



**PRISM**  
Primer

*IPS Prism*

*A scenario planning process designed by IPS to generate multiple perspectives on how Singapore might govern itself in 2022. Just as prisms are integral to how a pair of binoculars works, we hope participants will enjoy the process of taking the long view about our country. Prisms illuminate in new colours, and likewise, the IPS process of co-discovery will offer new insights, ideas and fresh views of old ones to create a series of plausible futures of Singapore that we hope different sectors of society, including the seven represented in our workshops, will find helpful in shaping the future we finally arrive at in 2022.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction: How will we govern ourselves in 2022?</b>	Pg 3
<b>Section One: Possible Challenges for Singapore from 2012 – 2022</b>	
<i>Society</i>	
Population	Pg 5
Social Inequalities	Pg 6
Potential Cultural Fault Lines	Pg 7
<i>Resource Constraints</i>	
Food and Water Security	Pg 8
Energy Security	Pg 10
Supply Chain	Pg 11
Epidemics and Pandemics	Pg 12
<i>Security</i>	
Terrorism	Pg 13
Cyber Threats	Pg 14
Social Media	Pg 14
Environment	Pg 15
<i>Others</i>	
Emergence of ‘Disruptive Technologies’	Pg 16
Geopolitics and Development	Pg 17
<b>Section Two: Exploring Difference Governance Systems and Philosophies</b>	
Majoritarianism	Pg 18
Proportional Representation	Pg 19
The Civil Service	Pg 23
Civil Participation and Civil Society	Pg 25
Business and the Economy	Pg 26
Role of the Media	Pg 28
National Identity, Demography and Globalization	Pg 39
Social Compact and Welfare State	Pg 30
<b>Appendix: A Synopsis on Scenario Planning</b>	

## [INTRODUCTION]

### How will we govern ourselves in 2022?

- **What opportunities and constraints will we face as a small city-state?**
- **How do we decide on the goals of our society and achieve them?**
- **How do we balance the trade-offs?**

The Singapore General Election 2011 has been described as a watershed year for Singapore, with many questions raised about the future of Singapore's politics and governance. Is greater political pluralism to be expected in the years ahead? Will this result in a more polarised society or will we find a new equilibrium in diversity? Will there be sufficient common ground to implement the critical or strategic decisions our country will need to take?

To answer these questions, we first apply a foresight exercise to envision the world in 2022. In particular, how would society change and what could be the prevailing political attitudes? We will need to consider, too, if the institutions and practices we have in place today will ensure some measure of sound governance as we move towards 2022.

The first part of this document lists a number of *possible internal and external challenges* that might present themselves either singularly or in concert with each other over the next decade.

A discussion about such challenges will help us anticipate areas in which strategic decisions may be needed over the next decade. These challenges may in fact restrict *how* our country will be able to make the strategic decisions in the first place. They give us a sense of the difficult choices between competing demands and goals that lie at the heart of any public policy-making process, or even within the design of governance systems or institutions. For instance, creating a fairer situation for one group of citizens may disenfranchise another group; reinforcing the workings of a particular agency to address a social need may undermine the powers of another to act on some long-standing economic objective; while strengthening a particular political institution may structure the worldview of citizens to make alternative political arrangements, especially if they are called for by future conditions, unimaginable.



What is the governance structure Singapore might need in order to make policy decisions to achieve the optimal outcome on any of the listed issues? Is it even possible to come to a working consensus on what that desirable outcome might be? Why or why not?

### Think

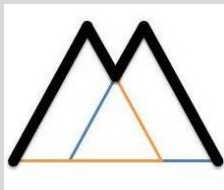
The second section provides a review of the *key ideas that have shaped the thinking on governance systems and institutions* around the world as we consider how the current system in Singapore might change over the next decade. The idea of governance and politics has been divided into seven parts to enable analysis and discussion. Participants may suggest their own method of dissecting the concept that is relevant to the Singapore context. Each section covers a different system or guiding philosophy like a ‘menu of ideas’, to set participants thinking.

Participants may refer to the Appendix of this document to understand the process of scenario planning that is adopted.

## [SECTION ONE]

### Possible Challenges for Singapore from 2012 to 2022

#### Society



#### **Population**

Population and demographic change usually counts as one of those 'known knowns' in the scenario planner's work. In the case of Singapore, much discussion has gone into the trends in low fertility, high life expectancy, an ageing workforce and increasing dependency ratios: one in ten today are over 65 years of age, and by 2030 — all other things being equal — one in five will be in that age category.

The implications of population and demographic change may be a rise in social spending at both the household and national levels, and it is more likely to be acutely felt in the former where each working person may have to support, *in extremis*, two generations of elders. While a working person may be compelled to work harder and earn more, at the macro level, the economy could suffer a severe shortage of manpower and a dip in its vitality in comparison with the past.

At the policy level, Singapore has been adopting a relatively liberal immigration and foreign labour policy to augment its labour force, in addition to actively boosting productivity and innovation in the economy as well as fertility among the population. As Singapore generally experiences low resident unemployment, the immigration and foreign labour policies address the shortfall in labour given an assumption about what our desired level of economic growth and well-being ought to be, given also, assumptions of productivity among its factors of production. The policies ensure the quality of labour needed to bring about a transition to higher value and value-added economic activities is available. The idea is to invite better-educated and endowed foreigners to help the economy move up to the next level of innovation and value. In recent years, the immigration and foreign labour policies have led to disquiet about the cultural impact of the large numbers of foreigners, and the allegation that they depress wages at the low to middle spectrum of labour.

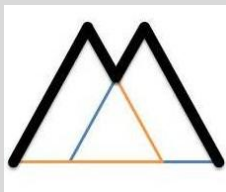
IPS population scenarios (Yap *et al.*, 2011) suggest that if the resident total fertility rate were to rise from the current 1.15 to 1.24 births per woman in 2030, and 30,000 net migrants were added to the population each year from 2005 to 2030, Singapore might be able to maintain a relatively stable proportion of people in the working ages of 15 to 64 to the rest of the population. Demography and how it will be addressed is a multi-faceted challenge with policy choices to be made between economic performance, social provision and the social-cultural complexion of society — and therefore has significant implications for governance.

## Population Size and Growth

Year	Number, (as at June) ('000)					Average Annual Growth <sup>1</sup> (Per Cent)				
	Total Population <sup>2</sup>	Singapore Residents			Non-Residents	Total Population <sup>2</sup>	Singapore Residents			Non-Residents
		Total	Singapore Citizens	Singapore Permanent Residents			Total	Singapore Citizens	Singapore Permanent Residents	
1980	2,413.9	2,282.1	2,194.3	87.8	131.8	1.5	1.3	1.6	-4.5	8.0
1990	3,047.1	2,735.9	2,623.7	112.1	311.3	2.3 <sup>3</sup>	1.7 <sup>3</sup>	1.7 <sup>3</sup>	2.3 <sup>3</sup>	9.0
2000	4,027.9	3,273.4	2,985.9	287.5	754.5	2.8	1.8	1.3	9.9	9.3
2005	4,265.8	3,467.8	3,081.0	386.8	797.9	2.4	1.6	0.8	8.6	5.9
2006	4,401.4	3,525.9	3,107.9	418.0	875.5	3.2	1.7	0.9	8.1	9.7
2007	4,588.6	3,583.1	3,133.8	449.2	1,005.5	4.3	1.6	0.8	7.5	14.9
2008	4,839.4	3,642.7	3,164.4	478.2	1,196.7	5.5	1.7	1.0	6.5	19.0
2009	4,987.6	3,733.9	3,200.7	533.2	1,253.7	3.1	2.5	1.1	11.5	4.8
2010	5,076.7	3,771.7	3,230.7	541.0	1,305.0	1.8	1.0	0.9	1.5	4.1

- 1 For years prior to 2005, growth rate refers to average annual growth over the last ten years. For 2005-2010, growth rate refers to growth over the previous year.
- 2 Total population comprises Singapore residents and non-residents. Resident population comprises Singapore citizens and permanent residents. Non-resident population comprises foreigners who were working, studying or living in Singapore but not granted permanent residence, excluding tourists and short-term visitors.
- 3 Growth rate based on 1980 and 1990 using de facto concept.

Source: Singapore Department of Statistics: Census of Population 2010 —Advance Census Release, p. 3. <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/pubn/popn/c2010acr.pdf>



### **Social Inequalities**

Singapore is a global city and a nation-state at the same time. While it operates as a logistics and financial hub for international trade and commerce, it is as much a home that requires a diversity of economic and social activities to ensure that economic growth is inclusive and the sense of national unity and identity is strengthened. With its exposure to the global economy and its position as a 'price-taker' (where, being a small economy, its transactions does not have a big impact on the global market), its economic structure, skills and education profile of its people have resulted in income distribution being rather unequal when compared to other developed countries, though perhaps not to other global cities, not Singapore's own history. Historical data is difficult to come by but writing in 1975, economist Pang Eng Fong noted that the Gini coefficient of household income for 1973 was 0.4. (An index closer to zero denotes perfect income equality in a population, and closer to 1 is gross inequality. The Gini Coefficient for Singapore in 2011 was 0.482.) While Pang explained why there was little social tension in spite of that high level of inequality in 1975, and arguably this is still the case in 2012, what do we envisage might happen over the next decade? How will it affect governance and politics?

Since Independence, the People's Action Party (PAP) government has focused first on ensuring that there were absolute improvements in real income and social development for its citizens. It tried to ensure relatively equitable distribution of public goods through heavy state subsidies. However, since the mid-2000s, there has been growing public concern that income distribution has worsened, and that social mobility has slowed such that each generation finds it more difficult to enjoy the improvement in standards of living and quality of life when compared with the previous generation. There is also worry that the social compact between citizens and the government has shifted too much towards co-payment, corporatisation, and private provision of what were previously public goods, such as healthcare, housing, education and transportation. The argument from critics is that one has to be relatively well resourced to afford what is needed to achieve social mobility and a reasonably level of quality of life today. The Gini coefficient based on household income from work per household member in 2011, excluding contributions to Central Provident Fund (CPF), stood at 0.482.

This issue cuts to the heart of governance — as a technical matter, but also as the essential function of governance. The structure of society is admittedly complex and difficult to change. However, Singapore society is one that does not have deeply entrenched rifts, castes or classes, where citizens are familiar with an activist state, the structure of society can still be modified. The social compact, as it evolves over the next decade, will depend on whether citizens will be comfortable with an unequal society that allows for the maximum scope of choice and opportunity or if they prefer a more egalitarian society with larger demands on social responsibility where the state provides universal affordable public goods and citizens in national solidarity, bear the burden of contributing fiscally to their corporate well-being. Public intellectuals have highlighted that a society that promises equality of opportunity cannot be achieved in a deeply unequal society. Clearly, dealing with social inequalities will shape social harmony. How this is done will hinge on the citizens' conception of what a 'good society' is. This will ultimately define what Singapore stands for as a nation.



**Potential  
Cultural Fault  
Lines**

A lot of Singapore's social, cultural and political systems have been developed around the fact that the population residing in this dense island state is multi-racial and multi-religious. Its history has demonstrated how race and religion can be used either on their own but more potently, together, for a political agenda and to cause social disruption. With immigration, further cultural and social diversity is being introduced even if new citizens and permanent residents are attracted from Mainland China or the Indian Sub-continent. They may be of the same broad ethnic category of the main groups in Singapore but beyond that, they tend to manifest significant cultural difference from local-born Singaporeans of today. The face of Singapore in 2022 could be a very different one which increases the level of complexity to anticipate when we think about governance in a decade from now.

While many Singaporeans especially younger citizens wish for a positive vision of how cultural diversity and vibrant faith-based communities should be celebrated, the state and government leaders often caution for the careful management of ethnic relations and religious sensitivities. These are often characterised as 'fault lines'. In 2011, the President of the country spoke of preventing the relationship between locals and foreigners from becoming yet another fault line.

In order to facilitate social and political inclusion, the PAP Government has tweaked the political system to ensure representation of ethnic minorities in Parliament through the Group Representation Constituency (GRC) system. Citizens and permanent residents who are owners of Housing & Development Board, or HDB flats are organised under the ethnic quota system so that people of different ethnicities and origins are represented evenly in among those who own and occupy homes in public housing estates. The languages of the main ethnic groups are taught as second language in schools as the state's support for cultural heritage among younger generations of Singaporeans. Ethnic self-help groups have been established to mobilise the leaders, resources and cultural capital to uplift the disadvantaged within their respective communities if not even beyond them. The state has



Sentosa's Many Faces One Story Museum

also developed an elaborate network of inter-religious and racial confidence circles in all constituencies who champion cross-cultural understanding and provide grassroots leadership should any social disruption happen. On the other hand, there are forces that are swiftly bringing change to Singapore's cultural landscape. Immigration and inter-marriage have increased the level of diversity in our population. As an indication,

40.6% of all marriages in 2010 were between citizens and non-citizens. In that year, 17.5% of marriages under the Woman's Charter, and 33.3% of marriages under Muslim law were inter-ethnic marriages. This would mean that that the pre-existing categories of ethnicity and religion will increasingly be questioned. The first accommodation of this 'diverse diversity' is seen in a new provision for parents of children of inter-ethnic unions to list two ethnic identities in official registration, with the caveat that they should state their primary identity first.

An important question here is whether social harmony in Singapore will be better secured by clearer categorisation or by the blurring of categories. Will Singapore be able to promote multi-racialism where one continues to be identified by the four main ethnic categories? How will the strength of identity around ethnicity compare with that which arises from religion, country of origin and being 'Singaporean'? What are the changes in the system and guidelines around these identities that are necessary?

### **Resource Constraints**



#### ***Food and Water Security***

Not commonly nor intuitively perceived by many as a security issue, many of us in Singapore tend to take food security for granted and assume a continued variety and availability of food here. We have also come to expect a certain standard of safety in what we consume. Our near-total reliance on food supplies from outside our borders is something that bears deeper consideration. Similarly with water, it is taken for granted that the government ensures that the taps run smoothly and on demand whether for domestic or industrial use and that its price will be kept affordable.



With regard to food, this vulnerability is compounded by the fact that there are the multiple external actors and trends that impact food security beyond Singapore's direct control. Natural disasters such as pestilence, floods, droughts and diseases could result in disrupted food supplies or cause price instability. Climate change exacerbates this uncertainty. These scenarios have the potential to spark panic or tension amongst the population and erode the trust between the population and the government. Food supply would have to be secured at source as well as at the processing and delivery stages, and food safety requires an even tighter regime of control on suppliers.

## Food Imports and Per Capita Consumption

### Per capita consumption

Per Capita Consumption	2009	2010
Item	2009	2010
Chicken (kg)	31	32
Pork (kg)	19	20
Beef (kg)	4	4
Duck (kg)	3	3
Mutton (kg)	2	2
Fish (kg)	23	21
Vegetables (kg)	94	96
Fruits (kg)	69	67
Hen eggs (pcs)	300	309

Eg. Chicken consumed per capita - 32kg  
 Multiply 32kg by 5,076,700 (2010 Population) = 162, 454 Tonnes

We import almost 100% of our food supply.

### Food imports

Food Imports		2009	2010
Item		2009	2010
Chicken	Tonne	160,693	169,221
	\$'000	414,590	461,737
Ducks	Tonne	13,561	14,514
	\$'000	56,638	57,994
Pork	Tonne	96,268	103,368
	\$'000	414,507	451,645
Beef	Tonne	27,897	31,872
	\$'000	160,213	192,639
Mutton	Tonne	10,740	9,280
	\$'000	58,245	68,175
Fish	Tonne	154,291	153,195
	\$'000	691,856	766,624
Vegetables	Tonne	486,184	489,638
	\$'000	449,133	498,671
Fruits	Tonne	365,300	361,816
	\$'000	454,345	490,758
Hen eggs	Tonne	69,880	73,226
	\$'000	124,789	132,042

Source: Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore – “Per Capita Consumption” and “Food Imports” <http://www.ava.gov.sg/Publications/Statistics/>

The challenge is to ensure that there is a consistent supply, as well as a buffer and emergency stockpiles, to cushion any sudden shortfall in critical food stocks. Singaporeans may need to adapt to alternative food selections if long-term shortages occur.

With the expiration of the water agreement with Malaysia in 2061, the NEWater project and future expansion of desalination plants will account for 50% and 30% of the nation's water demand, respectively. However, the threat of insufficiency remains real. Desalinating water will require newer technology in order to reduce energy consumption, and water conservation through reservoirs depends on the amount of rainfall, an act of nature that lies beyond human capacity. There are suggestions on how to design systems to capture rainfall in the urban environment on rooftops of buildings, and even the roads. The demand side of the equation will require a lot of trust and cooperation of households and businesses should a supply crisis arise. Tough choices will be needed and compliance to rationing or pricing to mitigate supply disruptions cannot be assumed.



A NEWater Pipeline in one of the 4 NEWater plants  
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### ***Energy Security***

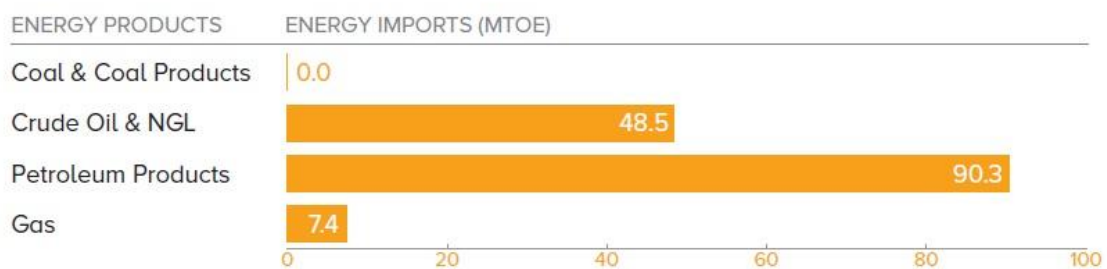
Singapore's economy would invariably require energy to power everything from communication to transportation, to security and information systems as well as the desalination plants that it is hoped will supply a large part of the water the country needs. Hence, securing long-term energy supply is a critical national requirement. Besides being subjected to physical disruption by state or non-state actors, threats to energy security can also include significant global price fluctuations or the arbitrary or calculated imposition of price increases by an oligopolistic or monopolistic supplier. How does industry and state work to manage this vulnerability?

## Energy Import Figures

### ENERGY IMPORTS

Singapore imports all fuel required for her energy needs. In 2009, Singapore imported 146.1 Mtoe of energy products. Being a major oil refining and trading hub in the region, the main imports were petroleum products and crude oil & natural gas liquids (NGL), which constituted 61.8% and 33.2% of total energy imports respectively.

Total Energy Imports By Energy Products 2009



Source: Energy Market Authority – Singapore Energy Statistics 2011 Page 10. <http://www.ema.gov.sg/media/files/publications/SES2011.pdf>

Beyond price manipulation, energy could be threatened by the suspension or termination of supplies, physical damage to the energy infrastructure either of the supplier or of the importer as a result of natural events, misfortune, terrorism or warfare. Energy infrastructure is also increasingly reliant upon computer systems that could fall prey to cyber attacks.

There is also intense world competition for energy resources with the increased pace of industrialisation in rapidly expanding economies such as India and China and other emerging economies in the region. In the long-term, alternative sources or methods of generating energy will be critical in ensuring that supply is accessible, safe, secure and sustainable. It is not clear what are citizens' expectations about how the burden to achieve that should be split between state and industry.

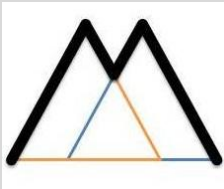


#### Supply Chain

A supply chain is a system of organisation, people, technology, activities, information and resources involved in delivering a product or service to a customer. Invariably, the continued viability of Singapore's collective supply chain ensures the delivery aspect of our food, energy and other critical resources to the island. Disruption of this chain due to man-made or natural calamities would result in delays or non-delivery. Hence, all manner of transportation — land, maritime and aviation into and out of Singapore that constitutes the logistics of delivery — would be deemed critical, and require both protection and redundancy. Given our dependency on external resources as discussed above, this issue of maintaining Singapore's capability and capacity as a logistics hub is recognised for its key strategic value for the country's survival.

Shipping presents a soft target, particularly after the massive tightening of global airline security following 9/11. Perhaps the main maritime vulnerability is the ease with which large, slow-moving oil tankers and cargo ships can be targeted by fast explosives-laden dinghies or speedboats in suicide attacks. Politicised forms of piracy — here loosely defined as acts of piracy that include some political demands aimed at achieving more than just ‘private’ gains — remain a closely watched issue. Pirates continue to evolve and refresh their tactics and targets in order to remain elusive and lucrative.

Logistics systems are therefore attractive targets for their centrality and public nature. The sheer complexity of transport systems, involving multiple commercial and public-sector entities and often operating in overlapping legal and regulatory jurisdictions, presents formidable security and more generally, governance challenges. Often security needs to be weighed against operational efficiency and the imperative of keeping business costs low.



### ***Epidemics and Pandemics***

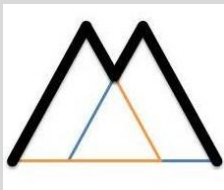
Another area of non-traditional threats are emerging and re-emerging diseases with epidemic or pandemic potential. This threat also needs to be framed within the context of Singapore as a logistics hub — via air, sea and road. The international traffic into Singapore makes people and logistics system vulnerable to viruses like Influenza H1N1 and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) as can be seen in the recent past when even Singapore’s Changi Airport was a ghost town at the height of the crisis. Increased rates of mortality and illness would place strains on public health and the workforce, which could lead to political instability and economic volatility. An outbreak among security or defence forces would also cripple Singapore’s ability to defend itself from other internal and external threats. Past crisis have been short-lived but that may not be the same of future ones.

## **Security**

With increasing globalisation, prevention alone will not suffice in handling epidemics and pandemics. Preparedness needs to be added into the equation at different levels, with right and robust coordination. Preparedness is also costly especially if the public debates the cost relative to the likelihood of something threat taking place in our backyard. While a lot of the same can be said of the challenges listed in previous sections, this threat can have direct and immediate impact on lives and therefore lead to severe social and political disruption.

Our own national experience has taught us that handling such challenges requires a whole-of-society effort, from detection to response, from monitoring to mitigation, and certainly, to enforce a strict regime of quarantines before returning to normalcy. This rests either on a shared sense of social responsibility or robust regulation. Will Singapore have either?

In addition, support for transnational collaboration in research on such diseases needs to continue even in the absence of imminent emergencies, so that the appropriate measures are available either to interdict the entry of such diseases into Singapore or to mitigate an occurrence.



### ***Terrorism***

Despite recent successes by security services around the world at mitigating the threat of terrorism, terrorist acts are likely to remain an issue through to 2022. Motivations behind such threats may or may not change, but tactics, weapons and targets will certainly continue to evolve. As long as the use of terrorist methods remains a viable and attractive option, there will be no shortage of disenfranchised and extremist groups that will resort to them to gain an advantage, even a fleeting one, over the power of established authorities. While certain terrorist groups that have loomed large over the past decade begin to lose their influence, it is safe to assume that new ones would emerge and very likely, from unexpected quarters. An even greater fear is the 'lone wolf' terrorist who will almost be impossible to identify without support and insights from members of the public who may have encountered the lone wolf.

As authorities heighten protective measures in one area, terrorists would frequently adapt their methods, shift their targets to retain an upper hand. The kinds of weaponry used by terrorists will also determine the extent of disruption and psychological trauma, and these can range from radiological, chemical, biological and nuclear threats.

Combating terrorism requires reliable and timely intelligence, the use of which, technological or otherwise, often runs against the grain of libertarian sentiments because freedom and privacy of individuals may be curtailed in the name of broader security concerns. The acceleration and expansion of society's technological sophistication may also bring with it new vulnerabilities that can be exploited by terrorists, be it in critical national infrastructure or in financial networks.



Singapore Armed Forces soldiers patrolling Changi Airport

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### **Cyber Threats**

The worldwide information revolution has been accompanied by the rise of new domain-related threats, such as cyber-terrorism and cyber-warfare, and innovative incarnations of old problems, such as cyber-espionage, financial fraud and identity theft. Being one of the ten most connected cities in the world today; Singapore faces its associated vulnerabilities.

The draw of cyber-attacks lie in the ubiquity of the Internet, its ease of use and most importantly the fact that it allows relative anonymity and deniability as compared to conventional 'kinetic', or physical attacks. The most common reason for successful cyber-attacks continues to be human negligence or failure to comply with acceptable usage policies (AUP). As people, companies, governments and militaries worldwide become more interlinked and interdependent, the incentives to target networks and digital communications systems and the need for strong cyber-security frameworks and tools will increase. Cyber-attacks allow smaller or weaker entities to mount asymmetrical actions that can cause the critical infrastructure of their targets to fail should attackers have the level of competence.

Actors that carry out cyber-attacks usually do so under a host of different motivations. These include recreational hackers, activists, criminals and state actors. The risk of cyber-attacks increases as the country's inter-connectivity multiplies. Some of the emerging threats, such as data corruption as well as cyber-terrorism, can have costly results, especially when many public infrastructures such as the power grid, communication and banking cannot afford to breakdowns. One of the security priorities remains in ensuring that these networks are secure, trustworthy and resilient, to prevent, detect and defend against attacks and to recover quickly from any disruptions or damage.



### **Social Media**

The spread of high-speed wireless data networks and the development of portable interfaces from smart phones to tablet devices impact the speed of growth for social media, putting the power of information exchange, knowledge creation and social networking into the palm of the individual. Will there be enough common touch points for a nation to communicate with itself, for government and state to connect and mobilise the public to address national issues?

Technological development and business channel innovations are the core drivers of new forms of social media. The penetration of social media on a global scale has been extensive. Facebook alone has some 845 million members as of December 2011, and its projected growth will continue to be exponential. This unsurprising and unprecedented growth of social media — from blogs and online social networks, to virtual worlds and multi-player games, to content sharing sites like YouTube — is presenting new challenges to all sectors of society. The popularity of social media is creating some new security risks too. The availability of personal information is driving new concerns regarding personal physical security, cyber-bullying, identity theft and fraud. The same technologies that enable civil authorities to mobilise disaster management teams and companies to administer their global operations more effectively can also facilitate illicit surveillance at business and governmental levels. The same networks that allow civic interest groups to co-ordinate campaigns and plan events may also allow terrorist networks and anarchists to plan and carry out attacks.



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Recent studies by the US-based SANS Institute showed that some of the content on social networking sites' content might serve as a powerful resource for capturing and correlating intelligence in a systematic way. While Wikileaks' diplomatic cables leak was not the first such example, the magnitude and impact of the fallout are likely to attract and embolden like-minded activists and whistleblowers in future. This will be a concern for governments that have to deal with the aftermath of confidential state data leaked into the public domain. One clear implication is in the area of international diplomacy where certain negotiations between countries may be jeopardised due to premature disclosure leading to public disapproval. It also represents the power of citizens and political activists to hold state agencies, businesses or public organisations that compromise public interest, accountable. There may also be other vulnerabilities that we have yet to realise; that people have yet to devise.



### ***Environment***

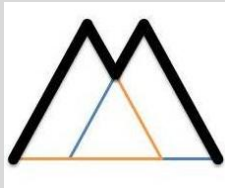
Even as Singapore continually seeks to enhance economic opportunities and living standards, there is also a need for us to address environmental threats that could undermine our abilities for longer-term economic growth and development.

The challenges to environmental security are multi-faceted. Having regulatory measures that curb undesirable greenhouse emissions or other pollutants could run counter to efficient business operations already in place in many industries, especially where operating margins are low as it is, and will be affected. Transportation costs could be affected too if there is a more aggressive regime to price carbon emissions.

Another challenge is the sustainability of key but fast depleting resources that would be needed by our economy. Support and representation for international conservation regulations are in the interest of Singapore, even though resources may lie outside

Singapore's immediate environs. Contemplating alternative energy sources that may benefit to Singapore, such as nuclear energy, will necessarily involve an assessment of potential risks. The institutionalisation of holistic planning — taking into consideration necessary safeguards and redundancies at every level — will provide assurances not only for Singapore but also for neighbouring countries. The environment is clearly an area that attracts a significant amount of direct interest and advocacy by citizens and civil society groups, and this can only grow as the world discusses and experiences the effects of climate change.

## Others



***Emergence of  
'Disruptive  
Technologies'***

'Disruptive technology' occurs when a technological development creates for itself a new market and a corresponding network of social and technological resources to support it. This then displaces that of an earlier entrenched technology. In this sense, disruptive technology often brings innovation that is unexpected. It creates new consumer behaviour and fundamentally changes the way we do things.

Some of the more significant disruptive technologies could really be game-changers, which in turn would have an impact on various parts of society. These would affect governance. Some of the more foreseeable trends that could arise from disruptive technologies would be the increasing democratisation of certain technologies that were previously unattainable to a private individual. D-I-Y bio-technology, human augmentation, and 3D printing are just some examples of over-the-horizon disruptive technologies that could take root within the next decade and be expected to cause no small impact on society. Without going into too detailed a projection, their implementation, if not managed prudently by the state or through proxies, could allow criminal and extremist elements to use these technologies to circumvent conventional security measures; could cause social or class friction within societies (i.e., the 'haves' versus the 'have-nots'); or could drastically and even irreversibly alter certain key sectors of the economy. Excessive or blanket regulations governing such technologies may not be viable either, and options surrounding selective and specific regulations with public-private co-operation may be more palatable to keep the country and economy on top of trends.







***Geopolitics and  
External  
Developments***

As a small nation-state, we are often affected, be it directly or indirectly, by the actions and interactions of larger neighbouring, regional and international players. This will remain the case despite our active foreign policy to constantly improve and sustain our international position. Attempting to forecast geopolitical events or foreign policy actions of the many key players that will shape Singapore's diplomatic and economic space would be a futile exercise. Nonetheless, generic developments such as growth, co-operation, competition, conflict and migratory patterns will all have some measure of impact on Singapore's national security. Emerging geopolitical tensions and non-state security challenges will no doubt implicate Singapore's international position, internal resilience and strategic interests.

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## [SECTION TWO]

### Exploring Different Governance Systems and Philosophies

This second section is divided into seven segments — *Political Leadership; Civil Service; Citizenship Participation and Civil Society; Business and the Economy; The Role of the Media; National Identity, Demography and Globalisation;* and lastly *Social Compact*. These segments demonstrate the core aspects of any governance system. They contain theoretical ideas and alternative models based on experiences in other countries and systems to ignite thinking about Singapore’s future governance and political landscape. With each section, participants will have to ask themselves how the current system has come to be what it is, what is the extent of path dependency that Singapore is subjected to, but also how it might or should evolve to respond to the future with the sorts of challenges that have discussed in the first section of this document. These articles therefore aim to provoke thinking outside of the usual assumptions of how the key pieces in our governance and political system might operate ten years from now.



**Governance  
Systems**

Democracy is, in its simplest and ideal form as expressed by Abraham Lincoln, the rule of the people, for the people and by the people. Democratic governance systems are therefore often judged by the extent to which they are representative of the citizens, accountable to them and serve the common good of the polity. The institutions of rule of law, elections and avenues for public scrutiny and discourse, as well as the outcomes of public policy and government are assessed by this ideal.

### **Majoritarianism**

Robert Dahl highlights the debate over ‘majoritarianism’, the idea that government should represent ‘the majority’, a common principle amongst all democracies (1989, 156-157). That on its own is not as simple as it sounds as there is the inherent risk that a democracy could descend into mob rule or the ‘tyranny of the majority’, where the interests of the minority comprising fully equal citizens can be consistently quashed in the worst-case scenario.

There are different ways of operationalising this principle of majoritarianism. In Singapore, we are familiar with the notion of establishing a simple majority in our general elections: through a ‘first-past-the-post’ system, the duly elected Member of Parliament is established in each constituency and the party that forms the government is based on that which has the majority of seats in parliament. There are many jurisdictions that favour the proportional representation system, where parties receive their seats in the assembly according to their percentage of the vote they polled.

The latter seeks to balance the notion of representation with the concern towards the majority or representatives of the majority being locked into their ascendant position for all too long. This is the concern of the scholars who argue that all societies and organisations will ultimately be led by a minority or an elite few, even in a democracy (Mosca, 1923, 39.; Michels, 1962, 85 - 92.; and Mills, 1956.).

In this instance, political parties and powerful business elites form a ruling class that dictates the political agenda in their interests. This ruling oligarchy will in turn produce a set of social mores that favour certain cultural capital — a preferred profile, social manners and norms by which society establishes who qualifies for power. Such discussions seek to investigate conditions that exist in reality. To illustrate, white male Anglo-Saxons who are born in an elite family in a certain country may behave in ways (i.e., accent and fashion) that are perceived as acceptable to the elite and recognised as suitable leaders by the general public. For that reason, they are given more opportunities to education and access to the ruling oligarchy of business and to the political elites to arrive at their leadership positions.

Dahl disagrees. He challenges the extent to which elitist rule by a minority is inevitable in a functioning liberal democracy. He argues that the ideals of representativeness and accountability, or majority rule, will be inexorably strengthened through elections that are that as we know, democracy ensures that the ‘will of the people’ prevails. He believes that power is dispersed in society, and there are in fact many ‘centres of power’. Decision-making is not concentrated in the hands of a few as the elitists would argue but is diluted and decentralised among civic and community leaders, businessmen, bureaucrats, local politicians and individual citizens exerting influence in the polity. He called this a “pluralist” democracy.

In such a regime, lobby groups and interest groups aggregate and represent their varied interests far better than bureaucratised political parties. Dahl argues that it is through these interest groups that representation is achieved. They check the power of political parties and serve as alternative platforms for the expression of views and interests and shape decision-making.

However, E.E. Schattschneider argues that the “pressure system” (i.e., interest and lobby groups) is very unlike parties (1960, 31). He argues that the pressure system is mostly dominated by business interests that is rich powerful elites lobby and fund interest groups and reeks of an upper-class bias. On the other hand, parties are more representative since they have to garner votes and are consequently forced to appeal to and represent a larger spectrum of society 35-36).

Together, this section raises two crucial issues — first, whether interest groups will play a significant role in the governance of Singapore and political parties less so, where perhaps elections do not matter so much as the political discourse and lobbying that happens in between elections; and second, whether such pluralism, seen elsewhere is desirable, especially if policy decisions might be swayed by well-endowed interest groups with the general public being none the wiser ?

### **Proportional Representation**

In contrast, some scholars argue that pluralism is beneficial to upholding the principle of representation in a democracy. Arend Lijphart argues that in plural societies (with diverse communities), a proportional representation system, is optimal since all groups are adequately represented in the legislative assembly in a power-sharing model (1977, 113 - 114. He argues that coalition governments (i.e., multi-party systems) are stable because even though there are sharp cleavages in the groups of people and interests they represent,

the elites in these coalitions form consensual and cohesive leadership in a “consociational” democracy (1969, 213 - 214).

However, there have been several critics of Lijphart’s model. Scholars argue that some cleavages in society — perhaps the fault lines referred to in the first section to this document — may instead lead to greater political instability, and that his model, mostly based on the Dutch experience, may not apply to all countries (Barry 1976, 395 – 396) For instance, in Anglo-Saxon countries, there is often a politics of envy (or “tall-poppy syndrome”) where elites bicker and jostle for political power so that as a result, consensus is rarely reached in a hugely polarised electorate. Moreover, some of these cleavages may be politically constructed; for instance, the ‘fault lines’ of race, religion and country of origin can be politicised to suit the interests of different actors and may in fact bear no societal significance apart from what these actors make them out to be.

Most importantly, others argue that in such a consociational democracy, the process of decision-making may be impeded, as all segments must come to a long-deliberated consensus before proceeding. Furthermore, for a liberal democracy, where the idea of an opposition in parliament is to serve as a check on the ruling government, if all parties in power were to seek to come to a consensus (and parties take on identical forms) and similarly sing the same tune for the sake of agreeing amicably, then this collusion amongst parties might soon become an elitist upper-class structure that ultimately does not adequately represent the masses. These are the considerations around what a multi-party system of governance entails.

In contrast, Giovanni Sartori discusses aspects of factions and factions within parties (1976, 71–106). Even within parties, there are factions of ideology, motivation and interests. These are usually organised into intra-party sub units. Evidence from many countries proves that there are organised factions within parties where perhaps different influential families or business groups serve as power brokers in a political party. It is not uncommon for parties to splinter into different groups led by counter-elites. Indeed, Sartori argues that in some countries, factions, not parties, are the true political unit for representation, which is the case in Southern Italy. This is significant for Singapore’s “pre-dominant party system” (1976, 84). Factionalism, decadence,



Taiwan’s Kuomintang rallying for support on the streets  
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corruption and complacency can plague such systems, for instance the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in Japan, the Kuomintang (KMT) in Taiwan and also the Social Democratic Party (SAP) in Sweden. In some of these cases, the dominant party fragments into splinter parties, albeit all sharing similar political principles. In others, the party system becomes polarised such that parties are forced to form coalitions with anti-system parties (e.g., Marxists or anti-system radical parties like anti-immigrant, anti-religious or anti-racial groups). The question for Singapore would be: What is the future of its one-party dominant system — is it sustainable? Why or why not? What are wider ramifications of that? Can we envisage a situation that is not a one-party dominant system? What would it be and how would it come about?

Sven Steinmo illustrates the fact that the way political institutions are set up play just as large a role in determining the *policy-making process* and ultimately power in different countries (1989, 522-523). For instance, the US system of checks and balances (i.e., two-party system), separation of powers where the legislature has the right to reject the executive, or president's bill, with a fragmented congress and decentralised lobby groups — has led to much incoherence in policies, citing tax policy as an example. Steinmo argues that these checks and balances of the US system, which were there to ensure that no one power could overwhelm another, ironically means that in a polarised congress, powerful lobby groups such as the American Medical Association, could “throw wrenches into the system” and US citizens are left without universal healthcare for nearly five decades under numerous presidents (1995, 329–372). This occurred even when, year upon year, a majority of US citizens had favoured such a bill.

In contrast, although corporatist countries like Sweden have had an assortment of parties in power, their strong corporatist ties with labour have forced them to make compromises to create a stable, adequately represented and coherent tax policy. Lastly, Steinmo argues that even though a majoritarian party government like that of the United Kingdom might have full executive control over its taxation policies, it had no representation of labour interests which were organised in the Labour Party (1989, 521). Hence, once the loyal opposition comes to power, the new government will seek to modify everything that the previous government had implemented to differentiate their policies from the previous ruling party, sometimes very incoherently and unnecessarily.

Although Steinmo provides a cautionary tale of the impact of what he views as a disorganised political system and therefore balances the arguments for political pluralism, there could be elements of representation that might be desirable for Singapore.

Lastly, aside from political systems and parties, ‘good governance’ or technocracy, is the idea that the process of policy- and decision-making should be rational and dispassionate. Technocracy is seen as using *technical means to resolve problems* for the greater good of society. This idea hence justifies the need for an efficient, well-educated and meritocratic elite bureaucracy and a bureaucratized professional political leadership, in what Erik Bryld calls a “technocratic state” (2000, 703). The idea of a technocracy requires impersonal, professional thinking whereas democracy favours charisma, popularity and responsiveness of policy-making. Good governance or stable, efficient and clean government has often been prescribed to developing countries by the United Nations and the World Bank to improve human development. Recently, China elected many technocrats into its top decision-making Politburo. However, authoritarianism can easily be disguised as a technocracy.

As Singapore's leaders are mostly top bureaucrats believing in emotionally detached policy-making by essentially managerial and sometimes hardly charming leaders, this technocratic idea of governance is likely to be challenged over the next decade. What are the implications of that? In Thailand, for instance, political representatives are usually elected from the rural areas, with very few possessing tertiary education. This is partly the cause of tensions between Bangkok's educated elite and the relatively unsophisticated and rural northerners. Likewise in 1980s and 1990s Taiwan, politicians typically were *heidao* (“mafia”) leaders who mobilised their followers to garner populist votes to enter into legislature. Nevertheless, in both Thailand and Taiwan, the people were represented in a democracy, albeit by political leaders without technocratic expertise.

	<b>Model of Governance</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Brief Summary</b>	<b>Criticism</b>	<b>Example</b>
1	<b>Majoritarianism</b>	<p><b>Robert Dahl</b></p> <p>Sterling Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Yale University, United States</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Government representing majority of citizenry</li> <li>✓ Prevailing “will of the people” through elections</li> <li>✓ Foucauldian conception of power as distributive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Minority unrepresented</li> <li>✓ Setting of dominant culture by long-standing party</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>E.E. Schattschneider</b></p> <p>- Ex-president of the American Political Science Association from 1956–1957</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ “will of the people” represented by interests group with upper-class bias</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Singapore’s first-past-the-post system</li> </ul>
2	<b>Proportional Representation</b>	<p><b>Arend Lijphart</b></p> <p>Research Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of California, United States</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Multi-party system</li> <li>✓ Seats in assembly awarded in proportion to votes received</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Greater propensity for political instability</li> <li>✓ Delay in policy implementation</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Giovanni Sartori</b></p> <p>Emeritus Professor of Political Science at Columbia University, New York</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Factionalism leading to splinter group formations</li> </ul> <p><b>Sven Steinmo</b></p> <p>Chair in Public Policy and Political Economy at the European University Institute</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Focuses on structure of political institutions framing the interplay of political parties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Federal Republic of Germany</li> </ul>



### **The Civil Service**

The civil service, or bureaucracy in its typical form, is a formal, impersonal and elitist-technocratic body of institutions that are concerned with the administration of provision of public goods and government business. But can it ever be neutral as the expectation is that it must be faithful to translate the plans of a duly-elected political leadership into action.

In recent debates, the assumption that public organisations are distinct from the private sphere (in other words, the market or business sector) has been challenged. For instance, George Boyne argues, using empirical evidence, that in terms of managerial values, incentive structure, organisation structure and goals, public and private organisations these days are indistinguishable (2002, 118). Likewise, M. Shamsul Haque observes several business-like reforms in Singapore similar to worldwide trends of New Public Management (NPM), where the civil service behaves like a business (for instance, where public work is quantified by 'key performance indicators') and is downsized through market-oriented policies like outsourcing and privatisation (2004, 68-69). These trends are based on the assumption that the market is efficient as it works through incentives and quantifiable objectives like profit and loss and therefore 'business-like' bureaucracies are going to be generally more efficient, productive, flexible and frugal for the same reasons.



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Haque argues, however, that this has also resulted in the erosion of what is 'public' about the bureaucracy (2001, 68-69). As citizens are now treated as clients, those who are unable to afford public goods may not receive them. Downsizing and the sale of public institutions to the private sector has weakened the government's ability to provide public goods. Also, the lack of distinction between private and public has led to less accountability (since civil servants are given more managerial autonomy) and present the possibility of shady public-business relations (ibid., 71).

These policies are usually justified by bureaucrat-bashing (i.e., politicians accuse civil servants of being inefficient and lazy), which also results in a real loss of talent and morale in the civil service of many countries. For instance, lateral entry recruitment of private sector managers mean that public servants who possess a sense of public duty are usually sidelined for promotions. Also, other measures like shorter employment contracts for civil servants mean a lack of job security. This lingering threat of early termination not only incentivises bureaucrats to indulge in corruption to 'feather their own nest' as quickly as possible, it also lends itself to easier politicisation of public servants since bureaucrats are now engrossed in pleasing their political sponsors (i.e., the Minister) to keep their jobs, rather than to assess proposed policies by how they serve the public interest in addition to other technocratic considerations.

In contrast, V. Subramaniam elucidates a different debate altogether on a “representative bureaucracy” (1967, 1011-1013). Civil servants of most countries are unelected and are subordinate to the interests of the public through their elected political masters (e.g., the Minister). However, as the civil service grows more powerful over policy decisions and implementation, some have argued that bureaucracies should reflect the public, in terms of ethnicity, gender and religion, to be more accountable and responsive to the public that they serve. Subramaniam illustrates arguments for a representative bureaucracy but argues that these social strata (e.g., ethnicity, gender, etc.) do not matter in middle-class societies simply because social class matters more and most bureaucrats reflect their class interests. Other scholars also argue that it is not the *number* of bureaucrats but the *quality and level of influence* these bureaucrats have over policies that matters.

As Singapore progresses, questions over the accessibility and representation of the civil service will be crucial especially if Singaporeans continue to rely greatly on the state for provision of public goods and services. How can we ensure that the civil service is responsive to the needs of the public and yet takes the long-term view of what is important for the future of the country more generally?

Lastly, bureaucracies can sometimes be politicised over time, where civil servants favour a particular policy stance because of their political affiliations with the ruling party or the mere fact that dominant parties have had incumbency advantages that diminish the distinction between party and state over an extended period. This is commonly frowned upon as undemocratic if it is uncovered, as the civil service should remain impartial and be not beholden to any political party’s interests or persuasions. As such, there have been efforts in other countries to depoliticise the civil service. For instance, some countries appoint counter-bureaucracies, such as think-tanks, to produce counter-policy proposals, or elect an ombudsman that is an intermediary between the public and the civil service to ensure that policies are representative of the various constituent interests. How important are such ideas for Singapore?

Thus far, the assertion in Singapore has been that elite civil servants are ‘not neutral but impartial’; they are mostly “pro-establishment” in their preference for technocratic policies (i.e., well-thought technical solutions) and against populist measures (i.e., policies that win votes and undermine the medium or long-term future of the system). This aids policy implementation of the ruling party’s mandate to the fullest. Also, think-tanks might be a drain on state resources when top policy makers in the civil service relinquish their responsibilities to counter-bureaucracies. Others argue that think-tanks might become politicised since those that support a particular partisan view might be bedazzled to receive political funding for their research. Lastly, the election of the ombudsman could possibly diminish the importance of elected politicians in setting the policy agenda.

Chris Eichman and Richard Shaw, however, argue that *institutionalised* politicisation is democratic and helpful, as this allows for partisan officials to have a clear role in the public service and prevents any mixing of partisan and public interests (2008, 354 - 356). For instance, political advisors to ministers not only free up ministers to focus on public duty, they also aid in clarifying the ministers’ positions to top civil servants. Top civil servants are also not encouraged or feel the need to pander to the ministers’ political persuasions as the former are not involved in the partisan political work.

At present, the civil service in Singapore can be said to be politically sensitive to the ruling party. However, whether or not Singaporeans find outright politicisation of the bureaucracy attractive is pertinent when thinking about our future. Should the highest rungs of the bureaucracy be manned by political appointees? Or should it remain technocratic and yet checked by counter-bureaucracies to keep them responsive and accountable to the public and public interest?





### **Citizen Participation and Civil Society**

The idea of civil society begins with an assumption that there is a separation and tension between the state (i.e., political parties and government institutions) and civil society (i.e., a sphere of autonomous groups that are free from state intervention). Civil society is often thought of as comprising businesses, interest groups, clubs, families and religious organisations and communities. What is their likely influence on governance over the next decade?

B. Guy Peters argues that the state should “roll back” and “steer not row”, or intervene less, and let the market and civil society govern; power should be returned to the people (1997, 53). The term “governance” thus becomes a process that engages many stakeholders in society, not just the government, in administering the affairs of the state. Several models of governance are discussed — “societal governance”, “network governance”, “network management” and “decentralised rowing” (ibid., 56-58). Similarly, R.A.W. Rhodes details more models of governance, “corporate governance”, “New Public Management”, “good governance”, “socio-cybernetic system” and “self-organising networks” (1996, 653). These models are especially relevant for understanding the possibilities of models of governance in Singapore’s future.

The question is: What is the role of the citizen in those possible future scenarios? Arthur Schafer acknowledges that in “democratic elitism,” elites will ultimately rule and that the masses lack political competence to make their own decisions (1974, 493). However, he defends “participatory democracy” and explains how citizens should participate and the limits to such participation by using environment policy-making in Canada as a case-study (ibid. 495).



Supporters cheering as ex-exco of AWARE are ousted  
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Likewise, Terence Chong also argues that citizens’ participation in Singapore’s civil society has been defined differently by different actors (2005, 8). He identifies five narratives that exist. First, that civil society ought to be “civic” (i.e., apolitical and non-confrontational to conservative values of society and the dominant ideology of the state). Second, civil society is envisioned by some to be an intellectual society of educated elites contesting and challenging the state’s discourse over culture and societal values. Third, a “consulted public” where the state provides avenues of discourse, for instance, through the official feedback unit (now called Reach) in a controlled setting. Fourth, the “active citizen” or forms of “voluntarism among the better-off in order to tap community-based resources to help the needy and disadvantaged.” To this, Chong argues that this ideal faces many challenges in Singapore especially when they come into conflict with the government’s interests. Fifth, “reciprocal state-society” where synergies of independent groups are harnessed by the state to further development goals and are “able to engage with each other when their interests converge and disengage when they diverge.”

Chong uses the example of the collaboration between a theatre company, The Necessary Stage, under the government's theatre-in-education scheme (TIE) to explain this point.

Concepts of 'new governance' and the expanding role of society in governance are described by Vivien Lowdnes and Helen Sullivan, authors of one of the academic articles behind the UK's Big Society Policy in 2010 (2008, 59). In this article, "neighbourhood governance" in the UK is explicitly described with different case studies, from neighbourhood forums to the neighbourhood election of street stewards to integrate newcomers, from managing affairs of the neighbourhood in partnership with city councils to implementing state programmes. These new roles that citizens at the neighbourhood level may participate in daily governance (and national issues) are pertinent as we think about Singapore. Can we envisage these roles for the citizen in this country over the next decade?

Kenneth Tan argues that greater citizenry participation may come from greater liberalisation of the grassroots sector, or local neighbourhoods, in Singapore (2003, 16-17). Traditionally, the grassroots have been used for mass political support, the co-opting of traditional leaders, women and youth, for surveillance and control, as a mouthpiece for government policies, as a government feedback channel and, lastly, as a source of manpower, logistics, organisational and information support. Tan argues three reasons why the government will have to open up and liberalise, and three reasons why the idea of "civic society" is more favourable (ibid., 13–15). Finally, he contends that Community Development Councils could be locally elected by their communities, although the government has reservations about this. As a result, the government appoints even more elite civil servants into the grassroots sector, and bureaucratising it in the process.

These ideas involving the role of citizens are crucial in understanding the way governance will potentially evolve in time to come.



### **Business and the Economy**

Heavily reliant on export-oriented global trade and foreign labour, Singapore prides itself as a financial hub with industries ranging from manufacturing to services. However, despite being a global city, Singapore is mostly a state-led capitalist economy with a plethora of government-linked corporations and state-guided entrepreneurial firms, with a strong emphasis on control over its fiscal and monetary policies. Moreover, it places a profound emphasis on economic growth with most of its socio-economic policies aimed at promoting a healthy work ethic and self-reliance, and spurring upward social mobility to empower a globalised knowledge-based economy. Additionally, labour relations are managed in a corporatist structure where labour unions are organised under an umbrella organisation (the National Trades Union Congress, or NTUC), to bargain and reach a consensus over business and labour interests (e.g., working conditions, salaries and other employment disputes). How will this tight web hold over the next decade? Is it desirable that nothing changes?

In the "Road to Serfdom", Friedrich A. Hayek famously articulates the renowned neo-liberal mantra: that government should not intervene in the market-economy, an idea not unlike the ideas of Milton Friedman and Adam Smith (2001, 37-38). Summarised in a series of cartoons, this theoretical piece asserts several unnatural consequences from the intervention of the government in planning the economy. In Litan, Baumol & Schramm, four models of capitalism (their advantages and disadvantages) are succinctly explained. First, *state-guided capitalism*, with which Singapore shares many similarities. Second, *oligarchic capitalism*, one that is similar to state-guided capitalism but whose policies and wealth

benefit only the elite-class. Third, *big-firm capitalism*, an oligopolistic system with a few large companies dominating the domestic market. Lastly, they argue that *entrepreneurial capitalism*, where many entrepreneurs rapidly innovate and commercialise their new products and technologies, is the most desirable (2008, 92). They argue that resistance to change and innovation is partly because people in advanced economies have become too comfortable and unwilling to take risks. Will Singapore be ready to accept other forms of capitalism or continue to rely on the state in future? Are we also ready to accept the political disadvantages that come with different models of capitalism?

Undoubtedly, the main goal of most capitalist economies has been to accumulate wealth and material goods as a way to individual well-being and human development. Growth has been the underlying principle behind economic governance in Singapore where the government forms a strong social compact with its citizens through the promise of 'delivering the goods'. Nonetheless, this emphasis on growth may prove to be unsustainable in economic governance, as many around the world have rejected the idea that growth by measure of an increase in gross domestic product, or GDP, is a suitable indicator of well-being. They prefer to track the distribution of growth, on social development indices to look at the social impact of growth and distribution and now even indices of well-being and happiness are being developed to reflect what thinkers believe should be the ultimate aim of economic growth. However, Litan et al. not only tackle these assumptions, they also argue that growth allows the economic pie for all to expand, mitigates the effects of an ageing population and also promotes social cohesion amongst different segments of people (2008, 15-16). Whether citizens will continue to accept this as a performance indicator of economic governance will have to be established later. This might result in new ways by which Singapore will continue to govern itself.

Nevertheless, Ronald Inglehart argues through case studies in Japan, Germany and European economies that as societies develop economically, they face permanent generational changes in norms and values (1981, 883-886). He argues that post-war boomers, because of the circumstances of the past, tend to emphasise "materialist" values such as economic stability and are more interested in material goods like jobs and economic growth. The subsequent generations however exhibit "post-materialist" values.



A Night shot of Marina Bay Sands  
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These post-materialist citizens are more attracted to ideas of socio-political change, are not averse to disruption and damage to trade and property in their quest for social justice and political action and lastly, also tend to take the 'material' for granted.

This argument poses questions about the future of economic governance in Singapore, including how state-business relations are regulated in the corporatist structure. Lucio Baccaro challenges the idea that a corporatist structure, where the state recognises only a few unions as legitimate and forms a partnership with these peak associations, is necessary for "concertation" (i.e., consensus and compromise) (2003, 684-685). Using Ireland and Italy as examples, he argues that even as the corporatist structure collapsed due to politics, concertation and agreements were nevertheless secured through democratic policies *within* the unions that allowed more participation of workers, instead of traditional closed-door bargaining between only the union leaders and politicians. The question now is how economic governance, business relations and labour relations will be managed in the future, especially if the state begins to intervene less in the economy and labour.



### **The Role of the Media**

In ideal democracies, the media is the ‘fourth estate’, and as argued by Sheila Coronel, often normatively accorded the role of ‘watchdog’ to scrutinise the excesses of government as well as to function as a forum for discussion and building a consensus (2003, 1-3). Coronel contends that a “free press” is therefore presumably a tool for greater representation in a democracy. With the power to publish now extend to the palm of the individual, and the enormous choice of platforms and communities the public has in who and how they want to associate with, what are the common touch points by which citizens meet, learn about what is taking place in their country, or even define what is in the common interest?

Cherian George asserts that the Singapore government’s hold over the mainstream media means that it presently faces a “credibility issue” (2012, 3). He further argues that should people be able to exercise greater scrutiny over the government through an unbiased media that does not side with the government 100% of time; this would increase the credibility of the government and trust for the traditional mass media.

Nevertheless, in 1987, then Minister for Trade and Industry and present Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong had argued that the greater liberalisation of the media here would jeopardise moral values and encourage political and racial strife. In addition, the ruling party has often argued that elected politicians, not journalists, should decide the national agenda and prevent it from distortion through sensationalism (i.e., gutter politics, scandals and outrageous satire) and a chaotic marketplace of ideas. Others like Wendy Borkhorst-Heng add that centralised newspapers in Singapore perform a nation-building role by maintaining social and political stability amongst others (2002, 560-565).

Yet other observers argue that the centralisation of the press (i.e., control over the mainstream media via legislation) has allowed the government to push through its policies effectively through the mobilisation of the masses since Independence, as well as better apply crisis governance during the SARS crisis in 2003.

More recently, the use of social media has opened up the political space for greater pluralism of values and ideas on the media platform. Being one of the most connected and media-savvy countries in the World, any relaxation of state regulation of the mainstream media, will likely change the way governance is conducted in Singapore.



A visit to Facebook Headquarters by the public. Obtained and reproduced with permission from Flickr – Scott

Lastly, Singapore society may be seen, at least theoretically, as going through phases of “mediatisation”. Jesper Stromback argues that all societies can be classified into *four different phases* with the fourth phase being the zenith (2008, 239 - 240). In the first phase, people do not rely much on the media to understand politics. Also, media content is reliant on political actors and political actors actively using the media as a tool to shape opinions, but these are only part of the range of other tools. In the last and final phase, however, all “social activity assumes media form,” with social and political actors internalising “media logic” (ibid. 239-240). In this final phase, the media subordinates all society and politics. Politicians “permanently campaign” (by taking on a media form) and all

society relies predominantly on the “mediated realities” (where perceptions formed by the media) rather than actual reality.

In this sense, the media itself is no longer a platform, but acts like an institution, with an independent logic. In a recent study by Trisha Lin and Alica Hong, younger voters tend to rely more on the mass-media, especially new media, as their main source of political information (2011, 17-18). Few actually relied on personal experience or interpersonal relations (e.g., writing to a member of parliament or attending a political rally) to form their opinions.

Also, younger voters tend to trust new media more than the older generation, although the mainstream media was still generally trusted by the young. As such, Singapore seems to be somewhere on the spectrum of mediatisation and questions on the probable role of the media in governance and society is thus of utmost importance.



**National Identity,  
Demography and  
Globalisation**

A nation is often defined as an ‘imagined community’ of people who share a similar history, language, culture and ethnicity. Singapore, however, is a plural, diverse society in a young independent state. For decades since Independence, much of the Singaporean identity has been crafted by the ruling party, the PAP. Social cohesion and a sense of national identity, upheld by the ideal of equal opportunities through meritocracy and social mobility, became a primary base of legitimacy for the dominant rule of the PAP. What are the threats to this and how will it affect the way we define the goals of governance?

Randolph Kluver and Ian Weber examine these efforts at building a national identity in Singapore (2003, 371-373). Indeed, one of the greatest ironies of Singapore is that it aims to artificially construct a ‘nation’ (i.e., a socially cohesive patriotic citizenry) that strives to be a ‘global city’ riding on the global economy — promoting free trade, pro-growth, open borders and flow of people and information from overseas — and also promotes elements of multiculturalism (e.g., ‘Chineseness’ for the Chinese). Although some of these ‘globalisation’ strategies indeed helped Singapore to achieve political stability and economic growth, they have led to a weakening of social bonds, which are critical for patriotism.

It is in this same context of globalisation that Kenneth Tan (2008) questions the idea of meritocracy. Meritocracy is supposedly one of the pillars of good governance, with the best talent wooed to run and rule Singapore and where the government promises equal opportunity for social mobility to all, regardless of ethnicity, language or religion. However, meritocracy is not without its contradictions. It leads into the formation of social classes and exacerbates inequality. Most importantly, with increasing globalisation and exposure to the global economy and foreign competition, he argues that an under-class of Singaporeans is increasingly unable to experience social mobility. For instance, the well-educated and well-to-do are better able to find employment overseas. They are ironically also more empowered to seek citizenship elsewhere (the so-called ‘quitters’) and also break their scholarship bonds, for instance. Hence, locals will therefore be less likely to “rally around the government” even as the government struggles to remain attractive to global capital. Tan ends his argument portending a perilous future for Singapore.

Since Singapore cannot survive isolated from the world — or can it? — The question of how to manage immigration, foreign talent and transient workers is crucial in discussing the future governance of Singapore. In David Sam and John Berry’s 2010 study, they illustrate the strategies both immigrants and the dominant population use in their interactions with each other.

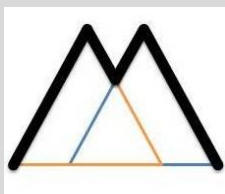
They call this interactive process, “acculturation” (Berry, 2010, 472 - 473). Four acculturation strategies emerge for immigrants — assimilation, separation, integration and marginalisation. *Assimilation* occurs when individuals reject their minority culture and adopt the cultural norms of the dominant or host culture. *Separation* occurs when the dominant culture is rejected in favour of preserving their culture of origin (such immigrants often form colonies or enclaves). *Integration* occurs when individuals are able to adopt the cultural norms of the dominant culture while maintaining their culture of origin. Integration leads to and is often synonymous with biculturalism. *Marginalisation* occurs when individuals reject both their culture of origin and the dominant culture.



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These same strategies may be used by the larger society. In a melting-pot society, in which a harmonious and homogenous culture is promoted, assimilation is the endorsed strategy. In a segregationist society, in which individuals are divided into racial groups in daily life, a separation strategy is espoused. In a multiculturalist society, in which multiple cultures are accepted and appreciated, individuals are encouraged to adopt an integrationist approach to acculturation. In societies where cultural exclusion is promoted, individuals often adopt marginalisation strategies of acculturation. Sam and Berry champion the integrationist model as most favourable and highlight the psychological and cultural significance this has on social solidarity.

Catherine Makino (2009) reports that in Japan, the ageing population is in dire need of elderly care facilities, and this has sparked off recent debates in Japan over its strict immigration policy into its homogenous population and questions on whether replacement migration, such as the one argued in the 2008 UN “Replacement Migration” Report, should be an option to solve its low birth rates (UN Population Division). Singapore shares many similarities with Japan, an ageing population and increasing ambivalence about the government’s immigration and foreign worker policies due to feelings of insecurity by locals along with the congestion that is being experienced by their large numbers. The acculturation strategies should be useful in considering how to address the presence of the foreigner in Singapore.



**Social Compact  
and the Welfare  
State**

The resilience of Singapore’s state-society relations and stable governance is mostly underpinned by the idea of a social compact between its citizens and government. The PAP government has eschewed welfarism and instead embraced a culture of self-reliance buttressed by a dogged belief in a strong work ethic and a fear of dependency on the state for welfare support. It has at various points provided generous state subsidies for the provision of public goods to the population, but over the past decade it has preferred to allow for the market to provide these as well. How will the social compact between the state and people evolve and will the current ruling party adapt to those demands from the ground.

For a brief introduction to this topic, Anthony Hall and James Midgley illustrate the different types of social security, where they define it chiefly as “government programmes

that provide cash payments known as income benefits to defined groups of people” or generally, “income support” (2004, 233–261). They also explain why some countries historically provide social security whilst others shun the idea. For instance, the Poor Laws in 18th century England were formative in shaping the idea of relief workhouses and income support for the poor in Anglo-Saxon countries. However, these workhouses soon became squalid institutions with many of those who could actually find employment nevertheless receiving social assistance. This partly explains why the US shuns universal welfare today. Hall and Midgley buttress their analysis with social security coverage trends in recent history — what shaped them, and what challenges these trends will face in the future. For instance, the challenges that countries face over privatised social security and government regulation are particularly insightful.

No understanding of the welfare state can be complete without Gösta Esping-Andersen’s “Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism” (1990:40-41). According to Karl Polanyi, societies fully exposed to market forces, labour, land and money are fully commodified, or made into commodities (Polanyi 1957, 71 - 80). Esping-Andersen contends that the welfare state reduces the deleterious effects of market forces, a term he calls “decommodification”, where the individual is made less reliant on his labour (e.g., unemployment, social assistance, pensions, etc.) for his sense of well-being. By identifying and studying the relationships amongst variables such as state, class, individual and family to the market economy, three typologies of the welfare state are identified in his argument — *Liberal* (US), *Corporatist* (Germany) and *Social Democratic* (the Netherlands and Sweden) with the Liberal having the least amount of decommodification and the Social Democratic model having the most.

The liberal model relies mostly on stigmatising welfare provision and providing particularistic, or targeted, welfare to specific groups of needy people. Private, not public, schemes provide for much of the coverage for health, housing, old age and retirement savings.



New Yorkers protest against Wall Street bailouts  
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 A. Golden

In the corporatist model, the family is seen as the first line of defense against the market and welfare policies are made to support families and social status. In the social democratic model, the state manages large social programmes and welfare is universal (i.e., provided to all regardless of their income); for instance, completely free education and health, with high taxation.

Esping-Andersen argues that inequality is heightened in the liberal model with least poverty reduction although this inequality is a driver for the American work-ethic. He argues that the social democratic models seem to affect the highest levels of poverty reduction and income equality although he notes that this is in a context of a homogenous society with a high level of social cohesion.

Ian Holliday (2000) argues however, that one more typology exists on this spectrum — a Productivist East Asian Model. Holliday contends that countries like Singapore are indeed similar to welfare states although they differ with the earlier three models in how their economic policies incorporate social policies. For instance, he argues that these countries plan their social policies (i.e., subsidised public housing, public education and public health) to aid economic policies. Incentivising productivity, social mobility and the ability of the individual to tap on the global market, is in fact the way to decommodification. These

alternative models are extremely useful when attempting to renegotiate the social compact in Singapore.

Lastly, the politics behind the Swedish welfare state is described by Sven Steinmo (2001). He argues that there remain many misconceptions surrounding the Swedish model, for instance, the myth that large corporations and capitalists are taxed more to distribute to the working classes. Instead it is the richest of the working classes who are taxed to aid the working class in general. The capitalists continue to enjoy many benefits to bring in jobs and innovation. Politically, the decline of the corporatist structure (along with more confrontational unions) led to the weakening of the political authority of the executive core of the Social Democratic Party (SAP) in the government. The government and the civil service were unable to make unpopular decisions without facing strikes or breakdowns in production. Over time, the SAP had to initiate an explosion of social spending and they also had to make bigger demands on employers who had begun to internationalise their businesses.

Even so, many liberal-centrist parties began to frame the idea of “social democracy” differently. They claimed that the concept of social democracy should be one that gives priority for Swedish people to compete in the global economy and to attract investors (through low taxes for the capitalists); wealth will then be redistributed or used to cut back on welfare to save costs. This debate ultimately led to the collapse of the SAP’s dominant party status in 1991. Ironically, the new centrist coalition government could not reach a consensus over taxation policy, which led it to cut taxes (both labour and capital) across the board, which in turn resulted in taxation that was underfinanced and social spending that had to be slashed. The Swedes re-elected the SAP into power in the subsequent election and rallied around paying high taxes, receiving high social spending and therefore, having a big government that intervenes in many spheres of public life.

These articles are significant for two reasons. First, that politics is intricately linked to the sustenance of the welfare state. Second, that ideas of social democracy and welfare state have been framed differently by different political actors even within ‘social democratic’ states. This begs the question of how Singapore would define its idea of a ‘welfare state’ and renegotiate this social compact with the government in future.

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The logo for IPS Prism was designed by Mr Andrew Lim, an intern at IPS, and third year Sociology student of the Nanyang Technological University. The triangles within the 'M' represent prisms. Blue and Orange are the corporate colours of IPS and the National University of Singapore.



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