

the
Singapore

WAY

**TEACHER
GUIDE**

The Future of Singapore

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Case Title: *Future-Proofing a Nation: Singapore's Leap into Tomorrow*

1. Introduction to the Case.....	3
Purpose of the Case	
Thematic Fit within “The Singapore Way”	
Key Teaching Points	
2. Pre-Class Preparation.....	4
Assigned Readings and Multimedia	
Pre-reading Questions for Students	
Instructor Pre-Class Notes	
3. Session Plan.....	5
Recommended Class Duration	
Session Flow (Opening, Discussion Segments, Closing)	
Timing Breakdown	
4. Case Facilitation Tools.....	7
Guiding Discussion Questions	
Decision-Making Frameworks (e.g., Futures Wheel, Scenario Matrix)	
Visual Aids & Diagrams	
5. Group Activities & Teaching Tactics.....	9
Role-Play: The “2040 Cabinet” Scenario Simulation	
Group Mapping: Prioritizing National Challenges	
Debate Format: “Resilience vs Risk” Policy Stance Debate	
6. Assignments and Post-Class Engagement.....	11
Individual Policy Brief Assignment	
Classwide “Future Singapore” Strategic Foresight Memo	
Optional: Digital Foresight Workshop with AI Tools	
7. Assessment and Feedback Tools.....	13
Rubric for Participation & Analysis	
Policy Memo Evaluation Criteria	
Reflection Journals and Feedback Surveys	
8. Instructor Notes and Commentary.....	15
Common Pitfalls in Discussion	
Suggested Insights to Emphasize	
Commentary on the Real-World Evolution of Chapter Themes	
9. Additional Resources.....	17
Recommended Articles, Videos & Podcasts	
Reports on Future Governance, Technology, Aging, and Climate	
Singapore Futures Academy & Government Scenario Planning Tools	

1. Introduction to the Case

Purpose of the Case

This case is designed to challenge learners to think deeply about what it means for a nation—especially a small and resource-limited one like Singapore—to be “future-ready.” Students will analyse how governments can anticipate disruptions and make bold yet responsible decisions to secure their long-term national well-being. The case moves away from celebrating past success and focuses on preparing for what lies ahead—uncertainty, complexity, and opportunity.

Thematic Fit within *The Singapore Way*

Chapter 17 serves as a **culmination and a forward pivot** in the book’s arc. While previous chapters highlight past achievements in housing, education, trade, and governance, this chapter encourages strategic foresight. It raises core questions of adaptability, resilience, leadership continuity, and the reimagining of national identity in the face of aging demographics, climate volatility, AI disruption, and shifting geopolitical alliances.

The themes reinforce the book’s guiding principles, including:

- **Long-term planning**
- **Visionary leadership**
- **Adaptability**
- **Self-reliance**
- **Global perspective**

Key Teaching Points

- Understanding the **tools and mindset of foresight** (scenario planning, horizon scanning, adaptive governance)
- Exploring **trade-offs in policy design** amid aging, automation, and climate pressures
- Identifying what makes a country resilient—beyond economics and defense
- Applying **systems thinking** to national planning: interconnections among demography, diplomacy, innovation, and sustainability
- Discussing **small-state diplomacy**: How Singapore navigates global power shifts
- Emphasizing the role of **inclusive leadership and public engagement** in future-building

2. Pre-Class Preparation

Assigned Readings and Multimedia

Required Reading:

- *The Singapore Way*, Chapter 17: *The Future of Singapore: Challenges and Opportunities*

Supplementary Materials (Optional):

- Excerpt: "Singapore's Population White Paper (2013)"
- Video: *Singapore in 2040 – The Future We Imagine* (Gov.sg, 6 min)
- Article: "AI and the Workforce: The Skills Singapore Needs" (Straits Times, 2024)
- Podcast: *The Future of Small States – Resilience and Strategy* (Singapore Futures Academy, 28 min)

Pre-Reading Questions for Students

Ask students to reflect on these questions before class:

1. What do you believe are the top 3 challenges Singapore must address over the next 15 years?
2. How can a government balance long-term goals with short-term political demands?
3. What should be the role of citizens in shaping a national future?
4. How does Singapore's global positioning change in a multipolar world?
5. Is there a trade-off between adaptability and national identity?

Instructor Pre-Class Notes

- **Prepare scenario-building templates or cards** for group activities
- Review student background knowledge on:
 - Aging population issues in Asia
 - Automation and workforce shifts
 - Singapore's water, housing, and sustainability policies (covered in earlier chapters)
- Consider **grouping students by professional/academic interest** (e.g., policy, business, education, tech) for deeper engagement
- Have visual aids ready (projector, whiteboard, or digital Miro board) to facilitate scenario mapping

3. Session Plan

Recommended Class Duration

90 minutes (adaptable to 60 or 120 minutes)

Session Flow Overview

Time	Segment	Objective	Format
0–10 min	Opening Spark	Frame the future challenge through a provocation or real-world scenario	Instructor-led
10–25 min	Quick Recap & Discussion	Review key themes from Chapter 17 & check assumptions	Whole group
25–45 min	Dilemma Deep Dive	Engage in discussion around Singapore's key long-term tensions (e.g., growth vs. climate)	Guided discussion
45–70 min	Scenario Planning Activity: "Singapore 2040"	Groups co-create a plausible future and develop strategic responses	Small groups
70–85 min	Group Presentations	Each group presents their future vision and policy priorities	Presentation
85–90 min	Reflect and Close	Connect the case to broader leadership and governance principles	Instructor summary + student reflections

Segment Details

Opening Spark (0–10 min)

- **Prompt:** "It's the year 2040. A storm has just cut off global trade for 2 weeks. Singapore must rely on its own resources for energy, food, and medical supplies. What happens?"
- Use this to provoke urgency and imagination.

Quick Recap & Discussion (10–25 min)

- *Ask: What is Singapore's biggest existential challenge?*
- Students share key takeaways from pre-readings and multimedia.
- Use a live poll (Mentimeter/Slido) to gather perspectives.

Dilemma Deep Dive (25–45 min)

- Discussion Themes:
 - How does Singapore prepare for the unknown?
 - What role does aging play in shaping national priorities?
 - Is economic resilience compatible with environmental sustainability?
 - How much should Singapore rely on AI and automation?

Group Activity: Singapore 2040 Scenario Planning (45–70 min)

- Each group chooses one focal driver (e.g., climate, technology, population)
- They build a **future scenario** using the **Futures Wheel** or a **Scenario Matrix**
- They must define:
 - Their “future world” in 2040
 - 3 bold policies Singapore would need
 - 1 ethical tension or trade-off

Group Presentations (70–85 min)

- Each group gets **3–4 minutes** to present
- Class offers one insight or challenge per presentation

Reflection & Close (85–90 min)

- Prompt: *What leadership traits are most needed in future-proofing a nation?*
- Instructor wraps with reference to Singapore’s foresight institutions (e.g., Centre for Strategic Futures)

4. Case Facilitation Tools

Primary Facilitation Goals

Equip instructors with tools to:

- Guide high-level strategic thinking
- Manage complexity and ambiguity in discussion
- Foster creative, interdisciplinary problem-solving
- Encourage systems thinking and ethical reasoning

Guiding Discussion Questions

Use these to shape an engaging and deep conversation:

Framing the Future

- What does it mean for a nation to be *resilient* versus *adaptive*?
- How might Singapore's small size be an asset in facing global disruption?
- What signals of change (technological, demographic, environmental) should policymakers monitor today?

Trade-Off Exploration

- If Singapore increases automation, what is lost in terms of social cohesion or employment stability?
- How does a rapidly aging population reshape the social compact?
- How might decarbonization policies affect economic competitiveness?

Diplomatic Positioning

- How does a small state maintain strategic relevance in a multipolar world?
- What does “constructive neutrality” look like in 2040?

Leadership and Strategy

- How can leaders plan for the future without pretending to predict it?
- What role does public trust play in long-term governance?

Decision-Making & Analysis Tools

Tool	Description	Usage in Class
Futures Wheel	A visual method for mapping first-, second-, and third-order consequences	Used in group activity to build 2040 scenarios
Scenario Matrix	Plots 4 future worlds across two major uncertainties (e.g., tech advancement vs. social cohesion)	Optional alternative to Futures Wheel
Ethical Tension Mapping	Map out stakeholder tensions and unintended consequences of bold policy choices	Use during dilemma discussion or debate
System Map or Causal Loop Diagram	Shows how policy levers (e.g., immigration, education, automation) interact	Great for visual learners in complex discussions

Visual Aids & Templates

- **2040 Scenario Board:** Pre-designed quadrant matrix or wheel
- **Policy Tension Cards:** Prewritten cards with dilemmas like “Resilience vs. Risk”, “Automation vs. Inclusion”
- **Whiteboard prompts or digital boards** (Miro, Jamboard)
- **Sticky Notes or Digital Comments** for student input

5. Group Activities & Teaching Tactics

Overview

This section equips you with hands-on activities that will drive deeper engagement with the core dilemmas of the case. Each activity is designed to stretch imagination, build collaboration, and challenge students to think like policymakers in uncertain terrain.

Activity 1: “2040 Cabinet” Role-Play Simulation

Objective:

Simulate a future cabinet meeting in 2040 to confront a national emergency under uncertainty.

How It Works:

- Divide students into groups of 5–6; each group becomes a **cabinet taskforce**.
- Each member adopts a role (e.g., Minister for Sustainability, Défense, Innovation, Finance, Social Development, Trade).
- Give them a scenario prompt (e.g., “Rising sea levels have displaced 15% of the population. Budget constraints are severe. Global supply chains have fractured.”)
- Task: Propose a **3-point strategic plan** in 15 minutes.
- Present & defend decisions in a 2-minute briefing.

Facilitation Tip:

Give extra challenge cards: e.g., “Budget cut by 25%,” or “Cyberattack ongoing.”

Activity 2: “Future Singapore” Strategic Mapping

Objective:

Analyse how forces like AI, geopolitics, aging, and climate intersect and impact policy.

How It Works:

- Groups receive 6–8 **“Future Forces” cards** (examples: “AI Replaces 30% of Jobs”, “Population Over 70 Doubles”, “US-China Tensions Escalate”, etc.).
- Using a **canvas or whiteboard**, they:
 - Categorize each force as either a Threat, Opportunity, or Uncertainty
 - Draw connections (causal or reinforcing)
 - Recommend 2–3 “no-regret” strategic actions

Outcome:

Encourages system-level thinking and priority-setting.

Activity 3: Debate – “Resilience vs. Risk: What Should Singapore Bet On?”

Objective:

Challenge students to examine trade-offs between bold innovation and cautious preservation.

Structure:

- Two teams debate the motion:

“Singapore should prioritize risk-taking and disruptive innovation over stability in the next 15 years.”

- One team argues *for*, one *against*
- Audience may vote at the end (or in the middle to measure persuasion shift)

Debrief Prompt:

“What’s the real cost of being too cautious or too aggressive in national planning?”

Bonus Mini-Tactic: “One Policy, Three Lenses”

Quick-fire Discussion Technique

Choose a bold proposed policy (e.g., “Ban private cars by 2035” or “Launch Universal Basic Income for AI-displaced workers”).

Ask students to examine it from:

- Ethical lens
- Economic lens
- Social equity lens

This builds analytical agility in evaluating future-oriented ideas.

6. Assignments and Post-Class Engagement

This section extends learning beyond the classroom by offering students opportunities to reflect, analyse, and apply insights from the case in creative, meaningful ways.

Core Assignment: Policy Brief - "Future Singapore 2040"

Objective:

Challenge students to synthesize foresight, policy design, and ethical reasoning into a coherent national strategy.

Prompt:

"You are an advisor to the Prime Minister. Draft a 2-page policy brief outlining one major future scenario (positive or disruptive), its implications for Singapore, and your proposed strategy to respond."

Key Elements:

- Description of a plausible 2040 scenario
- Analysis of key drivers and uncertainties
- 2–3 actionable policy recommendations
- One ethical trade-off and proposed mitigation
- Executive Summary (150 words max)

Suggested Format:

- 2 pages, single-spaced
- Include a diagram or visual (e.g., futures wheel, timeline, or causal loop)

Assessment Focus:

- Clarity, originality, systems thinking, strategic soundness

Collaborative Assignment: Future Singapore Memo (Group Work)

Objective:

Foster interdisciplinary dialogue and long-term thinking.

Task:

Groups (3–4 students) submit a joint strategy memo titled:

“The Singapore We Want: A Strategic Foresight Memo for 2040”

Structure:

- Vision Statement
- Key Trends and Risks
- Top 3 Strategic Priorities
- Stakeholder Engagement Plan
- Metrics for Success

Optional Add-On:

Present your vision as a pitch in a mock “Parliamentary Futures Committee.”

Digital Extension: AI + Foresight Lab (Optional)

If your institution allows, offer an interactive workshop:

- Tools: ChatGPT, Scenario Generator, Futurocity Cards
- Task: Use AI to generate scenarios, stress-test ideas, and refine policy strategies
- Outcome: Create a PDF “2035–2040 Forecast” poster or mini deck

Reflective Practice: Journal Prompt or Personal Essay

Prompt:

“What kind of future do I want to help create—professionally and personally—and what role can I play in shaping it?”

Length: 300–500 words.

This personal reflection helps learners connect the macro dilemmas to their own purpose and leadership development.

7. Assessment and Feedback Tools

This section equips instructors with clear tools to evaluate both the **quality of student engagement** and the **depth of learning**. It also offers ways to gather meaningful feedback from students to improve future sessions.

Assessment Criteria Overview

Dimension	What to Look For	Applicable To
Critical Thinking	Recognizes complexity, explores trade-offs, challenges assumptions	All activities and written submissions
Systems Thinking	Identifies interdependencies among political, social, technological, and environmental factors	Scenario Planning, Policy Briefs
Foresight & Imagination	Demonstrates plausible future thinking, not just extrapolation	Scenario Design, Group Memos
Strategic Reasoning	Proposes coherent, actionable strategies that are future-focused	Policy Briefs, Presentations
Communication & Clarity	Clear, persuasive, and well-organized ideas	Debates, Presentations, Written Assignments
Teamwork & Engagement	Participates fully, listens, builds on others' ideas	Group Activities, Discussions

Rubric: Policy Brief / Group Memo (Suggested 20-point scale)

Category	Points	Indicators
Scenario Realism & Insight	5 pts	Is the future scenario well-thought-out and plausible?
Strategic Recommendations	5 pts	Are the proposals clear, innovative, and feasible?
Ethical/Economic/Social Lens	3 pts	Are tensions acknowledged and trade-offs discussed?
Systems Thinking	3 pts	Are relationships across sectors considered?
Communication	4 pts	Clarity, structure, and persuasive tone

✓ **Bonus (up to 2 pts):** Use of visual tools like futures wheels or scenario matrices

Participation Rubric (Discussion & Activities)

Level	Descriptors
Excellent	Thoughtfully engages, links ideas, challenges constructively
Good	Participates consistently and adds value to the dialogue
Fair	Present but contributes minimally or off-topic
Limited	Absent, distracted, or disruptive

Feedback Tools

Exit Slip Prompts (End of Class):

- One insight I'm leaving with...
- One challenge I'm still wrestling with...
- One bold idea I'd like to test in my context...

Survey (Post-Session):

- On a scale of 1–5, how well did this case push your thinking on national planning?
- What was your favourite part of the case experience?
- What would you improve for future cohorts?

8. Instructor Notes and Commentary

This section offers teaching insights, facilitation cautions, and deeper reflections on how to connect this case with real-world leadership and policy challenges. It's designed to help you bring nuance and strategic depth into the room.

Instructor Framing Notes

- **Shift the Tone from Celebration to Curiosity**
Previous chapters often highlight Singapore's remarkable successes. This chapter asks students to *look forward*—to move from admiration to action. Make space for ambiguity, not answers.
- **Balance Optimism and Realism**
Encourage students to recognize Singapore's strengths (foresight, agility, planning culture), but also its fragilities (demographic shifts, external dependencies, geopolitical vulnerabilities). Avoid turning the session into either techno-utopianism or doomscrolling.
- **Honor the "Small State, Big Vision" Paradigm**
Highlight how Singapore operates under constant strategic pressure, which has forced it to innovate faster than larger nations. This can help students reframe constraints as creative opportunities.

Common Pitfalls to Watch For

Misstep	Correction
Oversimplifying complex futures	Ask students to identify unintended consequences of each policy
Ignoring human and ethical dimensions	Use the "One Policy, Three Lenses" mini-tactic to restore balance
Too much focus on technology	Re-centre discussions on governance, values, and institutions
Thinking in silos (e.g., only climate or only AI)	Use system maps or group cross-pollination to reveal interdependencies

Strategic Commentary: Instructor Insights to Emphasize

- **Singapore's Use of Strategic Foresight Is Not Accidental**
Institutions like the *Centre for Strategic Futures*, *Scenario Planning Office*, and *Singapore Futures Academy* reflect a deep belief in anticipatory governance. Bring attention to how this institutional mindset can be cultivated elsewhere.
- **Aging Is a Strategic Lever, Not Just a Risk**
Singapore's aging population isn't just a demographic crisis—it's also an opportunity to reimagine work, caregiving, urban design, and lifelong learning.
- **Diplomacy as a Resilience Strategy**
Point out that Singapore's geopolitical strategy—balancing the U.S., China, ASEAN, and multilateralism—is an evolved form of resilience that smaller states can emulate.
- **Foresight Requires Inclusive Participation**
Ask: Who gets to imagine the future? Whose voices are left out? Use this as an opportunity to stress equity and youth engagement in policy design.

Tips for First-Time Instructors

- Invite students to build **multiple future pathways** rather than one perfect future.
- Use **visuals and frameworks** early in the session to reduce overwhelm.
- Don't fear pauses—silence can be generative when working with complex questions.
- Lean into **storytelling**. Ask: "What kind of Singapore would you want your children to inherit?"

9. Additional Resources

This curated list offers **enrichment materials** to help both instructors and students explore the themes of Chapter 17 in greater depth. These resources are ideal for pre-reading, post-class assignments, or future independent study.

Official Singapore Government & Foresight Resources

Resource	Description
Centre for Strategic Futures (CSF)	Singapore's primary foresight agency - includes publications on scenario planning, complex systems, and emerging risks.
Singapore Futures Academy	Training hub for public officers in anticipatory governance and future scenario development.
[Population White Paper (2013)]	Landmark planning document examining demographics, aging, and immigration. Still a key policy reference.
Urban Redevelopment Authority - Master Plans	Forward-looking urban design and population distribution strategies.
Smart Nation Singapore	National vision and projects integrating digital, AI, and innovation efforts.

Podcasts & Talks

Title	Host / Speaker	Focus
<i>Futures Thinking: Singapore's Foresight Model</i>	The GovInsider Podcast	Features interviews with Singapore's foresight leaders.
<i>Rethinking the Social Compact</i>	IPS Singapore	Explores the evolving contract between government and citizens.
<i>The AI-Ready Workforce</i>	CNA Leadership Series	Deep dive into preparing workers for automation and AI.
<i>TED Talk: The Case for Strategic Foresight in Government</i>	Aarathi Krishnan (Red Cross Global Advisor)	Inspiring take on future-ready leadership for public sector reform.

Recommended Articles & Reports

- **"Scenarios for Singapore 2040"** – Centre for Strategic Futures (2022)
- **"The Ageing Puzzle: Solving Longevity Challenges in Asia"** – LKYSPP (2023)
- **"Small States in a Disrupted World"** – S. Jayakumar, ISEAS (2020)
- **"Governing the Future: The Ethics of Foresight"** – World Economic Forum Whitepaper (2021)
- **"Climate-Resilient Singapore: Policy Innovation in the Face of Scarcity"** – NUS Public Policy Review (2024)

Teaching Enhancers

- **Miro / MURAL Templates:** Scenario mapping boards, systems thinking diagrams
- **Kumu or Loopy Tools:** For building digital causal loop diagrams
- **Futures Literacy Lab Guide:** UNESCO Futures Literacy Playbook (great for activity design)
- **Think-Tank Outputs:** Atlantic Council Foresight Report, WEF Global Risk Reports, UNDP Foresight Manual