Institutionalized Hegemonic Party: The Resilience of the People's Action Party (PAP) in Singapore

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Abstract

In an age of democracy, the resilience of Singapore's hegemonic party autocracy is puzzling. The ruling People's Action Party (PAP) has defied the "third wave" of democratization, withstood economic crises and governed continuously for more than four decades. Will the PAP remain a deviant case and survive the passing of its founding leader, Lee Kuan Yew? Building on the concept of party institutionalization, this paper argues that the resilience of hegemonic parties such as the PAP depends more on institutions than coercion, charisma or ideological commitment. It posits that with an institutionalized leadership succession system that ensures self-renewal and elite cohesion; and electoral engineering strategies that deter opposition challenges, the PAP is poised to rule for some time more in the post-Lee era.

"All parties must institutionalize to a certain extent in order to survive" (Panebianco 1988, 54).

Introduction

In the age of democracy, the resilience of Singapore's hegemonic party autocracy[1] is puzzling (Haas 1999). A small island with less than 4.6 million population, Singapore is the wealthiest non-oil producing country in the world that is not a democracy.[2] Despite its affluence and ideal socio-economic prerequisites for democracy, the People's Action Party (PAP) has ruled the country uninterruptedly for the last four decades. No substantial opposition party has existed since 1960s and electoral competition remains weak. Unlike its regional neighbours, the cosmopolitan middle-class in Singapore is characterized as "passive, deferential, acquiescent, and lacking political mobilization" (Sinnott 2006, 45).[3] Singapore's refusal to embrace competitive party politics confounds democratization theorists; even leaving some to exclude it as a deviant case that permits no meaningful cross-country comparison (Neher 2002, 174). As Huntington once said, "the anomaly remains Singapore" (1993, 38).

Singapore under the PAP's rule (1968-2009) is classified as a hegemonic party autocracy[4] because: 1) opposition parties are "second class, licensed parties" which cannot compete with hegemonic party on equal terms; 2) the hegemonic party outdistances the other parties with more than two-thirds majority of legislative seats; and 2) alternation of power is not envisaged (Magaloni 2006, 35 and Sartori 1973, 230). Constraints in political freedom and civil liberties (1972-2007) have led most observers to exclude Singapore as liberal democracy (Englehart 2000, IBA Report 29 Jul 2008). Besides, Freedom House (2008) has consistently rated Singapore as "Partly Free" with scores of "5" and "4", signifying constraints in political freedom and civil liberties from 1972 to 2007.

Scholars on regime change and stability have warned that apart from exogenous shocks that undermine the resilience of all autocracies, internal split and leadership succession are the two likely causes of authoritarian breakdown (Geddes 2003; Haggard and Kaufman 1995; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986). With the global economic downturn, export-dependent Singapore faces its worst crisis since independence.[5] More critically, as the PAP's founding leader, Lee Kuan Yew turns 86 years old, questions are raised on the prospects of the hegemonic party - will it continue to rule Singapore after the passing of its founder[6]?

"The institutional strength of a party is measured in the first instance by its ability to survive its founder or the charismatic leader who first brings it to power" (Huntington 1968, 409). This chapter

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[1] Building on Sartori's definition of "hegemonic party", the term hegemonic party autocracy refers to a polity where a party dominates policy, controls access to political office, even though other parties may exist and compete for power. It is a hybrid regime that combines both democratic and authoritarian institutions to govern. Unlike Pempel's (1990) "uncommon democracies", hegemonic parties operate in a semi-competitive party system.

[2] Singapore's per capita income surpassed US $10,000 in 1990s and US $20,000 in 2000 (Statistics Singapore 2008).

[3] Also see Asian Barometer 2004 and Asian Values Survey 2008 that found Singaporeans to have no strong demand for more democracy or greater civil society.

[4] With more than two-thirds majority of legislative seats, the hegemonic party can change the constitution unilaterally without forging coalitions with opposition parties.

[5] In Apr 2008, the unemployment hit 4.8 percent, a spike from its annual average of 2.8 percent (ST 30 Apr 2009).

[6] Lee Kuan Yew has had two heart operations in 1996 to clear a blocked heart artery. He was hospitalized again in Sep 2008 for abnormal heart rhythm and has since implanted a cardiac pacemaker (ST 1 Dec 2008). A public conference was held recently discuss the country's prospects in the event of Lee's death (ST 21 Apr 2009).

contends that the resilience[7] of hegemonic party autocracies such as Singapore depends more on institutions than coercion, charisma or ideological commitment (Geddes 2003; Perlmutter 1981; Smith 2005). As Hicken and Martinez (2009) note in the introductory chapter, party institutionalization ought to be distinguished from party democratization. The focus on Singapore's PAP attempts to show that institutionalization can occur in autocracies and party system institutionalization does not necessarily lead to democratic consolidation. With an institutionalized leadership succession system to ensure self-renewal and elite cohesion, and electoral engineering to deter opposition challenges, hegemonic party autocracies can be resilient to the perils of leadership change.

This chapter examines the institutional strengths and weaknesses of Singapore's regime in four parts. First, it introduces a theoretical framework on a party's elite recruitment and selection institutionalization based on two dimensions: decisional autonomy and systemness. Second, it examines the critical junctures during the PAP's early formation period that led to its organizational adaptation from a mass to cadre party and effects of candidate selection policies on elite cohesion; quality and composition of the Legislature and Cabinet. Third, it examines the PAP's oversized majority in the Legislature and impact of electoral engineering on the opposition. Finally, this paper considers the weaknesses of the PAP's elitist leadership model and the possibility of "deinstitutionalization" (Mainwaring and Scully 1996). It concludes that with the injection of right people and concerted attempt to address the gap between ordinary party members and leadership, the PAP is likely to survive the passing of its founder and rule in the post-Lee era.

Institutions and Institutionalization

As North reminds us, "institutions are not necessarily or even usually created to be socially efficient; rather, they are created to serve the interests of those with the bargaining power to create new rules" (1993, 6). Institutions[8] represent a social order that has reached a certain state or property and institutionalization denotes the process of its attainment. This paper views party institutionalization as a necessary condition for regime resilience and posits that a strongly institutionalized hegemonic party is more likely to withstand the uncertainties of power struggles and leadership successions. It focuses on the party level analysis as the institutionalization of the hegemonic party is expected to lead to the institutionalization of the party system (Randall and Svasand 2002, 7).

Scholars disagree on the definition and measurement of institutionalization.[9] For example, Huntington defines institutionalization as the "process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability" and measures institutionalization by its "adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence of its organizations and procedures"(1965, 394). On the other hand, Mainwaring and Scully identify stability; stable roots in society; legitimacy and party organization as four criteria for the institutionalization of democratic party systems (1996, 4). To complicate matters, the same dimension of institutionalization is sometimes analyzed under different labels. For example, Huntington's "complexity" is similar to Mainwaring and Scully's "party organization".
Despite the debates, there is a general consensus that the concept retains its utility, as long as its definition, unit of analysis and dimensions are clearly laid out.

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[7] Regime resilience refers to the ability to recover quickly to its original institutional arrangement when challenged and expectation to remain in existence.
[8] Following North, institutions are defined as the "rules of the game" that shape interaction and "reduce uncertainty by providing a structure to everyday life" (1990, 3).
[9] See Levistsky (1998), Meleshevich (2007) and Randall and Svasand (2002) for a critique of the concept.

As an initial study, my paper proposes to measure party institutionalization based on two criteria: 1) decisional autonomy and 2) systemness (routinization)[10] (Huntington 1970; Levitsky 1998; Randall and Svasand 2002, Panebianco 1988). Decisional autonomy refers to control and freedom from external interference (trade unions, multinational corporations, religious organizations etc) in determining its own policies and strategies. And systemness refers to the density and regularity of interactions that constitute the party as a structure and the development of prevalent rules, norms, conventions and practices. When the rules, procedures or patterns of behavior are institutionalized, they are routinized, stablilized, predictable, and a stable sets of expectations form around them, promoting systemness (Levitsky 1998, 80; North 1990; O'Donnell 1996).

A political party is viewed as an organization and not an institution. It is through time, a party as an organization becomes an institution or becomes institutionalized (Randall and Svasand 2002, 12). Party institutionalization implies that the party as an organization is valued on its own right, rather than an instrument for the achievement of a political goal (Gunther and Hopkin 2002, 196). For a party to persist, it must distribute selective incentives (prestigious positions, career opportunities) to its party members and collective incentives (sense of belonging or "value infusion") to its activists. Without the consolidation of this incentive system - party institutionalization cannot take place and organization survival is at stake (Panebianco 1988, 54).

Institutionalization of Elite Recruitment and Candidate Selection

The problem of succession is the "gravest threat to stability", studying how it is arranged goes directly to the heart of the problem of hegemonic party survival (Huntington 1970, 30). Elite recruitment and candidate selection (leadership selection system) are key processes for succession. They are especially salient in hegemonic party autocracies as only one party dominates the electoral arena. Elite recruitment refers to the process through which individuals are inducted into active, high profile political roles and candidate selection is part of this wider recruitment process (Czudnowski, 1975: 156). Candidate selection is an intra-party mechanism by which parties select their candidates before the general elections (Barnea and Rahat 2007, 376). On the intra-party level, they affect party members behavior and elite cohesion. On the party system level, the formal and informal rules, norms and procedures guiding who can or cannot be stand as candidates affect the composition and representativeness of the legislature (Gallager and Marsh 1988, 265; Hazan and Rahat 2006, 368).

A party with an institutionalized leadership succession system ought to be more cohesive and stable than one that is not. A party's leadership succession system is considered institutionalized if the selectorate[11] has exclusive rights and jurisdiction over the recruitment eligibility and criteria for candidacy. The selectorate is autonomous if it set its own requirements for candidacy and exclude any invasions by intruders who do not meet its own admission requirements and can nominate or appoint its candidates without interference from organizations such as the trade unions or the church (Lovenduski and Norris 1993, 321).

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[10] As Levitsky (1998, 85) suggests, there is less risk of tautology if we adopt the routinization definition as opposed to "value infusion" definition as the outcome to be explained (cohesion) is not treated as an aspect of institutionalization. I exclude adaptability as a dimension of party institutionalization as I consider it an effect of institutionalization rather than a feature of institutionalization. Also see Randall and Svasand (2002, 17).

[11] Party selectorate refers to the body that selects the candidates. It can compose of one person or many people (including the whole nation) (Harzan and Rahat, 2006, 110).

Conversely, if the selectorate is too inclusive with permeable borders, has little say or control over the experience or quality of candidates, then its autonomy is low. If the candidates are selected through an election that involves a large selectorate as opposed to an appointment system, then the party's decisional autonomy is low. On the inter-party level, the number of independents in the legislature may be another indicator of the party's autonomy. A legislature with high number of independents implies that the party lacks autonomy in selecting candidates for higher office and parties is not the exclusive channel to power (Meleshevich 2007, 27). See Table 1 for the candidate selection methods based on inclusiveness and exclusiveness.

Table 1: Methods of Candidate Selection (Harzan and Rahat, 2006, 110-1)

Inclusiveness ← → Exclusiveness

1	**Party Selectorate**	General Electorate	Party membership	Selected party agency	Non-selected party agency	Single leader
2	**Candidacy**	All citizens	Party members			Party members & additional requirements
3	**Electoral method**	Voting				Appointment

Systemness is the second dimension of institutionalization, which refers to "routinization of charisma" or "the regularization of patterns of social interaction, or the entrenchment of the formal and informal rules of the game" (Levitsky 1997, 88; Panebianco 1988, 53). If there are formal (party charters) and informal rules (patronage network), established guidelines (education qualifications or seniority) governing the regular selection of candidates for top party and national leadership positions, and these rules and procedures are accepted without contest by a large number of party members, then, systemness is high. Conversely, if these rules are circumvented or manipulated to suit the short term needs of one individual or group of social or political class; or challenged by a majority of party members, then, systemness is low. A party may be unevenly institutionalized, displaying high autonomy and low systemness, or vice-versa. Uneven combination of autonomy and systemness signifies unstable institutionalization that could give way to factionalism and power struggles. See figure 1 for the combinations of the two dimensions in a four-cell matrix below.

Figure 1: Dimensions of Institutionalization for Party Leadership Selection

	Decisional Autonomy (DA)	
Systemness (S)	High S & High DA	High S & Low DA
	Low S & High DA	Low S & Low DA

The following sections will outline the origins of Singapore's electoral and party system to frame the study of elite recruitment and candidate selection in the PAP. The empirical observations and evidence will be drawn from archival sources; elite interviews, party publications and media reports.

Cleavages and Formation of Party System

Within West European party systems literature, Lipset and Rokkan's "freezing hypothesis" has gained much traction in explaining how early socio-economic conditions affect the formation and

stability of party system (1967, 34).[12] For example, universal suffrage is viewed as a catalyst that "freezes" cleavage structures and institutionalizing a language of politics that is more or less immutable. It is argued that pre-democratic parties formed in this crucial period were more likely to persist, as they were able to establish mass organizations, entrench themselves in government and narrow the mobilization market. Cleavage structures are viewed as the main determinants of the potential social bases of party conflict and its party system.

Pre-independence Singapore has all the elements of value dissension (Chiew 1990 46-7). The Rendel Constitution[13] that extended the franchise of Singaporeans had an immediate impact on the electoral techniques and party organization (Yeo 1973, 253). Elite-based politics dominated by English-speaking local and British elites were replaced by rambunctious, mass-politics polarized by left and right-winged parties.[14] The island's struggle to independence was then besieged by anti-colonial agitations, communist subversion and racial unrests.[15] Low wages and unfair treatment of labourers resulted in union strikes, civil unrests and demonstrations, many instigated by the communist led unions and the communist faction of the PAP.

Ethno-linguistic and class cleavages mobilized citizens into different party groups and affected voter alignment in pre-independent Singapore. However, the cleavage structures and partisan dispositions were not immutable. In fact, the pattern of social cleavages has little predictive power once the PAP came into power in 1959.[16] While Lipset and Rokkan's cleavage approach helps to explain the rise of parties and party system in early Singapore, it does not account for the PAP's hegemony and persistence. In Singapore, PAP elites play an important role in de-politicizing the cleavages rather than accentuating them. The nationalist movement (backed by the unions and Chinese students) that first propelled the PAP into political scene was later, systematically dismantled by the PAP leaders. It inaugurated seven "broker institutions" to serve integrative functions between the four main ethnic groups.[17] Ethnic-based politics[18] was consequently discouraged and most of the pre-democratic parties are now either defunct or irrelevant. In the post-independence Singapore, active steps were taken in "de-pluralization" - where ethnic boundaries and exclusiveness of socio-political organizations were broken down to foster a common Singaporean national identity (Chiew 1990, 55).

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[12] See Bartolini and Mair (1990, 56-75); Kalyvas (1996) and Kitschelt (1995). India's party system is a known non-European example of "freezing thesis".

[13] The Rendel Constitution was introduced in 1953 to allow Singapore more self-governance. For the country's electoral history, see Fong (1979); Josey (1968); Yeo (1973) and Drysdale (1984).

[14] The left wing parties were the PAP, Barisan Socialis (BS) and Labour Front (LF) and right wing parties were the British-backed Progressive Party (PP) and Democratic Party (DP) backed by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

[15] In 1955 alone, an estimated number of 275 strikes were called. By 1960s, Konfrontasi had escalated ethnic tensions and sparked ethnic riots between the Chinese and Malays. Konfrontasi was Indonesia's attempt to de-stablize the Federation of Malaysia (1962-6). See Clutterbuck (1989) and Vasil (1989).

[16] See Burnell & Randall (2008); Mainwaring (1999) and Randall (2000) for similar arguments.

[17] For example, 1) integrated schools of different ethnicities were implemented; 2) inter-ethnic participation was actively promoted; 3) school textbooks were Singaporeanized and pluralized; 4) state symbols such as Singapore Flag, National Day Parade and National Anthem were designed to foster national identity; 5) bilingualism in primary and secondary schools were made compulsory in 1966; 6) Housing Development Board was set up in 1960 and integrated public housing estates that consist of all ethnicities; 7) technical and secular subjects were introduced and made compulsory which build a new Singaporean culture that is shared by all members of ethnic groups (Chiew 1990, 56-7).

[18] Singapore Malay National Organization and Singapore National Front are two ethnic-based parties left in Singapore.

Singapore's Electoral System And Rules of the Game

Singapore inherited a Westminster, unicameral parliamentary system from its colonial masters. When it attained self-rule in 1959, it instituted a compulsory voting system and held its full Legislative Assembly Election, which the PAP won on 43 out of all 51 seats and was swept into government. Since then, the PAP has won all 11 General Elections (GE). Despite its electoral hegemony, the PAP treats elections seriously as they are considered foundational to its legitimacy. Even when electoral outcome is predictable, elections allow the Party leaders to recruit, reward loyal supporters and remove dissenters from the "inside" circle of power structure, re-enforcing elite cohesion (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Magaloni 2006, 8; Rodan 2002, 110). Unlike one-party states such as Vietnam or China that ban party pluralism, there are 24 registered opposition parties in Singapore. However, only 4 to 5 opposition parties are active. See Appendix A for a list of registered parties in Singapore.

Singapore under the PAP is not a pseudo or sham democracy that rigs election or commit electoral fraud to stay in power.[19] But the methods that the PAP used to disadvantage the opposition, such as announcing constituency boundary changes (gerrymandering) three months before the elections and restrictions on the freedom of expression, organization of public rallies and use of libel suits to intimidate opposition leaders reinforces the view that the electoral process is free but not fair (Mauzy and Milne 2002, 253). Besides, the lack of an independent elections commission in Singapore also raises doubts on its autonomy.[20]

In its post-independence constitutional development, the PAP has made a series of constitutional amendments[21] to its original electoral system, introducing schemes such as Group Representative Constituencies[22] (GRC), Non-Constituency Member of Parliament[23] (NCMP), Nominated Member of Parliament[24] (NMP) and Elected Presidency[25], which now ought to be regarded as a unique system of its own (Rodan 2005, 114; Tsun 2008, 611). Singapore's electoral system is now a mixture of single-member constituency (SMC) and "party block vote" or GRCs of five to six candidates based on a one-man-one-vote system and simple plurality. The 11th Parliament is represented by 23 electoral constituencies: 9 single seats, and 14 GRCs consisting of 5 or 6 seats (74 seats). Presently, the House has a total of 84 elected MP seats, 9 seats reserved for NMPs and up to 3 seats for NCMPs. The next section will examine the effects of legal restrictions governing candidacy.

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[19] Unlike Levitsky and Way (2002, 54), I do not consider Singapore in the 1990s as a "façade" electoral regime. As the U.S. Dept of State reports, "elections were generally fair and free of tampering" (2008).

[20] Elections are administered by civil servants in the "Elections Department", which reports directly to the Prime Minister. The government appoints all elections staff, including those responsible for redistricting.

[21] For the constitutional reforms see Rodan (2005); Tsun (2008); Thio (1997); Mauzy (2002) and Mutalib (2002).

[22] In the GRCs, the candidates contest in teams of 5 or 6 and voters cast their votes for the entire team. In a SMC, voters vote for one candidate. In 2006 GE, there were a total of 14 GRCs (75 seats) and 9 SMCs.

[23] In May 1984, the NCMP scheme was introduced to allow more opposition voice in parliament. NCMPs are appointed seats that go to the top opposition losers with more than 15% of the votes in their respective constituencies. The Parliamentary Elections Act allows up to 6 NCMPs from the opposition.

[24] Another constitutional reform was made in 1990 for the appointment of up to 9 NMPs to ensure a wider representation of community views in Parliament. NMPs are non-partisan, citizens appointed by the President of Singapore for a term of two and a half years on the recommendation of a Special Select Committee of Parliament chaired by the Speaker.

[25] From 1965 to 1991, Singapore has a non-executive president with limited powers. But in 1991, a constitutional amendment transformed the presidential office into an elected one. In Aug 1993, a direct presidential election was held for a president with veto powers over budget decisions, financial reserves spending and appointment of senior officials. For more on Singapore's elected presidency, see Tan and Lam (1997).

Candidate Eligibility. Singapore's legal restrictions on candidate eligibility are fairly universal with three key legislations govern Singapore's Parliamentary Elections.[26] Significantly, candidates must comply by Article 45 of the Constitution[27] - which states that anyone who has been sentenced by a court of law in Singapore or Malaysia and imprisoned for not less than one year, or a fine of not less than S$2,000 will be ineligible for candidacy or disqualified from Parliament. Critics have argued that Singapore's rule of law have been used by the PAP to prevent opposition opponents to stand in Parliament for long periods of time (IBA Human Rights Report 2008, 28-9).[28] For example, the first opposition MP, J.B. Jeyaretnam[29] of Worker's Party (WP) was disqualified in 1984 for mis-stating party funds and again, as an NCMP in 1997 because of bankruptcy lawsuits brought by PAP leaders. Besides J.B. Jeyaratnam, other opposition candidates excluded from the Parliament as a result of lawsuits were WP members Wong Hong Toy, Tang Liang Hong, R. Murugason and SDP Secretary General Chee Soon Juan. In contrary, Finance Minister, Tharman Shanmugaratnam, a former Administrative Service Officer and Director in the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS), who was charged and found guilty of breaching Official Secret's Act in June 1992, was fined only S$1,500, an amount that would allow him to contest in elections as a PAP candidate.[30]

Deposit. Like most countries, Singapore requires candidates to place a monetary deposit to stand for legislative election (Massicotte et al. 2004, 61). Since its first Legislative Council Election in 1948, a deposit amount of $500 was required of each candidate. However, by 2006 GE, the deposit amount has increased twenty-seven fold to S$13,500. Constitutionally, the deposit amount is calculated based on 8 percent of the total allowance payable to MPs in the preceding year. With the dramatic increase in ministerial and civil servant's salary[31] in the last two decades, the deposit amount has also skyrocketed. The official rationale to impose monetary deposit is to screen out farcical candidates. However, the large sum of deposit privileges resource rich, incumbent PAP candidates and deters poor parties and candidates to contest. Thus far, only independent candidates or opposition candidates have forfeited deposits. This precedence discourages qualified opposition candidates to contest in elections and exacerbate the rise in uncontested seats.

Dual Mandates. In most legislatures, there are prohibitions of dual mandates.[32] Legally, senior categories of officers from the Public Service[33] (Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), Singapore Civil Service (CSC), Singapore Legal Services and the Singapore Police Force (SPF)) are prohibited to hold public office and be a MP at the same time (Chapter IV of Singapore's Constitution). Yet, this prohibition does not prevent the PAP from recruiting its candidates from the Public Service. In fact, the Civil Service, Statutory Boards and the SAF are prime recruiting grounds for the PAP and hand-

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[26] The three legislations are: 1) The Constitution of Singapore (The Legislature - Part VI); 2) The Parliamentary Elections Act (Chapter 218); 3) The Political Donations Act (Chapter 236) and Subsidiary Legislations. A person is qualified to stand as a candidate if he is a citizen above 21 years; in residence for more than 10 years; possess language proficiency in one of the 4 national languages: English, Malay, Mandarin or Tamil and not incapacitated by physical causes.

[27] Article 45 states that a potential candidate convicted of defamation; imprisoned for one year or fined with at least S$2000 or liable to pay damages in a civil suit that results in bankruptcy is ineligible to stand for elections for five years.

[28] The PAP has pointed out that countries such as Australia (Constitution Section 44) have similar provisions. But the disqualification in Australian constitution does not apply to fines, but is limited to jail imprisonment.

[29] See Mauzy 2002, 134-6 for a summary of the key lawsuits. And for the lawsuits against JBJ and his party members, see the Worker's Party (WP) website at http://www.wp.org.sg/party/history/1981_1986.htm

[30] See Worthington (2003, 155-163) for an account of the "accidental prosecution" of T Shanmugaratnam.

[31] Press Release by the Prime Minister's Office, 13 Dec 2007.

[32] A study by Massicotte et al. (2004; 59) shows that except in France and Germany, 46 countries do not allow public servants to serve simultaneously as elective officers at the national levels.

[33] The Singapore Public Service employs some 110,000 public officers working in 15 Ministries, more than 50 Statutory Boards and 9 Organs of State. Within the Public Service is the Civil Service that comprises of more than 60,000 officers.

picked candidates are fast-tracked into ministerial positions (Rodan 2005, 116). As Table 3 shows, the bulk of Singapore's ministers and PAP MPs were former career civil servants, university professors and military officers. An average of 49 percent of the PAP MPs – nearly half of the Parliament, were drawn from the ministries, government-linked corporations and statutory boards.

Table 3: Occupational background of MPs (1963-2006)

	11th Parl 2006- (%)	10th Parl 2002-6 (%)	9th Parl 1997-01 (%)	8th Parl 1991-6 (%)	7th Parl 1988-91 (%)	1968-84 (%)	1963 (%)
Bureaucrats	14 (16.9)	11 (13.1)	13 (15.7)	13 (16)	14 (17.3)	23 (23.9)	8 (19.5)
Govt Linked Companies (GLCs)	4 (4.8)	4 (4.8)	3 (3.6)	4 (4.9)	4 (4.9)	1 (1.04)	0
Military	6 (7.2)	6 (7.1)	6 (7.2)	5 (6.2)	3 (3.7)	2 (2.1)	-
Academics	9 (10.8)	10 (11.9)	16 (19.3)	20 (24.7)	21 (25.9)	22 (22.9)	2 (4.8)
Professors	7	9	14	16	15		
Teachers	2	1	2	4	6		
Journalists	4 (4.8)	5 (6)	6 (7.2)	5 (6.2)	1 (1.2)	7 (7.3)	5 (12.2)
Subtotal (%)	**44.5**	**42.9**	**53**	**58**	**53**	**57.2**	**36.5**
Professionals	22 (26.5)	26 (31)	14 (16.9)	11 (13.6)	10 (12.3)	14 (14.6)	3 (7.3)
Medical doctors	8		4	4	4		
Lawyers	13		7	5	5		
Others	1		3	2	1		
Trade Union links	4 (4.8)	5 (6)	3 (3.6)	5 (6.2)	7 (8.6)	12 (12.5)	11 (26.8)
Company Managers	17 (20.5)	14 (16.7)	18 (21.7)	18 (22.2)	14 (17.3)	14 (14.6)	3 (7.3)
Party Staff	2 (2.4)	1 (1.2)	1 (1.2)	1 (1.2)	3 (3.7)	2 (2.1)	9 (21.9)
Others /Unknowns	1 (1.2)	1 (1.2)	3 (3.6)	3 (3.7)	4 (4.9)		
Total of MPs	83	84	83	81	81	96	41

Sources: Data for 1963 to 1984 are from Ikuo (2003, 352); the rest compiled by author based on official Singapore Parliament and Singapore Election websites.

To most observers, the "politicization" of the civil service is a key feature of Singapore's political system that is distinctively un-Westminster style (Vannewald 1994; Worthington 2002, Iwasaki 2003). Since the PAP's split in 1961, the locus of power has shifted from the party to the state bureaucracy. Chan's (1975) concept of an "administrative state"[34] best captures the fusion between party and state and the horizontal integration of government elites into the PAP. Access to state resources and unloading of traditional party functions to the para-political organizations such as the People's Association (PA); the Community Development Centres (CDCs) and Community centres (CCs) have also bolstered the PAP's policy formulation capacity and penetration into grassroots level (Tan 2003). As Mauzy and Milne observe, "the PAP is everywhere, but it is the PAP government, not the party apparatus" (2002, 49). And as Worthington puts it:

> "In Singapore, hegemonic rule is achieved not through democratization but through oligarchic means. The bureaucratic, political and business elites are integrated through a bourgeois party which uses meritocratic assessment based on educational and other achievements to select the public sector and political leadership. Because of the high degree of penetration of the state into the market and society, the party selected elite also penetrates these sectors thus perpetuating oligarchic control" (2003, 10).

PAP's Organizational Transformation from Mass to Cadre Party

The PAP was formed in 1954 by a group of British educated, middle-class men. It originated as a left-winged mass party, and co-opted pro-communist unionists so to expand its support base. As an "externally created party", the PAP began its political foray with two factions: the English-speaking

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[34] Singapore's "administrative state" entails 1) a de-politicization of the citizenry; and 2) a significant increase in the power of bureaucrats which blurs the distinction between the civil service and the executive (Chan 1975, 510).

moderates led by Lee Kuan Yew and Chinese-speaking communists led by Lim Chin Siong (Duverger 1954, xxiii, Pang 1971, 3). In the early formative years, three key events altered the organizational development of the PAP: a failed takeover attempt by the Communist faction in 1957 and two party splits that resulted from personality and ideological differences in 1960 and 1961.[35] The close capture of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) by the Communist faction was a critical juncture in the PAP's history as the moderates learnt how inclusiveness and intra-party democracy could weaken party cohesion. It was after the near takeover that Lee decided to re-organize the mass-based PAP into a cadre party[36]. As he recounts in his autobiography: "the folly of adopting a democratic constitution had left it open to capture through the penetration of its own party branches. We discussed several possible changes to ensure that it could never happen again" (1998, 271).

CEC Selection. 1958 marked the end of PAP's experiment with intra-party democracy where party members met annually to elect the CEC[37]. A bloc voting system was instituted so that only full cadres were allowed to vote in the bi-annual election of CEC (Chan 1989, 73). The CEC is the pinnacle of the PAP's decision-making body and dominated by the party secretary who selects the cadre, who, in turn endorses the CEC at a biannual party conference. As Pang describes, the CEC voting is a "closed system" in which "the cardinals appoint the pope and the pope appoints the cardinals" (Pang 1971, 36). Consisting of 18 members, the CEC is the party's selectorate of legislative candidates, who are mostly Cabinet members. In the latest CEC formed in Dec 2008, 15 out of 18 CEC members were in the Cabinet. Instead of discussing policy direction within the party, the PAP uses the Cabinet meetings to develop policies.

Cadre Selection. Since 1957, four categories of membership (probationary, ordinary, probationary cadre and cadre) and regular re-registering of party membership were introduced to prevent takeovers (Pang 1971, 35). Originally, PAP's inclusive membership attracted working-class labourers, unionists and students. After the second party split in 1961, mass exodus of members and declining enrolment changed the membership composition to more English-speaking, higher educated, middle-class members (Pang 1971, 63 and 65; Shee 1971, 166). To ensure that only members with substantial contribution to the party could become cadres, measures such as selection board[38] and cadre-training classes were introduced (Lee 1998, 280). While the exact number of the cadres has never been disclosed, it was estimated to be around 1000, 6.7 percent of the total party membership of 15,000 in 2007. Usually, a cadre is a loyal, trusted party activist, nominated by his MP from among the outstanding branch activists. To be considered as a cadre, a selected member must undergo three interview panels of 4 or 5 Ministers and MPs (ST 4 April 1998). Annually, around 100 candidates are selected for interviews.

The secretive and exclusive cadre recruitment process fosters elite cohesion as it filters like-minded members into the inner-circle and excludes those with extreme views. While being a cadre comes

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[35] The first party split was caused by a personality clash between Ong Eng Guan and Lee Kuan Yew; the second split was a result of differences over the merger issue between the two factions, see Pang (1971), Fong (1979) and Lee (1998).
[36] The organizational overhaul was also inspired after Lee's visit to Rome in 1958, where he was reminded of the resilience of the Catholic Church. As he said, "The Church must have got many things right to have survived for nearly two thousand years. I remembered reading about a new Pope being elected by some one hundred cardinals who themselves had been appointed by earlier popes. That recollection was to serve the PAP well" (1998, 287).
[37] The CECs from 1954 to 1957 were elected by all the Party members, after 1957, they were elected by party cadres.
[38] As a pragmatic party that seeks an ideological middle-ground, the PAP cadre selection board seeks fair representation from diverse backgrounds, age, race, language and religion and educational qualifications (ST 4 April 1998).

with no extra incentives or privileges[39], the sense of exclusivity on being the select few serves as a "collective incentive" and a sense of belonging (Panebianco 1998, 54). As Wong Kan Seng, the PAP's first Assistant Secretary General said: "You know you are among the elite, the trusted few. People are quite happy when told they have become cadres" (ST 4 April 1998). My interviews with PAP cadres also confirm that the prestige and honour of being a PAP "insider" rather than rather than material incentives were sufficient to generate loyalty and "a sense of belonging".

Candidate Selection. There is no primary election for the PAP's selection of legislative candidates. Like its exclusive cadre selection method, the search of a PAP MP is conducted through an elaborate nomination and appointment process. While candidate selection was ad-hoc in the past, since 1976, it has become more systematic and formalized. As the PAP's organizing secretary for recruitment Dr. Ng Eng Hen says, the Party's recruitment committee now relies on its "network of contacts…The net is cast wide, covering the civil service, the corporate sector, and professions such as law, banking and medicine." Generally, the PAP selection process comprise of the following six stages:

> Stage 1: Candidates are "talent spotted" and recommended by PAP activists, corporate leaders, MPs and senior civil servants to PAP recruitment committee (ST 15 Apr 2006). Recommendation is informal and drawn from a network of contacts. Candidates are usually professionals, peers from the "top of their cohort" from the Civil Service, the private sector, and professions such as law, banking and medicine. In 1984 GE, more than 2000 names of potential candidates were compiled from lists of local government scholars, returned scholars and registers of professionals as well as those in the party ranks (Ooi 1998, 371).

> Stage 2: Groups of six to eight candidates are invited to meet with one of three ministers in tea discussions, which lasts around 60 to 150 minutes. During the tea session, the minister will ask probing questions to ascertain the ideas, motivation and political inclinations of the potential candidates on issues and ability to be a "team player" (ST 18 Apr 1996). Around 100 candidates get invited for the tea sessions a year (Mauzy and Milne 2002, 48). Due to the large number of "talents" studying or working abroad, tea sessions are also now conducted overseas (ST 15 Apr 2006).

> Stage 3: Shortlisted candidates undergo two formal interviews by a high level panel at the party headquarters. Successful candidates who passed the second formal interview are invited to meet the Cabinet ministers. Party activists or grassroots members who are familiar with the key office holders may skip the first three stages.

> Stage 4: The CEC, which is the party selectorate, reserves the final authority to endorse the selected candidates. In 1997 GE, 24 PAP candidates were fielded out of 300 interviewed (Ooi 1998, 372). Each prospective candidate has an 8 percent chance of being fielded.

> Stage 5: Months before an election, the selected candidates are deployed to the different constituencies to learn the ropes of running party branch work by studying under a senior MP. This training period may range from a few months to 4 years[40]. Before the election,

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[39] The PAP prides itself for its anti-corruption, clean governance that does not condone gift giving or patron-client relations. The Party is against the use of party or cadre membership to further personal gains (see PAP recruitment website). However, critics have argued that political corruption manifests itself in different form, see Tarling (2004).
[40] One PAP MP, Inderjit Singh said that he was sent to work with grassroots groups in 1994 and was only introduced to contest in 1997 GE (ST 20 Feb 2009).

prospective candidates are sent for courses on public speaking and communications skills to learn ways to handle the press and to field questions during hustings. For example, MP Ong Kian Min revealed that the training focuses on TV appearances where they learnt to avoid shifty eyes or gesticulating when speaking in front of camera (ST 4 Feb 2006).

Stage 6: Selected candidates who have been deemed to have ministerial quality will be asked to go through an additional stage of psychological tests of over one thousand questions that lasts around one-and-a-half days (see Neo and Chen 2007, 351; Mauzy and Milne 2002, 49). At this stage, the PAP adopts the potential appraisal system developed by Shell Oil Company to assess the personality and disposition of its candidates. In each election, five to six candidates are identified to have ministerial qualities and carefully groomed for higher office.

Key Features of the PAP's Leadership Selection

Turnover. Elections conducted every 4 to 5 years provide the PAP the opportunity to recruit new candidates and ensure new blood in its rank and file. In last three elections, the average turnover rate is around 20 to 24 MPs, or a third of each cohort. See Table 4 for the rate of turnover in Parliament. In 2006 GE, 25 MPs relinquish their parliamentary positions. 4 out of the 25 MPs had only served one term and no reasons were given for their removal from office. According to ex-MPs, the decision to step down is always communicated directly to about one-quarter of each cohort of MPs, around 6 months before polling day. Usually the PM, who is also the Party's Secretary General, meets the selected MPs personally over lunch, in groups of two to three, to break the news that they are asked to step down (NP 29 Oct 2005). It is interesting to note that even when some MPs express reluctance to leave, they often obliged without public complaints or protests.[41]

Table 4: Rate of Turnover in Parliament (1980-2006)

Year of Election	Total Elected MPs	No of New PAP candidates	MPs retired/gave up position (%)
1980	75	18	11 (14.7)
1984	79	24	20 (25.3)
1988	81	18	14 (22.2)
1991	81	11	9 (11.1)
1997	83	24	18 (21.7)
2001	84	25	23 (27.4)
2006	84	24	24 (28.6)

Source: Compiled by author based on data from Singapore Elections and Singapore Parliament websites.

Horizontal Integration. Conventionally, a person interested in political office would register with a party, work up the ranks and file and cozy up to the leaders and hopes to be spotted and nominated as a candidate. But this is not the case for the PAP. The PAP is odd[42] as it avoids vertical integration of its cadres and does not overtly reward party loyalists. As senior Lee said: "We have resisted the temptation, and the pressure, to fill up the Parliament with party loyalists. We have to field the best that Singapore has" (Petir 30th Anniversary Issue 1984, 22). Since 1984, the PAP has adopted the rigorous process that the Government uses in the recruitment of its top civil servants, specifically, the

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[41] In the earlier days, old PAP guards such as Toh Chin Chye, Lee Koon Choy and Ong Pang Boon were more vocal with their dissatisfaction with the speed of the party's renewal (Interview with Lee Koon Choy, 8 Feb 08).
[42] As Mauzy notes, the PAP is odd in many ways: the party began as a left wing mass party but it is no longer left-wing; it espouses social democratic policies; but it abhors welfarism; it stands for law and order, family values and is pro-business; but it is not a conservative party; it is organized as a communist and cadre party; yet it ignores party bureaucracy between elections; it recruits from the civil service and professions rather than from its ranks and file; while the party is dominated by Lee, it is institutionalized and capable of forcing out old guards (2002, 246-7).

officers for the Administrative Service – the apex of the Civil Service hierarchy.[43] As discussed, the PAP "talent spots" from within the state structures and integrates them horizontally into the Party. The PAP's incumbency advantage and access to state institutions such as the Public Service Commission (PSC), that administers 13 prestigious government scholarships helps to channel highly qualified scholars into its party (see Neo and Chen 2007; Barr 2006).

"Talent Spotting". The government scholarship scheme administered by the PSC is one of the PAP's main "talent spotting" mechanism that identifies and nurtures outstanding returning scholars who serve their scholarship bonds[44]in government agencies and statutory boards. To recruit local high-calibre female candidates, the three local universities are also roped in to nominate outstanding female undergraduates to participate in PAP's political and networking activities and enjoy perks such as networking with business leaders and mentoring by female politicians (Petir Jul/Aug 2009). View this way, the PAP cadre party structure is evolving into a party-state, cartel model where the "colluding parties become agents of the state and employ the resources of the state to ensure their own collective survival" (Katz and Mair 1995, 5). As Lee Kuan Yew explains:

> "Our problem was not to find loyal cadres who can do the rank and file work and running of the party, even to be MPs…and the only way we could overcome that was by going out recruiting, talent spotting…A person who has done well in Singapore's scholarship system will eventually be "spotted" and "headhunters" from the party will look for him. That is the system that has evolved" (PAP 45th Anniversary 1999, 133).

In the 11th Parliament, there are a total of 23 former government scholars,[45] or "scholar MPs", sponsored for higher education in prestigious foreign universities by the PSC. These "scholar MPs" are part of the power elite and groomed for higher leadership roles.[46] In the latest Cabinet of 21 Ministers, 71.4% were former government scholars[47]. Out of this cohort, six ministers[48] (28.6%) were former military officers and SAF military scholars. As Table 5 shows, the bulk of the Cabinet ministers were former scholars, civil servants from the elite Administrative Service or the military. Between 2001 to 2009, only an average of 10 percent of Ministers were from the private sector.

Table 5: Profiles of Cabinet Ministers (2001-2009)

	2009	2008	2006	2004	2003	2001
Administrative Service	5 (23.8)	4 (20)	3 (16.7)	3 (15.8)	3 (16.7)	3 (17.6)
Government Scholars	15 (71.4)	13 (65)	12 (66.7)	13 (68.4)	13 (72.2)	14 (82.4)
Civil Service /Stat. Board	7 (33.1)	10 (50)	10 (55.6)	11 (57.9)	11 (61.1)	10 (58.8)
GIC/GLC	3 (14.3)	3 (15)	3 (16.7)	3 (15.8)	2 (11.1)	2 (11.8)
Military	6 (28.6)	4 (20)	4 (22.2)	4 (21.1)	4 (22.2)	4 (23.5)
Private sector	5 (23.8)	3 (15)	1 (5.6)	1 (5.3)	1 (5.6)	1 (5.9)
Total Ministers	21	20	18	19	18	17

Source: Compiled by author based on data from official Singapore Cabinet website and PAP publications.

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[43] Since 1984, Lee Hsien Loong has adapted the psychological tests by Shell oil company to assess the PSC Administrative Service officers and PAP candidates. See Chen and Neo (2007, Chapter 7).

[44] Scholarships awarded by the Singapore government usually come with a bond period of 3 to 10 years. See Public Service Commission (PSC) website: http://www.pscscholarships.gov.sg/

[45] Out of 83 elected MPs, there are a total of 6 President Scholars; 8 Colombo Plan Scholars; 2 EDB-Glaxo Scholars; 2 Singapore Police Force Scholar; 1 Commonwealth Scholar and 5 SAF Overseas Scholars.

[46] Grace Fu, Lee Yi Shyan, Masagos Zulkifli and Lui Tuck Yew were earmarked for higher office in 2006 GE (CNA, 3 May 2006).

[47] Both the PM Lee Hsien Loong and Deputy PM Teo Chee Hean and Foreign Affairs Minister George Yeo were holders of both President and SAF Overseas scholarship – two most prestigious scholarships in Singapore.

[48] They are Lee Hsien Loong; Lim Hng Kiang; Lim Swee Say; Lui Tuck Yew; Teo Chee Hean and George Yeo.

Meritocracy and Elitism. The PAP prides itself on having developed a leadership recruitment system that is based on the concept of meritocracy and elite-led government.[49] As PM Lee Hsien Loong says, it is a "uniquely Singapore approach" that is comparable to the Communist party in China (Lee's Speech, 6 May 2008). As he says: "Singapore adheres to the philosophy of government by elite. We must pick elites from different industries and trades to participate in the running of the country. The prerequisite is that these elites must have a sense of social responsibility and they must be willing to serve the people." (ST 8 July 2008). Besides academic brilliance, the candidates must have a proven record of outstanding career achievements and qualities such as "ability, integrity and commitment" and "character, motivation, judgment, stability, temperament, ability to connect with people" (Petir 30th Anniversary Issue, 1984, 22).

Gender Imbalance. Singapore has a low female representation in Parliament. Unlike efforts such as GRC to address ethnic imbalance in Parliament, the PAP does not advocate gender quota or adopt affirmative action. In 1959, the Parliament had 5 female MPs. But since the sole female MP Chan Choy Siong retired in 1970, there were no female MPs for 14 years. In 1984 GE, this changed and the PAP fielded 3 female candidates[50] and increasing to 4 in 1988. However, a narrow loss of an acting female minister, Dr. Seet Ai Mee in 1991GE prevented the PAP from fielding female candidates in SMCs. Instead, the PAP has fielded female candidates only in GRCs, increasing from 10 in 2001 to 17 in 2006. In April 2009, a former Administrative Service officer and director of the government's investment arm, Temesek Holdings, Mrs Lim Hwee Hua became the first female Minister in Cabinet since 1991. There are now 17 female elected MPs (20.5%) in the 11th Parliament. See Table 6 below.

Table 6: No of women MPs in Singapore Parliament (1980 – 2006)

	2006GE	2001GE	1997 GE	1991 GE	1988 GE	1984 GE	1980 GE
Female PAP MPs	17	10	4	2	4	3	0
Female Opposition MPs	1 (NCMP)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total elected Female MPs (%)	17 (20.5)	10 (11.9)	4 (4.8)	2 (2.4)	4 (4.9)	3 (3.8)	0
Total	**83**	**84**	**83**	**81**	**81**	**79**	**75**

Source: Compiled by author based on data from Official Singapore Parliament website.

A typical PAP candidate is thus one who is a professional or technocrat, a former government-scholar from a prestigious overseas university, married, male in his 30s and 40s with a few children to lend support to the government's population and pro-family policies.[51] As Singapore is a multicultural society, language abilities are also prized assets. While the first batch of PAP leaders were mostly English speakers, but with the rise of China and globalization, knowledge in information technology and bilingualism are now considered essential qualities for aspiring office bearers.

Formalizing the Selection of PM. The secretary general of the PAP, who is the party's supreme leader, is usually also the country's prime minister. Over the last five decades, the PAP has engineered two party leadership successions without public infighting or power struggles. In 1959, Lee Kuan Yew became the country's first PM when it attained self-government as he was the Party's Secretary General[52]. In 1990, he relinquished his PM position and endorsed Goh Chok Tong as PM in

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[49] For an insightful study debunking the myth of meritocracy in Singapore, see K Tan (2008).

[50] The first 3 female PAP candidates were: Dr. Aline Wong; Dr. Dixie Tan and Mrs. Yu-Foo Yu Shoon.

[51] The recent batch of new PAP candidates has three single women (Indranee Rajah; Penny Low and Fatimah Lateef – breaking the PAP's convention of fielding only married candidates.

[52] Lee Kuan Yew's leadership was not preordained. In a party leadership contest in 1959, Lee was elected by a single vote over Hokkien-speaking and populist politician Ong Eng Guan (Mauzy 2002,5).

a carefully managed leadership transition. While Goh was not Lee Kuan Yew's preferred successor[53], he deferred the choice to the Cabinet and Goh was popularly selected by his cabinet colleagues (Mauzy and Milne 2002, 115-6). The first leadership transition was completed when Lee gave up his Party's Secretary General position 2 years later. While PM Goh was widely seen as a "seat-warmer" for Lee's son, Lee Hsien Loong, he held on to his position for 12 years and earned respect for his consensus-based, leadership style (Asiaweek 3 Dec 1999). Meanwhile, young Lee[54] waited at the helm and supported Goh as Deputy PM. See Table 7 for the list of the PAP PMs.

Table 7: List of Prime Ministers In Singapore

Prime Minister	Years as Sec. Gen	Age as PM	Former Profession	Selection Method	Tenure	Reason for giving up PMship	Post PM position
1. Lee Kuan Yew	1954-1992	36	Lawyer	Elected in an intra-party contest	1959- 1990 (31 years)	Resigned	Minister Mentor
2. Goh Chok Tong	1992-2004	49	Economist (Admin Svs.)	Nominated by PM and endorsed by a select group of cabinet ministers	1990 –2004 (14 years)	Resigned	Senior Minister
3. Lee Hsien Loong	2004-present	52	Army Brigadier General	Nominated by PM & endorsed by cabinet &ministers and elected PAP MPs	2004 - present	In office	-

Source: Compiled by author.

During the second leadership transition, former PM Goh formalized a three-step selection procedure for the PM in May 2004 that begins with: 1) a meeting of all the Cabinet Ministers to nominate a leader based on consensus; followed 2) by a meeting by all the PAP MPs to show their support of the PM candidate in a separate venue. At this stage, the PAP MPs are permitted to nominate other names and their nomination will be considered separately by the CEC. 3) And finally, the CEC would meet to mediate and endorse the final decision. Based on this new formal procedure, Lee Hsieng Loong was selected and appointed as the country's third PM in Aug 2004.

This formalization of PM selection method is significant as it provides a mechanism to mediate the possibility of power struggle. As Goh says, "The confidence of MPs is important. I want to put in place a process so that, in future, if there is a contest for the position, there's a process to follow" (Petir May/Jun 2004). This new procedure offers a means for selected cadres such as the PAP MPs[55] to nominate an alternative PM candidate and mitigate any arbitrariness. In the event that a disagreement should arise with the CEC's nomination, a mechanism is in placed to mediate and close ranks. While no primary election is instituted, this formality could build elite cohesion and legitimacy, as former PM Goh said: "the next prime minister will be chosen by his or her own peers. Having chosen the leader, the team would then be obliged to support him or her fully" (Petir Jul/Aug 2008). In Singapore's short history under the PAP, two PMs have stepped aside for a younger successor. While the fourth PM successor has not been identified, the precedence of PMs stepping down for younger successor is expected to continue (ST 7 Aug 2009).

In most autocracies, the question of leadership succession is perilous as it raises expectations and changes that could de-stablize the balance of power. For example, when Taiwan was under the Kuomintang's rule in the 1980s, speculations or publications on the prospective successors of ailing strongman Chiang Ching-Kuo were banned (Chang 1984, 425). Usually, strong leaders strive to hold

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[53] Lee had preferred Tony Tan as his successor as he was doubtful of Goh's public-speaking ability and perceived lack of toughness. Eventually, he endorsed Goh's leadership after some "mutual adaptation" (Mauzy 2002, 118).

[54] Lee's diagnosis of lymphoma in 1992 was another reason why Goh had remained as PM longer than expected.

[55] It is assumed that all PAP MPs were also made cadres of the party.

on to power for as long as possible or show little interest in developing a means of providing a successor. However, this is not a case in Singapore. Singapore's leadership succession is exceptional as its leaders makes leadership succession a priority and PMs retire voluntary – not an easy feat, considering how often coups and protests are the main mechanisms for leadership change. As former PM Goh said: "In the PAP, we have institutionalised a planned and orderly system of political succession. The old generation systematically identifies and prepares the next generation to take over. It steps aside when the successor generation is ready"(Speech at PAP 50th Anniversary, 2004).

Another unique feature of Singapore's leadership succession system is that retired PMs and senior Cabinet Ministers do not leave the political scene, but remain in office to lend expertise as Senior Ministers (SM) or Minister Mentor (MM). Currently, the Cabinet has two SMs and one MM. The expansion of the Cabinet is an ingenious innovation as it mitigates power struggles and uncertainties that come with leadership transition. The new cabinet positions encourage elite cohesion and stability as it: 1) compensates the outgoing leader with a prestigious position and high salary; and 2) allows the new leader to tap his predecessors for knowledge and expertise. While the specific job scopes are unclear, the current MM and SMs are seen to act as consultants and ambassadors by travelling overseas to improve Singapore's international standing. Domestically, they grace governmental functions and support government policies. Despite criticisms of having a bigger Cabinet, Singapore's Cabinet is still one of the leanest in the world.

Institutionalizing Semi-Competitive Party System

Based on Sartori's calculation of relevant parties and ideological pluralism[56], Singapore has 1.03[57] relevant parliamentary parties (1968-2006), a moderate level of party pluralism and low party fragmentation (Croissant 2002, 334-5; Reilly 2007, 198). A combination of restrictions on the freedom of expression[58], organization of public rallies and use of libel suit to intimidate opposition leaders have turned Singapore's party system into a "two-tier system" in which the PAP "tolerates and discretionally allocates a fraction of its power to subordinate political groups", treating them as satellite and inferior parties (Sartori 1976, 230). While elections were competitive in the 1950s and 60s, but by 1968, the PAP has emerged as a hegemonic party and won every seat in every election until 1981, where a by-election broke the monopoly. However, the opposition's victory has never led to more than 4 seats in Parliament. Besides, the number of independents has also dwindled substantially from 39 in 1959 to nil in the 2006 GE.

As Singapore's electoral results show on Table 8, the popularity votes for the opposition always hovered around 30 to 40 percent (except for 1980 and 2001 GE). Yet, this 30 per cent of popular votes do not translate to seat shares. In fact, the opposition has only captured between 1.2 to 4.9 per cent of seats in Parliament. Due to Singapore's ethos of majority rule that is determined by the plurality system, the strongest party stands to gain. As SM Goh says, "Singapore is, therefore, like one big constituency. Hence, in a first-past-the-post Westminster system of democracy, it must be that any party that wins, wins big" (ST 26 Jul 2008).

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[56] According to Sartori, a party must satisfy three criteria: 1) electoral strength or "strength in seats"; 2) coalition potential and 2) "blackmail" potential to be considered a "relevant" party (1976, 122-4).
[57] Croissant uses a threshold of 1 percent of parliamentary seats as the minimum for a party to be relevant (2002, 334).
[58] All newspapers in Singapore are owned by the Singapore Press Holdings, a GLC controlled by the Singapore Ministry of Information and the Arts (Ooi 1998: 392). The compliance of editors and reporters are also encouraged informally by "OB" (out-of-bounds) markers (Case 2004: 116-7). See Tsun (2008); Gomez (2006) and Rodan (2006) for the restriction of free press and impact on opposition parties in Singapore.

Table 8: General Election Results in Singapore (1959-2006)

	Total No. of Seats	No. of Contested Seats	No. of Un-contested Seats	Seats Won by PAP (%)	Seats Won by Opp. Parties (%)	Ind-epend ents	PAP's popular vote (%)	Opp. Parties' popular vote (%)
Legislative Assembly								
30 May-59	51	51	0	43 (84.3)	8 (15.7)	39	53.4	46.6
21 Sep-63[59]	51	51	0	37 (72.5)	14 (27.5)	16	46.9	53.1
Parliament								
13-Apr-68	58	7	51 (87.9)	58 (100)	0	5	84.4	15.6
2-Sep-72	65	57	8 (12.3)	65 (100)	0	2	69	31
23-Dec-76	69	53	16 (23.2)	69 (100)	0	2	72.4	27.6
23-Dec-80	75	38	37 (49.3)	75 (100)	0	0	75.5	24.5
22-Dec-84	79	49	30 (37.9)	77 (97.5)	2 (2.5)	3	62.9	37.1
3 Sep 1988*	81	70	11 (13.6)	80 (98.8)	1 (1.2)	4	61.8	38.2
31-Aug-91	81	40	41 (50.6)	77 (95.1)	4 (4.9)	7	61	39
2-Jan-97	83	36	47(56.6)	81 (97.6)	2 (3.4)	1	65	35
3-Nov-01	84	29	55 (65.5)	81 (97.6)	2 (2.3)	2	75.3	24.7
6-May-06	84	47	37 (44)	82 (97.6)	2 (2.3)	0	66.6	33.4

Source: Yeo (2002, 210); Tremewan (1995, 181) and Singapore Elections website.

Like most hegemonic parties, the PAP strives for oversized governing majority and projects an image of invincibility to deter opposition challenges and control institutional change to their advantage (Magaloni 2006, 15). A series of constitutional reforms that were passed as a result of the PAP's supermajority in Parliament has transformed the electoral system from 79 single-member constituencies (SMC) into a mixture of SMCs and GRCs of five to six candidates based on a one-man-one-vote system and simple plurality.[60] Most significantly, innovations such as the GRC introduced in 1988 have spiked the number of uncontested seats from 13.6 percent in 1988 to 65.5 percent in 2001 (easing to 44 percent in 2006 GE). From 1991 to 2001, more than 50 percent of seats were uncontested. This meant that a disproportionate of PAP MPs took office by "appointment" and nearly half of the electorate did not exercise their rights to vote. See Figure 2 for the representation of ethnic minority MPs in the Parliament and rise of uncontested seats.
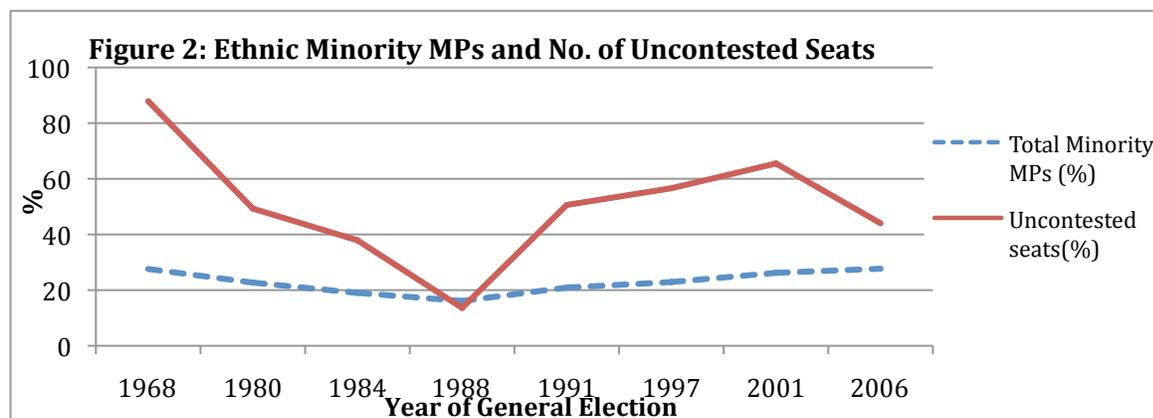
Source: compiled by author.

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[59] The only election held when Singapore was a state of Malaysia (1963-1965).

[60] The Parliament is represented by 23 electoral constituencies: 9 single seats, and 14 GRCs consisting of 5 or 6 seats (total = 74 seats). In 2006 GE, the Parliament has a total of 84 seats for elected MPs, 9 seats reserved for NMPs and up to 3 seats for NCMPs.

The rationale for the GRC scheme was to include at least one ethnic minority candidate and ensure minority representation in the Parliament.[61] However, the overall minority parliamentary representation was not severely imbalanced to begin with. As Figure 2 shows, the introduction of GRC has only improved the ethnic representation slightly from a low of 22.7 percent in 1980 to 27.7 percent in 2006.[62] Since 1988, all minority MPs have been elected through the GRC scheme and the PAP has not lost any GRC to the opposition. Opposition parties feel disadvantaged by the GRC scheme as they find it difficult to recruit high-quality ethnic-minority candidates to stand in election (Interview with Workers Party Chairman, Sylvia Lim, 6 Feb 2007)[63].

The high number of uncontested seats meant that more MPs were "appointed" rather than elected to their seats. The arbitrary enlargement of GRCs reinforces the view that GRCs were created to enable rookie candidates to ride on the coattails of heavyweight PAP candidates without the need to undergo the "baptism of fire." (ST 24 Apr 2006) As former PM Goh concedes, the GRC: "allows the PAP to recruit younger and capable candidates with the potential to become ministers…Without some assurance of a good chance of winning at least their first election, many able and successful young Singaporeans may not risk their careers to join politics." In the present Cabinet, young ministers such as Lim Swee Say, Dr. Ng Eng Hen, Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan and Rear Admiral (NS) Lui Tuck Yew were inducted into politics without contesting in elections. All these ministers entered politics via walkovers in the GRCs – a PAP strategy to ensure promising new candidates a place in government.[64]

From 1968 to 2006, the PAP has consistently earned around 70 percent of popular vote. Yet, it has maintained more than 98 percent majority of seats. Singapore's electoral disproportionality[65] stands at an average of 29.03% for the last 10 elections – one of the highest in Asia (see Crossiant 2002, 329). The dramatic increase of uncontested seats and high level of electoral disproportionality shows that Singapore's electoral system has a poor record of representativeness with strong majoritarian effects as the strongest party is over-represented in the Parliament (Crossiant 2002, 333). See Table 10 for Singapore's electoral disproportionality calculated based on Lijphart's index (1994)[66].

Table 10: Electoral Disproportionality in Singapore's Parliament

Country	Elections Held	Elections Included	Degree of Disproportionality (%)	
			Average	Latest Election
Singapore (1968-2006)	10 (1968-2006)	7 (1968-97)	29.03	31 (2006)

The PAP leaders make no apologies for its hegemonic rule and equate multipartyism and with bad governance that do not work in Asia. As Senior Lee warns, "Singapore cannot afford revolving door style of government where leaders change every five years" (ST 4 Apr 2007). Likewise, his son, PM

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[61] See Tan (2005) and Fetzer (2008) for an insightful study on electoral engineering and ethnic politics in Singapore.
[62] Minority parliamentary representation (Malays, Indians and non-Chinese) was consistently between 23% ad 29%, approximating and even exceeding the national racial composition. Now, both Malays and Indian MPs reflect a gradual upward trend but not significantly different from the pre-GRC system (Tan 2005, 423).
[63] My informal interviews with leaders from other opposition parties also concur with Lim's view.
[64] Wong Kan Seng, a minister who has been in office for 6 terms, has only contested once in his political career.
[65] Disproportionality means the deviation of the party's seat shares from their vote shares. Perfect proportionality is the situation in which each party receives exactly the same share of seats with the share of votes it receives (Croissant 2002, 329; Lijphart 1994, 57-77). Critics argue the size of GRCs secured the system's disproportionality in favour of the ruling party (Croissant 2002, 331).
[66] This index uses the largest deviation in an election result as an overall index of disproportionality The index is derived by the absolute difference between the total percentage of votes (Vi) for the most over-represented party and the total percentage of seats (Si) obtained by the most over-represented party.

Lee concurs that party alternation "seldom works because having two or more parties has not guaranteed good governance or progress…it is not a political system which is working properly. And I don't think you want that kind of political system in Singapore" (ST 16 Nov 2008).

Potential Problems

Three decades ago, Chan Heng Chee has described the PAP's leadership selection system as weak as it has "no strength other than the adoption by the party leadership" (1975, 301). She also predicted that the party will suffer leadership struggles as "party discipline that is the very strength of the party will become its major weakness in future because when the present leadership leaves the scene, there would be a whole generation of politicians who are short on manipulatory (oratory) skills because manipulation within the party has been discouraged and the ability of such politicians to stick together must surely be questioned". Chan's prediction has not come to pass. Internal rivalries and power struggles within PAP, if any, are kept under wraps and not evident to outsiders.

As Mainwaring and Scully remind us, "evaluations of party system institutionalization are not static", "unilinear nor irreversible" (1995, 20-1). Despite the PAP's institutionalized leadership succession system in a stable, semi-competitive party system, the survival of the PAP as a party organization may be "de-institutionalize" for the following reasons. First, while the horizontal integration elites promotes elite unity, it does not foster vertical ties between party leaders and members. The PAP continues to struggle with its image as an elitist party. Its party membership has not increased in the last 35 years despite increase in the total Singapore population from 2.1 mil in 1971 to 4.4 mil in 2006. The percentage of PAP membership relative to the population has in fact reduced, from 0.71% in 1971 to 0.34% in 2006. See Table 10 below.

Table 10: Singapore's PAP Membership and Total Population

	1971	2006
Total PAP Membership	15,000	15,000
Total Singapore Population	2.1 mil	4.4 mil
% of membership out of Singapore population	0.71%	0.34%

Source: 1971 data from Pang (1971, 51), others from PAP website and Singapore Statistics 2008.

The PAP leadership is aware of its image problem and has launched aggressive recruitment drive to appeal to younger Singaporeans. Its attempts to address the gap between party leaders and members includes initiating a PAP Policy Forum (PPF) in 2004 as a feedback mechanism and reaching out to the internet savvy youngsters through Facebook, podcasts and blogs.[67] Like most parties, the PAP is moving towards more intra-party democratization by allowing direct elections and voting to take place for party committees such as the Youth Wing[68], Women's Wing and district branches[69]. As these initiatives are still new, it is too early to tell the effects of inclusiveness on party cohesion.[70]

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[67] One of the PPF's roles is to organize regular policy forums such that younger party members can meet with party leaders and participating in party affairs and policy formulation. See "PAP Policy Forum - A Vibrant Singapore" and "PAP policy Forum – PAP Giving Voice to the Rank and File. " Petir Jul/Aug 2006. See PAP website for its new media initiatives at http://www.pap.org.sg/

[68] For example, 30 positions in Young PAP were up for grabs in its first internal elections in 2004 (ST 6 Mar 2004).

[69] The positions on the previously exclusive executive positions on the Headquarters are slowly opened to the rank and file members. Now, two district elected members can have two seats in the HQ executive committee.

[70] For the debate on inclusiveness and party cohesion see Carty (2004); Katz and Mair (2004); Rahat and Harzan (2001).

Second, unlike most parties that prize party loyalty and grassroots experience, the PAP recruits widely from different sectors and "parachutes" candidates without strong party ties or grassroots experience to stand in elections. Overtime, this could undermine the relevance of the PAP as a political organization as it is no longer the primary supplier for candidates. PAP's "talent spotting" and recruitment from outside the Party may also frustrate ambitious cadres. Party careerists who were leapfrogged and excluded from the elitist "parachuting" scheme may choose to "exit" rather than "voice" (Hirshman 1970).

Third, as a result of five decades of hegemonic rule, the PAP now behaves like a party-state where the line distinguishing the party and state is blurred. The fusion between two is compounded by the fact that the CEC membership overlaps with the Cabinet. The Party exercises little influence on the government and the "CEC is only a rubber stamp for government decisions, and that the party has lost is role in giving direction to society" (Mauzy 2002, 49). The PAP organization is lean with less than nine salaried administrative staff in a humble headquarters located far away from the city centre. Instead, the Party relies on state resources to develop a sprawling network of para-political organizations to serve the constituencies. These grassroots organizations are slowly replacing the traditional roles of the PAP. Without more party-building efforts, the PAP may risk losing its organizational strength, coherence and relevance as a Party.[71]

Finally, the PAP's meritocratic-based recruitment and candidate selection process is viewed as "ruthless winnowing process" that promotes elitism[72] and "politics of envy" (Barr 2006; Tan 2008). Singapore PM, cabinet ministers, MPs and civil servants are one of the highest paid in the world[73]. As the political elites are rewarded with larger prizes, the growing income inequality between the elites and masses may evoke a sense of resentment, social disengagement, and envy among those excluded from this elite-based system. Besides, the elite-selection process may result in the ruling class renewing itself with the people of same mindset, promoting in-breeding of ideas. As this study shows, the Parliament is filled with technocrats, experts and professionals. With fewer MPs with party links, trade unions and grassroots experience, the Parliament may lack empathy for the problems of the ordinary people[74] and become disconnected from the ground.

Conclusion

As Huntington said, "Party systems originate in the patterns of cleavage and alignment among social forces. Different relationships among social forces and different sequences in the development of cleavages among them give rise to different types of party systems. Once the system takes root, however, they develop a life of their own" (1970, 10). Lipset and Rokkan's social cleavage approach is useful to explain the origins of parties and party system in Singapore but does not account for how and why Singapore's present hegemonic party system might "freeze" or evolve; or what mechanisms were responsible for its stability. In Singapore, the PAP that once benefited from the ethno-linguistic

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[71] However, Croissant has characterized the PAP as a programmatic party which offers voters the real choices between competing programmes and is able to sustain linkages between voters and themselves – the most conducive for the consolidation and stability of democratic regimes (2002, 346).

[72] In contrary, Mauzy and Milne observe that despite the complaints of elitism, Singapore voters will rarely vote for a person who is not well educated or qualified professionally (2002, 64).

[73] The salary for Singapore President (2008) is S$3.87 mil and S$3.76 mil for the PM. A MP receives $225,000 annually (PSC Press Release 13 Dec 2007). The high ministerial salary is a controversial issue in Singapore.

[74] As senior civil servant, Ngiam Tong Dow warned, elites may lack empathy as younger Cabinet ministers hail from upper-middle class backgrounds and they "do not know the impact of policies such as a 10-cent bus fare hike on ordinary families" (ST's Interview with Ngiam, ST 22 May 2008).

cleavage structure was also responsible for dismantling it. The deliberate formation of cross-cutting cleavages in an increasingly literate and affluent society have narrowed the social bases of mobilization and turned mass politics into an elitist one with a "life of its own".

Current party politics literature tends to equate party institutionalization with party democratization. My study of the PAP in Singapore challenges this assumption by showing how party institutionalization fosters the "iron law of oligarchy" and constraint electoral competitivenesss. The PAP has an exclusive and autonomous selectorate that retains the power to nominate and appoint candidates based on stringent selection criteria. Access to state resource sand incumbency advantage have freed the PAP from external interferences. The PAP shows high systemness as rules, regulations and selection process are in placed and routinized. With time, the party members and electorate have come to view interviews and psychological tests as acceptable means to produce an elite-based government. Selection criteria based on meritocracy and technocracy also appear to have mitigated factionalism, personality and money politics. Today, the PAP government is one of the world's least corrupt (Global Corruption Barometer 2009, 28). Five decades of rule with two leadership transitions have bolstered the PAP's credibility to generate good quality leadership. Public opinion data shows that 91.4 percent of Singaporeans are satisfied with leaders in office (World Values Survey 2002) and have high levels of trust for political institutions (Asian Barometer Survey 2006).

On the party system level, it is argued that constitutional reforms have a direct impact on the quality of candidate and electoral competitiveness. Both legal constraints and electoral reforms such as the GRC have tilted the "level-playing field" to the PAP's advantage. To paraphrase Pempel, dominance begets more dominance (1990, 16). The PAP's twin strategy of electoral manipulation and persuasion has built an image of invincibility and supermajority in Parliament that work against the opposition parties. Anecdotal evidence and interviews with opposition leaders and activists also confirm the view that electoral competition is free but not fair in Singapore.

Most observers contend that the PAP's cohesion over 50 years owed much to Lee Kuan Yew's forceful personality. Yet, it is more than charisma or ideological commitments that sustain the PAP. Lee and his successors have institutionalized a process by which the PAP as an organization has incorporated the founder's values and aims. As Lee Kuan Yew said: "My colleagues and I have institutionalized honesty, integrity and meritocracy into the systems we have created. Each generation of leaders has the duty to recruit the people of integrity, ability and commitment as their successors" (cited in Rodan 2009, 192). The notion of leadership selection based on meritocracy and integrity is entrenched and widely accepted by party members and a majority of Singaporeans. With the injection of right people and concerted attempt to address the gap between ordinary party members and leadership, the PAP is poised to survive the passing of its founding leader and continue to rule for some years to come.

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Appendix A

List of Registered Political Parties in Singapore

Name	Acronyms	Current status/ participation in Elections	Date of Registration
1. Alliance Party Singapura	APS	Never contested	17 February 1966
2. Angkatan Islam	AI	Dormant	6 August 1958
3. Barisan Socialis	BS	Dormant	15 August 1961
4. Democratic Progressive Party	DPP	Dormant	16 March 1973
5. National Party of Singapore	NPS	Defunct	26 February 1971
6. National Solidarity Party	NSP	Contested	6 March 1987
7. Partai Rakyat, Singapore State Division	PR	Defunct	3 December 1956
8. Parti Kesatuan Ra'ayat (United Democratic Party)	UDP	Contested	18 June 1962
9. People's Action Party	PAP	Contested	18 February 1961
10. People's Republican Party	PRP	Dormant	30 August 1973
11. People's Liberal Democratic Party	PLDP	Dormant	2 May 2006
12. Persatuan Melayu Singapura		Never contested	2 February 1952
13. Pertubohan Kebangsaan Melayu Singapura (Singapore National Malay Organization)*	PKMS/SMNO	Contested	20 February 1961
14. Reform Party	RP	Never Contested	3 July 2008
15. Singapore Chinese Party	SCP	Dormant	26 September 1950
16. Singapore Democratic Alliance*	SDA	Contested	2 July 2001
17. Singapore Democratic Party	SDP	Contested	8 September 1980
18. Singapore Indian Congress		Never Contested	7 August 1962
19. Singapore Justice Party*	SJP	Contested	10 August 1972
20. Singapore National Front	SNF	Never Contested	15 August 1991
21. Singapore People's Party	SPP	Contested	21 November 1994
22. The People's Front	PF	Defunct	21 May 1971
23. The Workers' Party	WP	Contested	30 January 1961
24. United National Front	UNF	Contested	6 March 1970
25. United People's Front	UPF	Contested	20 March 1975
26. United People's Party	UPP	Dissolved	14 July 1961

Sources: Singapore Yearbook 2008, available at http://www.sg/SG_Yrbook2008/Gov&Politics.html and unofficial
Singapore Elections website at http://www.singapore-elections.com/political_parties.html

- *Four parties joined an umbrella alliance and were registered as Singapore Democratic Alliance (SDA) on 3 July 2001 in preparation for 2001 GE. SDA, led by Chiam See Tong, consisted of four parties including SPP, NSP, SJP and PKMS. NSP left the alliance after GE2006.*
- *The opposition parties that have gained seats in post-independent Singapore Parliament are: SDA, NSP, SPP and WP*