

Finding our place in the world

Chang Li Lin

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The Singapore I hope to see in 20 years' time would take two forms.

In one form, I see it as a thriving city-state. While physically it remains small, it has the bustling resident population of a medium-sized country because of its attractiveness as a country that celebrates diversity.

In managing the challenging conditions of living cheek by jowl, yet being inclusive and allowing space for individuality, Singaporeans have become well-versed in the art of managing competing needs, trade-offs and holding a consensus view of what it means to be Singaporean.

As a society, they have come to define for themselves, and embrace, a set of core values that will sustain Singapore as a sovereign state. They have also built a strong social compact to uphold these values. Among the key values are the affirmation of the worth of the person, regardless of their race, language, religion, gender, place of origin and abilities.

Flowing from this is a society that functions according to principles that recognise the exponential potential of its citizenry and that has put in place a system focused on building the human capital, to help people excel in their areas of excellence.

A Singaporean, through his basic education, will have learnt multiple languages, been taught about cultures and histories of the many groups of people that now live as his neighbours. He is empowered to navigate and engage with the complex environment that he lives in because he has the cultural adeptness to move among different contexts and interact meaningfully with different people around the world.

In short, Singaporeans will have become comfortable with, and able to manage, the different identities they have.

In its second form, Singapore is a thriving diaspora bound by its commitment to its set of core values.

Imagine many Singaporeans, or friends of Singapore (people who have lived in Singapore, or experienced Singapore and embrace the common expressed values), scattered across the six continents, seeking to live out some of these values and create an impact on others wherever they live.

Diplomats Sought After

With these two forms, Singapore's role in the world is enhanced as it fulfils its responsibilities as a member of the international community.

Highly trained and sophisticated, Singaporeans are valuable cultural interlocutors and technical experts who can grapple with difficult multilateral challenges. Due to its small size, Singapore continues to be viewed as less or not vested in disputes and

thus not a threat; it is trusted, by small states and global superpowers, as an "honest broker" that can build consensus for outcomes that enable peace and stability. Singapore-trained diplomats are much sought after to fill leadership positions in regional and international institutions.

Singapore also contributes actively as a humanitarian country, based on its philosophy of "every human being matters". As a community, it is an active participant in disaster relief and reconstruction efforts. In times of crises, Singaporeans - both at the official and grassroots level - are often one of the early responders to provide assistance and participate in the recovery and rebuilding process.

Singapore's depth of expertise in this area also makes it a destination for other international humanitarian collectives to build their capacity and networks in and through here.

Singapore is also an important centre of excellence in capacity-building for good governance. Here, a range of experience and lessons from around the world in building national institutions, civil society organisations, innovation in policies and so on, are shared, so that it adds to the global capacity for better governance and contributes to the well-being of people of the world.

Most importantly, this Singapore, as a country, society and a diaspora, will be a confident Singapore, forging its own path for the next 50 years.

Chang Li Lin

- Associate Director, Institute of Policy Studies at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

- Has edited books on Singapore diplomacy and the United Nations