

# H1 General Paper (Paper 1 – Essay)

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Description	Marks	Weighting	Duration
This paper comprises 8 questions.  Candidates write between 500 and 800 words on 1 question of their choice.  Candidates examine issues of local, regional and global significance.	Content: 30  Language: 20  Total mark: 50	50%	1 hour 30 minutes

## Characteristics of Strong Responses

Stronger responses frequently demonstrated high levels of engagement with the issues raised in the question and were able to outline and develop the major arguments, usually including some balance, and a range of pertinent examples.

There was good use of knowledge, as evident from appropriate use of a range of illustrations from local, regional and/or global contexts, and consideration of issues from several perspectives, such as those of different stakeholders.

The strongest responses referred to and analysed a wide range of well-chosen examples, using them effectively to illustrate contrasts, trends, exceptions, and corroboration, and to demonstrate understanding of the likely variation in time and place, the gap between theory/the ideal and reality, or the perspectives of different stakeholders.

# Question Analysis → VIPERCJ

**Step 1:** Select question based on 1) topic 2) polarity

**Step 2:** TIACKO for shortlisted question, incl complications

<p><b>Value</b> About the desirability / importance / significance of XXX</p>	<p><b>Identify:</b> Signal words: “valuable”, “necessary”, “useful”, “important”, “have a place”</p> <p><b>Value = Function + Context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Function: what it does (unpack the keyword)</li> <li>- Context: situation that it is placed in e.g. “today” (consider traits / trends of modern society)</li> </ul> <p>For the keyword in question, come up with <i>a few</i> functions and contexts</p> <p><u>Match</u> between function &amp; context → has value  <u>Mismatch</u> between function &amp; context → has no value</p>
<p><b>Impact</b> About the magnitude / direction of change caused by XXX</p>	<p><b>Identify:</b> Cause + effect</p> <p><b>Impact = Disruptor + Change in status quo</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disruptor: characteristics / traits of XXX</li> <li>- Change in status quo: consequent outcome (+/-)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Possibility</b> About the attainability of some desirable goal</p>	<p><b>Identify:</b> Existence of a <i>desirable</i> goal Signal words: “can”, “attainable”, “feasible”, “realistic”</p> <p><b>Possibility = Action + Factor</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Action: some actions to take in order to achieve the goal</li> <li>- Factor: help / hinder us from achieving the goal</li> </ul>
<p><b>Effectiveness</b> About the extent to which some solution achieves some goal</p>	<p><b>Identify:</b> Solution + (desirable) goal</p> <p><b>Effectiveness criteria:</b> (best solution in solving a problem?)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <u>Profundity</u>: target root cause</li> <li>2) <u>Reliability</u>: works all the time</li> <li>3) <u>Cost-efficiency</u>: undesirable side effects</li> <li>4) <u>Durability</u>: how long do the effects last</li> <li>5) <u>Timeliness</u>: speed</li> <li>6) <u>Fairness</u>: does not unfairly burden any group</li> </ol>
<p><b>Responsibility</b> About the assignment of duty to some stakeholder</p>	<p><b>Identify:</b> Stakeholder + action Signal word hinting at obligation: “should”</p>

	<p><b>Responsibility criteria:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <u>Ability</u>: <i>with great power comes great responsibility</i></li> <li>2) <u>Morality</u>: actions that are consistent with moral principles are right should therefore be done, actions inconsistent with moral principles are wrong and should not be done</li> <li>3) <u>Duty</u>: actions that uphold a stakeholder's responsibilities are right and should be done, actions that shirk a stakeholder's responsibilities are wrong and should not be done</li> <li>4) <u>Debt</u>: if caused the problem, then should right wrongs</li> </ol> <p>How they might appear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One task + one stakeholder</li> <li>- One task + no stakeholder (could be implicitly mentioned)</li> <li>- One task + two stakeholders → compare more / less responsible</li> <li>- Two tasks + one stakeholder</li> </ul>
<p><b>Control</b> About the amount of power asserted by authorities over XXX</p>	<p><b>Identify:</b> Phrase related to freedom/control</p> <p><b>Infinity loop:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● F+ C- (merits of freedom &amp; demerits of control) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Freedom is a basic <u>right</u> that allows no exception ⇔ any infringement would impeach human dignity [UN's UDHR]</li> <li>○ Utility: Freedom is a necessary precondition for <u>happy</u> lives ⇔ control leads to maltreatment and misery [correlation b/w UN World Happiness Report &amp; The Economist's Democracy Index]</li> </ul> </li> <li>● F- C+ (demerits of freedom &amp; merits of control) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Freedom is disruptive at best, destructive at most ⇔ necessitate enforcement of rules to preserve societal harmony e.g. freedom of speech causes hate speech <i>"Your freedom ends when the freedom of others begins"</i></li> <li>○ Indv have imperfect knowledge, may not make well-informed decisions ⇔ govt's duty to protect citizens' well-being</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Useful to incorporate <u>responsibility criteria</u></p>
<p><b>Justification</b> About the acceptability of something controversial</p>	<p><b>Identify:</b> <i>Controversial</i> action Signal word hinting at acceptability: "acceptable", "should", "justified"</p> <p><b>Justification criteria:</b> prove an action is right / wrong</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <u>Impact</u>: <i>weigh</i> pros and cons</li> <li>2) <u>Morality</u>: rights</li> <li>3) <u>Effectiveness</u>: best / only way to get to its pros, or there are less dubious alternatives</li> <li>4) <u>Responsibility</u>: allows stakeholder to fulfil duty</li> <li>5) <u>Value</u>: if action has value, then acceptable</li> </ol>

## Complications:

<b>Absolute</b> “always”, “never”, “ever”, “all”, “nothing” (all or nothing)	<b>Approach:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Disagree</b> with the absolute position</li> <li>• First <u>acknowledge the claim to be true</u> in general (use a <i>conditional</i> topic sentence for the counter-argument)</li> <li>• All your essay needs to do is <b>prove that there are exceptions</b> (THIS SHOULD BE THE FOCUS!)</li> </ul>
<b>Exclusive</b> “only”, “sole”	<p>Depending on the phrasing of the question, exclusivity can be about <u>necessity</u> (only way to achieve x), <u>sufficiency</u> (only thing needed to get x), or both</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If X is necessary for Y, no X entails no Y, Y entails X</li> <li>- If X is sufficient for Y, X entails Y</li> </ul> <p><b>Approach:</b></p> <p>Assess strengths &amp; weaknesses of the GIVEN factor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To agree, argue that the given factor is <u>necessary</u> to achieve x</li> <li>• To disagree, argue that the given factor has <u>limitations/ weaknesses</u> → not <u>sufficient</u> to achieve x (cannot achieve x by its own)</li> </ul>
<b>Excessive</b> “too ...”	<b>Approach:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a clear <u>threshold</u> in each paragraph + explain why this threshold is valid/reasonable [consider both quantity &amp; quality]</li> <li>• Evaluate whether the threshold is <u>exceeded</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ benefits &gt; costs → applied in moderation</li> <li>◦ costs &gt; benefits → applied in excess</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Changes in context</b> “no longer”, “still”	<b>Approach:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify <u>drivers of change</u> (disruptor – consider SPECTRAL) + evaluate how the driver has changed the way we perceive the issue</li> <li>• Specify BOTH initial and final states to address <i>change over time</i></li> </ul>
<b>Comparison</b> “more ... than ...”, “rather than”, “X or Y”	<b>Approach:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TS should contain 1) <u>comparison criterion</u> 2) <u>distinguishing traits</u></li> <li>• Weighing must be done in TS of <u>every paragraph</u></li> </ul>
<b>Explicit condition</b>	<b>Approach:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must assume it is true, do NOT question it</li> <li>• MUST <u>address</u> the given condition in each TS, as such: Agree: <b>Because of ...</b> Disagree: <b>Despite / Precisely because of ...</b></li> </ul>
<b>Presupposition</b> “still”	<b>Approach:</b> Tells you that something was true before, so do not say otherwise
<b>Given context</b> “your society”, “modern world”	<b>Approach:</b> Consider traits / trends / aspect of the given context

# Planning → TIACKO

<b>Topic</b>	An area of human or societal interest E.g. governance, media, technology
<b>Issue</b>	An open question or unresolved tension to be explored over the course of the essay
<b>Assumption</b>	Implicit assumptions made in the question
<b>Comment</b>	<p>Depending on the <i>polarity</i>, use the associated <i>approach</i></p> <p>Brainstorming points</p> <p><b>A. Traits of modernity / 21st century</b> ['today' questions]  <b>CEFGKPPOT</b> = Competitive, Everchanging, Fast-paced, Globalised, Knowledge-based economy, Profit-driven, Pragmatic, Open economy, Technology</p> <p><b>B. Challenges of the 21st century</b> ['politics' questions]  <b>IEETDDPRC</b> = International conflicts and tensions, Economic vulnerabilities and crises, Environmental disasters, Terrorism, Discrimination, Diseases, Poverty, Refugees, Crime  VUCA: volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity</p> <p><b>C. Aspects of society</b> ['social' questions]  <b>CEFGHHS</b> = Culture, Education, Family, Gender, History, Health, Sport</p> <p><b>D. Features of Singaporean society</b>  <b>AAMME</b> = Asian conservative, Ageing population, Multiracial / cultural, Meritocracy, Education</p>

Use these to unpack keywords / generate points / evaluation, for breadth of scope  
[DO NOT USE THEM AS INDIVIDUAL POINTS!]

<b>Scope</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>EV lenses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social</li> <li>Political</li> <li>Economic</li> <li>Cultural</li> <li>Technological</li> <li>Religious</li> <li>Arts</li> </ul> <p>Consider issue from diff angles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals</li> <li>Corporations</li> <li>Governments</li> <li>International organisations (and their subgroups)</li> </ul> <p>Consider multiple perspectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Past VS present</li> <li>Ideal VS reality</li> <li>Intention VS outcome</li> <li>Superficial VS deeper analysis</li> <li>Majority VS minority</li> <li>Short-term VS long-term</li> </ul>
<b>Keywords</b>	Unpack using <u>SPECTRA</u> and <u>stakeholder</u> levels	
<b>Opinion</b>	Stand	

# Paragraph Structure

<b>Introduction</b>	<p><b>G</b>rab:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hook + explain relation to the question, lead in to the rest of the discussion</li> <li>• Common hooks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Recent events/ developments (that are relevant)</li> <li>◦ Quote, statistics</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>I</b>sue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unpack, define <b>keywords</b> (SPECTRA)</li> <li>• Explain <b>salience</b> of issue, why is this an issue today</li> <li>• Explain central <b>tension</b> (consider different stakeholders)</li> </ul> <p><b>S</b>tand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly articulated and nuanced (no sitting on the fence!)</li> </ul> <p><b>T</b>reatment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefly outline arguments</li> </ul>
<b>Counter-argument</b>	Signalling: <b><i>Notwithstanding, opponents to my viewpoint may argue ...</i></b> PEEL
<b>Rebuttal</b>	Signalling: <b><i>I concur with this view that ... but I still firmly believe that ...</i></b> PEEL: rebut opposing views, make them <u>less compelling/ convincing than yours</u> → use EV lenses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past VS present</li> <li>• Ideal VS reality</li> <li>• Intention VS outcome</li> <li>• Flaws: untrue / problematic assumptions / exaggeration / over-generalised</li> <li>• Superficial VS deeper analysis</li> <li>• Majority VS minority</li> <li>• Short-term VS long-term</li> </ul>
<b>Body paragraphs</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>TS:</b> encapsulate the main idea of what the entire body paragraph will be talking about, be general and succinct</li> <li>2) <b>Explanation:</b> unpack key ideas and concepts introduced in TS &amp; unpack logical process of the argument</li> <li>3) <b>Example:</b> prove argument in TS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe example (including lead up) + explain example (what is the significance of the example, how it supports point)</li> <li>• only include details relevant to the argument</li> <li>• Use a wide range of examples use positive + negative examples for contrast</li> </ul> </li> <li>4) <b>Evaluation:</b> show <b>conceptual understanding</b>  <b><i>"Is this always true? What about ...? Are there exceptions?"</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To qualify an argument, consider validity of argument across time and places → different groups, societies/ countries, change over time</li> <li>• Indicate that the argument does not hold for <i>all</i> instances → make point seem more <i>nuanced</i>, not absolute/ assertion/ sweeping claim</li> <li>• E.g. holds particularly for ..., may not hold when ...</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Synthesis paragraph</b>	'Question' the question i.e. identify flaws/assumptions made in the question itself <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>Neutrality:</b> whether a tool is good/ bad <i>depends</i> on its uses and users, and the conditions in which it is being discussed</li> <li>2) <b>False dichotomy:</b> question forces us to choose between two options when more than two options exist</li> <li>3) <b>Overlap:</b> question gives us two factors that are not actually different from each other → the two could be the same</li> </ol>

<b>Conclusion</b>	1) <u>Discourse marker</u> 2) <u>Reiterate</u> thesis statement and main points 3) Call to action / showing the way forward / advocate a balanced approach or 'middle ground' – bring in personal insights If possible, connect introduction and conclusion effectively, with reference at the end to the same quote or example featured at the outset  *Do not merely restate stance or summarise arguments; instead, attempt to leave a good final impression
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### **Conditional arguments**

Paragraph structure

1. If P then Q [Topic sentence - Q is the contention of the question]  
 E.g. **If** the benefits of growth are not equitably distributed, **then** progress can come at the expense of the poor.
  - makes assumptions clear at the outset, thus appears less sweeping and assertive
  - also establishes a basis for balance since it's quite intuitive to discuss the flip side [evaluation]
2. P [explain condition P - prove that P is true with examples]
3. Therefore Q [link]

<b>If</b>	Used for hypothetical but desirable conditions E.g. <b>If</b> we want society to be more accountable, then the private lives of politicians should be open to scrutiny
<b>Given</b>	Used to stipulate some current reality OR limitation that affects the conclusion E.g. <b>Given</b> the significant impact their actions can have on society, the private lives of politicians should be open to public scrutiny.
<b>When</b>	Used to indicate a hypothetical threshold that entails the conclusion when met/exceeded E.g. <b>When</b> their actions negatively affect public interest, the private lives of politicians should be open to scrutiny.

\*\*\*Conditional arguments are helpful for coming up with counter-arguments + rebuttal  
 To rebut, negate the condition P

# Characteristics of Singapore Society

This is mainly for “in your society” questions, and AQ.

Approach:

- 1) Consider consequences / implications / features of the topic and/or accompanying keywords
- 2) Identify relevant traits and characteristics of SG

These traits and attitudes should ideally cover attitudes, beliefs, values, policies of the nation.

## Social

### Singaporean psyche / behaviour

- Strong work ethic, ambitious, high expectations
- Law-abiding, cooperative, honest, non-violent
- Kiasu (fear of losing out), highly competitive – espouses an almost Darwinian meritocratic impulse
  - Crab mentality: people try to prevent others from gaining a favourable position, even if it has no effect on those trying to stop them  
“Sinkie pwn sinkie, can sleep well tonight.”
- Fast-paced society, long working hours, high-pressure environment
- Risk-averse, resistant to change
- Materialistic, pragmatic – prioritise practicality over creativity. Highly focused on the ‘Singaporean Dream’ of material acquisition, focus on ‘5Cs’: cash, car, credit card, condominium, country club membership
- Asian conservative
  - Generally tolerant, but not fully accepting of new social trends e.g. LGBT
  - Value ‘face’, act deliberately and with restraint to protect their self-worth and peer perception
  - Importance of image – political parties, influencers as social influence, SG as a country for pragmatic economic gain
- Collectivism – nation comes before your community and society above yourself
- Individualism, NIMBY → focus on self-interest, apathetic to social/political issues, bystander effect
  - We are a small nation, cannot do much to make a difference
  - Competitive society, social stratification
  - Altruism is for more self-serving, pragmatic goals EG LEAPS point system
  - Culture of comfort: used to material comforts, unaware of the sweltering/ uncomfortable reality  
→ ignore/ less interested in thorny issues
  - Chilling effect due to harsh restrictions → don’t dare to speak out on issues
- Ageing population: low fertility rates (educated population, study and work instead of forming families) + increasing life expectancy
  - EG Low Total Fertility Rate (TFR), fell to 0.97 in 2023. Proportion of citizens aged 65 and above has increased from 11.7% in 2013 to 19.1% in 2023. By 2030, around 1 in 4 (24.1%) will be aged 65 & above
  - Solutions: Raise retirement and re-employment age → larger labour force EG In 2023, raised retirement age to 63 & re-employment age to 68. By 2030, will be increase further – 65 to retire, re-employment until 70.
  - Ensure retirement adequacy by updating CPF schemes EG CPF LIFE: provide monthly income for life. Raised CPF contribution rates for seniors. Silver Support scheme: cash payouts to seniors
  - Strengthen healthcare system to meet increasing demand. EG Build new healthcare infrastructure and upgrading existing ones – hospitals, senior care facilities



- Encourage migration (foreign talents & foreign workers) to alleviate labour shortage – adjust foreign worker levy, approval criteria for high-skilled workers' Employment Passes  
Backlash in 2010s: SG low-wage workers experienced wage suppression, PET jobs taken away, blamed for social ills e.g. crime or disorderly public behaviour, high housing prices, overcrowding in public transport → in 2011 GE, PAP vote share fell from 66% to 60%  
In 2024, population exceeded 6 mil, mainly due to inbound migrant labour

### Social class stratification / social divide

- Multi-racial; multi-lingual; multi-religious society. Religious/ racial harmony. Chinese majority. Malay is the national language for historical reasons but English is the official working language.
  - Weak social fabric **EG 1964 racial riots**: between Malays and Chinese due to differing political allegiances
  - Racial and religious harmony socially engineered

**EG Racial Harmony Day**: celebrated every 21 July, commemorates 1964 communal racial riots, emphasise importance of racial harmony via education from young

**EG Group Representation Constituency (GRC) system**: requires at least one candidate from minority race in every GRC → ensure minority representation in policymaking

**EG Ethnic Integration Policy (EIP)**: HDB housing quota to reflect the Republic's racial proportion → encourage social mixing, avoid formation of racial enclaves  
[While the measure has largely met its aim, enclaves are now potentially forming along socioeconomic lines]

**EG Sedition Act & Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act**: prohibit speeches and acts that breed ill-will and hostility between different races

**EG Elected Presidency**: racial representation

  - However, casual racism persists

**EG** 2019 Nets advertisement featured Mediacorp actor **Dennis Chew** with his visibly darkened skin, depicting an Indian man – lack of cultural sensitivity of “brownface”

**EG** In 2021, **ex-Ngee Ann Poly lecturer** made racists remarks against interracial Indian-Chinese couple, said that the Chinese “don't like it” when “you're preying on Chinese girl”

**EG CNA-IPS Survey on Race Relations 2021**: 6 in 10 SGreans have heard racist comments
- Multireligious, secularism
  - Secular governance – no specific religion is promoted or persecuted
  - However, some believe that their religious views are still allowed to govern the rest of society

**EG Ethos Institute of Public Christianity**: Christian think tank founded by National Council of Churches of Singapore, Trinity Theological College, Bible Society of Singapore → encouraged civil servants to not grant licences to operate gay bars / LGBT public events
- Income inequality: tension between being economically progressive society and being an inclusive society – social safety nets to ensure that no one is ‘left behind’
  - **EG Statista**: Gini coefficient is 0.35 (2020), decreasing since 2012  
Solutions:
    - **EG MediShield Life**: provide coverage of medical treatments
    - **EG ComCare scheme**: assistance to help low-income SGreans tide over difficult periods
    - **EG Courage fund schemes** (SARS & Covid-19): first established in 2003 when SG hit by SARS outbreak, fellow SGreans donated generously to the Fund to support those in need
- Xenophobia
  - Identify too strongly with national history → nationalism, alienate new immigrants
  - Open policies to immigration → insecurity, anxious about social, economic impact
  - **EG 2021 IPS report**: 53.3% felt that govt spends too much money assisting immigrants



- **EG Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) with India:** concerned with economic and employment impacts, Gilbert Goh's protest
- **EG (now disbanded) Singapore First Party:** campaigned on the basis of creating a “new narrative” by putting SGreans first
- **EG** In 2021, ethnic Indian woman attacked for pulling mask up when exercising, given that Delta variant of Covid-19 emerged from India
- **EG** In 2014, plans to celebrate Philippine Independence Day in Ngee Ann City were scrapped due to safety concerns following the vitriol against the event on social media, FB group “Say No to An Overpopulated Singapore” rejected the event’s use of the word ‘interdependence’

## **Work culture and jobs**

- Highly competitive – hustle culture & govt expect constant upskilling to keep workforce competitive  
Increasing focus on work-life balance  
**EG** 2022 study by NTUC's U Women and Family unit: 78% felt burnt out at work due to normalisation of hybrid work and remote teams amid Covid-19 pandemic → physical and mental health problems  
However: recent discussion of 4-day work week **EG** only 18% of Singapore employers said that they have plans to or are considering a transition to a four-day work week within the next two years → fear losing competitive edge
- Choosing jobs – pragmatic vs. idealistic/passion

## **Political**

### **Political culture**

- One-party rule – political scene dominated by one party. Democratic Socialism. Survival discourse.
  - Flawed democracy: free and fair elections, and even if there are problems (e.g. infringements on media freedom), basic civil liberties are respected
  - Soft authoritarianism: some democratic aspects (free and fair elections, right to protest, freedom of speech, presence of trade unions) are compromised due to the need to maintain social order and stay economically competitive
  - **EG** denial of permits to hold campaign rallies, shutting down printing facilities used by opposition parties, increasing candidate registration fee, decreasing nomination period, bureaucratic hurdles
  - **EG** Alleged gerrymandering: SMCs with strong opposition party presence are incorporated into PAP-stronghold GRCs
  - **EG Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA)**: counter misinformation and disinformation, falsehoods and information manipulation → falsehoods spread quickly, create misunderstanding, intensify social conflict esp SG's weak social fabric
- Conservative, but generally opening up to more opposition voices and increased numbers of opposition in parliament.
- Pragmatic politics – social contract dominated by the programme of improving the standard of living and quality of life for all Singaporean systems. Politics wedded to a high-functioning civil service. SG is a city-state which ‘works’ – great things are achieved in the shortest possible time. Citizens are to a large extent dependent on the government to create opportunities for them.
- Political stability, as seen in peaceful political successions → pragmatism to uphold security and stability, avoid rattling investors and public
- National insecurity – need to leverage and overcome small geographical size by forming strong relationships with global political/economic powers. Government leaders are seeking to put SG on the world map, to be equal (or superior) to other global cities.

## Governance

- Paternalistic, interventionist: proactive and hands-on approach in managing citizens' lives
  - EG Socially engineer racial harmony
  - EG CPF: force SGreans to save up for retirement
- Harsh laws to preserve social harmony, create business friendly envt
  - **Public Order Act**: police control and registration on all forms of protests and demonstrations → heavily restrict and regulate civic space
  - Upstream activism seeks to address underlying socio-political structures upon which the ruling PAP is heavily reliant, systemic change involved challenges status quo
- Political leaders are willing to do "what is right" rather than "what is popular with the people" → long-term policies rather than short-term
  - LKY: act on "hard truths to keep Singapore going"
  - EG Raised GST over two years, from 6% to 8% (2023) and 9% (2024). While politically unpopular, has been justified by govt as replenishing SG's coffers, which were depleted in COVID years → financial prudence and responsibility of SG's leaders
  - EG 1972-1985 "Stop-at-Two" campaign: developing economy would not have capacity for large population to find employment → population control policy was painful for affected families, but GDP grew quickly
  - EG 1979 Speak Mandarin Campaign, opening of casino in 2010
- Provision of public infrastructure & social goods
  - Public transport EG Topped consulting firm Mercer's list of cities in Asia offering the highest quality of life, infrastructure deemed the best in the world
  - Provide affordable HDB housing EG High **home ownership rate** of 89.7% (2023)
  - EG MOE Financial Assistance Schemes: direct funding to low-income students
- Clean, incorruptible – PAP's motto
  - EG Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI): in 2022, ranked as 5th least corrupt country with a score of 83.31.
  - EG In 2024, Transport minister Iswaran charged for corruption - received gifts worth more than S\$160,000 e.g. flights, hotel stays, Grand Prix tickets, in exchange for advancing property tycoon Ong Beng Seng's business interests.
- Low policy transparency
  - Govt believes that as long as there is good governance → people satisfied with govt & trust govt → less demand for transparency
  - Govt consistently rejected legislation for freedom of information (law which obliges govts to publish necessary information and allows the public to request such information), claiming it serves frivolous and nefarious purposes and asserting its right to control information → prioritise policy efficiency over transparency
  - EG In 2020, Pritam Singh (WP leader) probed govt for data on employment numbers of citizens vs. non-citizens. Minister for Trade and Industry, Chan Chun Sing questioned the intent of the question, accusing Singh of trying to drive a discriminatory xenophobic wedge between people in SG. Chan said that as long as the ruling party delivered the jobs needed to keep SGreans employed, such data did not matter in public discourse.
  - EG Govt repeatedly assured SGreans that Tracetogther data collected would be used only for contact tracing. However, soon revealed that data was used in a murder investigation

## Law and Order

- Harsh stand on drug trafficking – death penalty under **Misuse of Drugs Act**
  - Deterrence → maintain public order and ensuring safety, given the potential social harm associated with drug abuse and trafficking
  - EG 15 people executed for drug related offences since 30 March 2022

- EG Joseph Schooling:** in 2022, confessed to taking cannabis during SEA games @ Vietnam  
→ barred from disrupting NS to compete, fined, supervised urine test regime for 6 months
- Public support due to collectivist society – prioritise welfare of community over individual rights, SGreans believe that strict penalties on drug trafficking are necessary to protect the greater good, ensure safety for all
- EG 2023 Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) survey:** 69% agreed that the mandatory death penalty was an appropriate punishment for trafficking a significant amount of drugs. 77% agreed that the death penalty should be used for the most serious crimes.
- Widespread surveillance: extensive network of security cameras and surveillance systems
    - Objective: prevent crime, ensure public safety, address potential terrorist threats
    - Pragmatism → sacrifice privacy for low crime rates  
Collectivism → prioritise societal security over privacy concerns  
Good governance → trust that surveillance is used responsibly to enhance public safety
    - **EG** Third most surveilled city in the world outside of China, 15.25 cameras per 1,000 people
- EG 2020 IPS survey:** 6 in 10 support the use of CCTV cameras to monitor people's movements during circuit breaker period
- EG TraceTogether:** use Bluetooth signals between devices to see if potential carriers have been in close contact with other people during Covid-19 pandemic ⇔ privacy concerns when police accessed TT data for criminal investigations



## Education

- Education – seen as one of the main vehicles for national/individual progress. Education system is constantly evolving to produce students who are able thinkers and are equipped with a range of 21st Century skills. Highly educated.
  - Kiasu, highly competitive
    - Highly vibrant tuition industry (seen to be a necessity to supplement skills and teaching rather than for weaker students only); heavy emphasis of academic results.
    - Largely assessment-driven – assessment standard is one of our 'pillars of success', but measures have been put in place to reduce this exam stress e.g. abolishment of MYE
- Broadening of educational landscape – multiple paths to success, emergence of new specialised schools to nurture talent in Sciences/Maths, Arts, Sports, growing awareness of the importance of the humanities/liberal arts – new Yale-NUS liberal arts college.
- Traditionally focused on STEM – pragmatism
  - Meritocratic: reward individuals based on merit, rather than background
    - Even playing field, equal opportunity to succeed → motivation to strive to be our best  
Tool to climb social ladder → increase social mobility  
Competence, maximise use of human capital (only resource)
    - "Flawed meritocracy": children inherit status/ wealth from elite parents → unequal starting point → unequal opportunities  
Success based on a single, static and narrow metric, as those who have succeeded will want to perpetuate the same yardsticks and measures of success
    - Despite its shortcomings, it is a better alternative than nepotism/majoritism/ aristocracy



## Economic

### Economics

- Highly affluent, prosperous **EG** GDP per capita of \$50 000 per annum
- Geographical context: small country with no natural resources. SG's economic miracle from independence to the present day: SG started off with a small manufacturing base and little industrial know-how, to a highly developed/first-world, diverse economy. Capital and knowledge-intensive economy, open to trade.
- Success built on its human resource (only resource) → essential to create pro-business environment
- Culture of economic self-reliance, govt strongly opposed to the idea of a welfare state → does not provide unemployment benefits
- High cost of living, esp due to recent inflation
  - **EG Economist Intelligence Unit's Worldwide Cost of Living survey**: ranked one of the most expensive cities in the world
  - Govt provides targeted assistance, particularly for lower- to middle-income households. **EG Budget 2023: Assurance Package** enhanced from \$6.6b to \$9.6b. In Sep 2023, govt announced additional \$1.1 billion **COL support package** → cover higher cost of living due to inflation and GST rate hike
- Healthy finances, sound economic management – fiscal prudence

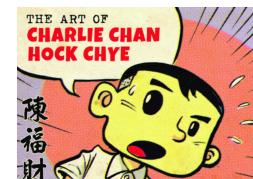
## Cultural

### Mass Media



- Media serves as pillar of transparency and accountability for SG's democratic system. Important for people to understand and be enlightened as the electorate, to elect capable politicians
- Laws in place to counter information distortion / fake news
  - **EG POFMA**: comes with 10 year jail term or \$1 mil fine
  - **EG Newspaper and Printing Presses Act**: amendment to limit the sales of "declared foreign newspapers" which were found to be engaging in campaigns to manipulate local opinions on local politics, race and religion issues
- Strong conservative stance, maintained via media classification
  - Age-appropriate classification (RA, PR, U, NC 16) to allow age appropriate viewing
  - Advertisers banned from showing cigarettes and vapes
- Media landscape:
  - Mainstream media organisations have close ties to govt - allegedly govt mouthpiece
    - SPH Media (includes The Straits Times, Lianhe Zaobao, Business Times, Money FM 89.3, One FM 91.3) → non-profit entity that receives govt funding
    - MediaCorp (includes Channel 5, Channel 8, Today newspaper, 98.7 FM, Yes 93.3) → fully owned by the govt's investment arm, Temasek Holdings
  - Alternative media landscape – critical of govt & accuse mainstream media of bias towards govt
    - The Online Citizen, The Middle Ground, Jom Media, Mothership

### The Arts



- High censorship, presence of Out-Of-Bounds (OB) Markers.
  - Protect public from issues that the government seems inappropriate & used to suppress / silence political dissent against govt
  - **EG The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye** by Sonny Liew: a graphic novel that got funding by the NAC withdrawn as it covered politically sensitive themes e.g. showcasing Lee Kuan Yew as a ruthless boss

- **EG To Singapore, With Love** by Tan Pin Pin: film barred from public screening as it showcased political dissidents
  - **EG Brother Cane** by performance artist Josef Ng: snipped his pubic hair for his art exhibit, a retaliation of SG's anti-homosexual sentiments → led to government's withdrawal of public art funding
  - **EG And Tango Makes Three**: children's book removed from the children's section of NLB because it promoted homosexual themes
- Diminishing traditional arts and local culture. SGrean tunnel vision of "success" only based on academic and grades + pragmatism, risk-averse → few people dare venture into the seemingly risky entertainment industry
  - Caused by parents' expectations → high paying STEM jobs
  - Caused by education system
  - Pragmatic → keep to the beaten path
- Increasing homegrown arts and culture e.g. movies, film, music. SG aims to be part of the Renaissance City. Govt efforts to create vibrant art scene:
  - Physical buildings for exposure to the Arts:
    - EG Victoria Concert Hall:** non-ticketed events, funded by the government
    - EG Singapore Art Museum:** free entry
    - EG National Gallery**
  - Education in the Arts:
    - EG SOTA, SUTD, Lasalle, NAFA:** pursue art at higher levels
    - EG H3 art / AEP / Higher Art:** offered in A-Level and O-Level curriculum
  - Events to promote the Arts:
    - EG Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA):** annual event that exhibits theatre, dance, music and visual arts in a series of performances in different venues around SG
    - EG Singapore Youth Festival (SYF):** celebrates youth achievement in performing arts and sports. More than 30,000 students participate in the performances and activities in the SYF
- Subjective, subject to individual interpretation
  - **EG** samsui woman smoking
- Preservation of culture heritage
  - Land-scarce, trade-offs in land use
  - Pragmatism & economic growth → favour growth over conservation (no real purpose besides a nostalgic one)
  - **EG CHIJMES:** refurbished to become gastro-hub of restaurants and eateries → preserved merely for economic purposes of commercialisation and tourism



## Science and Technology

- SMART nation – tech savvy, high internet and mobile device penetration rate
- Research in life sciences / biotechnology set to become a new pillar of our national economy. Development of new research hubs, drawing of top international scientific talent to SG.
- Strong emphasis on info-comm technology – IMDA seeks to transform the government and economy through infocomm, develop an improved national infocomm structure (wired and wireless).