

**Academics and Public Intellectuals Sector Workshop Report**

**Changi Village Hotel Quad 1: 5 – 6 July 2012**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

1. IPS Prism is a platform for Singaporeans to think about the future and how we will govern ourselves in 2022. A series of seven workshops were conducted over June and July 2012. This is a report of the workshop featuring academics and public intellectuals.

2. At the workshop, participants were invited to form teams that convened to discuss how Singapore might evolve over the next 10 years and what the driving forces of change might be for various scenarios.<sup>1</sup>

### Method

3. All teams in the Academics and Public Intellectuals Sector Workshop opted for the deductive approach to developing their scenarios. Scenarios were deduced from sets of driving forces that were deemed to be highly plausible in the future. By forming a matrix of these driving forces, each team produced four sets of scenarios, with each scenario fleshed out by a description on the state of governance and at least one hypothetical media headline. The teams also discussed a strategy for governance at the end of the workshop. Finally, the scenarios were put to a vote, to select the most plausible as well as challenging set.

### Driving Forces

4. Driving forces are defined as trends in the external environment that drive the plot of our scenarios, have an impact on the future and determine the outcomes. They are usually outside the immediate locus of control of one group or organisation, and would impact all the constituents in the system in one way or another.

5. In this workshop, the most widely-adopted driving force contrasted the prospect of Singapore remaining an open, global city with that of Singapore becoming closed and parochial. Another common driving force was whether the world in 2022 would be dominated by a single political and economic model or by multiple political and economic ideologies. Yet another driving force that was used by several groups was the state of the social compact between the government and the people. These were described in differing perspectives: through value systems, the redistribution of benefits, individualism-versus-communitarianism, national cohesion and adaptability of institutions.

### Strategy for Governance

6. A participant also suggested splitting Singapore into four “states” as a way to manage governance in 2022. The central government could be made up of elected officials from the four “state governments”, and would handle Singapore’s military and foreign policy. This would provide diversity and

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1. Please refer to the Appendix for the list of participants.

reduce Singapore’s vulnerability to poor leadership and sudden calamitous events.

**Winning Scenario**

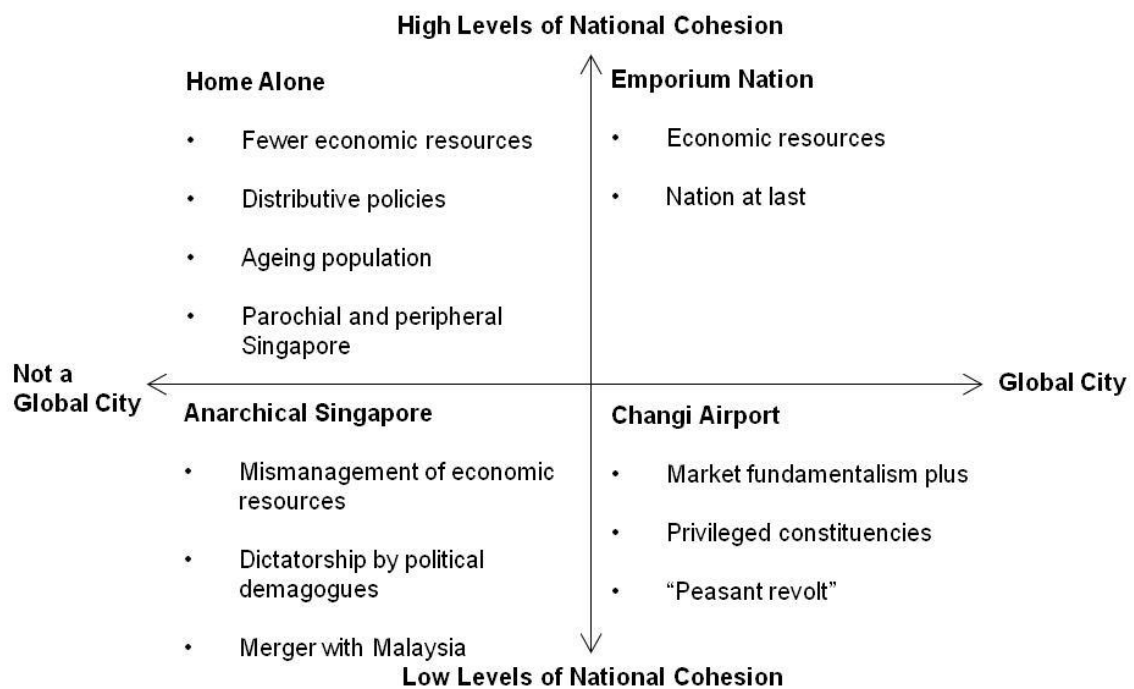
7. The workshops concluded with a discussion on future strategies in Singapore’s governance. The participants then decided through a vote that Team 2’s scenarios — contrasting the driving forces of a homogeneous globalised world with one comprising multiple political and economic models; and a strongly meritocratic world focused on economic growth with one that is more collectivist and focused on equitable growth — were the most plausible and challenging set.

**THE SCENARIOS**

**Team 1**

8. Team 1 examined the extremes of two driving forces: one was the degree to which Singapore is a global city, the other was Singapore’s level of national cohesion. Figure 1 shows a matrix of these driving forces resulting in different scenarios.

Figure 1. Team 1 Scenarios



**Home Alone**

9. In this scenario, Singapore is characterised by parochialism and a high level of national cohesion. As a result of moving away from being a global city, Singapore’s economic growth slows and state reserves diminish. Singapore faces the pressure of redistributing the limited benefits of lower growth as well as the pressure to engender a more open government. More redistributive

policies will be put in place, but Singapore is less open to labour and capital inflows. It is a “Singapore for Singaporeans”.

10. The headline Team 1 developed for Home Alone was “Last batch of Filipino maids leave”.

### **Emporium Nation**

11. Emporium nation represents a utopian state. In this scenario, Singapore is characterised as a globalised and cosmopolitan city with a high level of national cohesion. Initial setbacks before attaining this state includes pressure on infrastructure and social inequity. This leads to the questioning of the social compact between the people and the government, resulting in a new government structure. The new structure enables the government to arrive at far-reaching solutions for the country while maintaining an inclusive society that looks after the disadvantaged. Every sector of society is able to have their concerns represented and addressed by this new government. New migrants to this country respect the existing residents and aspire to integrate and strengthen the country’s sense of national identity.

12. The team also created the following narrative to describe this scenario.

13. Once upon a time, there was a happy and contented country that aspired to be a global city in a developed world. Each day, the citizens would sing the praises of the government that they trusted to perform and to “deliver the goods”. However, one day some citizens discovered that all was not well. Problems in infrastructure and social inequality led citizens to question the social compact between the people and the government — in particular, whether it was a good idea to leave all the decisions about how the country is run in the hands of a few so-called wise men and women.

14. In response, these wise men and women commissioned the even wiser men and women of the Institute of Policy Studies to design a new government structure in consultation with all the other wise men and women of the land. The new government structure gave the government the elbow room to devise far-reaching solutions for the country while maintaining an inclusive society that looked after the weak and encouraged the striving. Every sector of society then felt that their concerns were represented and addressed by this new government. The new arrivals to this country respected the existing residents, and wanted to become like them to strengthen the country’s sense of national identity. Since then, the nation and the global city were able to operate as one in a new model that was the envy of the world.

15. The headlines the team developed for Emporium Nation were “Coalition returns to power in GE 2022: share of votes increases due to good stewardship and inclusive growth” and “Youth issues find representatives in Parliament for the first time”.

### **Changi Airport**

16. This scenario represents a transitional state, as opposed to an end point. It could be called “market fundamentalism plus”, where the practice of

market fundamentalism is taken to an even further extreme than the current status quo. The government represents the class interests of a particular constituency. A “peasant revolt” whereby citizens react to the unfair social compact occurs. If the government in power is able to properly reform the social compact, Singapore could move from this scenario to the utopian Emporium Nation scenario. If the government does not succeed in doing so, Singapore could move from this scenario to the Anarchical Singapore scenario (see the following description of the Anarchical Singapore scenario).

17. The headline Team 1 developed for Changi Airport was “Orchard Road in flames, intellectuals man the barricades”.

### **Anarchical Singapore**

18. This scenario describes a closed Singapore with a low level of national cohesion. Singapore is little more than a “fishing village” here and its national reserves have dwindled. Life is increasingly difficult as people fight over a shrinking pie. In this situation, political demagogues arise as individuals look for solutions to the national malaise. These political demagogues eventually become dictators that rule Singapore. Re-merger with Malaysia becomes a likely solution to Singapore’s problems.

19. The headlines Team 1 developed for Anarchical Singapore were “National reserves wiped out!” and “Desperate times call for desperate measures”.

### **Team 2**

20. Team 2 contrasted the driving force of a homogeneous globalised world with that of a world with multiple political and economic models. Here, the “globalised world” pole is one in which countries are characterised by strong market norms and where there is a general convergence in national economic and governance models. The “multiple models of governance” pole is one in which countries diverge in terms of how their societies are organised and in how they choose to govern themselves. At this pole, there is a rejection of the “Washington Consensus” and an emergence and recognition of multiple governance models, such as China’s model of state capitalism. The “multiple models of governance” pole represents a more diverse, complex and heterogeneous global order, while the “globalised world” pole represents a more uniform world with harmonised global standards.

21. The second driving force was the balance that society strikes between growth and redistribution. The “winners” pole represents a society that is individualistic, consumerist and driven by meritocracy, and that believes the “trickle-down” effect from growth is enough to provide for those lower down the income ladder. On the end of the pole, “the rest” is a more collectivist, citizen-driven society that focuses on redistribution and fostering a more equitable economic and social order.

Figure 2. Team 2 Scenarios



**G.A.P.**

22. G.A.P. stands for “Government above People” or “Growth as Paramount” and is characterised by an adherence to the “Washington Consensus” and to an individualist social compact. It is a situation similar to one that prevailed in Singapore before the 2011 General Elections, where economic growth was paramount. Here, the mainstream media faces declining credibility. Whether this situation is sustainable remains a question.

23. The headline Team 2 developed for G.A.P. was “Ten years — still no change”.

**T.A.P.**

24. T.A.P. stands for “Trusteeship and Patronage”. Singapore is currently moving to this quadrant from the G.A.P. scenario. Here, the government still believes in the global capitalist model, but political pressure from “the rest” forces it to introduce redistributive policies. A capitalist ethic exists, yet redistribution acts as a salve to the public, insulating it from the harsher effects of capitalism. However, there is no redistribution of political power. It remains centralised in an all-powerful Cabinet. The government finds it difficult to define its legitimacy, as there is no consensus in society on what sort of performance measures it should meet to deserve and retain its mandate.

25. The headline Team 2 developed for T.A.P. was “‘Yes, we care. Really.’ PM at nuclear plant opening”.

### **P.A.P.**

26. P.A.P. stands for “People as Priority”. It is a Singapore in which political structures and institutions are rearranged to reflect the plurality of voices and interests among citizens. It is a rules- and rights-based society that is respectful of that plurality. Here, the government has both performance and systemic legitimacy, and this is necessary as it becomes increasingly complex to govern a society that has greater diversity. In this scenario, the government has to be adaptive and build consensus for policies across groups in society.

27. The headline Team 2 developed for P.A.P. was “‘We were wrong’, PM concedes”.

### **S.A.P.**

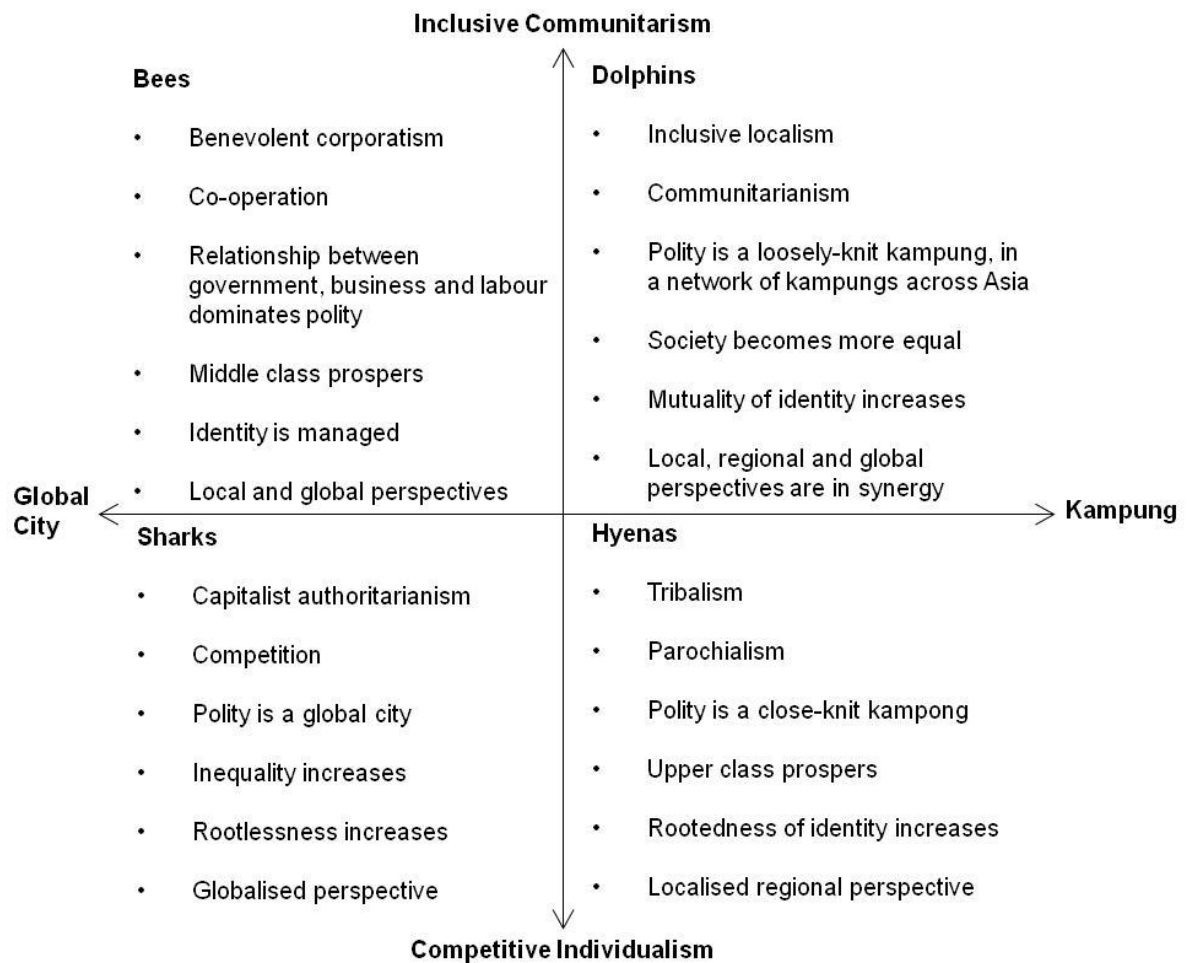
28. S.A.P. stands for “Singapore as Pariah”. In this scenario, the government tries to maintain its adherence to global capitalism but the world moves forward with other models, leaving Singapore as a pariah state. This could be most obvious in ASEAN: if Singapore follows a market fundamentalist ideology under a strong and undemocratic government while other countries in ASEAN become more democratic, Singapore’s position on human rights could become an anomaly even in the region. Issues that become problematic could include Singapore’s treatment of guest workers and dissidents. Singapore may become a sanctuary for the super-rich trying to escape their own countries.

29. The headline Team 2 developed for S.A.P. was “Student protests over Bo Gua Gua for NUS chair”.

### **Team 3**

30. Team 3 compared the choice between a “growth at all cost” and an “inclusive growth” strategy. This represents a choice between the idea of Singapore as a global city and as a *kampung*, respectively. The other driving force on which Team 3 built their scenarios was the value system of Singapore society — the choice between “inclusive communitarism” and “competitive individualism”.

Figure 3. Team 3 Scenarios



### Bees

31. This scenario describes an environment of “benevolent corporatism” in which the government provides for workers, who are in turn hardworking and co-operative. There is a strong tripartite relationship between government, business and labour, and while the middle class prospers, income inequality remains. Identity is also constructed and highly managed.

32. The headline Team 3 developed for Bees was “PM says: ‘We took care of you’”.

### Dolphins

33. This is a situation of “inclusive localism”, in which there is a communitarian ideology. Singapore becomes in that respect, a “loosely-knit” *kampung* in a network of *kampungs* across Asia. Society becomes more equal and the sense of identity strengthens where citizens are willing to reach out to one another. Local, regional and global perspectives are “in synergy” and there is scope for talking about human rights issues.

34. The headline Team 3 developed for Dolphins was “PM says: ‘Nation rejoices — all foreigners have become locals!’”.



## **Hyenas**

35. This is a situation where “tribalism” prevails, where Singapore is parochial and can be viewed as a tight-knit *kampung*. The upper class prospers and the rootedness of the Singapore identity increases to the extent that it becomes exclusive and inward-looking. Here, Singapore has a localised, regional perspective.

36. The headline Team 3 developed for Hyenas was “Nation rejoices — *orang tiong balik tiong kok*” (Chinese migrants return to China).

## **Sharks**

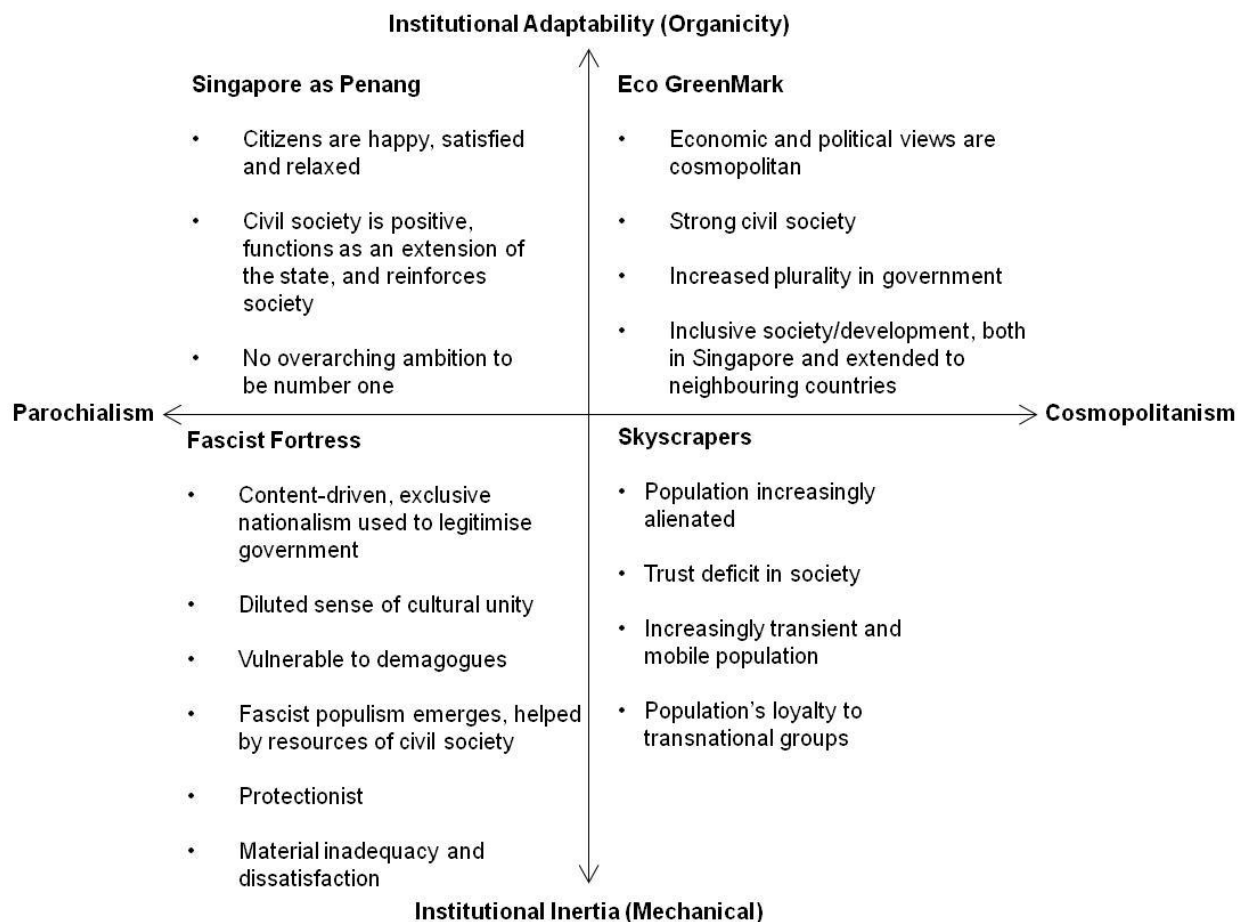
37. This scenario is one of “capitalist authoritarianism”. There is a strong government that focuses on maintaining Singapore’s economic competitiveness. Singapore is a highly competitive global city, with higher levels of inequality and rootlessness. It also has a globalised perspective.

38. The headline the team developed for Sharks was “PM says: ‘Greed is still good’”.

## **Team 4**

39. Team 4 examined different outlooks of the population — parochialism and cosmopolitanism — as their first driving force. Their second driving force compared the ability of state institutions and that of civil society to adapt to changing conditions, where institutional adaptability and organic institutions reside at one pole, while institutional inertia and mechanical institutions at the other.

Figure 4. Team 4 Scenarios



### Singapore as Penang

40. This quadrant represents the “life is a beach” scenario, where Singapore is parochial and yet her institutions are adaptable. While citizens are inward-looking, there is a sense of self-satisfaction, and people are happy and relaxed. There is a realistic acceptance of what Singapore’s condition is, and there is no overarching need to be the best. Here, institutions are organic, sensitive and responsive to changes in society, and civil society functions as a positive extension of the state that reinforces society.

41. The headline Team 4 developed for Singapore as Penang was “Residents of Singapore gather in town halls across the island to discuss dismantling of casinos”.

### Eco GreenMark

42. This scenario is the mirror image of Singapore now — it is a Singapore that is cosmopolitan and has adaptable institutions, as opposed to the Singapore that is cosmopolitan but characterised by institutional inertia (described in the Skyscrapers scenario below). In the Eco GreenMark scenario, Singapore continues to be cosmopolitan in both economic ideology and political ideals — open and shaped to a great extent by international norms about human rights. This produces a strengthened civil society that results in greater plurality and representation of different groups in

governance. A different, more inclusive definition of development is adopted, and this inclusivity is extended beyond those in Singapore to neighbouring countries. There is a greater emphasis on removing “networks of exploitation” and on Singapore becoming a better citizen of the greater global community.

43. The headline Team 4 developed for Eco GreenMark was “A new end to colonialism”.

### **Skyscrapers**

44. Here, Singapore is cosmopolitan but characterised by institutional inertia. This scenario represents a straight-line projection of the situation today. In 2022, the population feels increasingly alienated and the trust deficit between society and the government results in an increasingly transient and mobile population whose loyalties lie with transnational centres and groups.

45. The headline Team 4 developed for Skyscrapers was “Globalisation run wild”.

### **Fascist Fortress**

46. In this scenario, Singapore is parochial and suffers from institutional inertia. Starting from a position similar to that described in the Skyscrapers scenario above, Singapore finds that the trust deficit, instability and the effects of deeper globalisation result in numerous deeper and less easily understood crises. The government is unable to rely on performance for its legitimacy and instead turns inwards and uses nationalism to establish its legitimacy. This new, manufactured nationalism is content-driven and exclusive, and is an attempt by the state to distract the people from the government’s decreasing ability to provide economically for its people.

47. As the population feels alienated, conditions are ripe for the rise of demagogues who ride on this nationalist fervour and mobilise people around fascist concerns. Fascist populism emerges in Singapore and new episodes of moral panic appear in the mainstream and alternative media that feature the typical scapegoats — single mothers, racial minorities, gays and liberals. There is also a comfortable relationship between the state and civil society, with civil society becoming a part of the larger fascistic state, which in turn relies on the resources of civil society to provide for this new, unified nation. Under the veneer of this new, unified nation however, new lines of inequalities emerge.

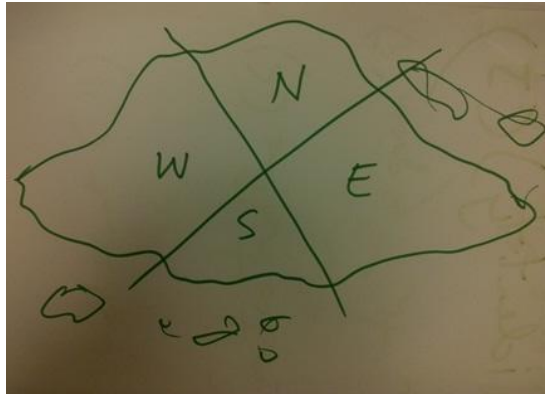
48. The headline Team 4 developed for Fascist Fortress was “Down with Imperialist China”.

### **Discussion**

49. The teams convened to discuss the scenarios. One participant suggested that there has always been a need for diversity and different viewpoints as society is fractious. Singapore should therefore be divided into four “states” that are governed separately. This would engender institutional diversity as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach to governance. A central

government made up of elected officials from these four state governments would then look after military and foreign policy.

50. If the international financial and global situation curtails Singapore's manufacturing and financial exports, an alternative would be for Singapore to "export" itself; this would involve reducing her population and having Singaporean settlements in other countries.



51. Another participant pointed out that care is needed in exporting the "Singapore brand" overseas. An example was given of Myanmar, and how the Singapore model could possibly marginalise and destroy the homes of villagers if it was simply transplanted to Myanmar.

52. The idea of "rurbanisation", where the city and the rural areas are regarded as a single space, and where there is a sense of community, was raised as a possible development path for the case relating to Myanmar.

53. One participant agreed that splitting Singapore into four states might be a good idea, as Singapore's current model is too risky. The participant argued that Singapore currently is too vulnerable and too dependent on good leadership and the ability of the People's Action Party to renew itself. However, another participant suggested that Singapore should instead move towards a "pluralist, multi-model" system. The same participant questioned if the splitting Singapore would mend the current social fault lines or new ones.

54. A participant pointed out that the success of Singapore's model lies in the "eradication of alternatives". For example, if we had retained several *kampung*s, and if people wanted to move back to them, it would suggest that the Singapore model has failed. The proposal to split Singapore into four parts runs counter to this eradication of alternatives.

55. In response, one participant pointed out that the argument was based on the idea that politics is treated as a separate and different category of endeavour; that there cannot be diversity but uniformity. While it is common to argue that Singapore is too small for political choices, the same space is large enough to be zoned into multiple areas for different uses and it is fine to have that diversity when it comes to urban planning. However, Singapore's population is not as small as it seems. The same participant pointed out that Singapore's population is larger than that of about half of the countries in the world and may not be too small to have multiple political choices. The participant expressed disappointment at Speaker's Corner which has not been expanded even when it has not had an adverse effect on businesses and the population.

56. In the absence of a federalised Singapore, participants gave suggestions on the devolution of some power to the local level. Citizens could be allowed to elect their Town Councils and Residents' Committees. In addition, Town Councils could be given the authority to grant public speaking or performing licenses instead of the Media Development Authority. The idea of having local community radio stations was also put forward.

57. A participant noted the interesting convergence in the use of the global and local nature of Singapore as a driving force in the workshop, but wished to highlight one important divergence: Team 2's driving forces, which are "globalised world" and "multiple models of governance", highlighted the absolute need for Singapore to be a global city. In their set of scenarios, it is not the global or local nature of Singapore that is important, as Singapore cannot become a closed country. Instead, it is whether one global reality is dominant, or whether multiple models of governance and economic development will coexist.

58. Another participant suggested that the current bilingual policy should be extended to require Singaporeans to have a third language. The idea of Singapore as a translation centre for all Asian languages was also suggested.

59. Moving to another issue, a participant argued that National Service influences behaviour and attitudes and could be a cause of low productivity in Singapore. The same participant also felt that Singapore's casinos should be closed; these represent an easy model of making money (most of which leaves the country) and could also be a cause of Singapore's low productivity. Lastly, a participant pointed out that productivity could be redefined to give greater weightage to innovation.

## **VOTING**

60. The participants voted on the set of scenarios they felt were the most plausible and challenging. Team 2's scenarios received the highest number of votes. The votes are shown below.

Table 1. Voting results

Team	Number of Votes
Team 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home Alone</li> <li>• Emporium Nation</li> <li>• Changi Airport</li> <li>• Anarchical Singapore</li> </ul>	4
Team 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• T.A.P.</li> <li>• P.A.P.</li> <li>• S.A.P.</li> <li>• G.A.P.</li> </ul>	23
Team 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bees</li> <li>• Dolphins</li> <li>• Hyenas</li> <li>• Sharks</li> </ul>	6
Team 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singapore as Penang</li> <li>• Eco GreenMark</li> <li>• Skyscrapers</li> <li>• Fascist Fortress</li> </ul>	5

## **APPENDIX: LIST OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS**

Dr Cherian George, Adjunct Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Policy Studies; and Associate Professor, Division of Journalism and Publishing, Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information, College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Nanyang Technological University

Dr Evelyn Goh, Reader in International Relations, Department of Politics and International Relations, Royal Holloway, University of London; and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

Mr Kwa Chong Guan, Head, External Programmes, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Assoc Prof Anthony Kwok, Associate Provost (Student Life); and Head, Division of Sociology, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, Nanyang Technological University

Dr Lam Peng Er, Senior Research Fellow, East Asian Institute

Dr Lee Chee Keng, Assistant Professor, Visual and Performing Arts, National Institute of Education

Mr Donald Low, Vice President, Economic Society of Singapore

Dr Norman Vasu, Assistant Professor and Deputy Head, Centre of Excellence for National Security, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Mr Freddy Orchard, Consultant, Government of Singapore Investment Corporation Pte Ltd

Dr Sharon Siddique, Partner, Sreekumar • Siddique & Co Pte Ltd

Prof Su Guaning, President Emeritus, President's Office, Nanyang Technological University

Dr Suzaina Kadir, Assistant Dean (Student Affairs) and Senior Lecturer, PhD (Political Science), Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

Assoc Prof Kenneth Paul Tan, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

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