

In his seminal study on culture and corruption in the Pacific Islands, Peter Larmour (2012, pp. 116, 132) observed that while “ideas about ‘culture’ have often been used to explain, or excuse, acts of corruption”, such ideas “seem indispensable to understanding corruption”. However, unlike the role of leadership and political will, which has been emphasized in anti-corruption research (Rotberg, 2017, pp. 223-256), the impact of leadership in minimising the influence of cultural factors on corruption has been given less attention.

Accordingly, the purpose of this *Public Administration and Policy* special issue is to demonstrate that both leadership and culture are important variables influencing how corruption is exacerbated or minimised in many countries/regions. To analyse the interaction of leadership and culture in combating corruption, six countries/regions were selected for comparison and scholars who have published on corruption in these countries/regions were invited to contribute to this special issue, which consists of seven articles.

The first article by Michael Johnston focuses on the important role of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and civil society in curbing corruption in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China. In the second article, Matthew Carlson compares how two prime ministers have combated corruption in Japan by focusing on Miki Takeo’s political reforms and how his corrupt predecessor, Tanaka Kakuei, exploited the system to further his political objectives.

David Seth Jones evaluates anti-corruption efforts in Malaysia in the third article and concludes that its political leaders, especially Prime Minister Najib Razak, failed to minimise corruption because of the ineffective implementation of the anti-corruption measures and the adverse consequences of money politics. The fourth article by Robert Gregory and Daniel Zirker contends that despite New Zealand being ranked highly in combating corruption, current analyses of its success in this regard are incomplete and biased because they have ignored the discrimination against the Maori population and the confiscation of land from them by the dominant European population. This constitutes a form of corruption in itself.

In the fifth article, Jon Quah explains how Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew minimised corruption in Singapore by implementing: (1) the enactment of the Prevention of Corruption Act in June 1960; (2) provision of adequate resources to the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB); (3) paying competitive salaries to ministers and civil servants to prevent corruption and retain talent; and (4) punishing corruption offenders. Ernie Ko compares how two Taiwanese presidents have curbed corruption in the sixth article. President Chen Shui-bian campaigned for the 2000 presidential election on an anti-corruption platform but was corrupt during his two terms of office. His successor, President Ma Jing-jeou, was incorrupt and established the Agency Against Corruption (AAC) in July 2011. However, unlike the CPIB and ICAC, the AAC is a paper tiger because it has not been allocated sufficient resources to perform its functions.

The seventh article by Jon Quah compares how the six countries/regions have curbed corruption and concludes that New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong SAR of China are



more effective because of their governments' strong political will and reliance on the Ombudsman, Serious Fraud Office, CPIB and ICAC. On the other hand, Malaysia's anti-corruption strategy is ineffective because its political leaders lack the political will to implement the effective anti-corruption measures. Japan's and Taiwan's anti-corruption measures have failed because of their political leaders' weak political will and their reliance on inadequate anti-corruption measures. It concludes that culture is a serious obstacle to combating corruption if the political leaders are corrupt and lack the political will to enforce impartially the regulations prohibiting gift-giving, vote-buying and money politics in Japan, Taiwan and Malaysia.

Finally, we would like to thank Professor Peter Fong, Editor-in-Chief, of *Public Administration and Policy*, for inviting us to be the Guest Editors for this special issue and for his tremendous support and encouragement. We owe a special debt to Dr Alice Te, the Managing Editor, for her professional and efficient assistance in editing the articles and facilitating the peer reviews of the seven articles. We are also grateful to the contributors to the special issue for their articles and cooperation in revising and submitting the manuscripts promptly. Last, but certainly not least, the 14 peer-reviewers deserve our utmost gratitude for enhancing the quality of the seven articles through their constructive comments and suggestions.

**Jon S.T. Quah**  
**David Seth Jones**  
*Guest Editors*

#### **References**

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- Rotberg, R.I. (2017), *The Corruption Cure: How Citizens and Leaders can Combat Corruption*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.