



# SINGAPORE PERSPECTIVES 2020

Politics

## **About the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS)**

The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) was established in 1988 as an independent think-tank to study and generate public policy ideas in Singapore. IPS became an autonomous research centre of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore in 2008. Today, IPS continues to analyse public policy, build bridges between thought leaders, and communicate its findings to a wide audience. The Institute examines issues of critical national interest across a variety of fields, and studies the attitudes and aspirations of Singaporeans through surveys of public perception. It adopts a multi-disciplinary approach in its analyses and takes the long-term view in its strategic deliberation and research.

For more information about IPS, please visit [www.lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips](http://www.lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips).



# SINGAPORE PERSPECTIVES2020

## Politics

Monday, 20 January 2020  
Sands Expo and Convention Centre

IPS is grateful to the following organisations for their support of IPS and Singapore Perspectives 2020.



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# Politics

The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) will hold its annual flagship Singapore Perspectives (SP) conference on Monday, 20 January 2020. The theme of SP2020 is “Politics”. It will reflect on the paths that Singapore has taken and the implications for its political institutions and values, as well as emerging forms of citizenry — to consider what Singapore politics should and/or will be like in the immediate and near future.

## **Programme**

7.45 am – 8.30 am

### **Registration**

8.30 am – 8.45 am

### **Opening Remarks**

Mr Janadas Devan  
Director  
Institute of Policy Studies

8.45 am – 10.15 am

### **OPENING KEYNOTE**

#### **Chairperson**

Mr Janadas Devan

#### **Speaker**

Mr Heng Swee Keat  
Deputy Prime Minister  
and  
Minister for Finance

### **Question-and-Answer Session**

10.15 am – 10.45 am

### **Tea Break**

10.45 am – 12.30 pm

### **PANEL I Paths Taken**

#### **Chairperson**

Professor Tan Tai Yong  
President  
Yale-NUS College

## **Speakers**

Dr Lam Peng Er  
Senior Research Fellow  
East Asian Institute  
National University of Singapore

Ms Zuraidah Ibrahim  
Deputy Executive Editor  
*South China Morning Post*

Mr Bilahari Kausikan  
Chairman  
Middle East Institute  
National University of Singapore

## **Question-and-Answer Session**

12.30 pm – 1.45 pm

### **Lunch**

1.45 pm – 3.30 pm

## **PANEL II New Forms and Movements**

### **Chairperson**

Associate Professor Farish Ahmad-Noor  
Coordinator of PhD Programme  
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

## **Speakers**

Dr Crystal Abidin  
Senior Research Fellow  
Internet Studies  
Faculty of Humanities  
Curtin University

Mr Cai Yinzhou  
Director  
Citizen Adventures

Ms Carrie Tan  
Executive Director  
Daughters Of Tomorrow

Ms Nor Lastrina Hamid  
Co-founder  
Singapore Youth for Climate Action

**Question-and-Answer Session**

3.30 pm – 4.00 pm

**Tea Break**

4.00 pm – 5.15 pm

**DIALOGUE**  
**with Mr Chan Chun Sing,**  
**Minister for Trade and Industry**

**Chairperson**

Ms Lee Huay Leng  
Head  
Chinese Media Group  
Singapore Press Holdings

**Question-and-Answer Session**

5.15 pm

**End**

# Conference Concept

## Overview

As in other societies, Singapore's politics can be described either in terms of the political parties that have competed for power over the course of its history, or in terms of the citizens who have defined our polity and have driven our democratic processes. Naturally, as Singaporeans have become better informed and more engaged in fashioning their own future, the nature of the contest among the political parties has also shifted. This conference seeks to engage attendees in a reflective dialogue on their "experience" of politics, both in the traditional sense of elections and governance as well as beyond those formal structures.

## PANEL I

### Paths Taken

The objective of this panel is to discuss the political landscape of Singapore focusing on the paths taken by different political parties, as well as the impacts of geopolitics on Singapore. As *The Economist* states, Singapore is “the only one among the world’s richest countries never to have changed its ruling party”, an exception noted by political scientists. As the story goes, after the People’s Action Party (PAP) was elected to power in 1959, it has continued to dominate politics in Singapore, as the country moved from “third world to first world”, much to the astonishment of the international community. To better understand the nuances of this national narrative, this panel will address the following questions: Who are the PAP? How would we describe their legacy thus far? How did they get to where they are today? How do we explain their popularity during elections?

To only focus on the PAP, however, would be a disservice to the successes of other actors in Singapore’s political history; right from the beginning, the PAP had to compete in open elections against stringent opposition — from the likes of the Labour Front and other parties all jockeying for power. PAP leaders also had to deal with an internal split, which led to the formation of the formidable Barisan Sosialis around 1961. Who are these opposition parties? What were some of the challenges they faced? What factors led to some of their successes, eg, 2011 General Election? What were the paths that led them to where they are today? What role might they play in the future?

On a broader scale, Singapore’s politics has been shaped by, and is in turn shaping its relations with other countries and its position in the region. How has Singapore’s politics been influenced by bilateral issues? In what ways has Singapore’s politics impacted Singapore’s relations with our immediate and distant neighbours? What are the emerging bilateral and multilateral challenges, and how will they impact Singapore’s politics?

## PANEL II

### New Forms and Movements

While politics is most instinctively associated with political parties, elections and state authority, political dynamics exist wherever there is social life. Local politics has always been affected by non-governmental actors, including corporations, social welfare groups, artists and religious institutions. Singapore has seen more space for these actors to influence society in recent years, as reflected in the government's encouragement of more ownership and leadership from various sectors of society, to complement the role of the state. This panel explores how non-governmental actors make sense of and contribute to politics in Singapore, drawing on insights from the sectors of tech, community welfare and advocacy.

A multiplicity of voices from diverse actors in local society provides forms of mutual support, facilitates conversations and new ideas about pertinent issues, and influences social norms. In recent years, new trends and modes of engagement have taken shape, and with them norms have evolved around how citizens express their views and exercise political agency. Nationwide discussions about matters such as legislative changes, for example, have been propelled through vigorous informal debate on online networks. Strong single-issue organisations have also emerged around specific interests, from LGBT+ rights to climate action.

The speakers will discuss where they see themselves in the political landscape of Singapore, in relation to the general public, other non-state actors and the government. While some broadly seek to facilitate or maintain a healthy democratic society, others have more specific goals of social change. Much of their work involves engaging the government to effect policy change or more gradual social shifts, through consultation and advocacy. How have organisations and actors with different aims worked together to support each other's objectives and negotiate political space? What are the challenges to and opportunities for political participation that they have come across? From their vantage point, what is good politics for Singapore?

# **Administrative Guide**

## **Registration**

All participants will be issued a name tag at the registration counter. Name tags must be worn at all times during the conference.

## **Venues**

Panel Sessions & Lunch - Sands Grand Ballroom (Level 5)  
Tea Breaks - Foyer

## **Dietary Restrictions**

If you have not informed us of your dietary restrictions for lunch, please speak to the IPS staff members at the registration counter about your needs before 10.45 am.

## **Complimentary Parking**

Please approach the registration counter for a complimentary parking coupon during lunch or the tea breaks.

## **IPS Events and the Personal Data Protection Act**

This event is open for full media coverage. All information given or comments made at this conference are on the record, unless otherwise stated.

The personal information provided to us will only be used for event registration and administration. Photos and audiovisual recordings of this event may be used by IPS for education, marketing, promotional and/or publication purposes. By registering for this event, you have consented to the above. For enquiries, please contact Ms Regine Tan at 6601-5730 or [ips.perspectives@nus.edu.sg](mailto:ips.perspectives@nus.edu.sg).

## **Presentations**

After the conference, the speakers' presentations (if available) and video recordings of each session will be uploaded on the IPS website.

## **Social Media**

Connect with IPS on Facebook (@IPSLKYSP), Twitter (@IPS\_sg) and Instagram (@IPS\_sg), and tell your friends about the conference.



## Biographical Notes

**CAI Yinzhou** is the Director of Citizen Adventures Private Limited, a company that aims to bridge gaps between disadvantaged communities and formal structures by encouraging sustainable models for self-organised groups. Starting from 2013, notable social initiatives by his company include Geylang Adventures, Dakota Adventures tours and #backalleybarbers. To date, the team at #backalleybarbers has given more than 3,000 free haircuts to people on the streets of Geylang, nursing homes, migrant worker shelters and rental flat communities. Through the tours and other social initiatives, he hopes to inspire collective action for positive societal change.

**CHAN Chun Sing** is the current Minister for Trade and Industry, Minister-In-Charge for the Public Service, and Second Assistant Secretary-General for the governing People's Action Party. Mr Chan is also Deputy Chairman of the People's Association and the Member of Parliament for the Tanjong Pagar Group Representation Constituency. Mr Chan's previous appointments included Minister in the Prime Minister's Office and Secretary-General of the National Trades Union Congress. Mr Chan also served as Second Minister for Defence and Minister for Social and Family Development. Mr Chan served with the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) from 1987 to 2011. He held various appointments, including Chief of Army (2010 to 2011), Chief of Staff, Joint Staff (2009 to 2010) and Commander 9th Division / Chief Infantry Officer (2007 to 2009). Educated at the Raffles Institution (1982 to 1985) and Raffles Junior College (1986 to 1987), Mr Chan was awarded the SAF (Overseas) and President's Scholarship to study Economics at Christ's College, Cambridge University in the United Kingdom in 1988 and graduated with First Class Honours. In 2005, he completed the Sloan Fellows Programme at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology under the Lee Kuan Yew Scholarship.

**CRYSTAL Abidin** a digital anthropologist and ethnographer of vernacular internet cultures. She researches young people's relationships with internet celebrity, self-curation, and vulnerability. Her published books include *Internet Celebrity: Understanding Fame Online* (2018), *Microcelebrity Around the Globe: Approaches to Cultures of Internet Fame* (2018, co-edited with Megan Lindsay Brown), and *Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures* (2020, co-authored with Tama Leaver and Tim Highfield). Dr Crystal's forthcoming books investigate the history of Singaporean blogshops as youth-driven DIY e-commerce, the influencer industry and shifting trends on social media, and the evolution of Instagram as a practice and culture. A graduate of National University of Singapore and University of Western Australia, she is currently a Senior Research Fellow and Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) Fellow in Internet Studies at Curtin University. On top of being an authority in social media and society studies, she is listed on *Forbes 30 Under 30 Asia* (2018) and *Pacific Standard 30 Top Thinkers Under 30* (2016).

**DEVAN, Janadas**, Director of the Institute of Policy Studies, was educated at the National University of Singapore and Cornell University in the United States. He was a journalist, writing for *The Straits Times* and broadcasting for Radio Singapore International, before being appointed the Government's Chief of Communications at the Ministry of Communications and Information in 2012. He is concurrently Deputy Secretary at the Prime Minister's Office.

**FARISH Ahmad-Noor** is Associate Professor and Coordinator of the PhD programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies and the School of History at Nanyang Technological University (NTU). Associate Professor Farish received his Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Literature from the University of Sussex in 1989, before studying for a Masters of Arts in Philosophy at the same University in 1990 and a Masters in South-East Asian Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He completed his PhD at the University of Essex in 1997 in the field of governance and politics. He is a political historian and his main area of research has been Southeast Asia in the 19th century. Dubbed the “rock star professor” by *The Star*, he has a well-established media profile and has hosted several *CNA* documentaries on Southeast Asia.

**HENG Swee Keat** is Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister for Finance and Member of Parliament for Tampines Group Representation Constituency. Mr Heng co-chaired the Committee on the Future Economy, which charted the strategies for Singapore's next phase of growth. He is also the Chairman of the National Research Foundation, which sets the direction for Singapore's research, innovation and enterprise strategies. Before this, Mr Heng served as Minister for Education from 2011 to 2015. While at the Ministry of Education, Mr Heng led *Our Singapore Conversation* that reached out to close to 50,000 Singaporeans on their aspirations for Singapore's future. In 2015, he chaired the Singapore 50 (SG50) Steering Committee leading the celebrations for Singapore's Golden Jubilee. Prior to entering politics in May 2011, Mr Heng was the Managing Director of the Monetary Authority of Singapore. He has served in various other public service positions, including appointments in the Singapore Police Force, and as the Principal Private Secretary to then-Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew from 1997 to 2000. Mr Heng has a Masters in Economics from Cambridge University. He also holds a Masters in Public Administration from the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

**KAUSIKAN, Bilahari** is currently Chairman of the Middle East Institute, an autonomous institute of the National University of Singapore. He has spent his entire career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before retiring as Ambassador-at-Large in 2018. During his 37 years in the Ministry, he served in a variety of appointments at home and abroad, including as the Second Permanent Secretary and Permanent Secretary. Raffles Institution, the University of Singapore and Columbia University in New York all attempted to educate him.

**LAM Peng Er** is Senior Research Fellow at National University of Singapore (NUS) East Asian Institute, and was previously part of the NUS Department of Political Science. He obtained his PhD in Political Science from Columbia University and has written widely, with a particular interest in Japanese and Singaporean politics. He was a co-editor of *Lee's Lieutenants: Singapore's Old Guard* (1999), a seminal volume on Singapore's first generation of political leaders. Dr Lam's academic publications have appeared in international journals such as the *Pacific Affairs*, *Asian Survey*, *Asian Affairs*, *Japan Forum*, and *Government and Opposition*. He is an executive editor of the *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* (a journal of the Japan Association of International Relations published by Oxford University Press) and *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* (of the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, Seoul National University).

**LEE Huay Leng** is the head of Singapore Press Holdings' Chinese Media Group, which publishes three Chinese newspapers and runs the UFM100.3 and 96.3HaoFM radio stations, among other productions. She has over 20 years of experience in the media industry, having begun her career as a journalist in *Lianhe Zaobao* in 1994 and taken on various roles including Sports Correspondent, Hong Kong Correspondent, Beijing Bureau Chief, China Editor and Deputy Editor. Before entering her current position in 2016, she was concurrently the Editor of Chinese evening paper *Lianhe Wanbao* and Senior Vice President (New Growth) of *Lianhe Zaobao*. Ms Lee is a member of the Board of Directors of the National Kidney Foundation; a Governor of Singapore International Foundation; and a member of the Public Transport Council as well as the Founders' Memorial Committee.

**NOR LASTRINA Hamid** is an environmental activist and co-founder of Singapore Youth for Climate Action — a network of Singaporeans working for climate action. In 2015, she had the honour of being the voice of YOUNGO (Youth Non-Governmental Organisations) — a youth constituency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) — at the 21st United Nations negotiations on climate change under the UNFCCC framework in Paris. At the United Nations conference, she urged all nations to commit and take action against climate change. Ms Nor Lastrina has done voluntary work to help the environment since 2009 and is the recipient of the National Environmental Agency NEA EcoFriend Awards 2016.

**TAN, Carrie** is the founding Executive Director of Daughters Of Tomorrow, which enables livelihoods and financial self-sufficiency for underprivileged women in Singapore. Since 2012, she and her team have impacted more than 1000 women through community mobilisation to provide them with skills, confidence and access to job opportunities. Currently, she is raising awareness about urban poverty in one of the richest countries in the world, and forging collaboration among private, public and non-profit sectors to enable social and economic mobility for vulnerable communities. Ms Tan is a Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Fellow and her work in women's empowerment and advocacy for collaboration was mentioned by President Obama at a press conference during Prime Minister Lee's visit to the White House in August 2016.

**TAN Tai Yong** is President and Professor of Humanities (History) at Yale-NUS College. Professor Tan was the National University of Singapore's Vice-Provost (Student Life) overseeing all student matters in the university. He also served as Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and was the founding Director of the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS). A member of the NUS Department of History since 1992, he specialises in South and Southeast Asian History and has published extensively on the Sikh diaspora, the social and political history of colonial Punjab, decolonisation and the partition of South Asia, and Singapore history. Professor Tan is Honorary Chairman of the National Museum of Singapore and Chairman of the National Heritage Board's National Collection Advisory Panel. He was also a member of the Singapore Bicentennial Advisory Panel, and served as a Nominated Member of Parliament from 2014 to 2015.

**ZURAIDAH Ibrahim** is Deputy Executive Editor of the *South China Morning Post* (SCMP). She oversees Hong Kong and Asia coverage and is also editor of *This Week in Asia*, SCMP's award-winning weekly magazine focusing on regional current affairs. Prior to this, she was Deputy Editor of *The Straits Times* (2010 to 2014) before leaving for Hong Kong in December 2014. Ms Zuraidah is a co-author of *Lee Kuan Yew: Hard Truths to Keep Singapore Going* (2011), based on lengthy interviews with the late founding father as well as *Opposition* (2016), which examines the history and prospects of Singapore's opposition parties. A student of political science, she commutes between Hong Kong and Singapore, writing extensively about politics in Asia.

## **Singapore Perspectives 2020: Politics**

This conference is organised by Dr Natalie Pang, Mr Shamil Zainuddin,  
Ms Wong Kwang Lin, Ms Nur Zahidah Mohd Nasir  
and the administration team of the Institute of Policy Studies.



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