

Hougang Bukit Batok Pioneer Fengshan Bukit Panjang Radin Mas Potong Pasir
Marsiling-Yew Tee GRC Chua Chu Kang GRC Aljunied GRC Tampines GRC
Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC West Coast GRC Jurong GRC Marine Parade GRC

POST-ELECTION CONFERENCE 2015

Tanjong Pagar GRC Ang Mo Kio GRC East Coast GRC Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC
Holland-Bukit Timah GRC Nee Soon GRC Jalan Besar GRC Sembawang GRC
MacPherson Yuhua Hong Kah North Sengkang West Punggol East Mountbatten

Wednesday, 4 November 2015
Ballroom 1 & 2, Orchard Hotel

IPS **POST-ELECTION** CONFERENCE 2015

Session Two

GE2015:

Parties, Policies and People

Presentation by

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School of Law &

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Centre for Scholars' Development
Singapore Management University



**GE2015:
No Watershed but a Flight to Safety**

*Eugene KB Tan
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IPS Post-Election Conference

4 November 2015

Brief

- **Analyse performance of political parties in GE2015, and the implications of the outcome for them**

Caveat:

Perils of analysing GE2015 as election result confounded expectations of parties, candidates, electorate, analysts, pundits, diplomats, foreign media, and bookies alike

Discerning the hearts and minds of the silent majority

Central Argument

The Pendulum Swings

- **In seeking to outflank PAP, Opposition ended up aggressively outflanking themselves. This drove conservative/middle-ground voters back into the arms of the tried-and-tested PAP**
- **Deep irony is the electorate's very receptivity to more political competition that contributed to the Opposition's blowback, resulting in PAP's blowout win**

Was GE2015 a Watershed Election?

- **Had the makings but did not materialise**
- **PAP clawed back significantly electoral support; Opposition did not build on the gains in GE2011**
- **GE2015 results *sui generis*, like GE2001**

PAP Clawing Back

- **Track record of clawing back seats/overall popular vote when it mattered:**
 - **GE1988: regained 1 seat (from 2), 1.6% fewer votes**
 - **GE1997: 2 seats (from 4) + 4% more votes**
 - **GE2015: 1 seat (from 7 [6]) + 9.8% more votes**
- **6th best performance in terms of popular vote won (after '68, '80, '01, '76, '72); 2nd best performance post-1990**

PAP's Post-Independence Electoral Performance, 1968–2015

Date of General Election	Total No. of Parliamentary Seats	Total No. of Walkovers by PAP	PAP's % Share of Total Valid Votes Cast	PAP's Share of Parliamentary Seats (%)
13 Apr 1968	58	51 (87.9%)	86.7	58 (100%)
2 Sep 1972	65	8 (12.3)	70.4	65 (100)
23 Dec 1976	69	16 (23.2)	74.1	69 (100)
23 Dec 1980	75	37 (49.3)	77.7	75 (100)
22 Dec 1984	79	30 (39.8)	64.8	77 (97.5)
3 Sep 1988	81	11 (13.6)	63.2	80 (98.8)
31 Aug 1991	81	41 (50.6)	61.0	77 (95.1)
2 Jan 1997	83	47 (56.6)	65.0	81 (97.6)
3 Nov 2001	84	55 (64.7)	75.3	82 (97.6)
6 May 2006	84	37 (44.05)	66.6	82 (97.6)
7 May 2011	87	5 (5.75)	60.1	81 (93.1)
11 Sep 2015	89	0	69.9	83 (93.3)

Resilience of One-party Dominance

- **One-party dominance still resilient, subsisting with desire for more political competition, diversity, and checks and balances**
- **3Rs of PAP's political resilience: Responsiveness, Resourcefulness, and Resoluteness**
- **Electorate's preference for incremental political change**
- **Hard work, effort and outcome of policy shifts and people engagement**

Perceptions of Governance

- **PAP's performance legitimacy notwithstanding bugbear issues (strong coincidence of least satisfied & most influential issues)**
- **Election not won during hustings; work between May 2011 and April 2015 and future plans decisive in clawing back support**
- **Trust, confidence, credibility, and goodwill eroded but still relatively robust**

Instrumental View of Issues – POPS (8)

- **Pragmatic view of governance – Efficiency as trumps**
- **Growing resonance of post-material issues**
- **Issues cross-cut accounting for education, housing type, household income, age**
- **Sharp rise of conservatism (political status quo) in GE2015**

Opposition's Misreading Electorate

- **Opposition attempted a time warp to GE2011**
- **Sought to re-create angst, anxiety, and anger of GE2011**
- **Passing of Lee Kuan Yew fresh on voters' minds (icon for status quo/conservatives?)**

Opposition's Coordination Problem

- **Opposition fragmentation intensified by largest number of opposition parties and candidates contesting**
- **Desperation to be even more left-of-centre than PAP**
- **Opposition perceived to be going into uncharted waters, perhaps even undermining Singapore**
- **Perception that much was stake and that change was imminent unless...**

Holland-Bukit Timah GRC (4 members)	49		51
Jalan Besar GRC (4 members)	52	48	
Marsiling-Yew Tee GRC (4 members)	53		47
West Coast GRC (4 members)	58		
Bukit Batok SMC (1x1x1)	58		41
Bukit Panjang SMC	57		43
Fengshan SMC	45	55	
Hong Kah North SMC	54		
Hougang SMC	32	68	
MacPherson SMC (1x1x1)	52	43	5
Mountbatten SMC	48		
Pioneer SMC	58		42
Potong Pasir SMC	46		
Punggol East SMC	40	60	
Radin Mas SMC	60		
Sengkang West SMC	46	54	
Yuhua SMC	55		45

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46

5

52

42

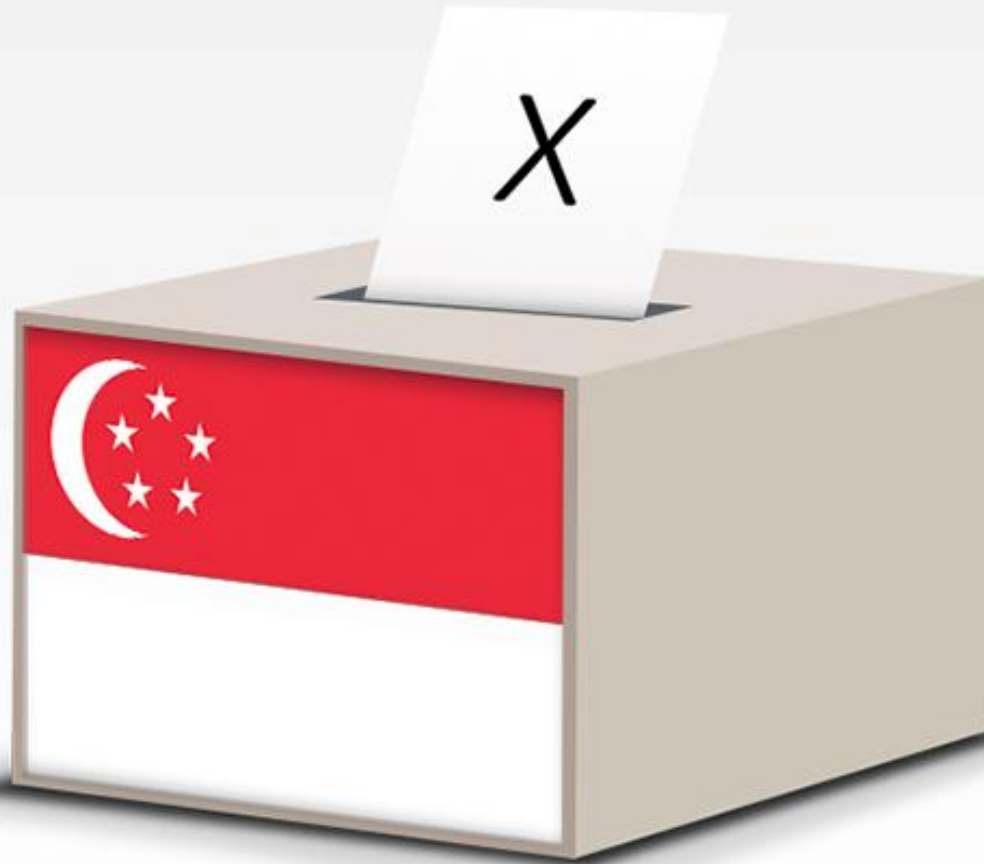
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Flight to Safety

- **Social media frenzy speculating in massive slide in support for PAP**
- **Divergent trajectories of Singapore and Malaysia**
 - **PAP not in dire need of being checked**
 - **SG50 as comforter**
 - **PAP's 'With you, for you, for Singapore'**
- **Economic challenges and regional security concerns**
- **Haze setting in on Cooling-off Day**

Sensing the Voter



 SINGAPORE

**GENERAL
ELECTION
2015**

Political Pragmatism & Behaviour

- **Hyper-pragmatism as (a) self-undermining rhetoric and, (b) barrier to collective action**
- **Affects how people decide to spend resources on politics, and the decisions they ultimately make**
- **Overkill of bread and butter issues: Voters are reminded of issues they are individually concerned about, in turn reducing their willingness to devote money and time and ideas for the public good (Me, myself, and I mindset)**

Political Pragmatism and Conservatism

- **On economic insecurity, which are fundamentally personal, difficult to talk or be mobilised without being reminded about such constraints and vulnerabilities in their own lives**
- **Reminds people of where their priorities ought to lie even if people find them so critically important => preference for status quo, tried-and-tested formula**

Implications for Opposition

- **Discerning electorate: not just any Opposition will do; no clear, viable alternative(s)**
- **Opposition cannot rely on anti-PAP vote or be cesspools of political discontentment; votes must be affirmation**
- **Multi-party system stillborn; putative ersatz two-party system**
- **GE2020 make or break for non-WP opposition – slide to deeper political irrelevance?**

Implications for PAP Government

- **Reassuring victory much needed for PAP – policy implications**
- ***How they govern will likely be the issue at next GE, with economy being at the forefront***
- **Instinctive quest for dominance to be balanced with the electorate's growing belief that political competition, diversity, and contestation are critical ingredients**
- **Challenge of maintaining the huge umbrella of broad, middle ground (PAP more as national movement)**

Implications for Singapore(ans)

- **Arguably, biggest winner of GE2015**
- **Hard task master in retail politics – politics as courtship**
- **Need persuasion for more Opposition**
- **Growing political consciousness, awareness, and knowledge**
- **Rising importance of post-material concerns and issues**

Quaere

- **SG politics & policy options – often less about what to do than how to do**
- **Electoral reforms? PAP's electoral success a function of how it has governed and delivered, not from it being a political machine and having electoral system advantages**
- **4G Prime Minister in the making**
- **Impact on Presidential Election 2017**

Thank you very much!

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