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**Singapore**

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**WAY**

**STUDENT GUIDE**

**Leadership and  
Governance**

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# 1. Welcome & Purpose of This Case

## Welcome!

You're about to dive into a case that explores how visionary leadership, governance stability, and long-term planning turned a small, struggling island into one of the most admired nations in the world—Singapore.

This isn't just a history lesson. It's a look into how decisions made decades ago still shape people's lives today. It's also a challenge to you:

How would you lead if your nation, company, or team stood at a crossroads?

This case draws from real events, leaders, policies, and challenges faced by Singapore since 1965. It highlights how one key principle—stability through vision—helped build systems of trust, foster investment, and ensure progress across generations.

## Why This Case Matters

In a world where leadership often changes quickly and unpredictably, Singapore's story shows what's possible when:

- Leaders stay committed to long-term goals
- Governance is designed to outlast individuals
- Trust is built through action, not just words

Whether you're a future policymaker, business leader, entrepreneur, or community builder, this case will help you explore questions like:

- What makes leadership sustainable?
- How do you build trust in uncertain times?
- How do systems—not just individuals—deliver results?

## What You'll Explore

- How Singapore transitioned from instability to order
- The leadership traits and habits of Lee Kuan Yew and his successors
- Mega-projects like Tuas Port that embody long-term thinking
- What it means to prepare future leaders, not just appoint them
- The balance between control and citizen trust

## A Note from the Author (Maher Kaddoura)

"Stability isn't about clinging to power—it's about building foundations others can stand on after you're gone. This case is not meant to be admired. It's meant to be applied."

Ready to begin? You don't have to be a policymaker to learn from this.

Just bring your mind, your voice, and your vision.

## 2. Case Background

### **Singapore in 1965: A Nation on the Brink**

Imagine inheriting a new country with:

- No natural resources
- A divided population
- Massive unemployment
- Recent riots and racial tensions
- Dependence on another country for water and trade

That was Singapore's reality in 1965, after its unexpected separation from Malaysia. Many international observers predicted it would fail. But that's not what happened.

Instead, over the next six decades, Singapore would become:

- One of the safest cities in the world
- A top global economy with a GDP per capita of over US\$82,000
- A trusted hub for global businesses
- A country with one of the lowest corruption rates on Earth
- Home to over 7,000 multinational companies

### **The Secret? Leadership + Stability**

Much of this progress was anchored in the leadership approach of Singapore's founding Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, and the People's Action Party (PAP) which has governed since 1959. But this wasn't just about staying in power—it was about delivering results, grooming successors, and creating systems people could trust.

Key elements of this strategy included:

- Long-term leadership that focused on outcomes, not popularity
- Policy consistency that allowed people and businesses to plan with confidence
- Zero tolerance for corruption to build public trust
- Smooth succession planning that avoided power struggles
- Mega-projects like Tuas Port, which embodied future-focused governance

## **Featured Example: Tuas Port**

By the 2010s, Singapore's old ports were overloaded. Rather than patch them up, the government launched Tuas Port—a bold \$20 billion plan to create the smartest, greenest port in the world, run by AI, electric vehicles, and real-time data.

It wasn't easy. COVID delays, rising sea levels, and global trade disruptions all tested the project. But the government stayed the course—and in 2025, Tuas Port became a global logistics model.

**Why is this important?**

It shows what happens when a nation builds for the long term—even when short-term challenges scream louder.

## **Big Picture**

This case helps us understand that stability isn't boring—it's often the most powerful foundation for transformation. Whether you're leading a country or a classroom, you'll explore what it takes to lead for the long haul.

### 3. Learning Objectives

This case isn't just about learning facts—it's about building leadership habits and critical thinking tools you can carry with you.

By the end of this case, you should be able to:

#### Understand

- The historical and political context in which Singapore's governance model emerged
- The rationale behind long-term leadership and predictable policies
- How Tuas Port and similar mega-projects reflect visionary planning
- The importance of leadership succession in sustaining national direction

#### Analyse

- The trade-offs between stability and democratic pluralism
- The relationship between governance and public trust
- How policies and leadership frameworks create space for economic development
- Why some nations struggle with continuity—and what Singapore did differently

#### Apply

- Use Singapore's leadership principles to examine your own country, organization, or community
- Reflect on how stability can be maintained without suppressing innovation
- Evaluate a current leader or system using the "Singapore Stability Lens"
- Propose strategies for succession planning in a leadership context you care about

#### Discuss & Debate

- Should leaders stay in power for decades if they keep delivering?
- What would happen if Singapore suddenly changed political models?
- Is trust in leadership more important than political competition?

This case is designed to challenge assumptions, spark practical insight, and encourage action-oriented thinking.

## 4. Pre-Class Preparation

Before diving into the class session, take time to engage with the following materials and reflection questions. The more prepared you are, the more meaningful your contribution will be.

### Required Reading

- Chapter 1 of *The Singapore Way* by Maher Kaddoura

Focus on:

- Singapore's political landscape post-1965
- The leadership style of Lee Kuan Yew and PAP
- The development and symbolism of Tuas Port
- How governance, trust, and long-term planning were built

### Optional Enrichment

If you have extra time or interest:

- Lee Kuan Yew's *From Third World to First* – Selected passages
- Transparency International – Corruption Index
- EDB Singapore's Global Rankings
- Short video: "Tuas Port: Singapore's Future Gateway" (YouTube / PSA Singapore)

### Reflection Questions (Write Notes in Advance)

Be ready to share your thoughts in small group discussions:

1. What does "governance stability" mean to you?
2. Do you think a country can be both visionary and tightly controlled?  
Why or why not?
3. What is your reaction to a single party staying in power for decades?  
What are the risks and rewards?
4. What surprised you most about the Tuas Port story?
5. Can you think of an example (in your country, school, or workplace)  
where a lack of leadership planning caused problems?

### Checklist: Bring This to Class

- Notes or answers to the reflection questions
- Your copy or summary of Chapter 1
- A real-world example to share (from your own experience or your country)
- Curiosity and an open mind

## 5. In-Class Participation

This session is interactive, discussion-driven, and designed for you to apply what you've read—so your active voice matters.

### What to Expect

Depending on the session length, you may participate in activities such as:

Segment	What Happens
Group Discussions	Small group conversations guided by key questions
Role-Playing Simulations	Act as decision-makers in a real-life leadership dilemma
Case Analysis Debriefs	Break down what Singapore did and why it worked
Polls & Live Reactions	Share your views in real-time and compare with classmates
Creative Exercises	Design governance solutions, draft a stability playbook

### How to Contribute Effectively

- Be prepared. Bring your notes, examples, and questions.
- Be curious. Don't worry about having the "right" answer—ask insightful ones.
- Be respectful. This case may raise political or cultural debates. Listen with empathy.
- Be relevant. Relate your ideas to the case, the reading, or your own experiences.
- Be bold. Push your thinking. Challenge others with kindness.

### Sample Questions You'll Explore

- What's more important: strong leadership or strong systems?
- Is it ethical for one party to rule for decades if the country prospers?
- How can future leaders be prepared—not just chosen?
- What would it take to apply Singapore's success formula in your country?

### Tip: Participation is Graded

Instructors may use a rubric to assess your engagement based on:

- Frequency and quality of contributions
- Critical thinking and real-world application
- Listening and collaboration
- Willingness to participate in activities

Be present, and your voice will shape the conversation.



## 6. Assignments

After the session, you'll be expected to deepen your learning through individual or group assignments. These are designed to help you reflect, analyse, and apply the leadership and governance principles from the Singapore case.

### Option 1: Reflective Essay

Title: "What Stability Looks Like in My Context"

Length: 800–1000 words

#### Prompt:

Use the Singapore case to reflect on a real-world context you know—your country, community, workplace, or school. What systems (or lack of them) impact stability and leadership succession? What can be improved? What would "stability through vision" look like where you are?

Tip: Be honest, specific, and reflective. Real insight beats polished theory.

### Option 2: Comparative Policy Brief

Title: "Governance Models: Singapore vs. (Your Choice)"

Length: 2-page memo or 5-slide deck

#### Instructions:

1. Pick a country you're familiar with.
2. Compare it to Singapore in terms of:
  - Leadership structure
  - Policy consistency
  - Anti-corruption and trust
  - Succession planning
3. Conclude with 1–2 policy ideas your country could adopt from Singapore's playbook.

### **Option 3: Creative Poster**

**Title: "Leadership for the Long Haul"**

**Format: Digital (Canva/Google Slides) or physical poster**

**Must include:**

- A quote from The Singapore Way or Lee Kuan Yew
- A powerful visual metaphor (e.g., lighthouse, compass, tree)
- Three key lessons from the case
- One bold idea for building trust and stability in leadership

**Optional: Present it to your peers in a 2-minute "poster pitch."**

### **Assignment Submission Tips**

- Review your instructor's due date and format requirements.
- Cite the chapter and any external sources if used.
- Proofread and use clear formatting—especially for memos or slides.
- You may be asked to peer-review another student's work.

## 7. Reflective Practice

This section helps you internalize the insights from the case and apply them to your own life, leadership journey, and future decisions. True learning isn't just about understanding others—it's about understanding yourself.

### Self-Reflection Prompts

Take a few quiet moments after class to journal or voice-record your thoughts:

1. What is my personal definition of “stable leadership”?
2. Have I ever been part of a group or organization that lacked a clear vision?
  - What happened?
  - How did people respond?
3. What leadership values from Singapore's model resonate most with me? Why?
4. If I had to plan for my own succession in a leadership role, what would I do?
5. What's one leadership blind spot I might need to work on?

### Leadership Self-Check (Quick Quiz)

Rate yourself from 1 (rarely) to 5 (consistently) on the following:

Statement	Score (1–5)
I make decisions with long-term impact in mind.	
I value trust and consistency more than popularity or quick wins.	
I think about who could lead after me—even if I'm not leaving soon.	
I look for systemic solutions, not just one-time fixes.	
I would be willing to “step aside” if someone else could lead better.	

### Reflection:

What's your total score? Where could you grow?

### Optional: Reflective Circle or Pair Share

If your instructor allows, you may be invited to participate in a guided sharing circle or peer dialogue using one of these prompts:

- “What's one leadership shift I'll make after this case?”
- “What is one thing I admire—but would not copy—from Singapore's model?”
- “How would I lead differently in a crisis?”

### Final Thought

“The best leadership doesn't just prepare for today—it prepares others for tomorrow.”

- Let this case be more than an assignment. Let it be a mirror and a map.

## 8. Glossary of Key Terms

This glossary defines important terms and concepts you'll encounter in the case and during class discussions. Use it to strengthen your understanding and improve the quality of your contributions.

Term	Definition
<b>Governance</b>	The systems, structures, and processes used to guide and manage a nation, organization, or institution.
<b>Leadership Stability</b>	The ability of a leadership team or system to remain consistent over time, even through transitions.
<b>Succession Planning</b>	A strategic process of preparing future leaders to take over roles smoothly, without disrupting operations or vision.
<b>Visionary Leadership</b>	Leadership that focuses on long-term goals and transformations, not just immediate needs or popularity.
<b>Tuas Port</b>	A \$20 billion next-generation container port project in Singapore that symbolizes long-term planning and smart infrastructure.
<b>People's Action Party (PAP)</b>	Singapore's ruling political party since 1959, known for delivering consistent governance and economic development.
<b>Policy Continuity</b>	Keeping key policies and strategies consistent across political or leadership transitions.
<b>Anti-Corruption Culture</b>	Institutional and cultural commitment to preventing corruption and promoting integrity in governance.
<b>Systemic Trust</b>	Confidence in the fairness, transparency, and reliability of public or organizational systems.
<b>Authoritarian Efficiency</b>	A model where leadership delivers high performance with limited opposition or electoral competition. Often debated in governance studies.

### Study Tip:

Try using these terms in your essays, debates, and discussions to deepen your analytical language and demonstrate mastery of the material.

## 9. Additional Resources

To support your learning beyond the classroom, here are recommended readings, videos, and tools that provide richer context and allow you to explore Singapore's leadership model—and broader governance questions—more deeply.

### Recommended Readings

Resource	Why It's Useful
The Singapore Way - Full book	Offers the complete picture of Singapore's development strategies.
From Third World to First by Lee Kuan Yew	Direct insights from Singapore's founding Prime Minister on challenges and policy decisions.
The Art of Leadership- Harvard Kennedy School	Case studies and theory from public and private leadership fields.
World Bank Governance Indicators	Compare how countries rank globally in accountability, control of corruption, etc.
UNDP Reports on Good Governance	Frameworks used in development programs worldwide.

### Videos & Documentaries

Title	Platform	What it Covers
Lee Kuan Yew: The Architect of Modern Singapore	CNA Insider (YouTube)	A personal and political portrait of LKY's leadership.
Inside Tuas Port: Building the Future of Shipping	PSA Singapore (YouTube)	Shows the scale, vision, and execution behind the Tuas mega-project.
Bloomberg: Singapore –City of the Future	Bloomberg QuickTake	How Singapore plans and governs for long-term transformation.

## **Online Tools & Platforms**

- **Transparency International – Corruption Perceptions Index**
- **World Bank Open Data – Governance Indicators**
- **Singapore EDB – Reports & Rankings**
- **Google Scholar – Search academic articles on governance, public trust, and stability**

## **Comparative Countries to Explore**

**If you're interested in comparing Singapore to other national governance stories, look into:**

- **Rwanda: Post-genocide national rebuilding and centralized leadership**
- **Botswana: Natural resource management with transparent governance**
- **South Korea: Democratization and state-led economic growth**
- **UAE: Visionary megaprojects and federal leadership stability**
- **Chile: Development through policy innovation and institutional trust**

## 10. FAQs & Support

This section answers common questions students might have about the case, session expectations, assignments, and where to find help.

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**Q1: Do I need to agree with Singapore's leadership style to succeed in this case?**

**Answer:** Not at all. The purpose is to critically evaluate the model—not to accept or reject it blindly. You'll gain the most by challenging ideas respectfully and exploring their outcomes.

**Q2: Can I use examples from my own country or workplace in discussions and assignments?**

**Answer:** Absolutely! In fact, we encourage you to apply the principles to your own context. That's where real learning happens.

**Q3: What if I'm not familiar with Singapore's history?**

**Answer:** No problem. Chapter 1 gives you the essentials, and class discussion will fill in the rest. You're also welcome to explore the additional resources for context.

**Q4: Is participation graded? What counts as good participation?**

**Answer:** Participation is often part of your grade. Good participation means:

- Being prepared with your reading and reflections
- Contributing ideas thoughtfully
- Listening actively and building on others' points
- Engaging in activities and simulations

**Q5: Can I work with a partner or group on the assignments?**

**Answer:** Unless your instructor specifies otherwise, assignments are usually individual. But discussions, brainstorming, and peer review are often encouraged.

**Q6: Where can I get help with writing or research?**

**Answer:** You can reach out to:

- Your instructor or teaching assistant
- Your school's academic writing centre
- Online tools like Grammarly, Zotero (for citations), or Google Scholar

## Support Channels

Need Help With	Go To
Clarifying the case or readings	Your instructor or case facilitator
Research or data	Library services / recommended databases
Technical tools (e.g., poster design)	Canva, Google Slides tutorials
Assignment structure or expectations	Refer to this guide or class Q&A time

## Final Encouragement

**“You don’t have to be a policymaker to lead.**

**You just need to think long-term, stay consistent, and prepare others to succeed.”**