

Report on IPS Forum on the Presidential Election 1 November 2011

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This is a report on the IPS Forum on the Presidential Election held on 1 November 2011 at Orchard Hotel.

Opening Remarks



IPS Director Mr Janadas Devan opened the Forum by suggesting that there was a need to arrive at a common understanding of the Elected Presidency through dialogue. This was because the IPS survey on the 2011 presidential election to be launched at the Forum revealed that Singaporeans had remarkably eclectic views on this important institution.

Greek philosopher Heraclitus said that “although the law of reason is common, the majority of people live as though they had an understanding or wisdom of their own”. This law of reason applied to the law as well, and in particular, the Constitution. The election seemed to have turned not on policies, credentials or proposals of candidates but on what the Elected President (EP) should, could or might do, in terms of the powers bestowed by the Constitution. What was the genesis of it in the first place?

A glance back into history would reveal the original intention the political leaders had for it. Singapore’s founding fathers Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Dr Goh Keng Swee, Mr Hon Sui Sen and Mr Lim Kim San very cautiously stewarded the national reserves even in early days when these reserves were much smaller. Such an ethic was heavily influenced by the Second World War when the leaders were struck by the fragility of life, and the fact that countries with gold fared better. In 1967, there was the split from the common Malayan currency following the political separation in 1965. Singapore’s leaders were prepared to do so as they wanted iron clad guarantees of Singapore’s control of its own reserves which they had not received. That year, Finance Minister Dr Goh took the bold step of backing part of Singapore’s reserves in gold. Dr Goh stated a novel thesis to then British Chancellor of the Exchequer Roy Jenkins that there were two kinds of reserves – non-monetary and monetary. While the former would be backed by the sterling pound in accordance with common currency arrangements, Singapore should be free to invest the latter as it saw fit to guarantee its future.

In 1981, the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation was set up to invest the nation's non-monetary reserves. Singapore was the first amongst non-oil or commodity trading countries to establish a sovereign wealth fund. 1981 was also the year when opposition politician Mr Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam of the Workers' Party broke the PAP stronghold in Parliament with his Anson by-election victory. With these events, Singapore's political leaders saw the need for the institution of the EP to safeguard the reserves.

In 1984, Mr Lee revealed that a constitutional amendment to protect the reserves was in the works. In 1988, the first White Paper on the Elected Presidency was presented to Parliament, calling for an EP with powers to block the government wishes to spend the reserves. It also proposed protecting the integrity of the civil service as those in public office were in the position to impact the management of reserves. In 1990, the second White Paper was presented to Parliament, proposing further roles for the EP, that is, to authorise investigations by the CPIB, even if the Prime Minister refused to grant consent, and to counter ministerial orders under the Internal Security Act and Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act under certain conditions. To allow the EP to stand firm against a profligate popular government, Mr Lee then decided that the president should be elected. The hope however was that the president would be above politics, or 'non-partisan'.

The provisions for the EP had restricted the government then as well. The issue of whether Net Investment Income (NII) should be locked up as past reserves or be available to the current government surfaced in the tenure of the first EP under Mr Ong Teng Chong. A 50-50 compromise was reached in the third White Paper in 1999, allowing the government to draw down on half of the NII. More recently, the government introduced a constitutional amendment to let it draw down on half of the Net Investment Return (NIR), a broader measure than NNI.¹ This drawdown now accounts for almost 20 per cent of annual government spending.

In an opinion piece published soon after the 2011 presidential election, Mr Devan and Mr Ho Kwon Ping commented on the impossibility of a non-political election. Were Singapore's founding fathers wrong in thinking that Singapore needs a president above politics? Was there a need to rethink the office? What would the consequences of continued disagreement on the role of the president be?

Mr Devan concluded by reiterating the idea that although the law of reason was common, many lived as though they had a private wisdom of their own. Society should strive to arrive a common understanding of the law. This would not be possible without dialogue which in turn can only be achieved by listening to what people are saying, and in this case, through the IPS survey.

¹ NIR is the sum of:

(1) the long-term expected real rate of return on the reserves invested by GIC and Monetary Authority of Singapore, and
 (2) the NII on the remaining assets, comprising primarily Temasek.

Source: Singapore Government, Ministry of Finance. 2008. Second Reading Speech for Constitution of Republic of Singapore (Amendment) Bill, 20 August. <www.parliament.gov.sg>

Session One: IPS Presidential Election Survey 2011

The IPS survey on the 2011 presidential election discovered that citizens in the higher socio-economic groups tended to take a more 'critical' stance about it – they were more questioning or demanding of the system and its outcome.

The presidential election 2011 (PE2011) survey was the fifth in a survey series designed to take timely snap-shots of the response of stakeholders to changes or events in the policy and political environment.

The objective of the PE2011 survey that polled 2025 citizens of voting age was to understand the factors that shaped the decision-making process of voters in the 27 August 2011 Presidential Election. The PE2011 survey sought to determine how voters perceived the role of the EP, what qualities they looked for in candidates, the channels of communication that provided material that influenced their vote, and their assessment of the election system and its outcome.

The survey revealed that the level of understanding of the roles of the EP as officially interpreted was limited. The survey listed 12 statements on the possible roles of the EP, six designed to be aligned with the official interpretation, and another five crafted to be outside of that. One statement – 'free to be a champion of social and charitable causes' was judged in the analysis stage to be ambiguous and therefore left out of the process.² 42% of respondents correctly identified six or more of these statements as being in or beyond the official interpretation of the role of the EP.

Political Knowledge

The 11 statements that constitute the political legitimacy indicator are:

Roles aligned to official interpretation

- To represent Singapore in meeting and visiting foreign leaders
- Head of State
- To block the Government's intention to spend national reserves if he disagrees with the plan
- To block the appointment of people to important positions in the public service if he disagrees with the Government's choice
- Not to speak publicly on any national issue unless the Government advises him to

Roles outside of official interpretation

- To ensure that the Government manages the economy wisely
- Free to speak publicly on national issues he thinks are important
- To ensure that Government does what it promised in the general election
- Free to decide the best way for the country to manage its foreign relations
- Head of Government

The top three roles cited as the EP were: 'the representation of Singapore in meeting and visiting foreign leaders', 'head of state', and 'to ensure that the government manages the economy wisely'. The top three roles, when cited, were also considered 'important' by respondents in shaping their vote were: 'the president ensures that the Government managed the economy wisely', 'ensure that the government does what it promised in the general election' and 'blocks the government's intention to spend national reserves if he disagrees with the plan'.

These 11 statements were grouped together to form the 'political knowledge' indicator, where the full sample generated a mean score of 5.4 out of a possible 11 points. Respondents who strongly agreed and agreed with the

² This statement was removed from the analysis due to issues of ambiguity.

statement 'I am interested in matters related to Singapore's governing system obtained a slightly higher mean score, and this difference was of statistical significance. Respondents who were male, Chinese, better educated, younger, in higher household income brackets, and in the Service occupational class hewed closer to, or had slightly more knowledge of the official interpretation of the institution.³

The survey also looked at the characteristics of candidates that were the most important to respondents in shaping their vote. Fairness, (97% agreed and strongly agreed), the ability to represent the country well (97% agreed and strongly agreed) and honesty (96% agreed and strongly agreed) were rated as the most important qualities, while 'independence from political parties' and 'resonance with the views of candidates on national issues' were least important to the sample. Notably, voters in the Working Class and those with PSLE education and below found that independence from political parties was more important for them than for other demographic groups.⁴ This is possibly because voters in other groups took a realistic view that candidates were likely to have some association with political parties.

The survey then examined the influence of a range of communication channels in shaping voter preferences, of which, traditional media, comprising of newspapers (87% agreed and strongly agreed) and television (80% agreed and strongly agreed), followed by the Internet (67% agreed and strongly agreed) came out tops. More specifically, newspapers were still the most important, but this was less so for respondents in the 21-29 to 30-39 years age brackets, the Service class as well as new and first-time voters. These groups tended to view the Internet as an important channel. The survey discovered that the Internet was more influential the lower the age, and the higher the occupational class of the respondent. The top five online channels that were important to netizens were Facebook (46%), the Yahoo website (37%), the Google website (20%), the Channel NewsAsia Website (14%) and Twitter (12%).⁵ Facebook was a more influential channel for those in the 21-29 years age bracket, while the Yahoo website was more important to those in the 30-39 years age bracket.

In the section of the survey on the election system and its outcome, two further indicators of 'political legitimacy' as well as 'institutional independence' were developed.

On 'political legitimacy', those in the lower socio-economic groups and older respondents scored higher, which meant that they were more likely to feel that both the election system and outcome were legitimate. The political

Political Legitimacy

The four statements that constitute the political legitimacy indicator are:

- The 2011 process of certification gave those I think were truly qualified the chance to contest
- Overall, there is no need to change anything in the system of the Elected Presidency
- All candidates got fair coverage by the mass media, that is, free-to-air television, newspapers and radio
- The outcome of who has been elected on 27 August will strengthen Singapore's governing system

³ Service Class in this survey follows the classification of British sociologist Dr John Goldthorpe and includes senior executives, professionals, technicians and supervisors.

⁴ Working Class in this survey follows the classification of British sociologist Dr John Goldthorpe and includes operators, semi-skilled workers and unskilled workers.

⁵ Netizens in this survey refers to respondents who found the Internet or Mobile Phone important.

legitimacy indicator drew on responses to four statements on the election system, where the mean score for was 14.5 out of a possible 20 points. Female respondents, older respondents, especially those aged 55 years and above, lower educated respondents, especially those with secondary level education and below, the lower income, especially the low to low-middle categories, and respondents in the least expensive dwelling types scored higher than the rest. Conversely, those in the ethnic 'Others' category and the Service class scored lower than the rest.

Institutional Independence

The three statements that constitute the institutional independence indicator are:

- The person who exercises the powers of the Elected President must be chosen through an election by Singaporeans and not selected by Parliament
- Social organisations, unions or other community groups should not be allowed to endorse candidates in the presidential election
- Political parties should not be allowed to endorse candidates in the presidential election

On 'institutional independence', those in the higher socio-economic groups and younger respondents scored higher, which indicated concurrence with the perspective that the system should stand independent of other centres of authority. The institutional independence indicators drew on responses to three statements on the election system, where the mean score was 11.8 out of a possible 15 points. Male respondents, better-educated respondents, especially those with

post-secondary education and above, those in the upper household income brackets, Service Class, HDB 5-6 room categories scored higher than the others.

Correlation analysis was conducted between the indicators of political knowledge, political legitimacy and institutional independence. This revealed that politically knowledgeable respondents preferred institutional independence for the Presidential election, and were less likely to view the election system as legitimate.

In conclusion, the IPS survey pointed to the need for more public education on the role of the EP for an informed debate on the system, in time for the next election. The survey also suggested however, that the more knowledgeable the voter, the more likely he or she would take a critical view, in questioning if the election system or outcome was the best for Singapore. This survey reinforced the idea that those in the higher socio-economic groups fell in the category of being more critical voters, and showed that younger and better-educated netizens are less likely to think that all candidates got fair coverage by traditional media, and would rely on social and alternative media for the presidential election as well.



Discussion

In the discussion, suggestions of how the electoral process could be refined were raised amongst other questions.

A participant asked if there should be a run-off election between the top two candidates. This would give this EP the support of a stronger majority and greater public legitimacy. Dr Koh said that the 'first-past-the-post' system is one that is very familiar to and accepted by most Singaporeans and any change to that must be based on strong popular sentiment. Also, in effect, a run-off would force candidates to be very polarised in their positions, which may in turn force voters into extreme positions. The first-past-the-post system delivered neater results, where victory was assured even if it was by just one vote. In addition, the



onus was on the winning candidate to achieve consensus by taking heed of and adopting suggestions of the other candidates, if the result was indeed very close. This would be all the more important if the victor wished to ensure that he might be voted in again the next time.

Another participant asked if it made more sense for the president to be elected by institutions, in light of the possibility that candidates who tap or stir up populist sentiment might interfere with the rational choice for the average voter. Mr Devan said that since popular elections had been put in place, it would be difficult to reverse this. Dr Koh added that the PE2011 survey indicated some 90% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the president should be chosen through an election by Singaporeans and not selected by Parliament.

A participant asked if the data suggested that a prominent figure from civil society would be rather successful in the presidential elections as many respondents preferred that candidates were not endorsed by political parties, Dr Koh said that based on the findings of the survey, candidates from the civic sector might be able to attract the support of those of higher socio-economic class, as opposed to party leaders or union leaders. A participant, who was the election agent of one of the candidates added in the next session that anyone interested in contesting elections had to embrace those from the political world to run a credible race.

A participant invited the panel to comment on President S R Nathan's approval of the use of reserves 27 times from 2002 to 2011 for land reclamation and the Selective En Block Redevelopment Scheme (SERS), and the fact that this had received little publicity. Mr Devan said that the land is considered part of the past reserves, as was made explicit in the 1999 White Paper. When the Housing Development Board (HDB) develops land, it pays the fair market value into the reserves. A participant added that with regard to the SERS scheme and land that has been reclaimed, the safe presumption would be that land sales proceeds would exceed the development cost and the surplus would then be returned to the reserves. There would be no draw-down of reserves but an enhancement of them. It is for

this reason that it is not objectionable by any means even if there is still a need to seek the EP's consent to such proposals.

Session Two: Panel Discussion moderated by Mr Janadas Devan

The three panelists made opening presentations and these were followed by an open discussion of issues raised from the ground. The three were joined by Dr Koh of the first session.

Mr Goh Sin Teck, Editor of national Chinese newspaper *Lianhe Zaobao* focused on the candidates, the impact of social media on traditional media, and the role of the traditional media in the 2011 presidential election.

Mr Goh raised the hypothetical question of how the election would have played out if Mr Tan Jee Say did not contest. It was likely that Mr Tan Kin Lian would have benefitted most from this, being the candidate least associated with the government, like Mr Tan Jee Say was. In fact, Mr Tan Kin Lian blamed Mr Tan Jee Say for his heavy loss as the former had been building momentum as the independent candidate in the election until the latter surfaced at the eleventh hour. Such a move caused Mr Tan Kin Lian's position to be more ambiguous, with Mr Tan Jee Say claiming to be the true blue opposition candidate, even as the presidential role was supposed to be 'above politics'. Mr Tan Jee Say might have fared even better if not for the ground shift against the possibility of a confrontational president in the final stage of the campaign. Another possibility to consider was if some 10,000 of the votes went to Mr Tan Cheng Bock – this would have changed the outcome of the election.



The next hypothetical question was how the election would have turned out if there had been no use of social media. On the surface of things, this seemed like too obvious a query. However, the fact that platforms like Facebook and Twitter were unheard of six years ago made this question a valid one. Social media was a force to be reckoned with in this election, with all four candidates using social media extensively and significantly. For instance, all candidates accepted the invitation of political blog *The Online Citizen* for a live forum. This has set a precedent, whereby no presidential, and even general election candidate in the future can afford to ignore the force of social media.

How would the presence of social media then change traditional media? Many journalists in traditional media have embraced new media. Yet, newspaper sales increased in the general and presidential election, more so for the former, and more significantly for Chinese newspapers. The use of social media did not erode the place of newspapers. On top of that, the traditional media still plays an important public education role. In the case of the presidential election *The Straits Times* and *Lianhe Zaobao* both printed full page spreads on the role of the EP, which was something many Singaporeans might not have bothered to find out online but in the traditional media, the information 'finds you'.

Adjunct Professor Dr Kevin Tan of the Faculty of Law at the National University of Singapore and the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies at the Nanyang Technological University commented on the presidential election through the lens of a constitutional lawyer.



Dr Tan said that prior to the announcement of the presidential aspirants that were qualified to run in the election he received questions from the press who would be eligible. He was very certain that three candidates but not Mr Tan Jee Say would qualify, as there was the question of how his experience as regional managing director of AIB Govett Asia would be taken into consideration. He was sure that former group Chief Financial Officer

of JTC Corporation Mr Andrew Kuan would not get through as he had been denied the first time. Private tutor Mr Ooi Boon Ewe clearly did not satisfy the requirements of Article 19 of the Constitution, which lists the qualifications a presidential election candidate must fulfil, so there were no surprises there.

The promises that the candidates made about what they would do in office fell in a grey area of actions that had not be explicitly prohibited by the Constitution, Dr Tan argued. This likely accounted for the findings in the PE2011 survey, that the public was confused on the roles of the president. There was a disjuncture between high expectations placed on the institution that had been naturally built up through the election process and the actual role specified and strictly interpreted by government leaders.

Dr Tan commented on the legality of some of the suggestions raised by presidential candidates. Ideas put forth by presidential candidates such as the issuing of an annual report, or giving of a 'state of the nation' address or press conference could plausibly be legal, the EP does not speak out of turn vis-à-vis the government, or contradict government policy in the process. On the other hand, as discussed in IPS Forum on the Elected Presidency in August, the EP is not free to disagree with the government publicly (for instance, when signing papers denying clemency), publicly call on the government to act on matters, criticise government policy, criticise the civil service, or rally Singaporeans in times of crisis or sooth frayed nerves without the prior consent of the Cabinet.

There is recourse for the government to thwart an activist or recalcitrant president. Article 22L allows for the removal of the EP for 'intentional violation of the Constitution'. Article 5(2A) has been held in abeyance since 1991 which means that it is still relatively easy to amend the powers of the EP currently. Other ways a government might circumvent the EP include raising funds through increasing taxes, selling state assets and by granting monopoly or oligopoly licenses.

A gridlock between an EP and the government is certainly possible because of the high transactional and political cost of removing the EP from office, alongside the problem of

differences of opinion on the role of the EP. Even in the short history of the institution, Singaporeans witnessed the conflict between a good government and good president in Mr Ong Teng Chong's term as EP. The case of a bad government and good president would be the People's Action Party's (PAP) imagined scenario, and *raison d'être* for the EP. The case of a good government and 'bad' president would be the case of the non-PAP endorsed president.⁶



Dr Tan also raised the question of whether a president elected on 35% of the votes had sufficient mandate to check a government with a mandate of some 60% of the popular vote. Would this result in a crisis of legitimacy for the EP? In addition, he cited an essay by Mr Devan and Mr Ho Kwon Ping where they proposed that the president be elected by an electoral college. The reasoning was that a popularly-elected president would result in

a politicised and polarising process. Dr Tan agreed particularly with their suggestion that a process of secret ballots be conducted until a single winner emerged to provide him with a strong mandate to exercise his powers.

Dr Tan said however that he preferred the idea of forming an upper house in Parliament that would consolidate all the unique Singapore institutions within it like the Nominated Member of Parliament scheme, the bodies in the Office of the President that monitored race relations and religious harmony, and the powers of the Elected Presidency itself. He noted that earlier proposals for an upper house were rejected – the 1955 Rendell Constitution and the 1966 Wee Chong Jin Commission but felt that this idea should be reviewed.⁷

Assistant Professor Eugene Tan of the School of Law at the Singapore Management University discussed the implications of the presidential election on political development and governance.



Mr Tan said that the short interval between the general and presidential elections meant that the political dynamics of the first election would most certainly spillover into the second.

⁶ Lam, P. E., 1997. 'The elected presidency,' in Tan, K. L., and Lam, P. E., *Managing Political Change in Singapore*, Routledge: Great Britain, pp. 202.

⁷ For instance, minority representation is guaranteed with the Group Representation Constituency (GRC) system; minority rights are safeguarded under the Presidential Council for Minority Rights; non-political sectoral representation is afforded with the Nominated Member of Parliament scheme; checks against short-termism in legislature are provided by the Elected President.

There had been a shift in political attitudes with a greater number of post-independence voters taking the view that the 52 year one-party dominant system is an unnatural state of affairs. Such a shift meant better prospects for candidates less aligned to the PAP. This was only the second contested presidential election since 1993 and for many Singaporeans, the first one they voted in. Candidates had their own ideas about the office. Voters were not bothered with constitutional niceties, and what the government had to say on the powers of the office. There was a disjuncture between the fact that this was an elected office, and the limited ascribed powers that the EP has.

The presidential election reinforced the sense that there is a greater desire among Singaporeans for the current one-party dominant system to be subjected to more effective checks and balances and in this case, by the EP. The Elected Presidency was presented by the PAP government as an integral part of the good governance framework to perform the role of checking the incumbent in specific instances as Singapore's political opposition was of limited size. Although the government had defined good governance as the situation where the leaders had a clear mandate to govern by securing a high percentage of popular votes, Singaporeans perceived this in a more nuanced manner where there are institutions or different centres of power to provide a check and balance against each another. In the recent presidential election, there were competing, if not conflicting visions of the presidency, where some candidates overpromised as part of electoral strategy. 'Independence' of the candidates was framed very narrowly, vis-à-vis the PAP, reflecting popular sentiment that would like a political watchdog that barks and bites.

The presidential election reflected that the PAP branding did still enjoy some cache, even though it might be a declining value proposition. Dr Tan Cheng Bock and Dr Tony Tan were establishment candidates with moderate readings of the EP's powers, and polled some 70% of the popular vote. This also demonstrated that those Singaporeans who value stability, in that it was important for the president to be able to work with the elected government are still in the majority.

In the wake of the presidential election, there is the question of whether the elected presidency needs to evolve in tandem with the generational shift and changing expectations. Mr Tan said that the government's continued reference to the case of the British monarch in explaining the Elected Presidency seems anachronistic as the latter was designed specifically to fit with the Singapore political system, which had itself departed from the Westminster system in several ways. It would be difficult to insulate the presidential election from partisan politics and the possibility that politicians would use this as a platform to boost their political careers. Singapore can expect a vigorous presidential election contest in 2017, but the question is if this would be politically polarising. There is therefore the need, Mr Tan said, to reconcile the prescriptions of the Constitution, political aspirations and realities on the one hand, with the government's preference for incremental political change on the other. In light of the desire for greater plurality and the possible rise of more partisan politics, it is more important than ever that the EP come to the fore as a symbol of national unity.



Discussion

The Forum discussed the possibility of instituting an upper house of Parliament, voter education, the mandate of the president that wins on a small majority, the role of communications and the impact of opinion polls on elections.

On Dr Tan's suggestion of an upper house in Parliament, Mr Devan referred to the approach of appointing rather than electing members of the upper houses in the United Kingdom and India. Dr Tan said that if such an approach was taken, selection should allow for a broad representation of the different sectors in Singaporean society and even include academics with expertise in topic of governance in its membership. His view was that it would be better to entrust the tasks of the EP to the collective wisdom of a group in such an on-going way so that decisions can be even more considered than currently so.

A participant pointed out that IPS survey findings suggested that many Singaporeans view the EP as the head of government, which was worrying. Some of this was shaped by how the candidates campaigned. She asked whose role it is to educate the voters. Mr Devan said that the law surrounding the elected presidency was complex, where the presidential council held sway on several fronts. The survey also found that some 60% of respondents saw that it was the president's role to shape foreign policy, which none of the candidates had really addressed in detail. Mr Tan said that Singaporeans had a duty to educate themselves, but the difficulty was when the government tried to take on this role, which would be perceived as an attempt to shape the role according to what would suit it. The idea of an annual report would certainly help educate Singaporeans on the roles and functions of an EP. The notion that the president was a watchdog that could bark but not bite certainly added to the confusion. Dr Tan suggested that one way of educating Singaporeans would be the use of Channel 8 drama serials. Mr Goh reminded the room that the last time Singaporeans had the opportunity to vote in the presidential election was 18 years ago, with many citizens under 40 voting for the first time. He was certain that knowledge would build up over time. Dr Koh said that different segments of the population would be responsive to different ways of issuing a message. She would support the use of the popular media, but some form of accounting, such as the annual report would be good for other audiences. There was also the issue of trust, as people would be more receptive to information that is compiled and shared by those they think have no vested interest in the situation at hand.

Two participants said that the fact that the president did not achieve a significant majority of the votes did not mean that he was not legitimate. The hope is that Singapore would tend towards such a trend in the longer term. Dr Koh said it was important for the political majority to recognise the interests of the minority, instead of say, simply crushing their views.

Recently, the idea that a party must get 50% of votes in a first-past-the-post system had been rejected in the United Kingdom. Voters should make their choice based on their political convictions, and vote in a positive manner for what they want and not to prevent another candidate from winning. Dr Tan maintained his point that it would be difficult for a president who won on a low percentage of votes to stand up to a government with a stronger majority.

On how communications made a difference to the election, Mr Tan said that the televised debates made a difference in voter outreach. Mr Goh said that new media was primarily in the English language, and might not reach the Mandarin speaking community and older Singaporeans. In addition, the importance of face-to-face interaction could not be ignored even today. Dr Tan said that this was about making use of media opportunities offered, and that not all candidates fared equally well in this regard.

Another participant asked if too much was expected of the role of the EP as it was currently constituted. Some candidates appealed to voters with 'heart-type' emotive qualities, while others possessed 'head-type' qualities in terms of credentials and competence. No candidate in this election had both. Was this then a case for supporting Dr Tan's earlier idea of an upper house, where the president would be freed to play just that one role of being a unifying figure to connect citizens to their country? In his view, Mr Tan felt that the election was not about who had the stronger *curriculum vitae*; it was more about who was able to identify with voters and 'emote'. This accounted for the popularity of fledgling opposition politician Ms Nicole Seah in the general election, which may well signal the slow death of the technocrat.

A participant asked if opinion polling during the campaign would have affected the outcome of the election. Mr Goh and Mr Devan said that constitutional limitations currently prevented the sharing of such polling results during an election. If the findings were publicised beforehand they would change the dynamics of elections significantly so it should be thought-through very carefully.

If you have comments or feedback, please email ips.eneews@nus.edu.sg

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