

IPS Retrospective 2016 in Viewpoints

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IPS RETROSPECTIVE 2016 IN VIEWPOINTS

The Institute of Policy Studies blog, [IPS Commons](#), provides a platform for our researchers and contributors to showcase their work and contribute to on-going discussions of public policy and issues of critical national interest. What has preoccupied them, and inspired them to turn ink into ideas? We look back at some of the most thought-provoking articles published in 2016.

Arts, Culture and Media

[Why reading should be a compulsory subject in school](#)

By Tan Tarn How | 25 May 2016

“I see readers as lucky beings with a light, one that illuminates a little of the mystery of life and pierces the darkness of ignorance for themselves and for others.”

A 2015 National Arts Council Survey showed that only [44 per cent of Singaporeans read one or more literary books in the past year](#), with “literary” defined quite generously. However, encouraging Singaporeans to read does much more than improve our literacy rates — it also nurtures better citizens. IPS Senior Research Fellow Tan Tarn How gives his [proposal](#) on how we can turn Singapore into a nation of readers.

[Filling the information vacuum responsibly](#)

By Carol Soon | 9 March 2016

“We have technology at our disposal — never before have we been able to locate information so easily and quickly. This also means that in our efforts to fill the information gap, we have to do it responsibly.”

In 2016, the suicide of a 14-year-old schoolboy sparked a debate on how the state should react when asked for official responses to questions in crises or emotionally charged incidents. How can online media refrain from being unreliable channels of information? IPS Senior Research Fellow Carol Soon, tackled these questions [in her piece published in March](#).

Demography and Family

[\[The Angle\] Ideas to further refine the CPF system](#)

By Christopher Gee | 20 January 2016

“At the moment, the CPFIS is suboptimal because most members participating in the scheme are essentially exposing themselves to those same risks... that are very difficult for an individual investor to manage or control, and furthermore these members lack sufficient scale and bargaining power to demand the best value from fund managers to whom they allocate their CPFIS monies.”

How should we refine Singapore’s CPF scheme to boost the savings of Singaporeans? IPS Senior Research Fellow Christopher Gee suggested revamping the CPF Investment Scheme (CPFIS) to give Singaporeans more choice but still largely mitigate risks and costs. Read here for [his piece published in January this year](#).

[Helping Singaporean women age with optimism](#)

By Varian Lim | 19 September 2016

“Any form of caregiving can be demanding and stressful. This could have an adverse impact on subjective well-being. Instead of enjoying their retirement, middle-aged and older women may be saddled with caregiving duties.”

According to a 2014 IPS survey, older women aged above 60 had the lowest future life satisfaction levels among Singaporeans. [In this piece published in September](#), IPS Social Lab Research Analyst Varian Lim said that this is largely due to the stress of being the main caregivers of the family as well as having inadequate retirement savings, leaving them unable to enjoy their twilight years. He also gave his policy recommendations on how we can help this group of vulnerable women.

Economics and Business

[When saving jobs can no longer ensure welfare](#)

By Nicholas Koh | 23 February 2016

“With more traditional occupations being disrupted by rapid technological change, the choices governments face in the future will no longer be clearly delineated into one of the two policy options [to maintain a minimum standard of living or maintain employment through lowered wages]. Instead, it will be imperative to take the middle road, by providing more social assistance programmes while continuing to focus on job retention.”

Former IPS intern Nicholas Koh suggested [a rethink of the distributional properties of the Singapore economy](#). Technological disruption, he argued, continues to affect the number

and quality of jobs created and this has an impact on workers' ability to achieve a minimum standard of living for themselves and their families.

[Grappling with rising costs in Singapore](#)

By Manu Bhaskaran and Ng Yan Hao | 25 January 2016

“Over the longer term, the rise in costs is partly a consequence of a policy shift by the government. Where Singapore’s growth model used to be based on its cost competitiveness, the price mechanism — where the forces of demand and supply determine prices — has been adopted to move Singapore towards a higher value-added economy.”

High rents for retail spaces have put pressure on retailers, who are an important source of employment in Singapore. How can policymakers work with landlords and REIT owners to ensure a fairer tenancy framework for retail businesses? IPS Senior Adjunct Research Fellow Manu Bhaskaran and IPS Research Assistant Ng Yan Hao gave [several suggestions](#), including new rules for tenants and landlords on sharing retrofitting costs and renewals.

Politics and Governance

[\[The Angle\] Bukit Batok by-election and the “Jurong Family” factor](#)

By Gillian Koh | 14 March 2016

“For the PAP to overcome the by-election effect, even what it thinks is a heavyweight candidate may be a necessary but not sufficient condition to prevail.”

By-elections are generally tough for the PAP. In this piece, written before the 7 May 2016 by-election in Bukit Batok ward, IPS Deputy Director (Research) Gillian Koh discussed the potential challenges that the party would face and the considerations that residents would have in the days leading up to the polls.

[Negotiating Singapore’s new pluralism](#)

By Johannis Bin Abdul Aziz | 19 April 2016

“The sooner we learn how to talk among ourselves as well as with the authorities in multi-logical processes, the healthier our political space will be.... We have to learn to agree to disagree and take every loss on the chin, knowing that there will always be a rematch.”

How can we practise democratic values when discussing highly contentious issues, especially when Singapore’s public political space has become more plural in recent years? Former IPS Research Fellow Johannis Bin Abdul Aziz [noted in this piece](#) that face-to-face meetings in a neutral setting can be a useful means of tempering antagonisms among opponents.

Society and Identity

[Why we need to talk about race](#)

By Mathews Mathew | 19 August 2016

“But the strong endorsement of multicultural principles and relationships does not mean that our society is free from racism.... The vestiges of racism here stem from our innate in-group preferences, which have sometimes left us lacking in sensitivity and self-awareness when we interact with those who are ethnically different.”

Racism in Singapore appears to have a relatively mild character. However, we can still improve on being sensitive and self-aware when interacting with those who are different from us, said IPS Senior Research Fellow Mathew Mathews [in an opinion-editorial here](#).

[The paradox of strong family ties in the integration of immigrants](#)

By Eugene Teng and Leong Chan-Hoong | 28 June 2016

“Strong family ties are no doubt a good thing, but improving the level of trust in outsiders is important if we are to achieve a fully inclusive and harmonious society.”

Asian societies where families have strong bonds with each other tend to be less trusting of “outsiders”. This has implications for the integration of foreigners in multicultural societies like Singapore. IPS Social Lab Research Analyst Eugene Teng and Senior Research Fellow Leong Chan-Hoong [gave their recommendations](#) on how we can cultivate a mindset of inclusiveness without weakening family ties.

Others

[Towards a zero-impact cross island line](#)

By Judy Goh | 26 February 2016

“What is the value of ecosystem services provided by an intact forest, which could include the provision of clean drinking water and habitat for biological creatures? What about the cultural and educational value of keeping the forest intact?”

Should the Cross-Island Line run through or around MacRitchie's Central Catchment Forest Reserve? This was one of the hotly debated issues in Parliament in 2016. Our contributor Judy Goh examined the discourse surrounding this issue [in her piece here](#).

[Navigating a global order lacking in clarity](#)

By Bilahari Kausikan | 3 February 2016

“Without global structure, global leadership is diffused. Without global leadership, many urgent international issues — take your pick: anything from climate change to nuclear proliferation to refugees to pandemics — will be left unresolved or dealt with only sub-optimally, enhancing the uncertainties.”

IPS' second S R Nathan Fellow for the Study of Singapore Bilahari Kausikan gave a series of five public IPS-Nathan Lectures this year. [In his first lecture](#), Ambassador Kausikan

charted the uncertainty that looms over our post-Cold War order and examined the challenges facing major powers in their relationships with one another.

What was your favourite article that you read on [IPS Commons](#) this year? Let us know on our [Facebook Page](#)!

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