in the promotion of junior officers by promotion boards made up of senior officers (Blair-Kerr 1973: 24).

Police Corruption in Contemporary Singapore

Analyses of police corruption in colonial Singapore indicate that it was the result of at least seven factors: the low salaries in the SPF; the SPF's poor

working conditions; its high degree of formalism; its poor recruitment and selection procedures; its lack of training programmes; the ample opportunities for corruption in the SPF because of the inadequate controls; and the widespread corruption in Singapore during the British colonial period (Quah 1978, 2001). If the SPF during the colonial period is compared with its counterpart today, it is obvious that the SPF is now in much better shape. Apart from being larger, the SPF today enjoys better conditions than its colonial counterpart. The most important difference is that salaries in the SPF have gradually improved since the Second World War. In 1951, the Police Pay Committee recommended new pay scales and allowances for members of the SPF below the rank of Inspector. For example, recruits to the SPF in 1951 received a monthly salary of S\$40, unlike their counterparts who were only paid a low salary of S\$4 per month in 1887 (Colony of Singapore 1951: 4).

In 1971, the Lee Soo Ann Salary Review Committee suggested between 20 to 25 percent pay rises for the junior policemen. It also recommended that pay increases should be accompanied with free medical aid, instead of paying a certain percentage of one's salary for such treatment; that free accommodation should be provided for married personnel; and that dialect and educational allowances should be reintroduced (*Straits Times*, 14 September 1971). The government accepted the Committee's recommendations and implemented these in April 1972. Thus, both the salaries and working conditions in the SPF have improved considerably since the colonial period.

Furthermore, members of the SPF, unlike their colonial counterparts, are not allowed to keep other jobs, as their salaries and working conditions have been increased substantially. There has also been improvement in the SPF's recruitment and selection procedures in order to enhance the calibre of its recruits. In July 1969, the Police Training School was transformed into the Singapore Police Academy to cater for the changes in the rationale and content of the training programmes necessitated by independence (Quah 1976: 109).

Perhaps the most important factor responsible for curbing corruption in general and police corruption in particular in Singapore was the commitment of the People's Action Party (PAP) government to clean government when it assumed office in June 1959. This was clearly stated by former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew (2000: 183-184) in his memoirs:

We had a deep sense of mission to establish a clean and effective government. When we took the oath of public office at the ceremony in the city council chamber in June 1959, we all wore white shirts and white slacks to symbolize purity and honesty in our personal behaviour 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.

Opportunities for corruption in the SPF have also been reduced since the PAP government came to power. The amendment of the Prevention of Corruption Act (POCA) in 1960 defined corruption explicitly and gave the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) wider powers.¹ Indeed, the greater vigilance of the CPIB in recent years has also made it difficult for Singaporeans in general and members of the SPF in particular to indulge in corrupt behaviour.

In December 1976, the SPF and the CPIB established a joint task force to weed out corrupt elements and practices in the SPF. The aims of this task force were twofold: to identify existing corruption hazards and devise measures to prevent them; and to examine the policy aspects which might have an impact on the prevention of corruption. Furthermore, the task force has reiterated that no form of corruption will be tolerated and corrupt officers will be severely punished or prosecuted in court. Policemen found to be living beyond their means will be watched by the task force because, if such officers know that they are being watched, their chances of being corrupt will be correspondingly reduced (*Straits Times*, 6 December 1976). A high standard of discipline is maintained in the SPF and any policeman found guilty of misconduct has to face disciplinary action.²

In short, Singapore has been transformed since 1959 from a British colony tolerant of corruption, first, to a self-governing state and then, in 1965, to an independent nation which is determined to minimize corruption among the population. In December 1966, the Political Secretary to the Minister of Culture described the SPF as "an efficient, small and honest force." Referring to the subject of corruption, he said: "The Government wants every citizen and every Government officer to be clear of corruption. We will not forgive anybody who is involved in corrupt practices" (*Straits Times*, 2 December 1966). Similarly, in 1976, *Police Life*, the SPF's newsletter, urged members of the SPF to show the public that corruption does not pay (*Straits Times*, 9 December 1976). Thus, unlike the British colonial period, corruption is now no longer tolerated or condoned by both the PAP government and the population.

Accordingly, it is not surprising that the reported number of cases of police corruption has declined after independence. Table 1 shows that there were 51 reported cases of police corruption in Singapore during 1996-2004. In terms of the size of the SPF, these cases constituted only 0.6 percent of the SPF's personnel.

Table 1
Reported Cases of Police Corruption in Singapore: 1996-2004

Year	Reported Cases	No. of cases as a percentage of the SPF's personnel
1996	10	0.12
1997	3	0.04
1998	8	0.10
1999	13	0.16
2000	4	0.05
2001	5	0.06
2002	NA	NA
2003	5	0.03
2004	3	0.02
Total	51	0.58

NA refers to not available.

Source: Data provided by the Manpower Department of the Singapore Police Force.

Singapore Police Force's Three-Pronged Approach

Apart from the PAP government's commitment to clean government and the improvement in the SPF's salaries and working conditions, the dramatic decline in police corruption in contemporary Singapore can also be attributed to the SPF's improvements in its recruitment and selection procedures, its training programmes and the socialisation of its members.

Recruitment and Selection Procedures

The *Knapp Commission Report on Police Corruption* (1972: 31-32) identified two general approaches to reducing the susceptibility of police officers to corruption. The first approach is to improve screening and selection methods and standards. Background investigations on candidates must be completed before they are admitted into the police force. The second approach is to rely on training to change the attitudes of police officers.

Roberg and Kuykendall (1993: 287) have argued that "a thorough background investigation is one of the most important aspects of the selection process" as it is "an attempt to assess the character and general suitability of the candidate for police work as determined by past experience and lifestyle." More specifically, the background investigation is based on

"the extensive personal history provided by the candidate" which enables the selectors to assess whether the candidate would be honest and reliable and make a contribution to the organization if s/he is recruited. The candidate's family history, employment and credit history, employment and personal references, friends and neighbours, education records, criminal and juvenile records, and military records are "all checked to develop a general assessment of the person's lifestyle prior to applying for police work" (p.287). Cohen and Chaiken (1972) found that New York police applicants "who were rated as excellent by the background investigators had the lowest incidence of misconduct" in contrast to those poor applicants who had the highest incidence of misconduct (quoted in Roberg & Kuykendall 1993: 287).

The British colonial government introduced meritocracy to Singapore in January 1951 when the Public Service Commission (PSC) was formed to accelerate the process of localisation of the Singapore Civil Service (SCS) and to ensure that recruitment and promotion are based on merit and not patronage.³ Accordingly, the PSC has relied solely on interviews to select qualified candidates for the SCS. To be eligible for appointment to the SCS in general and the SPF in particular, a candidate must satisfy the following six criteria: citizenship⁴, age, education, experience, medical fitness, and character (meaning no criminal conviction, no record of corruption, and not a security risk). Candidates for Divisions I and II appointments to the SCS and SPF who meet such criteria are interviewed by the PSC members. Letters of appointment are only issued to successful candidates if they pass their medical examination and security screening (by the Internal Security Department, the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau, and the Criminal Record Office) and after their educational certificates and relevant documents have been verified. The PSC has served as the gatekeeper to the SCS by ensuring fair play and impartiality in recruiting and selecting candidates for appointments to Divisions I and II on the basis of merit (Quah 1986: 74-75). However, because of the PSC's heavy workload, a system of 31 personnel boards was created in January 1995 which reduced the PSC's workload considerably by delegating the recruitment of Divisions I and II appointments to the personnel boards in the various ministries (Quah 2004b: 91-94).

The entry requirements for a police officer are indicated in Table 2. The entry requirements for a senior police officer are the same as those for a police officer, except for the educational requirement which is a Bachelor's degree in any discipline. Male Singaporeans are also required to have completed their full-time national service and have a PES A or B status.⁵ For those interested in the SPF Overseas Scholarship, the requirements are: Singapore citizens or permanent residents with the intention of taking up citizenship; strong leadership qualities and interest in a career in the SPF; good co-curricular activities record; GCE "A" levels or equivalent (eg, International Baccalaureate); and candidates should excel in Officer Cadet School.⁶

Table 2
Entry Requirements for a Singapore Police Officer

Requirement	Male	Female
Height	Minimum 1.62 metres	Minimum 1.57 metres
Weight	Minimum 54 kg	Minimum 45 kg
PES Status	A or B	Exempted
Age	At least 18 years old	
Vision	Good eyesight and applicant must have normal colour vision	
Educational Requirements	Male or female applicants with at least 5 GCE "O" Level credits or NITEC	
Medical Status	Certified medically fit	
Nationality	Singaporean or Singapore Permanent Resident	

Source: http://www.spf.gov.sg/career/protect/protect_entryreq.htm

According to the Commissioner of Police, Khoo Boon Hui (2005: 4) "applicants to the SPF are subjected to integrity-based psychological assessment, stringent screening and interviews to ensure that the right persons are selected for the Force." In this connection, it should be noted that Ainsworth (1995: 130) has warned about the "many difficulties surrounding selection and the use of psychological testing." For psychologists to help improve appropriate recruitment, they must know "exactly what qualities the police service needs in a new recruit" (p.135). This means that "a detailed job analysis is needed in order to understand just what an officer is expected to be able to do, and exactly what skills are needed for this" (p.144). Ainsworth (1995: 145) concluded thus:

Realistically speaking, psychological tests are unlikely ever to become the sole criterion upon which applicants are accepted or rejected. Having said that, such tests can provide useful and objective information about a candidate and can help identify those most and least suited to the complex job of law enforcement.

In short, while the SPF has relied on psychological testing as one of the criteria for selection, care should be exercised here as the detailed job analysis which is required has not been done in the SPF.

Training and Socialisation

During the first 60 years of the SPF (1820-1880), there was no training except for drill and physical education. Training began in the SPF with the setting

up of classes for police constables and inspectors during 1881-1904. From 1905-1922, training was undertaken by the Police Training School in Malacca for the various police forces in the Straits Settlements. As it was inconvenient to send the SPF recruits to Malacca for training, a Police Depot was established in Singapore in 1923 to take care of training efforts in the SPF until 1942. The Police Depot was renamed the Police Training School (PTS) after the Second World War (Quah 1976: 103-104).

As the SPF was suffering from a serious scarcity of personnel during the immediate postwar period, the PTS launched a crash training programme in December 1945 by organizing the following types of courses: refresher and promotion courses for both detectives and uniformed men; training courses for both recruits and regular members of the Singapore Harbour Board Police; and training courses for the SPF recruits which lasted for six months (p.104). In 1955, the six-month basic training course for recruits to the SPF was increased to eight months and the recruits received instruction in a total of 22 subjects.⁷ In 1957, the length of the basic training course for recruits was extended by another month to nine months and the training programme was revised to include instruction in only 13 subjects.⁸

With the attainment of independence in August 1965 and the withdrawal of the Malaysian Police Reserve Units from Singapore, the SPF faced a serious manpower shortage. Accordingly, the PTS was expanded to take in 850 constables for basic training by December 1965 (Quah 1976: 107). In 1968, the SPF was reviewed with the aim of improving its performance in law enforcement in a modern and independent Singapore. In terms of training, the British police adviser, IS Proud, recommended the transformation of the PTS into a Police Academy. The Government accepted this recommendation and the Police Academy was officially opened on 2 August 1969 (p.108).

Today, recruits to the SPF are required to attend a six-month Police Officers' Basic Course (POBC) at the Training Command (Tracom), which replaced the Police Academy. The POBC is a residential course which is designed to equip new officers with the skills, knowledge and values required for police work. These trainees undergo physical training, weapon training, unarmed combat and basic footdrill. They are also taught police procedures and regulations, criminal law and the basics of investigation.⁹

In contrast, the senior police officers are required to undergo a nine-month basic residential training programme at the Training Command. The training programme includes physical training, unarmed combat, weapon training, and individual physical proficiency. Unlike the junior officers, the senior police officers are required to undergo a six-week Leadership Programme which consists of three weeks training in Singapore to develop core leadership skills and to prepare for the overseas training unit; and three weeks overseas training to further develop and assess the trainees' leadership potential.¹⁰

The Commissioner of Police referred to the "Ah Long San" case which resulted in the charging of 17 police officers in court for corruption in 1999. Ten of these officers were cultivated by an illegal moneylender, nicknamed "Ah Long San." One of the officers charged was offered a paid university education by the moneylender, who was provided with information on police investigations by the officer when he joined the SPF after graduation (Khoo 2005: 2). The "Ah Long San" case made the SPF enhance its already strict anti-corruption measures by the introduction of values training in the SPF in 1999.¹¹

The values training introduced by the SPF for the basic training courses for both junior and senior police officers consists of 40 hours of instruction in the code of conduct, police regulations, and government instruction manuals. Case studies of police officers found guilty of corruption are also used in the training. The Commissioner of Police (Khoo 2005: 4) has highlighted this aspect of training as an important measure adopted by the SPF to combat corruption:

Recruits are then put through integrity-based lessons during their basic training to build resilience to corruption. Such training continues throughout their career to ensure that our core values, including loyalty and integrity, are inculcated in each of our officers. Officers with a strong sense of loyalty take pride in being officers of the Police Force. With the interest of the Force at heart, officers with the right values not only have the will to resist corruption, they are also able to keep fellow officers in check against misdemeanours. Regular in-service training at front line units, which are more susceptible to corruption, is conducted. Case studies of actual cases of police officers charged in court for criminal offences and corruption form part of our continuous integrity training programme.

In addition to the values training provided for all police officers, the Commissioner of Police has also referred to several other anti-corruption measures adopted in the SPF to minimise the opportunities for corruption and to socialise its members to resist such opportunities. First, all officers in sensitive and vulnerable posts, such as investigators, field intelligence officers, and anti-vice and gambling suppression officers, are rotated every three years to reduce the opportunities for corruption. Second, these officers are also required to submit their credit status reports from the Consumer Credit Bureau to assess their debt situation. Those officers with debt problems may be removed from their positions. Third, like other civil servants, all police officers are required to make an annual declaration of indebtedness for unsecured debts of more than three months of their monthly salary. Those officers who fail to make an honest declaration of

their unsecured debts are investigated and are liable to be disciplined. Indeed, some officers have been dismissed or retired in the public interest in the past for not declaring their debts as required (Khoo 2005: 4-5). According to the Commissioner of Police, "these measures are in place to select the right people to join the Force, to educate our officers on ethical conduct from the early days of their careers and to prevent indebted officers from turning to bribes to overcome their financial woes" (p.5). Finally, random testing of police officers for drug abuse was introduced in 2002 to further deter officers from "an unacceptable lifestyle, which is likely to lead to corruption and criminal behaviour" (p.5).

To reinforce the values training of police officers in Singapore and to enhance their awareness of disciplinary-related issues including corruption, an annual Ethics Seminar has been held since 2002. This seminar is usually attended by 300 police officers, including all the directors and commanders and ground supervisors. During the inaugural Ethics Seminar in March 2002, the SPF's Manpower Department launched a values handbook entitled *Guide to Ethical Decisions*, which was designed "to provide a set of general rules of conduct for officers of the SPF" (SPF 2002: 2-3). This pocket-sized handbook is based on the six guiding principles of ethos, the law, honour, conflict of interest, consequence, and scrutiny. These principles are defined and illustrated with actual cases. As police officers might have to make decisions on their own without getting advice from their superiors or peers, the six guiding principles will help them to ensure that their decisions are ethical.

Conclusion

The SPF has come a long way since its inception in 1820. Indeed, it has been transformed from an organisation afflicted with rampant corruption during the British colonial period to an organisation that is no longer infected by the scourge of corruption today. How did the SPF succeed in minimising corruption within its ranks?

The SPF's success in combating corruption is also a reflection of Singapore's success in fighting corruption. The first breakthrough in curbing corruption in Singapore occurred in October 1952 with the establishment of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) as the first anti-corruption agency in Asia that was independent of the SPF. The British colonial government realised the folly of entrusting the Anti-Corruption Branch of the Criminal Investigation Department of the SPF with the task of corruption control when police corruption was rampant. It corrected this mistake with the formation of the CPIB. However, as the CPIB had inadequate powers, the second breakthrough came in 1960 when the newly-elected PAP government demonstrated its political will in fighting corruption with the enactment of the Prevention of Corruption Act (POCA),

which strengthened the CPIB's capability to curb corruption considerably.

The CPIB's effectiveness in minimising corruption in Singapore is also reflected in Singapore's consistently high ranking and scores on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) from 1995-2005, as indicated in Table 3. Singapore has maintained its position as the least corrupt Asian country during this period. In 2005, it was ranked 5th among 159 nations and had a score of 9.40.

Table 3
Singapore's Ranking and Score on the CPI: 1995-2005

Year	CPI Ranking	CPI Score*	Size of Sample
1995	3 rd	9.26	41
1996	7 th	8.80	54
1997	9 th	8.66	52
1998	7 th	9.10	85
1999	7 th	9.10	99
2000	6 th	9.10	90
2001	4 th	9.20	91
2002	5 th	9.30	102
2003	5 th	9.40	133
2004	5 th	9.30	146
2005	5 th	9.40	159

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

Source: compiled from Transparency International's CPI: 1995-2005:
<http://www.transparency.org>

In short, Singapore has succeeded in curbing corruption because the British colonial government transferred the task of corruption control from the SPF to the CPIB in 1952, and the PAP government followed through in 1960 with the enactment of the POCA. Throughout, the SPF has been a reflection of the society at large. Hence it is not surprising that it was corrupt during the colonial period, as corruption was a way of life then in Singapore. Similarly, with the PAP government's commitment to fighting corruption after it assumed office in June 1959, the SPF has also been transformed into an effective and clean organisation because of the improvement in its salaries and working conditions, but also in the improvements to its recruitment and selection procedures, its training programmes, and the socialisation of its members to the four core values of courage, loyalty, integrity and fairness.¹²

The SPF efforts in curbing corruption among its members have borne fruit as manifested in the many cases of rejection of bribes by police officers in performing their duties. Traffic police officers are vulnerable to corruption

as motorists might bribe their way out of traffic violations. Examples of various police officers rejecting bribes of up to S\$500 have been cited by Koo (2004: 1-2) and Singh (2004: 1-2). The most impressive example of honesty and incorruptibility in the SPF was publicised by the Commissioner of Police when he revealed that Station Inspector Somasundaram had rejected a bribe of S\$100,000 (US\$60,000) offered to him by a person under investigation for harbouring illegal immigrants (Khoo 2005: 1). All the examples demonstrate clearly that the SPF has succeeded in persuading its members to abhor corruption and resist the many opportunities for corruption that are inherent in police work.

Notes

1. For more details of the POCA and the powers given to the CPIB, see Quah (1978: 10-13).
2. See *The Report of the Police Disciplinary Inquiries* (1961) and Singh (1971: 66-82) for details.
3. For more details on the PSC, see Quah (2004b: 81-82).
4. Singapore permanent residents may also apply for positions in the SCS and SPF.
5. See http://www.spf.gov.sg/career/enforce/enforce_entryreq.htm
6. See http://www.spf.gov.sg/career/lead/lead_about.htm
7. These subjects were: penal code, criminal procedure code, evidence ordinance, general ordinances, police general orders, highway code, traffic control, weapon training, unarmed combat, physical training, swimming, recreational training, first aid, map reading, arithmetic, geography, history, English, civics, general knowledge, drill, and riot drill: see Morris (1956: 10).
8. These subjects were: law, police procedure, drill, weapon training, unarmed combat, physical training, recreational training, civics, general knowledge, Malay, English, arithmetic and history: see Blades (1958: 18).
9. See http://www.spf.gov.sg/career/protect/protect_training.htm
10. See http://www.spf.gov.sg/career/enforce/enforce_training.htm
11. Interview with a senior police officer from the SPF's Manpower Department on 30 September 2005.
12. See http://www.spf.gov.sg/about_spf/ethos/about_ethos_core.htm

References

- Ainsworth, Peter B 1995, *Psychology and Policing in a Changing World*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bayley, David H 1969, *The Police and Political Development in India*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Blades, A E G 1958, *Annual Report of the Singapore Police Force 1957*, Singapore: Government Printing Office.

Blair-Kerr, Alastair 1973, *Second Report of the Commission of Inquiry under Sir Alastair Blair-Kerr*, Hong Kong: Government Printer.

Braibanti, Ralph 1962, "Reflections on Bureaucratic Corruption," *Public Administration*, 40 (Winter).

Cohen, B & Chaiken, J 1972, *Police Background Characteristics and Performance*, New York: Rand Institute.

Colony of Singapore 1951, *Police Pay Committee Report*, Singapore: Government Printer.

Khoo, Boon Hui 2005, "Speech at the World Ethics and Integrity Forum 2005" at the Integrity Institute of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 29 April.

The Knapp Commission Report on Police Corruption 1972, New York: George Braziller.

Koo, Joanne 2004, "'Bribery? No Way' Re-unite," *Police Life*, 30(4): http://www.spf.gov.sg/publication/plm/04apr_02.htm

Lee, Kuan Yew 2000, *From Third World to First. The Singapore Story: 1965-2000*, Singapore: Times Media.

Morris, N G 1956, *Annual Report of the Singapore Police Force 1955*, Singapore: Government Printing Office.

Partnership for Governance Reform in Indonesia 2001, *A National Survey of Corruption in Indonesia*, Jakarta: Final Report.

Quah, Jon S T 1976, "The Origins of the Singapore Police Academy," *Singapore Police Journal*, 7(2).

--- 1978, *Administrative and Legal Measures for Combating Bureaucratic Corruption in Singapore*, Singapore: Department of Political Science, University of Singapore, Occasional Paper No 34.

--- 1979, "Police Corruption in Singapore: An Analysis of its Forms, Extent and Causes," *Singapore Police Journal*, 10(1).

--- 1986, "Towards Productivity and Excellence: A Comparative Study of the Public Personnel Systems in the ASEAN Countries," *Asian Journal of Public Administration*, 8(1).

--- 2001, "Combating Corruption in Singapore: What Can Be Learned?" *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 9(1).

--- 2004a, "Best Practices for Curbing Corruption in Asia," *The Governance Brief*, Issue 11: <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Periodicals/GB/GovernanceBrief11.pdf>

--- 2004b, "The Public Service Commission in Singapore: An Evaluation of Its First 50 Years," in Akira Nakamura (ed), *Public Reform, Policy Change, and New Public Management: From the Asia and Pacific Perspective*, Tokyo: EROPA Local Government Center.

Roberg, Roy R & Kuykendall, Jack 1993, *Police and Society*, Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Roebuck, Julian & Barker, Thomas 1974, "A Typology of Police Corruption," in Ronald L Akers & Edward Sagarin (eds), *Crime Prevention and Social Control*, New York: Praeger.

Royal Malaysia Police 2005, *Report of the Royal Commission to Enhance the Operation and Management of the Royal Malaysia Police*, Kuala Lumpur: Percetakan Nasional Malaysia.

Sherman, Lawrence W 1978, *Scandal and Reform: Controlling Police Corruption*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Singh, Raymond 2004, "Unyielding in the Face of Temptation," *Police Life*, 30(7): http://www.spf.gov.sg/publication/plm/04jul_03.htm

Singh, Surjit 1971, "Disciplinary Proceedings in the Polis Republik Singapura," *Singapore Police Journal*, 1(1).

SPF (Singapore Police Force) 2002, *Guide to Ethical Decisions*, Singapore: Discipline and Awards Division, Manpower Department, Singapore Police Force.

Straits Settlements 1887, *Report of Commission appointed to enquire into the question of Public Gambling in the Straits Settlements*, Singapore: Colonial Secretary's Office.

Thampi, Gopakumar Krishnan 2002, *Corruption in South Asia: Insights and Benchmarks from Citizen Feedback Surveys in Five Countries*, Berlin: Transparency International: http://www.transparency.org/pressreleases_archive/2002/dnld/south_asia_report.pdf accessed on 13 October 2004.

The Report of the Police Disciplinary Inquiries 1961, Singapore: Government Printer.

Yoong, Siew Wah 1973, "Some Aspects of Corruption," *National Youth Leadership Training Institute Journal*, Singapore.

Jon S T Quah is Professor of Political Science in the Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore.

The article is a revised version of a paper presented at the Anti-Corruption Workshop on "Tackling Corruption within Law Enforcement Agencies — From Prevention to Prosecution" organised by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Singapore Institute of International Affairs in Hanoi, 5-7 October 2005.