

Can Liberia Replicate the Singapore Experience in Curbing Entrenched and Systemic Corruption? A Comparative Analysis

Dr. Ambrues Monboe Nebo (D.Sc.)

Criminal Justice Department, Adventist University of West Africa.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2023.10603>

Received: 28 May 2023; Accepted: 07 June 2023; Published: 04 July 2023

Abstract: From a qualitative comparative analysis method, this article assesses the possibility of Liberia replicating the Singapore experience as one of the least corrupt Countries in the world. Regarding fighting corruption, the study identified commonalities shared by Liberia and Singapore but with a significant difference that constitutes the research findings. The findings revealed the following:

Unlike Singapore, the political will that is critical to the fight against corruption only manifests in the legislation of institutional and normative frameworks not in enforcement and adequate budgetary appropriation.

Unlike Singapore, Liberia lacks character education important for tackling corrupt behaviors from early ages, shaping students' mind towards the danger of corruption, and producing excellent students with good moral behavior.

Unlike Singapore, ordinary people's attitudes, mindsets, and behavior toward corruption remain critical to the fight against corruption in Liberia.

In the affirmative, the study concludes that Liberia can possibly replicate the Singapore experience provided it addresses the significant differences that are not utopia.

Keywords: Corruption, Character Education, Liberia, Singapore,

I. Introduction

Being so passionate about the devastating impact of entrenched and systemic corruption in Liberia, US Ambassador Michael A. McCarthy has through a comparative analysis offered what could be termed a workable therapy for fighting corruption retarding the socio-economic development of Liberia. In his analysis, Amb. McCarthy compared Liberia and Singapore's early formation in the 1960s and how Singapore managed to change things around to have a per capita Gross Domestic Product that is now more than 130 times higher than Liberia (The Independent Probe Newspaper, 2023).

According to Amb. McCarthy which is a notorious fact, "Singapore is one of the wealthiest countries on earth, and their per capita Gross Domestic Product in 2022 had risen to \$82,794". In comparison, Liberia's per capita Gross Domestic Product in 2022 was \$630 (The Independent Probe Newspaper, 2023). Amb. McCarthy attributed the phenomenal success of Singapore to their resolve that corruption would no longer be accepted as a common culture (Smart News, 2023). Evidently, the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (2022) has ranked Singapore as the 5th least corrupt country in the world out of 180 countries with a score of 83. Singapore continues to remain the only Asian country ranked in the top 10.

The inherent magnitude that lies within Amb. McCarthy's analysis has caught the attention of this paper to research the strategies Singapore employed to be one of the wealthiest countries on planet Earth. The research result or research findings identified two essential approaches or strategies for Singapore's phenomenal success. The first is attributed to an effective corruption control framework, and the second is character education, all of which are sustained not by the mere expression of political will but by commitment continuously demonstrated.

As we search for strategic intervention that would stamp out the tides of entrenched corruption, this paper assesses the possibility of Liberia replicating the Singapore experience that influences its phenomenal success evidenced by the low levels of corruption in both the public and private sectors.

By doing so, this article is structured into four segments. As a research imperative, the first segment briefly reviews corruption as a concept and its devastating impacts on national development. The second segment reviews the Singapore experience in stamping out systemic corruption. Precisely, it looks at Singapore's anti-corruption framework and character education introduced in 1959. The third segment put Liberia into context. It begins with a scanty overview of corruption in Liberia and thereafter assesses the possibility of Liberia replicating the Singapore experience. Finally, the fourth segment concludes the paper and proposes recommendations.

II. Methods and Materials

This study adopts the qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) method. QCA is a method that allows a researcher to make systematic comparisons across cases in order to explore what causes differences between the characters of the cases (Centre for the Evaluation of Complexity Across the Nexus, 2016). The researcher's intent is to identify interventions for the problem the study seeks to unpack. To be precise, the study accesses valid qualitative but analytical data that helps stimulate and espouse the author's position in this study. Thus, the study relied on secondary data sources for its related works of literature. The materials were sourced from the internet through the Google Scholar Search Engine and Bielefeld Academic Search Engine.

Corruption as a Concept

As a concept, corruption remains one of the global social problems affecting the socioeconomic progress of humanity. Regarding its definition, research established the facts there is no universally accepted definition of corruption. However, it is often defined in terms of individual actions, and it is not a new phenomenon. Few attempts have been worked out to define it in many ways with each lacking some aspects. For example, the most popular and simplest definition authored by the World Bank is the abuse of public power for private benefits (World Bank, 2020). Similarly, transparency international defines the concept as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.

Both definitions highlight individual behavior, but there are also differences in their understandings of corruption. The World Bank emphasizes the public sector while transparency international definition broadened the scope to include the private sector as well. (Andersson & Heywood, 2009).

In the conclusion, these definitions suggest that corruption manifests in both the public and private sectors of society.

According to the World Bank (2020), corruption covers a wide range of behavior, from bribery to theft of public funds. Corruption exists all over the world, but it is usually present in countries with weak institutions, often affected by fragility and conflict. Without prejudice to the fact issue, Liberia is one of the perfect and irrefutable examples of corruption described by the US ambassador as a "Man-made plague" holding Liberia back when it comes to socio-economic development (The Independent Probe Newspaper, 2023).

As a matter of notorious fact, the general impacts of corruption on society include corrosion of trust, weakening democracy, hampering economic development, and further exacerbating inequality, poverty, social division, and the environmental crisis (Transparency International, n.d.). Without prejudice to notorious facts that could be erroneously misconstrued as painting Africa black or ugly, it represents or explains the worst-case scenario of corruption. For example, Global governance indices suggest that the public sector in sub-Saharan Africa is the most corrupt of any region in the world (Duri, 2020). Interestingly, the UN Conference on Trade and Development estimates that Africa annually loses about \$88.6bn, or 3.7 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP), in illicit financial flows (UNCTAD, 2020).

The Singapore Experience in Stamping out Systemic Corruption

On account of valid research, it is factual that prior to self-government in 1959, corruption was rampant in Singapore because of a myriad of factors, including inadequate laws, insufficient manpower in the anti-corruption agency, a great disparity in pay between the public and private sectors, lack of commitment amongst enforcement officers, etc. Essentially, the entire socio-economic climate made it ripe for corruption to develop a fibrous root, and it took a feat of political will to exterminate the scourge of corruption (Kah Hwee, n.d.) To authenticate this assertion, O'Connell, (2022) posited that before the 1950s, corruption was not just common but widely accepted in Singapore. So, it begs answer(s) for the question relating to how Singapore managed to be ranked the 6th least corrupt country by Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2017, the 5th least corrupt country in the world out of 180 countries with a score of 83 according to Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2022 and the only Asian country ranked in the top 10. Singapore's phenomenal success did not happen because of divine miracles resulting from fasting and prayers or religious crusades. With the conviction that removing corruption was key to establishing honesty and competent public institutions which the people could trust, and for businesses to have the confidence to invest in Singapore, their political leaders demonstrated the commitment by taking comprehensive actions to stamp out corruption from all levels of society while introducing a meritocratic system of governance (UN, 2018, p.64).

The first action was the enactment of an effective corruption control framework

comprising four key pillars. Precisely, Singapore established the Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA) and the Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Serious Crimes Act (CDSA) to fight corruption. The PCA applies to both the giver and recipients of bribes in both the public and private sectors. The CDSA, when invoked, confiscates ill-gotten gains from corrupt offenders (UN, 2018, p.64).

Secondly, Singapore established an independent judiciary and ensured that it is aloof and free from political interference. As a branch of the government, the judiciary also insists on zero-tolerance for corruption and metes out rigid penalties for corrupt offenders (UN, 2018, p.64).

Thirdly, anti-corruption institutions enjoy adequate budgetary appropriation. In Singapore, the Corrupt Practices Investigations Bureau (CPIB) that replaced the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) established 1937 due to ethical compromise is the sole institution responsible to fight corruption through investigation and prosecution. Research confirmed that since 1960, the CPIB has been a driving force in making Singapore one of the least corrupt nations on earth Z. van der Wal (2021). One of the main reasons behind the CPIB's success is constant adequate budgetary appropriation. For example, \$49.48 million which constitutes 5.1% of the total operating expenditure for FY2021 and was allocated to the CPIB programs and activities (HEAD U, 2021.), and \$54.19 million, constituting 5.0% of the total operating expenditure for FY2022 (HEAD U, 2022).

fourth, Singapore also introduced a strict Code of Conduct which sets out the

high standards of behavior expected of public officers based on integrity, incorruptibility, and transparency (UN, 2018, p.64).

Fourth, instead of overburdening the National Police which has implications for effectiveness, it is interesting to know that Singapore established the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau, which is an independent national anti-corruption agency responsible for investigating and preventing corruption in Singapore (UN, 2018, p.64).

And finally, as part of the strategy of sustaining the fight against corruption and more importantly preserving the culture of zero-tolerance for corruption, Singapore embarked upon a few programs equated to character development or character education used as therapy for corruption. They are Civics and Moral Education in 1992, National Education, Social, and Emotional Learning in 1997, Social and Emotional Learning in 2005, and learning experience such as Co-Curricular Activities (Ministry of Education of Singapore, 2014). Of recent is Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) which is also equated to character development or character education. The CCE aims to inculcate values in students so that they become civic-minded and responsible individuals and citizens. CCE emphasizes the interconnectedness of values, social and emotional competencies, civic literacy, global awareness, and cross-cultural skills that are critical for character-building (UN, 2018, p.13). In what could be viewed as the preamble of the CCE, Singapore Minister for Education, Heng Swee Keat remarks "Our education system must... nurture Singapore citizens of good character so that everyone has the moral resolve to withstand an uncertain future, and a strong sense of responsibility to contribute to the success of Singapore and the well-being of fellow Singaporeans" (Ministry of Education of Singapore, 2014).

A sober reflection on the phenomenal success of Singapore which is evidenced by its position as 5th least corrupt country in the world out of 180 countries with a score of 83 according to Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2022 and the only Asian country ranked in the top 10, safely suggest that all the actions employed to fight corruption are not like a toothless bulldog. This implies a strong political commitment coupled with the support of the people of Singapore.

To close this segment, it is no doubt that today Singapore enjoys an international reputation for a high level of incorruptibility. Can Liberia come closer to Singapore or make any significant difference in the fight against corruption? The next segment of this paper provides answers to the question through a comparative analysis.

III. Liberia in Context

To begin with, it is essential to consider the definition of corruption as per the statutes in Liberia. According to Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission Act of 2008, corruption is defined as:

Any act or acts, decision or decisions or use of public resource or resources by a public or private official in the discharge of official duties and/or responsibilities which, in order to satisfy the selfish desire or interest of the said official or other person or persons, natural or legal, ignore the established laws, regulations, and thereby, denies, deprives, and prevents, the State or person or persons natural or legal from receiving entitlement, consideration, and/or treatment.

Interestingly, the Act also specified behaviors that define acts of corruption as:

Bribery, embezzlement, extortion, fraud, influence peddling, insider trading, misuse of entrusted public property and vested authority, and any economic and financial crimes, which are now provided for under the Penal Code of Liberia, or may, hereafter, be defined and enacted.

Although the Penal Law - Title 26 - Liberian Code of Laws Revised did not clearly capture the definition of corruption. However, it catalogs offenses related to corruption. For example, Subchapter D captioned "Theft and Related Offenses" and Subchapter F captioned "Economic Sabotage" captures behavior related to corruption as:

Theft of Property, Theft of Service, Misapplication of Entrusted property, Misuse of Public Money or Property, Fraud on the Internal Revenue, and Theft and/or Illegal Disbursement of Public Money.

Just like Singapore experienced widespread systemic corruption, in Liberia, since political independence socio-economic development continues to be slopping downward due to systemic and entrenched corruption. This is a notorious fact that does not demand citation and Liberians in their right frame of mind will never counter-argue or deny it. For instance, according to the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) Report for 2022, out of the 180 countries, Liberia ranked 136 with a score of 29. Evidently, this report simply suggests that this latest ranking puts Liberia in fifth place among the 10 most corrupt countries in Africa. While it is true that this report reflects on the weak fight against corruption under the George Manneh Weah regime, it is in no way implying that past regimes were the least corrupt or fought to reduce corruption to the lowest. Inarguably, all the previous regimes have had their fair share of rampant corruption. Below are some pieces of evidence to support this categorical assertion or claim.

- Under William V.S. Tubman's 27 years regime, Liberia experienced a phenomenal rate of growth in its economy which yielded a per capita income of \$123 by 1960 surpassing that of almost every country in the world. Ironically, Liberia's economy was described as "Growth without Development" (Clower et al., 1966). By way of conclusion, the authors argued that Liberia's "traditional social and political institutions" impeded its development. Inferring from authors' conclusion, corruption cannot be aloof from Liberia traditional social and political institutions. Inarguably, corruption has been an embodiment of Liberia's political culture that encapsulate its traditional social and political institutions.
- The People's Redemption Council on 12 April 1980 overthrew the William R. Tolbert Jr. government based on the perception of what it termed as "Rampant Corruption" without tangible evidence produced in a court of competent jurisdiction. Ironically, the same PRC government was corrupt probably more than Tolbert's government.
- Following an audit from the Economic Community of West African States, former transitional leader Gyude Bryant was arrested for the disappearance of millions of dollars, allegedly receiving a kickback of about \$1 million (VOA, 2009).
- Under the regime of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, corruption was declared "Public Enemy No. 1," in 2006 (Clarke & Azango, 2017) and a "Vampire" of development and obstruction of progress in her government (Johnson, 2015). Evidently, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is on record to have personally accepted the blame for the financial difficulties that led to the bankruptcy of the National Oil Company of Liberia (NOCAL) in which one of her sons, Robert Sirleaf served as the Chairman with impunity (LINA, 2015). Moreover, in a 2011 report on Liberia's oil sector, Global Witness accused NOCAL of corruption and mismanagement in the report "Cure or Curse: How Liberia can Boost or Break Liberia's post-war Recovery" (Giahue, 2015)

Anti-Corruption Frameworks in Liberia

Compared to Singapore, Liberia has a good legislative, regulatory, and institutional framework largely put in place since 2005 to fight or address systemic and entrenched corruption. The below provides a catalog.

Anti-Corruption Institutional Framework/ Anti-Graft Institutions

As the name suggests, an anti-corruption institutional framework speaks to formal structures or organizations established by statutes to aid in the fight against corruption. Therefore, there are several integrity institutions aiding the fight against systemic corruption in Liberia. They are the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC), Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA), Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), General Auditing Commission (GAC), Internal Audit Agency (IAA), Public Procurement Concession Commission (PPCC), Liberia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (LEITI), etc. with the aim to combat systemic and entrenched corruption (US – Africa Partnership on Illicit Finance, n.d.)

The act or statutes that established these institutions endowed each with a clear and distinct mandate capable of fighting corruption. For example, the LACC was established by an Act of Legislature on August 28, 2008, with the mandate to investigate and prosecute acts of corruption, as well as educate the public about the ills of corruption and the benefits of its eradication (NAMATI, 2017).

The LRA was established through an Act of the National Legislature in 2013 and began operations on July 1, 2014, as a semi-autonomous agency of Government. The core mandate of the LRA is to administer and enforce Liberia's Revenue Code of 2000 as amended in 2011, and other related laws under which it is assigned responsibility, for the purpose of assessing, collecting, auditing, and accounting for all national revenues and for facilitating legitimate international trade through border management and enforcement (Liberia Revenue Authority, n.d.).

The FIU was established through an Act of National Legislature in 2012 and approved in 2013. It is mandated to receive, request, conduct preliminary investigations, analyze, and disseminate information to competent authority concerning suspected proceeds of crime and terrorist property (Financial Intelligence Agency of Liberia, n.d.)

The GAC seems to be one of Liberia's oldest anti-corruption institutions. According to its history, through an Act of National Legislature, it existed as the Bureau of Audits mandated to pre-audit requisitions, vouchers, and payrolls in tandem with the disbursements of public monies. In 1956, through an amendment, the Bureau of Audits changed to the General Auditing Office (GAC Liberia, 2019). In June 2005, the General Auditing Office was renamed as General Auditing Commission (GAC) (GAC Liberia, 2019). Section 53.1 of the Executive Law defined the GAC mandated. In summary, the GAC is mandated to audit all government functionaries, agencies, institutions including local governments, other municipalities, embassies, and diplomatic missions (GAC Liberia, 2019)

Through an Act of National legislature, the Internal Audit Agency (IAA) was established on 13 September 2013. According to Section 2.2 of the IAA Act, the mandate of the IAA comprised of the following:

- Establish and direct internal audit functions within all branches of Government including the Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary; and all public sector entities such as public corporations, autonomous agencies, autonomous commissions, Government ministries, and the Central Bank of Liberia.
- Promulgate and ensure that common internal audit standards and systems in keeping with best practices are established and maintained.
- Provide oversight, including managerial, administrative, and supervisory expertise at each of the established audit functions within each entity as stated in section 2.2 (a).
- Ensure that the ethics of internal audit according to the internationally accepted standards are strictly adhered to and followed. They shall be but not be limited to competence, integrity, confidentiality, and professionalism (Internal Audit Agency, RL, 2021)

The PPCC was established by the Public Procurement and Concessions Act (Act or PPCA) of September 2005 which came into force on January 16, 2006. The PPCC is mandated to implement the public procurement and concessions reform program of Liberia. The PPCC is the successor of the Contracts and Monopolies Commission (CMC) which exercised oversight responsibility of all contract and concession agreements entered into by the Government during the tenure of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (October 14, 2003, to January 16, 2006 (Public Procurement and Concessions Commission, n.d.). The object of the Commission is to ensure the economic and efficient use of public funds in public procurement and to ensure that public procurement and Concession processes are conducted in a fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory manner.

Finally, but not least is Liberia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (LEITI). Established by Liberia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (LEITI) Act of 2009, LEITI is mandated by its statute to track proceeds from the Mining, Oil, Forestry and Agriculture industries as a way of assisting in ensuring that all benefits due to the government and the people of Liberia on account of exploitation and extraction of minerals and other natural resources are: a) Verifiably paid or provided; b) Duly accounted for; and c) Prudently utilized for the benefits of all Liberians and on the basis of equity and sustainability (Yeakula, & Gray, 2021).

Interestingly, through these institutions, the government of Liberia has taken essential implementation actions. For instance, through the LACC, the government has created, publicized, and strengthened prevention hotlines and social media avenues for reporting corruption. Through the LRA, the government has prioritized building capacity in tax administration and combating tax fraud with the view of increasing transparency and efficiency of revenue collection as well as detecting and preventing tax crimes, and through the FIU the government has strengthened existing laws of cash transaction reports, suspicious transaction reports and cross-border currency declaration through the passage of new regulations US – Africa Partnership on Illicit Finance, n.d.).

Budgetary Support to Anti-Graft Institutions

In Liberia, anti-graft institutions include Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC), General Auditing Commission (GAC), Public Procurement and Concession Commission (PPCC), Liberia Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative (LEITI), and other public integrity institutions. Inarguably, scanty budgetary support that has serious logistical implications, as well as human resource capacity, is among the many factors undermining the fight against corruption. For example, the LACC budget in 2012/13 was 9,244,949; in 2014/15, it was 2701,640; in 2015/16, it was 2678,750; in 2016/17, it was 2386,116, and in 2023 it is 2,348,652 (Mbayo, 2023).

Anti-Corruption Normative Framework

By anti-corruption normative framework, it simply means the legal instruments or statutes pertaining to the fight against corruption in Liberia. For the record, Liberia has legislated several statutes capable of stamping out the tides of systemic and entrenched corruption. It is important to briefly review some of these statutes including international conventions if not all.

The Code of Conduct of 2014

Applicable to all Public Officials and Employees of the three branches of Government of Liberia, its parastatal bodies, and any other agency/organization it deals with, the Code of Conduct was enacted by the Legislature in 2014 pursuant to Article 90 of the Liberian Constitution, which obliges the Legislature to enact a Code of Conduct frowns upon corrupt behavior. It captures bribery as one of the conventional defining elements of corruption. It defines bribery as:

any reward or inducement paid to a Public Official or Employee of Government for doing or forbearing to do anything in respect of any matter or transaction within the scope of their official duties. It is anything promised, offered, given, accepted or received by a Public Official and Employee of Government for or on account of favor given or to be given in the exercise of his or her official duties, and includes what is known widely in local terminology as “cold water” or “eating”.

Germane to the fight against corruption, the Code of Conduct of 2014 mandates every Public Official and Employee of Government involved in making decisions affecting contracting, tendering or procurement, and issuance of licenses of various types to sign performance or financial bonds and in addition, declare his or her income, assets, and liabilities before taking office and thereafter: a. at the end of every three years; on promotion or progression from one level to another; upon transfer to another public office; and upon retirement or resignation. Interestingly, the Code of Conduct of 2014 prescribed sanctions for false declaration of assets. Particularly, summary dismissal and other measures provided by law for violator(s). Regrettably, this instrument remains a toothless bulldog due to the reluctance of the Government to establish the Office of the Ombudsman responsible for enforcing, providing oversight, monitoring, and evaluating the adherence to the Code of Conduct.

The Public Financial Management Act of 2009

As an anti-corruption framework, the Public Financial Management Act of 2009 governs all matters related to the management of public finances of the Republic of Liberia. It lays out fundamental procedures for the preparation, adoption, execution and final accounts of the National Budget and related matters including, internal control, accounting and auditing of public finances, assets as well as the arrangements for public debt and government guarantees.

Amended And Restated Public Procurement and Concessions Commission Act of 2010

With the latent intent of preventing corruption, the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission Act regulates all forms of public procurement and concessions, establishes the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission, provides for institutional structures for public procurement and concessions, and stipulates methods and procedures for public procurement and concessions and for purposes related thereto.

The Act is applicable to the procurement of all goods, works, and services financed in whole or in part from public funds including the disposal of government stores, plant and equipment, and all concessions. The following are exempt from the application of the PPCC law:

International agreements concluded between the Government of Liberia and other countries or international organizations for general or specific projects where these agreements provide for specified procurement rules and procedures; Agreements executed by the Central Bank of Liberia relating to the implementation of monetary policy or procurement related to the production of coins or currency and Procurement of military or national security equipment.

Penal Law - Title 26 - Liberian Code of Laws Revised

This law catalogs offenses related to corruption. For example, section 15, Subchapter D captioned “Theft and Related Offenses” and Subchapter F. captioned “Economic Sabotage” captures behavior related to corruption as:

Theft of Property, Theft of Service, Misapplication of Entrusted property, Misuse of Public Money or Property, Fraud on the Internal Revenue, and Theft and/or Illegal Disbursement of Public Money.

The Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission Act of 2008

This Act establishes the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) to lead the implementation of the Anti-Corruption strategy of Liberia, investigate and prosecute corrupt conduct in the public sector, actively prevent corruption in public sector institutions, and educate citizens and the public sector about corruption and its effects (Yeakula, & Gray, 2021).

In July 2021, the House and the Senate repealed the Anti-Corruption Act of 2008 giving the LACC the power to investigate, prosecute, and punish corrupt practices in Liberia's public and private sectors (Sonpon III, 2021). Prior to the amendment or repeal, the LACC function was limited particularly regarding exercising full complete authority in prosecuting criminal cases. The Commission usually reported corruption cases to the Ministry of Justice for further judgment. From a legal perspective, pundits identified major setbacks in the amendment that could undermine the fight against corruption. They argued the amendment limits the LACC's capacity to connect with the public and provide updates on the progress of investigations. Interestingly, the repeal limits the re-established LACC's ability to "force the freezing of assets of a person or individuals being investigated or prosecuted for alleged acts of corruption." Freeze of assets is now restricted to person(s) representing flight risk or those who have fled the Republic of Liberia (Sonpon III, 2021). By this, especially relating to the freezing of assets of corrupt officials, it is safe to make the inference that despite the prosecutorial power which is remarkable, the re-established LACC is just like the previous LACC.

IV. International Conventions

As of November 21, Liberia has on 16 September 2005 ratified the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) adopted on 31st October 2003, by resolution 58/4 (UN, 2021), and as of 30th October 2019, Liberia has also ratified the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC) adopted 11th July 2003 (AU, 2019). Both the UNCAC and AUCPCC represent a new international consensus on the transnational nature of corruption, and the need for a sustainable national and international fight against the scourge of corruption. The conventions, therefore, impose on each state party a treaty obligation to establish, within its own legal system, such laws, agencies, and policies necessary to effectively prevent, detect, and eradicate corruption in accordance with the principles of accountability, transparency, and good governance (Warner, 2006).

Pursuant to Article 34(f) of the Liberian Constitution, each of the two conventions must be duly ratified by the National Legislature to become part and parcel of Liberia's domestic laws, and therefore enforceable in Liberian courts. The ratification of these two international anti-corruption conventions simply means they are legally binding in Liberia. However, Liberia is yet to domesticate these conventions. On the flip side of the same coin, the ratification of these conventions demonstrates Liberia's implied commitment to fighting corruption.

Comparative Analysis Between Liberia and Singapore

Comparatively, Liberia shares some commonalities with Singapore but with significant differences. Let's start with the commonalities.

As mentioned in this article, both countries have what could be termed robust anti-corruption institutional and normative frameworks including budgetary support. In other words, there are strong laws on the book in both countries capable of fighting the menace of corruption. However, there are significant differences germane to this paper or article. These significant differences are lacking in Liberia. They are political will, adequate budgetary support, and character education coupled with the attitude or behavior of the people of Singapore. All these are the driving forces behind Singapore's phenomenal success in the fight against corruption.

In Liberia's context, the political will to fight corruption only manifests in the enactment of an anti-corruption normative framework and institutional framework. Regrettably, the political will to ensure the implementation or enforcement of the laws in the book without fear or favor remains questionable. Often, it is selective. The Brownie Samukai case, the former Defense Minister convicted for theft of property, criminal conspiracy, and misuse of public money among others for embezzlement from the Army's compulsory savings account is one of the classic examples of selective prosecution of corruption cases. (Porkpa, 2022). Similarly, President George Weah is yet to act swiftly on the General Auditing Commission audit report by bringing to justice individuals involved in the alleged mismanagement of the USD 25 million intended for the Mop-Up Exercise (Zeongar, 2019).

Unlike Singapore which introduced character education beginning from 1959 as part of the strategy to sustain the fight by educating its rising generation about the devastating effects of corruption. Character education that specifically targets anti-corruption is very essential to sustaining the fight against corruption. It is premised on the assumption that one of the best ways to change society is through education. In other words, to act against corruption, character education is important to be taught from an early age. That is to say, when children believe to be future leaders learn about corruption through their school journey, it is possible to develop an attitude or behavior of integrity, honesty, and patriotism that are critical to stamping out the tides of corruption. Liberian schoolers especially from elementary to senior high are taught character education, especially targeting corruption, it is possible to preserve society from corruption. Research reveals how character education has been identified as one of the long-term solutions to the practice of corruption. Besides Singapore, Indonesia has also embarked on the implementation of character education to address systemic corruption. As a subject or lesson, character education has been incorporated into primary schools' curricula (Sofwan, et al, 2018). The main reason why character education is identified as one of the long-term solutions to fighting corruption is because it is a moral problem (Wraith & Simpkins, 1963) which is incompatible with the moral values of good citizens. So, the lack of good moral character can cause greed, selfishness, and corruption. No wonder why prolific authors like John Maxwell (in his book, "How

Successful People Grow”, Derrick Warren (in his work, “The Purpose Driven Life”), and Martin Luther King, Jr., all agree that character is more important than competence, ability, and experience as much as these are important and required for success and progress. Therefore, installing character education in school going age children will shape their minds toward the danger of corruption, producing excellent students with good morals and behavior, and influencing teachers’ perception of corruption as well. Experts argued that character education forms students’ attitudes and behaviors which are shown through some merits such as honesty, responsibility, self-discipline, integrity, respect, and reliability (Sofwan, et al, 2018).

Liberia has no program that could arguably be likened to Singapore and perhaps Indonesia. Doubtlessly, grade schools teach morals through religion (Christianity and Islam) in Liberia. Moreover, it is believed that Civics has returned to the classroom. However, the emphasis or content areas of these subjects or lessons are distant from inculcating anti-corruption behavior in the rising generation. Ironically, most schools see the so-called “Flexibility Fees” as a tradition to compromise standards repugnant to character education. It is too appalling and at the same time ridiculous for schools to introduce the rising generation to corruption. In Liberia’s context, “Flexibility Fees” is defined as money collected from students as a means of cheating to pass the West African Examination Council (WAEC) exam (Heritage, 2012). This is something the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), WAEC Liberia has also frowned upon (LINA, 2023).

Next is the attitude and behavior of the people of Singapore regarding the fight against corruption. The phenomenal success of Singapore also implied the support of the ordinary people who are the worst hit. Unlike Liberia which shows the irony or contradiction, the people of Singapore disapproved of corruption. They don’t rationalize or support the accused by saying as most Liberians or supporters of the accused will say “your leave the man alone, other people steal government money and don’t invest in the country. They carried it (the money) outside to other countries.” “Is he/she the first person to steal government money?” “They sanctioned you; they don’t sanction you; we will still vote for you.” (Johnson, 2022). In other words, Singaporeans don’t support corrupt officials vying for public positions or offices. It is very common in Liberia. Most of the electorates or supporters of the ruling establishment care less about voting for those accused of corruption, especially those sanctioned by the US Treasury Department (Johnson, 2022). In their opinion, the sanction is politically motivated and meant to intimidate the government.

Finally, Unlike the anti-graft institutions that receive adequate budgetary support in Singapore, anti-graft institutions in Liberia are struggling to effectively fight corruption due to scanty budgetary support. Imagine, \$2,348,652 allotted to the LACC for the 2023 budget (Mbayo, 2023). While the \$54.9 million was appropriated for Corrupt Practices Investigations Bureau in Singapore in 2022 (HEAD U, 2022). You can now see how the disparity is so wide.

V. Conclusion

From the above analysis, the possibility of Liberia becoming like Singapore rated as the 5th least corrupt country in the world (Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, 2022) is conditional on the political will pertaining to implementation and enforcement of the anti-corruption laws on the books coupled with adequate budgetary appropriation, and the infusion of character education related to anti-corruption behavior into the curriculum of grade schools. It is also conditional on sustained awareness education changing the mindset of the society to disapprove of the menace of corruption.

To conclude in other words, this paper rejects the claim that Liberia lacks the political will to fight corruption. Of course not. It has demonstrated political will only in the areas of legislation, and enactments of both formative and institutional frameworks. Where it lacks or is yet to demonstrate the political will to fight corruption is seen from the holistic enforcement of the laws without fear and favor and adequate budgetary support. Until the political will can be demonstrated in these areas, the possibility for Liberia to become like or closer to Singapore remains very slim.

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About the Author

Ambrues Monboe Nebo Sr.



Ambrues Monboe Nebo Sr. is an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Political Science, University of Liberia. Department of Sociology, African Methodist Episcopal University, Criminal Justice Department, Adventist University of West Africa. He is also reviewer for the International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS).

He has excelled in academics with a wealth of experience.

Doctorate of Sociology (D.Sc.s.) with major in Sociology from Atlantic International University (AIU), Hawaii, USA.

MSc in the top 5 % of the graduating Class in Peace and Conflict Studies with emphasis in Humanitarian and Refugee Studies form the prestigious University of Ibadan, Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Post Graduate Certificate with distinction in Public Administration from Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration Ghana.

Bachelor of Arts (Magna Cum Laude) in Sociology from African Methodist Episcopal Zion University College in Liberia,

A graduate of Liberia National Police Academy and Training School formerly National Police Training Academy and obtained various Certificates in peacekeeping operations from the Kofi Anna

International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Ghana.

Professionally, he is a senior police officer of the Liberia National Police with 18 years of experience in Training and Administration.

He has authored four books namely:

1. The Politicization of the Criminal Justice System: A Liberian Perspective" available at <https://www.amazon.com/Politicization-Criminal-JusticeSystem-Socio-Political/dp/6139445337> and Morebooks shop.
2. The Wave of Protests Leading to Regimes Change in Africa: A Sociological Perspective available at <https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/9975153461>
3. Introduction to Liberia Criminal Justice System: A Concise Edition available at <https://www.morebooks.de/store/us/book/introduction-toliberia-criminal-justice-system/isbn/978-620-3-04123-1>
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He has authored a dozen of articles dealing with contemporary issues in Africa and Liberia that can be accessed online at <https://neboambrues.academia.edu> and ResearchGate.