



---

SINGAPORE IN 2017: Testing Times, Within and WithoutAuthor(s): Shashi Jayakumar

Source: *Southeast Asian Affairs*, (2018), pp. 299–320

Published by: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26492783>

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Southeast Asian Affairs*

JSTOR

# Singapore





# SINGAPORE IN 2017: Testing Times, Within and Without

Shashi Jayakumar

## Presidential Election

An amendment to the constitution in November 2016 reserved the office of the president for a particular ethnic group if a representative of that group had not been president for five consecutive terms. Other changes also tightened the criteria for those seeking the post: candidates from the private sector must have been the chief executive of a company with at least \$500 million in shareholders' equity (up from \$100 million) on average for the most recent three years.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, in February 2017, Parliament amended the Presidential Elections Act (PEA). The key part of the amendment meant that President Wee Kim Wee is considered to have served the first presidential term in Singapore. Given that President Wee and subsequent holders of the office were from the Chinese or Indian communities, the 2017 Presidential Election would be reserved for a member of the Malay community.

A legal challenge was mounted by former PAP MP Dr Tan Cheng Bock, who in 2011 had come within a whisker of the presidency. Tan submitted that President Wee Kim Wee, unlike his successors, was not elected by Singaporeans and did not serve six-year terms. Therefore, the five presidential terms should only be counted from the term of President Wee Kim Wee's successor, Ong Teng Cheong (1993–99). If Tan's argument held, this would have made the 2017 Presidential Election an open one that any individual could have contested. Tan, who stated that the reason for his challenge was to give Singaporeans a choice, saw this application at the High Court dismissed, prompting him to appeal to the Court of Appeal, which also rejected his application, in August 2017.

---

SHASHI JAYAKUMAR is Head of the Centre of Excellence for National Security at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). He also holds the appointment of Executive Coordinator, Future Issues and Technology, at RSIS.

Three candidates from the Malay community put themselves forward. One was Halimah Yaacob, former Speaker of Parliament and widely seen as the government's candidate. The other two hopefuls were Farid Khan, chairman of a marine services firm, and Salleh Marican, chief executive of a listed property company. The Presidential Elections Committee (PEC) found that Khan and Marican did not meet the requirement of having led a company with an average shareholder equity of \$500 million in the three most recent years. The rejection of their eligibility by the PEC meant that Halimah Yaacob was declared president by walkover on 13 September 2017.

Halimah Yaacob was of course Singapore's first female president — this achievement also has a backstory of personal success through extremely humble origins. Although there was in the media and online space recognition of her abilities and qualifications, there was also a significant amount of ground chatter that the changes made concerning eligibility and minority representation had been made to foil the presidential aspirations of Dr Tan Cheng Bock. Another criticism was that the PAP government's pushing through the constitutional changes and amendments to the PEA went against Singapore's foundational meritocratic ethos. Online commentary and discussion on social media suggested frustration at being denied the chance to vote in the election.<sup>2</sup> On 16 September 2017, two days after Halimah Yaacob's swearing in, several hundred individuals gathered at Hong Lim Park in protest at what they saw as the government's handling of the issue and the subsequent walkover. Also present were some opposition politicians, but the show stealer was Tan Cheng Bock, ostensibly there to "share the frustrations of other Singaporeans at being deprived of voting".<sup>3</sup>

The entire debate also opened uncomfortable questions about the very nature of race and ethnicity in Singapore. The constitutional amendment concerning minority eligibility of someone from the Malay community stipulates a Malay as "any person, whether of the Malay race or otherwise, who considers himself to be a member of the Malay community and who is generally accepted as a member of the Malay community by that community". These definitions tended to blur when faced with ground reality. Farid Khan was listed as a Pakistani on his identity card, while Mohammed Salleh Marican (whose father was Indian) is an Indian Muslim. Marican was criticized by some quarters of the community for not being fluent in Malay, after his fumbling during an interview conducted outside the Elections Department. Halimah herself has Indian lineage — her father was Indian Muslim.

It is not entirely certain if the government had foreseen in every respect the divisive debate within the Malay community on what exactly was meant

by “Malayness”. The entire debate seemed to go against the intention of the scheme — which seemed to be to cement multiracialism. On issues raised by the discussion on race and reserved elections, Law and Home Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam said that “The fact that we were able to talk about it, debate it ... in a way it helps strengthen the overall multiracial fabric.”<sup>4</sup>

When it came more generally to the tightening of eligibility criteria, it is clear that the government had been keenly aware that there would be a negative blowback, and that the PAP could end up paying a political price. From the leadership’s point of view, however, notwithstanding that the government had to have guardrails in place to ensure multiracialism, this was not something that could be deferred for future generations of leaders to solve.<sup>5</sup>

## OxleyGate

On 14 June 2017, the two younger siblings of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Dr Lee Wei Ling and Lee Hsien Yang, issued a public statement that they had lost confidence in their brother, PM Lee. This marked the beginning of the public aspect of a full-on rift within Singapore’s first family.

The discerning observer could perhaps be forgiven for thinking issues had been simmering within the first family in one form or another for some time. Indeed, some signs of disagreement had been publicly visible as early as 2015, when Dr Lee and Lee Hsien Yang, as executors of their father’s estate, had tried to gain control of their father’s Oral History Transcripts — interviews conducted in the early 1980s — a bid dismissed by the High Court in 2016. There was a further episode in April 2016, when Lee Wei Ling, seemingly upset by state-led efforts to commemorate her late father, published email exchanges which saw her calling PM Lee a “dishonorable son” attempting to “establish a dynasty”.

The public statement on PM Lee had in some way to do with a similar set of issues — the legacy of the late PM Lee Kuan Yew — but in terms of the effect it had on the body politic, it was of a different order of magnitude altogether. On the surface, the root cause appeared to be differing interpretations and intentions over the family home at 38 Oxley Road. Dr Lee and Lee Hsien Yang said that PM Lee had wanted the house preserved for political reasons, and for his political gain, all this against the wishes of the late Lee Kuan Yew. In response, PM Lee gave a rebuttal and in turn put forth misgivings over the preparation of the late Mr Lee’s will. PM Lee was concerned especially about the “demolition clause”, including what was to be done with 38 Oxley Road if the house could not (say, by decision of Singapore’s leaders) be demolished.

This clause had reappeared in Mr Lee's final will (after a period where Lee had appeared to accept that the government would not allow the house to be demolished). Lee Hsien Yang noted that the government — and specifically the ministerial committee tasked with looking into the issue — was interested solely in challenging the validity of the demolition clause. There were also allegations — not substantiated — about the abuse of state power and use of state organs against them (Lee Hsien Yang said he would leave Singapore for the “foreseeable future”) and other allegations posted on social media about PM Lee and his wife Ho Ching wanting to use Mr Lee's legacy to further their own ambitions for their son, Li Hongyi. Subsequent exchanges, including claim and counterclaim, were played out over the press and social media involving, amongst other things, the release of personal emails and correspondence involving (inter alia) the late Mr Lee.

PM Lee issued a statement and a video apology in June, rendering an apology to the people of Singapore that the dispute had affected Singapore's reputation and Singaporeans' confidence in the government. He made a ministerial statement to clear the air — and to refute, inter alia, the allegations of abuse of power — on 3 July 2017. This was followed by parliamentary debate on the issue.<sup>6</sup>

The public was initially gripped by every detail of the saga, but eventually there seemed some broad sense, as people tired of the issue, that Singapore's first family should settle the issue as families did — away from public scrutiny. There seemed at one point the possibility that matters might head to a truce of sorts, with an agreement by Lee Hsien Yang and Lee Wei Ling not to post on the issue on social media.<sup>7</sup> But on the whole it seems likely that this was only a temporary hiatus, with even PM Lee stating in an interview on 20 October that he was “not sure if the issue is solved”.<sup>8</sup>

The odds that the issue might face further public airings shortened considerably when it became clear that the younger generation was being drawn into the affair. Lee Hsien Yang's son Li Shengwu stated on Facebook that his family had become “increasingly worried about the lack of checks on abuse of power”, also commenting on Singapore's “pliant court system”. He subsequently declined to fully comply with a request from the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) that he delete the post and issue a written apology. In August, the High Court gave the AGC permission to commence contempt of court proceedings against Li Shengwu. At the time of writing, the AGC is proceeding in a contempt of court case against him, a junior fellow at Harvard University, with Li's lawyers contending that the court order allowing the AGC to serve papers on their client in the United States should be set aside.

The entire saga had brought quite unprecedented speculation to bear directly on Singapore's first family, together with (inevitably) speculation on the part of foreign media and academic commentators (including those not particularly well-disposed to Singapore) choosing to give their own interpretations on the saga.<sup>9</sup> The resilience of Singapore, and the confidence in it, had been affected. And as PM Lee observed, the open airing of a private family matter meant damage to the legacy of the late PM Lee Kuan Yew.<sup>10</sup>

## Government and Politics

The year 2017 saw lawsuits filed by Pasir Ris–Punggol Town Council (PRPTC) and Aljunied–Hougang Town Council (AHTC) against Workers' Party (WP) chief Low Thia Khiang, party chairman Sylvia Lim and assistant secretary-general Pritam Singh. The lawsuits concern the circumstances surrounding the setting-up of FM Solutions & Services (FMSS), its eventual appointment as managing agent of the now-defunct Aljunied–Hougang–Punggol East Town Council (AHPETC), and past payments made by the town councils to FMSS and a related service provider between 2011 and 2015 while the WP was managing AHPETC from 2013 to 2015. Independent audits flagged the need to investigate whether potential criminal offences, including criminal breach of trust, had been committed and should be investigated. The lawsuits sought to show that the WP figures (as town councillors) had breached their fiduciary duties and made allegedly improper payments to contractors.

The potential seriousness of the charges did not appear to have cast too much of a dampener on the sixtieth anniversary celebrations of the WP in November 2017. There was, however, something of a surprise at this occasion: Low, 61, made it known that he would not be contesting the post of secretary-general at the next party election (likely to be held in 2018).<sup>11</sup> There was speculation that the ongoing lawsuits might have had a hand in Low's decision, but Low would only volunteer that the move had been made to make way for new blood in the WP's ranks.<sup>12</sup>

The PAP, too, was in a transitional phase of renewal. Changes to the cabinet and other positions in the leadership in April 2017 saw several younger politicians appointed as Senior Ministers of State and two individuals promoted to the level of full minister: Josephine Teo and Desmond Lee.<sup>13</sup>

News of a more surprising exit from the top ranks came in September when it was announced that Tan Chuan-Jin, Minister for Social and Family Development, once seen as a core member of the fourth-generation political



leadership, would resign his position to take up the position (on the nomination of PM Lee) as Speaker of Parliament, a position vacated by Halimah Yacob in August when she resigned to contest the presidential election. The role of Speaker (which cannot be filled by an individual who is at the same time a political office holder) was seen as an important but largely ceremonial one. PM Lee stated that Chuan-Jin remained an important member of his team, albeit in a different role, and much was made of Tan Chuan-Jin stepping into an enhanced, “Speaker-plus” role.<sup>14</sup> This did little, however, to scotch the coffee-shop talk that this was a demotion of sorts as well as a sign that Tan was out of the running for the top job.

The issue of choosing Singapore’s fourth prime minister and successor to PM Lee was increasingly occupying the media, netizens and people at large. Quizzed by CNBC in a widely noted interview in October on whether he was ready to step down after the next election, PM Lee said that he was ready, with the caveat he needed to make sure “somebody is ready to take over from me”. Lee has been clear that the younger generation of leaders have to come to a consensus as to who should lead, and has made it known that his successor is likely already a cabinet member, but he has given away few clues about who that might be.<sup>15</sup>

Against this was a level of curiosity (tinged with anxiety) on the part of Singapore watchers, and at the grass-roots level, as to who PM Lee’s successor would be.<sup>16</sup> This had to do in part with the fact (acknowledged by some of the main actors involved) that this was a very different succession scenario compared to the elevation of Goh Chok Tong (1990) or Lee Hsien Loong (2004). Both had had considerable time at the top ranks before their ascensions, and were considered seasoned political hands. Lee Hsien Loong’s successor would have a considerably shorter runway, with the public having a similarly short runway in terms of getting to know the future PM.<sup>17</sup>

Even leaders close to the apex evinced some anxiety. Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong weighed in on the issue at the close of the year, saying in a social media post in December that he would like to see the “urgent challenge” of the fourth-generation leadership settled. Goh (who in 1984 had been chosen by his peers to succeed PM Lee Kuan Yew) went as far as to suggest that he hoped that the current cohort of leaders could settle the issue within six to nine months, allowing PM Lee to formally designate his potential successor before the end of 2018.<sup>18</sup>

If 2017 closed with a degree of anxiety over the succession issue, the opening of 2018 saw the fourth-generation leadership going some way to allaying

concerns. On 4 January, sixteen fourth-generation cabinet ministers and office holders (including Ong Ye Kung, Chan Chun Sing and Heng Swee Keat, the three thought to be in serious contention for the premiership) issued a response of sorts, acknowledging the pressing nature of the issue but stating also that the team of younger ministers “would settle on a leader from amongst us in good time”. What seemed surprising, perhaps, was that Ong Ye Kung (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) appeared at this time to rule himself out, saying that he had another, unnamed, individual in mind for the top job.<sup>19</sup> This would suggest that just Heng Swee Keat and Chan Chun Sing remain in contention. Whether this is indeed the case or whether further surprises remain in store will become clearer at some point in 2018, when PM Lee intends to carry out a major cabinet reshuffle. The likelihood is that even if this reshuffle does not contain an outright anointing, there will be a strong indication of PM Lee’s preferred successor — and the individual chosen by his peers to take Singapore into the next lap.

## Foreign Policy

PM Lee had had a very good relationship with then American president Barack Obama, having made a state visit in 2016 and being honoured by a state dinner celebrating the strength of the bilateral relationship on that occasion. PM Lee’s six-day official working visit to the United States in October 2017 at the invitation of President Donald Trump was important in terms of getting acquainted with the United States’ unpredictable new leader, and in keeping Singapore in the minds of American policymakers at an uncertain period in global affairs.

Lee’s meeting with Trump produced some standard niceties, with Lee noting that both sides reaffirmed the strength of the half-century-long relationship and the substantial cooperation in the defence and security and (not least) economic spheres. To underscore this, at the White House meeting, both President Trump and PM Lee witnessed Singapore Airlines’ signing of a US\$13.8 billion deal with Boeing. During the course of the visit, President Trump accepted PM Lee’s invitation to visit Singapore sometime in 2018.

It was also important to get President Trump and his administration to keep their minds on Asia, and Southeast Asia specifically. Speaking at a November Manila summit commemorating forty years of dialogue relations between ASEAN and the United States, PM Lee (as prime minister of the incoming country chair of ASEAN in 2018) told President Trump that his attendance at the summit was a positive step pointing to expanded relations, and that Singapore looked forward to continued support from the United States.

## **ASEAN**

In the course of symbolically taking over the ASEAN chairmanship from the Philippines in Manila during the ASEAN Summit, PM Lee outlined Singapore's approach and key priorities as chair. Singapore, Lee said, would seek to ensure the group promotes and upholds a rules-based regional order. It would focus on the twin themes of "resilience" and "innovation". The scope would encompass dealing with emerging security challenges, including cyber security, transnational crime and terrorism. This would also involve finding innovative ways to leverage digital technologies and equip citizens of ASEAN member states with skills and capabilities.

### **"Small States"**

Singapore's diplomacy — indeed the very nature and purpose of it — also came under the spotlight from a wholly different source in July, when the dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Kishore Mahbubani, published an opinion piece in the *Straits Times* dealing — on the face of it — with the ongoing economic and diplomatic blockade of Qatar by some of its neighbours. Mahbubani said that one lesson for Singapore was that "small states must behave like small states", especially now that Mr Lee Kuan Yew (by Mahbubani's account, Singapore's only globally respected statesman who could comment freely on the affairs of other countries) had passed on. Mahbubani's view attracted opprobrium from a range of notable individuals, including current and former Singapore diplomats and even a government Minister (K. Shanmugam).<sup>20</sup> Implicitly, rejection also came, although in a more nuanced way, from Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan.<sup>21</sup> Mahbubani was forced to defend his views (but not backpedal), stating that his piece was criticism against statements made by senior officials which had caused missteps in Singapore's external relations, but he had not meant his piece to be an attack on PM Lee (which was the reading taken by many).<sup>22</sup>

## **Malaysia**

In February, Malaysia applied to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to review its May 2008 judgment that awarded sovereignty over Pedra Branca and its surrounding waters to Singapore. The original ICJ judgment was final and without appeal, but Malaysia's application was made under a statute of the ICJ that allows application for a revision of judgement when new facts have been unearthed. Malaysia appears confident that such facts have indeed been discovered. Public statements from the Singapore side have appeared measured but equally

confident, and a “comprehensive rebuttal” was filed with the ICJ in October. The next step in the case is for the two sides to present oral arguments to the ICJ, on dates yet to be fixed.<sup>23</sup>

It has not escaped the attention of some observers that a general election will take place in Malaysia sometime during 2018. PM Lee himself has remarked that the Malaysian election “may have something to do” with the fresh Malaysian application to the ICJ. Some Malaysian leaders and officials bristled at such a suggestion.<sup>24</sup> Whatever plot twists follow, however, and even if Pedra Branca becomes Malaysian electoral fodder, it seems unlikely that both countries will allow the issue to mar a period of excellent ties. PM Lee’s very good personal relations with Malaysian PM Najib aside, there have been several bilateral accomplishments over the course of 2017. These include progress made in plans and discussions for cross-border connectivity between the two countries through two projects of immense scale: namely, the Kuala Lumpur–Singapore High Speed Rail, to be completed by 2026, and the Johor Bahru–Singapore Rapid Transit System Link, to be operational by 2024.

## The Economy

Topline figures for the economy held up reasonably well, with several sectors showing a modest recovery over 2016. In the third quarter of the year the economy grew 5.2 per cent, the fastest in nearly four years. In an upward revision, PM Lee in his New Year’s message bringing in 2018 said that the economy grew by 3.5 per cent (echoing earlier MTI statements that the economy was expected to grow by 3–3.5 per cent in 2017, against the initial estimate of 2–3 per cent).<sup>25</sup> Manufacturing (in particular electronics, biomedical engineering and precision engineering) was the main support for overall growth in 2017, but services (in particular financial services, retail and information and communications) also contributed, leading government agencies to state that the overall recovery was one not simply measured in pace but also in breadth.<sup>26</sup> In the statements associated with the third-quarter forecast, there were, however, points from MTI that denoted, if not concern, at least the sense that the pace of growth would moderate into 2018 (with, for example, growth in key external demand markets such as China and the eurozone likely to ease).<sup>27</sup>

It was partly in recognition of challenges lying ahead that the government convened a high-powered committee — the Committee on the Future Economy (CFE) — in early 2016 to chart out Singapore’s long-term growth trajectory.<sup>28</sup> The thirty-member CFE, headed by Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat, reported

in February 2017. Some of the observations in the final report might have seemed somewhat underwhelming: taking steps to ensure that the economy remained open and connected globally, and equipping the workforce with deep skills and an attitude that embraced lifelong learning. But as was made clear, the committee (made of five cabinet ministers, with the remaining twenty-five being individuals drawn from diverse parts of the private sector) never intended to prescribe miracle pills for the economy. The aim was a longer-term blueprint mapping out the transformation of the economy. Core parts included keeping adult workers relevant in an age of technological disruption. An important beginning had been made, the report noted, through the SkillsFuture movement. For businesses, upping innovation was emphasized. Here, targeted recommendations were made for SMEs (which make up the bulk of Singapore enterprises) in terms of helping them build up their digital capabilities — an area that the report notably went into more detail than the CFE's predecessor, the Economic Strategies Committee (ESC; 2009–10).

For the near-term, 2018 may well bring with it some degree of belt-tightening, given the need to tackle future challenges — not least the ageing population.<sup>29</sup> Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat said that government expenditure on healthcare is expected to “rise quite sharply” in the next three to five years and beyond, while Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has said tax increases are not a matter of if, but when, given investments in infrastructure and social spending.<sup>30</sup>

## SMART Nation

The CFE report mentioned SMART Nation or the use of smart technologies 19 times; “innovation” featured approximately 150 times in the 130-page report. These two — innovation and technological advancement — are the *sine qua non* in taking the economy to the next level. But not all of the journey to SMART Nation status will be smooth sailing. PM Lee in his 20 August 2017 National Day Rally speech observed that Singapore has the “right ingredients” to be a Smart Nation (a vision unveiled by Lee himself in 2014) but needed “to do much better” to create a SMART Nation.<sup>31</sup>

Getting government agencies to interface better is clearly a priority. A few months earlier, wide-ranging organizational changes in the agencies (and personnel) responsible for getting Singapore to SMART Nation status had taken place. These developments involved chiefly a centralization under the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), which saw the Smart Nation and Digital Government Office (SNDGO) formed under it, with staff drawn from the Smart Nation Programme Office (SNPO) in the PMO as well as other government departments. In addition, the

Government Technology Agency (GovTech), a statutory board under the Ministry of Communications and Information (MCI) was placed under the PMO as the implementing agency of SNDGO. Together, SNDGO and GovTech would form the Smart Nation and Digital Government Group (SNDGG) in the Prime Minister's Office.

The announced rationale behind these changes was to “enable the Government to be more integrated and responsive” in the nation's Smart Nation and Digital Government (SNDG) strategy and processes. The revamped government SMART Nation organizational architecture is a high powered — and many-layered — one. The SNDGG is overseen by a ministerial committee chaired by Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Teo Chee Hean. Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister for Communications and Information, will be Deputy Chairman and Minister-in-charge of Cybersecurity and the Info-communications Media Development Authority of Singapore (IMDA). The other members of the Ministerial Committee are Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister-in-charge of the Smart Nation Initiative, Ong Ye Kung (who will champion Public Service innovation) and Dr Janil Puthuchearry (Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Communications and Information and Ministry of Education), appointed Minister-in-charge of GovTech.<sup>32</sup>

Some SMART Nation efforts were already in some respects starting to bear fruit. The SNDGO revealed that initiatives in the pipeline included developing common QR codes for Singapore, to make it easier for consumers and small businesses to receive money through common integrated platforms, with MAS and banks here also working with industry partners on simplifying e-payments for merchants, thus going some way to address PM Lee's concerns. SNDGO also revealed that the National Environment Agency (NEA) will be embarking on the adoption of e-payments at hawker centres.

What was apparent in 2017 was the fact that technological disruption brings real world effects, and that in some cases, rather than freewheeling adoption, the platforms (if not the technology) would have to be brought under the regulatory ambit. For example, amendments to the Road Traffic Act in February meant that private-hire car drivers, including those under the ride-sourcing operators Uber and Grab, would now be required to obtain a vocational licence. This would also go some way to address concerns that ordinary taxi drivers could not compete on the same playing field as private-hire cars.

The regulatory regime appears reasonably well prepared to adapt to further developments — with measured calibration to disruption being the goal rather than outright rejection. But, given the sheer pace of change, whether the regime has the luxury of doing so at its own time and pace is less clear.

## Transport

Disruption of a more conventional but depressingly familiar kind marred 2017, with train disruptions becoming a regular occurrence. At the nub of the issue was SMRT's inability to get to grips with the multitude of engineering and technical woes plaguing it. In some cases, people were at fault; in others, systems. Apart from delays which could be classed as the more run-of-the-mill variety, two incidents stand out.

The first was flooding on the North–South Line on 7 October, which caused service disruptions across that day and the next, lasting some twenty hours in all. A quarter of a million commuters were affected.<sup>33</sup> Preliminary investigations revealed that a water pumping system malfunction resulted in flooding between Bishan and Braddell stations, with two float switches controlling the pump system at Bishan failing to kick in. Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan's initial comment that the SMRT maintenance team had “failed us” was swiftly overshadowed by revelations that maintenance works for the Bishan pump system had not been properly carried out since December 2016. It appeared that some key individuals had been party to the falsification of maintenance records to show that maintenance had taken place when actually it had not.

Worse was to come. On 15 November a train collision took place at Joo Koon station on the East–West Line. A stalled train was hit by another, injuring thirty-six people. SMRT's Twitter account initially referred to the accident — the second train-to-train collision (after one in 1993) — as a “train fault”, also referring to the crash as an incident that saw one train that “came into contact” with another. Following extensive investigations the LTA announced that a “software logic issue” with a new signalling system, coupled with a “confluence of failure conditions”, had been the root causes. LTA said that failure conditions arose as a result of complications from operating two signalling systems concurrently on a single line. The French company that supplied the new signalling system for the East–West Line acknowledged its responsibility for the incident and has apologized to the public. Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan acknowledged that commuter confidence would inevitably be affected by the incident, but he said that overall, progress would be made in reliability and he was confident that these improvements would be visible to commuters.<sup>34</sup>

Whether things will look up from 2018 remains to be seen. The incidents in 2017 triggered a public debate — played out in the press and social media — on issues concerning responsibility and SMRT's corporate culture. After the flooding incident, several individuals in SMRT's maintenance team faced disciplinary action and suspensions, with some also having their employment terminated.<sup>35</sup>



SMRT CEO Desmond Kuek took full responsibility and apologized to commuters affected.<sup>36</sup> MRT chairman Seah Moon Ming (flanked by Kuek and other senior members of SMRT management) at a press conference bowed to apologize for the incident as well.

Despite efforts (since major breakdowns affected the MRT in 2011) to emphasize maintenance and reliability, SMRT CEO Desmond Kuek acknowledged after the 2017 flooding incident that “deep-seated cultural issues” remain within the company that need more time to root out.<sup>37</sup> However, increasingly, questions were being asked (particularly in the realm of online socio-political commentary) about Kuek himself — whether, in position since October 2012, he had been given enough time to rectify the issues and whether he should make way for someone else.<sup>38</sup>

### Threats Seen...

A threat assessment report issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs in June laid bare the magnitude of the terror threat to Singapore, making it clear that the threat level was the highest it had been in recent years. The report — arguably the most important public-facing document on the terror threat since the 2003 Jemaah Islamiah White Paper — revealed that ISIS elements had plotted two attacks in Singapore. Perhaps more importantly, the report noted that in the age of ISIS, there had been a quickening in the pace and tempo of radicalization. Formerly, it would take around twenty-two months for people to become radicalized. But this has now been cut to nine months. Telling data was adduced to support this: while eleven individuals were detained under the preventive Internal Security Act (ISA) between 2007 and 2014, the period 2015–17 saw fourteen radicalized individuals detained, some of whom had planned to join ISIS.

For the first time, a Singaporean featured in ISIS propaganda videos. In his appearances in September and December, this individual, Megat Shahdan Abdul Samad, alias Abu Uqayl (hitherto completely unknown to the public, but apparently known to the security services), urged fighters to come to the region to undertake jihad.<sup>39</sup> New *types* of individuals in Singapore were coming under the thrall of ISIS, with women beginning to feature in the ranks of the radicalized. One 22-year-old female infant-care assistant became the first woman detained in Singapore for radicalism. She had planned to make the trip with her young child to join ISIS.<sup>40</sup>

Given the nature of the threat, government officials have unsurprisingly for some time been open in acknowledging that it is a matter of “when, not if” a



terrorist attack takes place in the country. The issue is not simply prevention, but shoring up resilience for day-after scenarios. The key government initiative in this respect is SgSecure, the nationwide call to arms launched in 2016 (in part a refresh of the decade-old Community Engagement Programme). In its report card on SgSecure, launched at the one-year mark of the SgSecure movement, the Ministry of Home Affairs gave updates on how many individuals and households SgSecure had reached, with additional details on the ramping up of the scale and frequency of emergency preparedness exercises. Work still needs to be done. In his remarks marking one year of SgSecure, Home Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam noted that while it had “some success” in raising awareness, there is “some way to go” in ramping up preparedness, and in getting people to “take ownership and prepare themselves”. “I think a lot of people are not mentally tuned to preparedness.”<sup>41</sup> Shanmugam noted that the national SgSecure movement is shifting gears, from raising public awareness of the threat of terror attacks to raising the level of “preparedness” among the population.

The year 2017 also saw the government making renewed efforts against intolerance, the feedstock of extremism. In June, at a closed-door dialogue with various faith and community groups, PM Lee drew attention to extremist and exclusivist religious teachings entering the mainstream in countries elsewhere. Lee warned of the dangers of exclusivist views taking root in Singapore, and the weakening effect it would have on racial harmony.<sup>42</sup> The government also made it a particular point to show that external influencers supporting hate speech, or the denigration of other faiths, will have no place in Singapore. In one case, two well-known preachers, Ismail Menk and Haslim Baharim, preachers with known hard-line views against other religions, and against multiculturalism, were prevented from entering Singapore, after earlier having been engaged to preach on a religious-themed cruise departing and ending in Singapore in November.<sup>43</sup> Their barring came soon after two Christian preachers known to have made negative comments of other religions were prevented from entering Singapore to preach.<sup>44</sup>

With Law and Home Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam stating that the Ministry of Home Affairs is looking at further tightening restrictions on foreign preachers who do not share Singapore’s values of religious harmony, it seems likely that 2018 will see further preventive measures, with some taking the legal form.<sup>45</sup> Shanmugam had also given indications that, more generally, laws concerning hate speech or actions that could upset religious sensitivities will be strengthened, with amendments to the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act in the works to deal with “segregationist teachings”.

### ...And Unseen

Another type of threat, perhaps less visible but equally insidious, reared its head sporadically in 2017. In February, the Ministry of Defence announced that one of its servers had been breached, with the details of some eight hundred national servicemen compromised. Keeping with past practice, no fingers were directly pointed, but the language of official pronouncements on the issue strongly suggested that a state actor was responsible. This follows other attacks against other government agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2014) and other unnamed public agencies, as well as sophisticated advanced persistent threat (APT) attacks against academic institutions known to work with the government.<sup>46</sup> In its inaugural report on the cyberthreat landscape in Singapore, the Cyber Security Agency (CSA) noted that attacks have become more sophisticated. Attacks, the report revealed, have targeted not just government agencies. Ransomware attacks against other sectors, including the healthcare sector, have also featured.<sup>47</sup> Key concerns of the authorities, revealed in the CSA Cybersecurity Awareness Survey released in February, are uneven levels of cyber hygiene and awareness, with one finding (out of several that would give the authorities cause for concern) being that a third of those surveyed do not manage their passwords securely.<sup>48</sup>

Straightforward cyberattacks are not the only concern. A different type of threat — fake news and disinformation campaigns — has increasingly reared its head worldwide in this post-truth era. In May, a study by BBC Global News found that eight in ten Singaporean news consumers are concerned about fake news, the highest among five places — the others being Australia, Malaysia, Hong Kong and India — in the Asia Pacific which were surveyed.<sup>49</sup> Real world effects of fake news were in abundance, from, for example, unfounded rumours on social media that someone was given a hefty fine for leaving used tissue behind at a public eating place, to (in a more serious vein) false allegations against the police, leading Law and Home Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam to decry these “completely false, made up, trumped up” attacks against the police, noting that they also dumbed down discourse.<sup>50</sup> Shanmugam suggested that a law against fake news and misinformation was in the works.<sup>51</sup> This may still eventuate in 2018, but the authorities appear determined to move in a calibrated fashion, with early January 2018 seeing the news (following a parliamentary debate on the issue) that a select committee of MPs would first be set up to study the issue, consult widely, and make recommendations.<sup>52</sup>

Experience around the world has shown in recent years that fake news and disinformation can be part of wider, state-sponsored subversion campaigns and influence operations. This was brought home in August 2017 when a professor at

the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Huang Jing (an American citizen of ethnic Chinese origin), had his permanent residence status revoked for allegedly being an agent of a (unnamed) foreign country. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, in an unusually detailed statement, Huang Jing had worked with intelligence agents from that country, and engaged prominent and influential Singaporeans, providing them with what he claimed was “privileged information” about the foreign country to influence their opinions in favour of that country. The ministry noted how Huang Jing gave supposedly “privileged information” to an unnamed senior member of the LKY School, who duly conveyed this to senior public officials who were in a position to direct Singapore’s foreign policy, in an attempt to cause the Singapore Government to change its foreign policy. However, the government declined to act on the information.<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusion

Singapore will not lack challenges in the next phase of its growth trajectory. These will include economic headwinds, socio-demographic challenges brought on by an ageing population, and a workforce buffeted by the pace and intensity of technological disruption. Threats in the security sphere will abound, too. Some, such as terrorism, have been present for some time, while others such as cyber and adjunct hybrid threats are of somewhat newer vintage, with potential aggressors themselves honing their methods. The next generation of Singapore’s leadership tasked to navigate the nation safely through these waters has, on the face of it, all the attributes to do so. They have been chosen and sieved out through a thoroughly rigorous, meritocratic process; can boast the technocratic skills to govern the nation; and will, for a time at least, have the mentorship of older-generation leaders — not least PM Lee himself. The individual eventually chosen to succeed to the premiership by his peers will by their estimation have the undoubted mettle to do the job. Whether this mettle will first be tested by external challenges or by issues pertaining to the inner resilience of Singapore society is, at this stage, impossible to tell. It might be one or the other, or perhaps even both.

## Notes

1. For the (stringent) requirements for candidates with a public sector background, see *Eligibility Criteria and the Presidential Elections Committee (“PEC”)* <<http://www.pmo.gov.sg/sites/pmo2/files/02%20-%20Eligibility.pdf>>. Candidates with a public sector background are required to have previously held office (in one of a number of select positions) or served as the chief executive of a key statutory board or government

- company for at least three years. The Presidential Election Committee also can at its discretion approve candidates not fulfilling these requirements if satisfied that the individual has the experience and ability to effectively carry out the functions and duties of the office of President.
2. For a sampling, see The Online Citizen, “No Longer the Singapore That I Was Once Proud Of”, 13 September 2017 <<https://www.theonlinecitizen.com/2017/09/13/no-longer-the-singapore-that-i-was-once-proud-of/>>.
  3. Nur Asyiqin Mohamad Salleh, “Hundreds Take Part in Silent Protest against Reserved Election at Hong Lim Park”, *Straits Times*, 16 September 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/politics/hundreds-take-part-in-silent-protest-against-reserved-election-at-hong-lim-park>>.
  4. Elgin Toh, “Reserved Elections ‘Critical as President Serves Unifying Role’: Shanmugam”, *Straits Times*, 9 September 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/politics/reserved-elections-critical-as-president-serves-unifying-role>>.
  5. Tham Yuen-C., “Reserved Presidential Election was Right Thing to Do: PM Lee Hsien Loong”, *Straits Times*, 29 September 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/reserved-presidential-election-was-right-thing-to-do-said-pm-lee-hsien-loong>>; Lianne Chia, “Govt Prepared to Pay Political Price over Changes to Elected Presidency: Chan Chun Sing”, Channel NewsAsia, 8 September 2017 <<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/govt-prepared-to-pay-political-price-over-changes-to-elected-9199326>>.
  6. PM Lee, in giving his account of the saga and his rebuttal to the allegations made against him, said he was reluctant to take his siblings to court as it would “besmirch” his parents’ names and prolong the dispute. See Ministerial Statement on “Alleged Abuse of Power on 38 Oxley Road” at the Parliamentary Sitting on 3 July 2017 by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong <<http://www.pmo.gov.sg/newsroom/ministerial-statement-pm-lee-hsien-loong-alleged-abuse-power-38-oxley-road>>.
  7. “Oxley Road: Lee Hsien Yang, Lee Wei Ling Will Stop Posting Evidence on Social Media – Full Text of Statement”, *Straits Times*, 6 July 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/oxley-road-lee-siblings-issue-joint-statement-in-response-to-parliament-session>>.
  8. Seow Bei Yi, “Family Feud Stuns Nation”, *Straits Times*, 18 December 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/family-feud-stuns-nation>>.
  9. See, for example, Chun Han Wong, “Singapore, a Model of Orderly Rule, is Jolted by a Bitter Family Feud”, *Wall Street Journal*, 14 July 2014 <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/first-family-feud-shakes-up-singapore-1500051573>>; and Bhavan Jaipragas, “Siblings of Singapore PM Fear for Their Safety, Accusing Him of Harassment and Thrashing Lee Kuan Yew’s Values”, *South China Morning Post*, 14 June 2017 <<http://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/2098224/siblings-singapore-pm-fear-their-safety-accusing-him-harassment>>.
  10. Lee Hsien Loong, Ministerial Statement on “Alleged Abuse of Power on 38 Oxley

- Road”, Parliamentary Sitting, 3 July 2017 <<http://www.pmo.gov.sg/newsroom/ministerial-statement-pm-lee-hsien-loong-alleged-abuse-power-38-oxley-road>>.
11. Danson Cheong, “Low Thia Kiang Will Step Down as Workers’ Party Secretary-General Next Year”, *Straits Times*, 3 November 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/politics/low-thia-kiang-will-step-down-as-wp-secretary-general-next-year>>.
  12. For analysis, see Elgin Toh, “WP Chief Low Thia Kiang to Step Down: Why Has He Chosen to Act Now?”, *Straits Times*, 5 November 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/politics/why-has-low-chosen-to-act-now>>.
  13. Teo was appointed Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office, and Second Minister in the Ministry of Manpower. Mr Desmond Lee was appointed Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office.
  14. PM Lee Hsien Loong, Facebook post, 5 September 2017 <<https://www.facebook.com/leehsienloong/photos/a.344710778924968.83425.125845680811480/1593633260699374/?type=3&theater>>.
  15. CNBC, “CNBC Transcript: Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore”, 19 October 2017 <<https://www.cnbc.com/2017/10/19/cnbc-transcript-lee-hsien-loong-prime-minister-of-singapore.html>>.
  16. See Bhavan Jaipargas, “Why Singaporeans Are Anxious to Know Who Will Replace Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong”, *South China Morning Post*, 4 November 2017 <<http://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/2118357/singapores-burning-question-who-will-succeed-lee-hsien-loong>>.
  17. Ibid.
  18. <<https://www.facebook.com/MParader/photos/a.584664768242860.1073741858.182873625088645/1954246467951343/?type=3&theater>>; Elgin Toh, “ESM Goh Chok Tong Says Settling 4G Leadership an Urgent Challenge, Hopes Next PM Can Be Designated ‘Before 2018 Ends’”, *Straits Times*, 31 December 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/politics/esm-goh-says-settling-4g-leadership-is-an-urgent-challenge-hopes-next-pm-can-be-formally>>.
  19. Tham Yuen-C. and Seow Bei Yi, “4G Ministers Say They Will Pick a Leader ‘In Good Time’”, *Straits Times*, 4 January 2018 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/politics/4g-ministers-say-they-will-settle-on-a-leader-in-good-time-ong-ye-kung-says-he-has-someone>>.
  20. Chew Hui Min, “Prof Kishore Mahbubani’s View on Singapore’s Foreign Policy ‘Deeply Flawed’: Ambassador-at-large Bilahari Kausikan”, *Straits Times*, 2 July 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/prof-kishore-mahbubanis-view-on-singapores-foreign-policy-deeply-flawed-ambassador-at>>.
  21. Danson Cheong, “As a Small Country, Singapore Has to Be Friends with Everyone, But at Times It Needs to Advance Its Own Interests”, *Straits Times*, 17 July 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/as-a-small-country-singapore-has-to-be-friends-with-everyone-but-at-times-it-needs-to>>.

22. *Today*, “Kishore Reiterates: S’pore’s Statements Must Be More Prudent”, 3 July 2017 <<http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/kishore-reiterates-spores-statements-must-be-more-prudent>>.
23. Elgin Toh, “Singapore is ‘Confident’ of Its Case on Pedra Branca, Files Rebuttal to Malaysia: MFA”, *Straits Times*, 31 October 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/politics/singapore-is-confident-of-its-case-on-pedra-branca-files-rebuttal-to-malaysia-mfa>>.
24. Channel NewsAsia, “UMNO Youth Condemns PM Lee’s ‘Irresponsible’ Comments on Pedra Branca”, 20 November 2017 <<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/umno-youth-condemns-pm-lee-s-irresponsible-comments-on-pedra-9422258>>.
25. See Lee Hsien Loong, New Year Message for 2018, “A Strong Foundation for the Future”, 31 December 2017 <<http://www.pmo.gov.sg/newsroom/2018-new-year-message-pm-lee-hsien-loong>>; and Ministry of Trade and Industry Singapore, “MTI Forecasts GDP to Grow by ‘3.0 to 3.5 Per Cent’ in 2017 and ‘1.5 to 3.5 Per Cent’ in 2018”, press release, 23 November 2017 <<https://www.mti.gov.sg/NewsRoom/Pages/MTI-Forecasts-GDP-to-Grow-by-3.0-to-3.5-Per-Cent-in-2017-and-1.5-to-3.5-Per-Cent-in-2018.aspx>>.
26. Vivien Shiao, “Singapore Economy Grows 5.2% in Q3, Beating Expectations; 2017 Forecast Raised to 3–3.5%”, *Straits Times*, 23 November 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/business/economy/singapore-economy-grows-52-in-q3-beating-expectations-2017-forecast-raised>>; Vivien Shiao, “Singapore Economy Grows 4.6% in Q3; Beats Expectations”, *Business Times*, 13 October 2017 <<http://www.businesstimes.com.sg/government-economy/singapore-economy-grows-46-in-q3-beats-expectations>>; Tang See Kit, “Singapore’s 2018 Economic Growth Likely to ‘Moderate’ from This Year: MAS”, Channel NewsAsia, 27 October 2017 <<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/singapore-s-2018-economic-growth-likely-to-moderate-2017-gdp-9348276>>.
27. Tang, “Singapore’s 2018 Economic Growth Likely to ‘Moderate’”.
28. Lee Min Kok, “What You Need to Know about the Committee on the Future Economy”, *Straits Times*, 9 February 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-committee-on-future-economys-report>>.
29. *Straits Times*, “Singapore’s Demographic Time Bomb: Number of Old People Will Match Number of Young for First Time Next Year, Says UOB Analyst”, 6 December 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/business/economy/singapore-will-reach-critical-demographic-crossroad-in-2018-says-uob-economist>>.
30. Salma Khalil, “Govt Spending on Healthcare to Rise Sharply in Next 3–5 Years: Heng Swee Keat”, *Straits Times*, 6 December 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/health/govt-spending-on-healthcare-to-rise-sharply-in-next-3-5-years-heng-swee-keat>>; Lianne Chia, “As Singapore’s Spending Needs Grow, Raising Taxes is Inevitable: PM Lee”, Channel NewsAsia, 19 November 2017 <<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/as-singapore-s-spending-needs-grow-raising-taxes-is-inevitable-9420086>>.



31. PM Lee Hsien Loong, National Day Rally speech, 20 August 2017 <<http://www.pmo.gov.sg/national-day-rally-2017>>.
32. Prime Minister's Office, "Formation of the Smart Nation and Digital Government Group in the Prime Minister's Office", 20 March 2017 <<http://www.pmo.gov.sg/newsroom/formation-smart-nation-and-digital-government-group-prime-minister's-office>>.
33. Charissa Yong, "10 MPs to Ask Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan about MRT Tunnel Flooding Incident in Parliament", *Straits Times*, 3 November 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/10-mps-to-ask-transport-minister-khaw-boon-wan-about-mrt-tunnel-flooding-incident-in>>.
34. *Today*, "Joo Koon Train Collision: Khaw Chides Signalling System Provider Thales", 21 November 2017 <<http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/joo-koon-train-collision-khaw-chides-signalling-system-provider-which-could-have-done>>.
35. At the time of writing, thirteen employees (several holding senior managerial positions) had been held responsible. C.K. Tan, "SMRT Sacks 8 Staff, Holds 5 Others Responsible for Falsification of Anti-flooding System Maintenance Records", *Stomp*, 28 November 2017 <<http://stomp.straitstimes.com/singapore-seen/smrt-sacks-8-staff-holds-5-others-responsible-for-falsification-of-anti-flooding>>.
36. Channel NewsAsia, "SMRT Takes 'Full Responsibility' for Tunnel Flooding, Says CEO Desmond Kuek", 16 October 2017 <<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/smrt-takes-full-responsibility-for-tunnel-flooding-says-ceo-9315322>>.
37. Adrian Lim, "SMRT Maintenance Staff Bonuses Will Be Affected following Lapse Which Led to Oct 7 Tunnel Flooding", *Straits Times*, 16 October 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/transport/smrt-maintenance-staff-bonuses-will-be-affected-following-lapse-which-led-to-oct>>.
38. See, for example, Belmont Tay, "Calls for SMRT CEO Desmond Kuek to Quit Grow Louder", *Mothership*, 6 November 2017 <<https://mothership.sg/2017/11/smrt-ceo-desmond-kuek-step-down/>>.
39. Joanna Seow, "Singaporean ISIS Fighter Shown Executing Man in Video", *Straits Times*, 31 December 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/singaporean-isis-fighter-shown-executing-man-in-video>>.
40. Danson Cheong, "Radicalised Female Infant Care Assistant from PCF Sparkletots Detained under ISA for Pro-ISIS Activities", *Straits Times*, 12 June 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/radicalised-female-infant-care-assistant-from-pcf-sparkletots-detained-under-isa-for-pro>>. A second woman, a 38-year-old housewife, also intended to join the group in the conflict zone. Danson Cheong, "Two Singaporeans, One a Woman, Detained under ISA for Terror-Related Activities", *Straits Times*, 9 November 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/two-singaporeans-one-a-woman-detained-under-isa-for-terror-related-activities>>.
41. Wong Pei Ting, "SGSecure to Shift Focus from Raising Terror Awareness to

- Preparedness”, *Today*, 28 September 2017 <<http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/sgsecure-shift-focus-raising-terror-awareness-preparedness>>.
42. Channel NewsAsia, “Singapore Must Strengthen Trust between Different Faiths amid Terror Threat: PM Lee”, 24 July 2017 <<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/singapore-must-strengthen-trust-between-different-faiths-amid-9058660>>.
  43. Tham Yuen-C., “2 Foreign Islamic Preachers Barred from Entering Singapore for Religious Cruise”, *Straits Times*, 30 October 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/politics/two-foreign-islamic-preachers-barred-from-entering-singapore-for-religious-cruise>>.
  44. Ibid.
  45. Channel NewsAsia, “Government to Tighten Rules against Hate Speech, Extremist Teachings: Shanmugam”, 3 October 2017 <<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/parliament/government-to-tighten-rules-against-hate-speech>>; Valerie Koh, “Cyber Attack on S’pore Public Organisation Was by State-Sponsored Group: CSA”, *Today*, 14 September 2017 <<http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/cyber-attack-spore-public-organisation-was-state-sponsored-group-csa-extremist-9275006>>.
  46. *Today*, “NUS-NTU Hack: Other Recent Cyber Breaches in Singapore”, 12 May 2017 <<http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/recent-cyber-security-attacks>>; *Straits Times*, “Hackers Broke into NUS, NTU Networks in Search of Government, Research Data”, 12 May 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/hackers-broke-into-nus-ntu-networks-in-search-of-government-research-data>>.
  47. Valerie Koh, “Cyber Attack on S’pore Public Organisation Was by State-Sponsored Group: CSA”, *Today*, 14 September 2017 <<http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/cyber-attack-spore-public-organisation-was-state-sponsored-group-csa>>.
  48. Cyber Security Agency Press Release, “CSA Releases Key Findings from First Cybersecurity Public Awareness Survey”, 15 February 2017 <<https://www.csa.gov.sg/news/press-releases/csa-releases-key-findings-from-first-cybersecurity-public-awareness-survey>>.
  49. A separate study by a respected private sector survey company found that 42 per cent of Singaporeans “regularly wonder if the news they read is fake”, with six in ten saying the issue worries them. See Kelly Ng, “In an Era of Fake News, the Truth May Not Always Be Out There”, *Today*, 2 June 2017 <<http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/big-read-era-fake-news-truth-may-not-always-be-out-there>>.
  50. Ibid.
  51. Chan Luo Er, “New Laws on Fake News to be Introduced Next Year: Shanmugam”, Channel NewsAsia, 19 June 2017 <<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/new-laws-on-fake-news-to-be-introduced-next-year-shanmugam-8958048>>.
  52. The green paper issued by the Ministry of Communications and Information and the Ministry of Law on 5 January 2018 (just before the parliamentary debate) gives a sense of government thinking. It is available at <<https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/content/dam/>>



minlaw/corp/News/Annexe%20A%20-%20Green%20Paper%20on%20Deliberate%20Online%20Falsehoods.pdf>.

53. Royston Sim, “LKY School Professor Huang Jing Banned, Has PR Cancelled, for Being Agent of Influence for Foreign Country”, *Straits Times*, 4 August 2017 <<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/lky-school-professor-huang-jing-banned-has-pr-cancelled-for-being-agent-of-influence-for>>; for the official ministry statement on the issue, see Ministry of Home Affairs, “Cancellation of Singapore Permanent Residence (SPR) Status – Huang Jing and Yang Xiuping”, press release, 4 August 2017 <<https://www.mha.gov.sg/newsroom/press-releases/Pages/Cancellation-of-Singapore-Permanent-Residence-Status-Huang-Jing-and-Yang-Xiuping.aspx>>.