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27

FLUID NATION
The Perpetual "Renovation" of Nation and National Identities in Singapore

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SINGAPORE THE FLUID NATION

For national communities, the nation is a site of stability and resilience. It is often premised on kinship or the myths of ethnic communities for a sense of collective belonging.[1] More recently, other scholars have argued that the nation requires the "regime of authenticity", that is, a purposeful attempt to install timeless values within the idea of the nation such that it is seen as eternal and thus "authentic", in contrast to the volatility of modernity.[2] The regime of authenticity is the political project to inscribe the nation with timeless values thus rendering it eternal in order to anchor it in the ferocious stream of capitalism and modernity.[3] It is this contrast against a volatile and random external environment that makes the nation, and the national identities within it, so treasured for its consistency and predictability.

Singapore has had to forfeit much of the traditional ingredients that go into the formulation of nation and national culture. For a variety of reasons well discussed elsewhere, its immigrant population, multi-ethnic complexion, and sudden separation from Malaysia all conspired to arrest the development of an ethnic-based national culture or the idea of a stable and timeless nation. Quite the opposite; with economic growth so central to the idea of national

survival, the Singapore nation has been defined as necessarily dynamic, open to change, and adaptable to the demands of the world economy. Hence, instead of the division between nation (stable) and modernity (dynamic) where the former can be looked upon for security and orientation, the Singapore nation and modernity are collapsed into a political project designed to keep citizens entrenched in economic realism, the result of which is a fluid nation and identity that respond to the global economy. And it is because nation and identity in Singapore are premised on the shifting sands of capitalism and globalization, the state-sponsored search for identity and nationhood is destined to be a futile one.

This chapter looks at Singapore as a fluid nation, that is, the variety of ways the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) articulates the nation, nationalism, and national identities as a strategy to respond to the dynamic challenges of the political and economic environment. As a fluid nation Singapore will be argued to be the result of the evolving political interests of the ruling elite as it attempts to define the Singapore nation and interpellate citizens through collective identities in order to maintain ideological hegemony in relation to the ever-changing political and economic landscape. As the external environment changes, so too must the ideological instruments of control, division, and mobilization. The concepts of nation, nationalism, and identities — all part of the state's repertoire of ideological instruments — are thus fluid in articulation and meaning.

Economic survival, for the PAP government, is the basic premise for everything, without which there would be no need to discuss national identity. As rightly pointed out by Willmott in the 1989 volume of *Management of Success*, "industrialization was the *product* of nationalism [in Singapore], not its cause".[4] By turning Gellner's explanation on its head, Willmott went on to assert that because Singapore was forced into independence without nationalism or nation identity, "in Singapore the state preceded the development of nationalism rather than emerging as its political consequences, and the state itself became the first major symbol of national identity".[5] Furthermore, the Singapore state not only emerged as the symbol but also, under the PAP government, the *author* of nationalism and national identities in Singapore. This chapter seeks to achieve two objectives. Firstly, to show how earlier imaginations of the Singapore nation were expressed by the governing elite and; secondly, to show how, upon successful industrialization, the demands and functions of globalization and the global city have forced the government to invent a "bigger" Singapore nation that could be linked to greater civilizations.

A NATION IN PERPETUAL "RENOVATION"

Right from independence, the concepts of nation and nationalism were not seen by the PAP government as sacred or stable, but as strategies for specific interests. Speaking at a seminar organized by the International Press Institute in Bangkok on 14 October 1968, then Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour, S. Rajaratnam opined that "It is through a series of new models of nationalism, each of which would incorporate some significant innovations, that I see Asian nationalism moving towards regionalism and internationalism."[6] In order to chart a postcolonial future, he went on to state that "I hope that the renovation of Asian nationalism will be undertaken by bold minds and that the seventies will be given over to this undertaking."[7] The ideological purpose of renovating nationalism was clear: "It will be necessary for the new nationalism to tell the people that social, political and economic development can be undertaken successfully only if the people are prepared for sustained work, self-denial and for considerable sacrifice."[8] But perhaps the most prescient insight offered by Rajaratnam was the way in which the forces of globalization, a term not yet invented, would force nationalism to reinvent itself.

> The new nationalism must also stress the fact that the nation-state can never be completely self-contained and sovereign. The nation-state of today has been so permeated by a parallel international system that all nations can survive and prosper only by modifying their concepts of sovereignty and national exclusiveness.[9]

Although Rajaratnam was pondering rhetorically over the region as a whole, his remarks made clear that ideas of nation and nationalism could not be premised on primordial or ethnic identities, but on the unfolding challenges in the external environment. After all, it was upon Rajaratnam's insistence that Singapore's official history should only begin from 1819 so as to "forget" the multitude of histories and memories of migrants, which he called "ancestral ghosts", believing that only a state-sponsored construction of nation and national identity, purged of inconvenient narratives, stood the best chance of producing a harmonious multicultural society.[10] Indeed, much of Rajaratnam's sentiments anticipate the economic liberal voice in globalization literature some forty years later. His belief that "the nation-state can never be completely self-contained and sovereign" squares perfectly with contemporary globalization scholars who note that "National claims to 'sovereignty' have been more myth than fact: states have never been all-powerful or omni-competent."[11] As Rajaratnam goes on to observe:

> What we need is a new nationalism to be created by the relatively simple process of renovation of its content. This I believe is practical politics and through this strategy we can harness the force of nationalism for meaningful and hopeful ends ...[12]

One of the earliest ways in which the Singapore nation was imagined by the governing elites was one that was in a state of struggle or what others have called "ideology of survival".[13] It was a realist perspective of competition, power, and national interests intimately informed by rationalism and pessimism that situated the tiny, defenseless, and resource scarce island-state in a sea of hostility. The "ideology of survival" discourse came with a sequence of ideas that led to a pragmatic sense of collective consciousness. First was the belief that Singapore and Singaporeans must be *tabula rasa*, free from the ideologies and values of Malaysia such as ethnic privileges. Second, Singaporeans must be willing to "adopt a new set of attitudes, a new set of values, a new set of perspectives" that were perceived to be necessary for survival.[14] Thirdly, these new attitudes, values, and perspectives were embodied by the "rugged society" discourse which began to make its round in the local media by 1966, only a year after independence.[15] The "rugged society" discourse was meant to foster "a rugged, resolute, highly trained, highly disciplined society. Create such a community and you will survive and prosper here for a thousand years".[16] The "rugged society" campaign, on a policy level, was also introduced to persuade the Chinese majority population of the need for national service.[17] This discourse, which included the active promotion of sports, the building of sports complexes in the satellite towns of Queenstown and Toa Payoh, and the introduction of national cadet corps in secondary schools, was designed to attune the population to mass participation in physical activities for the purposes of citizenry shaping. Like arts and culture, sports was not deemed valuable for sports' sake but for its supposed character-building qualities. On an ideological level, the "rugged society" is perhaps best understood as a specific construction of national identity by the ruling class that attempted to call out the qualities and values needed for the perceived challenges of economic and, by extension, national, survival. This national identity came with the PAP government's perceptions of the world and a Southeast Asian "rough-and-tumble neighbourhood" to which it had to be strong and tough against. The identity that the ruling elite perpetuated was one that espoused "a classical realist perception of an anarchic society of nation-states challenging, if not threatening each other in furtherance of their national interests".[18]

From the robust and outward looking "rugged society" national identity, the PAP government also adopted a "garrison mentality". According to Brown, in order to foster loyalty and political attachment to "ethnically neutral and meritocratic state", the PAP government promotes the "garrison mentality" "to publicize the various dangers and threats facing Singapore which make the defensive unity of the whole community imperative to the country's very existence".[19] The garrison mentality strives to promote a perpetual sense of vulnerability and insecurity amongst the populace by constantly warning of possible trauma such as racial violence by reviving the spectre of the Hock Lee bus riots, the 1964 racial riots or political unrest caused by so-called "Marxist conspirators". Such warnings are akin to the "staging of crises" whereby even non-security issues such as the "Speak Mandarin" campaign conjures up a crisis of identity for the Chinese Singaporean in order to drive home the criticality and immediacy of such policies.[20] This type of state-defined anxiety over the future, resulting in siege politics where the clear line between "us" and "them", serves to keep national identity in perpetual renovation.

By the late 1970s a Confucian-based national identity had grown in popularity. Fuelled on the one hand by external economic forces, the Confucian ethics discourse gained currency as a culturalist explanation of the "Asian Miracle" that included Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea. At a domestic level, the growing worry among some PAP leaders that the local populace was becoming increasingly "Westernized" and thus "de-cultured" led to the injection of public funds into the promotion of the Confucian ethics discourse as a national value system.[21] High rates of mass consumption, the explosion of American-centred popular culture, materialism and individualism, all accoutrements of modernity and economic development, were feared to be eroding the cultural roots of the Chinese majority, though interestingly the Malay or Indian minorities were not deemed to be affected.

Nevertheless, the instrumentalism of the Confucian ethics discourse went beyond a culturalist explanation of economic development, but also reflected the PAP government's search for an ideological compass. This search began in the mid-1970s when the Socialist International accused the PAP of losing its democratic and socialist ideals, prompting the party to resign from the international body. The PAP defended its mode of governance by appealing to its economic track record, and claimed to have found a "Singapore way" that subjugated socialism, democracy, and human rights to the needs of national interests.[22] Nonetheless, this resignation left an ideological vacuum,

thus making it necessary for the party to look for a set of values; one which the academic symposium on "Asian values and Modernisation" seemed specifically designed to fill.[23] The project eventually developed into a particular reading of Chinese values and Confucian ethics by the PAP government. The Confucian ethics discourse not only became a national value system but also served as an ideological identity for the PAP party itself. It believed that it was made up of *junzhi* (honourable men)[24] and that Lee Kuan Yew was the "modern Confucius".[25] As a strategy of practical politics, the Confucian ethics discourse was extremely useful to the PAP government as a justification for authoritarianism by rejecting Western concepts of "civilization". This particular use of "Culture" to thwart democratic values is not new. It echoes the way in which German imperial advocates of *Zivilisationskritik* (critique of civilization) fended off democratic modernity by appealing to *Kultur* (Culture). The implication was that "One could be modern and retain one's 'Asianness' just as industrialised Germany of the nineteenth century maintained its distinctive, non-Western *'Kultur'*."[26] The desire for ethnic or traditional culture to inform value systems while, at the same time, tapping into modernity and capitalism is not unusual. As Chatterjee has observed, postcolonial nations struggle with the aporia of having to be of the past *and* also not of it, creating a perennial tension in having to be both Western (the embodiment of modernity and capitalism) and Eastern (the embodiment of culture and civilization).[27]

A BIGGER SINGAPORE: RE-IMAGINING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE FLUID NATION

What the above examples have in common are the clear ideas on territoriality, boundaries and the national unit. These ideas, which informed the postcolonial state's imagination of nationhood, were, to a large extent, supported by the colonial state's institutions of power which Anderson has identified as "census, maps and museums".[28] These three institutions of ontological and epistemological management have been crucial in the type of identity that has emerged in the imagined national community. One example of a colonial institution that has shaped the way we think of a Singapore nation is the Old Ford Factory just off Upper Bukit Timah Road. The Ford Motor Factory most notably was the site for the formal surrender of Malaya by the British Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival to the Japanese Commander of the 25th Army, General Yamashita Tomoyuki. The surrender is now a metonym for the decline of

the British Empire in Asia, and marks the darkest period in Singapore's modern history. Today, through the tactics of play and playfulness, the Old Ford Factory pitches the trauma to new generations. The Factory invites students to "See 44 months of the Japanese Occupation unfold before you as you take in the colourful visuals captured in 44 boxes. Or, play the game and step into the shoes of the residents of Syonan-to as you navigate your way through perils and uncertainties. Overcome all odds and be the first to get to the end of the Occupation unscathed and win the race!".[29] Just as the colonial state deployed these institutions to justify its dominion, they have also enabled the PAP government to imagine the island-nation as a discrete territorial entity perpetually under threat and to be defended against external ills of both the political and cultural variety.

However, with the acceleration of globalization and the demands of global city status, new strategies are continually devised in the authenticity-making process. There has been a growing concern among the PAP elite to situate the multi-ethnic citizens within the civilizational narratives of China and India in order to achieve a longer and more durable cultural memory for its ethnic communities as the tide of global culture creeps up local shores. As such, in the last decade or so, we have seen a growing discourse from the PAP government that draws cultural and historical connections between these greater civilizations and their immigrant communities here. There is now a willingness to complement the colonial "census, map, museum" strategy with what Anderson calls "memory and forgetting".[30] This, for Anderson, is the instructive preservation of the imagined community through the glorification of specific historical episodes, and the deliberate "forgetting" of incriminating or contradictory remnants of the past. The purposeful collective forgetting of such incriminating or contradictory remnants allows the nation to remember-via-forgetting, paving the way for the PAP government to unproblematically hook the national narrative on to those of China and India, thus imagining the Singapore nation as an extended family of these two civilizations.

One such example is the move to position Singapore within the "orbit of China's politics". The emergence of the Confucian ethics discourse above had signalled a shift in the cultural politics of ethnicity and cultural capital in Singapore. Before the late 1970s, the cultural division between the so-called English-educated and Chinese-educated ran along the fault lines of communism and communalism. This division, together with the privileging of English as the language of business and administration, resulted in a marginalized Chinese-educated community. With the rise of Asian capitalism

and a dynamic modern China, there is now a compelling case to "forget" these local divisions and to highlight the island's significance to the Chinese 1911 revolution. The Sun Yet Sen Villa, gazetted as a national monument in 1994 and located off Ah Hood Road, now serves as a memorial hall that commemorates Dr Sun's eight visits to the island in his effort to raise funds from overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia for his revolutionary activities. The PAP government's interest in claiming the historical and political importance of the Sun Yet Sen Villa, according to historians Hong and Huang, "is aimed at giving its ethnic Chinese citizens a dynamic, romantic and progressive history which is bound up with the myth of the 1911 Revolution, postulated as having a deep and pervasive cultural influence on Singapore".[31] This strategic positioning of Singapore *vis-à-vis* the Villa in Chinese revolutionary history is a stark turnaround from popular notions of the English-educated as agents of modernity and the Chinese-educated as "chauvinists" or parochial in their world view. The simple caricature of the past and its identities, coupled with selective amnesia, is vital in the nation-building process. Indeed, the regime of authenticity, as Duara notes, requires that "The subject of history is identified with that which is authentic and pure and associated with notions of honour, morality, and spirituality. It is the order of the sacred within the secular, the essence of the past in the present."[32] As Hong and Huang go on to observe, the PAP government leaders' "identification of Sun Yet Sen as the fount of ideas on such profound modern cultural transformations and the broad brushstrokes on Chinese republican history conveniently skip over the attacks on Confucianism, adventures into total Westernisation, rise of Marxism-Leninism, struggles of the Chinese Communist Part and Sun's collaboration with them, ascendancy of Mao Zedong and the climactic 1949 Revolution. The deliberate lack of historical analysis and weak effort at contextualization allowed the PAP to make an unproblematic construction of its connection to modern Chinese history."[33]

To take Anderson's vocabulary further, this is akin to rewriting census, redrawing mental maps, and expanding museums (or in the Sun Yet Sen Villa's case, gazetting them). We are told by the Sun Yet Sen Memorial Hall website that the Villa should be preserved as a "cultural shrine" and that

> Singapore was the headquarters of the revolutionary movement in Southeast Asia. It played a pivotal role in the 1911 Revolution that led to the massive alteration of China's destiny and the political scene of Asia. The success of this historical event was partly due to our involvement and contribution.

> This honour will serve to boost the confidence of all Singaporeans. Though our nation's history is relatively young, we can still perform well on the international arena; even with limited space and natural resources, we can become an affluent cosmopolitan [sic], populated by distinguished individuals.[34]

This purposeful situation of the national narrative within the broader political developments of the Chinese history, sometimes at the risk of internal contradictions, signals a move from imagining the nation as a well defined territorial unit with clear boundaries towards a "bigger Singapore". This "bigger Singapore" has longer histories, more porous boundaries and exists as a transnational nation that latches on these greater civilizations and selectively co-opts the symbolism of historical events, to achieve an authenticity that its own immigrant past lacks. In doing so, "Chinese" as a racial category is not only given civilizational underpinnings, but is also endowed with a cosmopolitan spirit and attitude. For the Sun Yet Sen story is also an integral part of the historical migration of Chinese to the South Seas which has been interpreted elsewhere as a cosmopolitan process because of their integration and assimilation into other communities, the exportation of national politics, and the spread and circulation of a cosmopolitan Chinese education in Southeast Asia.[35] This rehabilitation of the Chinese-educated community as cosmopolitan offers a useful ideological counter for the PAP government against Western-defined notions of cosmopolitanism where notions of individualism, human rights and liberal democracy take centre stage. The message is clear: you can be cosmopolitan without becoming Westernized.

THE NATIONAL GLOBAL CITY: A SCHIZOPHRENIC IDENTITY

From imagining the nation as a territorial unit in a distinct external (and dangerous) environment, to a bigger Singapore where the nation is situated in the orbit of modern Chinese history, there is a clear shift towards expressing a type of cosmopolitan spirit that is grounded in notions of the local or Asian-ness. Nevertheless, the PAP government's success in engaging the forces of globalization and neo-capitalism has resulted in fissures in the imagined community. These fissures, caused by the hardening of class hierarchy and uneven wealth distribution, both exacerbated by globalization, have spawned increasingly different life-worlds

and social realities in society. These different life-worlds and social realities have made it impossible to speak of a singular Singaporean habitus or a homogenous imagination of national community.

According to the Household Expenditure Survey, released by the Department of Statistics in June 2005, the bottom 20 per cent of households suffered a 3.2 per cent income drop between 1998 and 2003. This was in contrast to the fact that the average income of all households rose by 1.1 per cent a year.[36] The Gini coefficient has also risen steadily through the years, from 0.442 in 2000, 0.472 in 2006, to 0.485 in 2007. Meanwhile, the number of millionaires has increased over the years, from nearly 50,000 in 2005,[37] 66,600 in 2007,[38] to 77,000 in 2008.[39] And though the PAP government has a variety of assistance schemes such as the Workfare Bonus Scheme, Progress Package and the Public Assistance Scheme, this pattern of uneven wealth distribution is replicated in almost every capitalist society plugged into the global economy. The widening wage gap and class reproduction, together with the politics of envy, have made it very difficult for many Singaporeans to imagine themselves to be part of any other community other than the one that is structured by their own material circumstances. This obstacle cannot be overcome by the politics of "memory and forgetting" because the economic disparities are too apparent in everyday life. Unlike momentous but one-off events such as civil wars, revolutions, or massacres which can be (re)interpreted by historiography to allow citizens to "remember-through-forgetting", the widening wage gap and economic disparities are real conditions which steadily influence the habituses of Singaporeans through lived "practice", informing their relationship to structure and disposition to other Singaporeans. National spectacles such as the annual National Day Parade or international sporting events may enable Singaporeans to share a collective consciousness for a brief fleeting moment by forgetting the material divisions among them but this euphoria quickly expires when one returns to the humdrum of life. It is the humdrum of everyday life that generates the accumulated personal knowledge, cultural capital, and private experiences, producing reflexive, non-rational, high heterogeneous responses to the idea of nation, which ultimately, undermines the concept of a singular imagined community.

Well informed of these growing socio-economic divisions, the PAP government has attempted to pre-empt any exclusion from the Singapore imagined community by romanticizing this heterogeneity. In his now much cited 1999 National Day Rally Speech, then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong divided Singaporeans into "heartlanders" (Singaporeans who were supposed to be rooted to the locale)

and "cosmopolitans" (Singaporeans who were supposed to be globally mobile). This distinction was based on popular ideas of local neighbourhood life and cosmopolitanism, together with the values and traits commonly associated with such popular perceptions. Hence, the "heartlander", who presumably took up occupations such as taxi-drivers, factory workers, contractors, and so on, was portrayed by Goh as hardworking and sincere, and who played a "major role in maintaining our core values and our social stability".[40] This uncritical attempt to embody heartlanders with so-called core values was nothing more than the romanticizing of the working class as an authentic down-to-earth people. Such romanticizing presents the heartlander, or Singaporean working class, as an unproblematic political subject, ignoring the local history of the intimate connection between language, ideology and politics, and commodifies him into a stereotype such that his individuality is transformed into a generic phenomenon that complements state interests. It serves to homogenize and sanitize the working-class habitus. Meanwhile, the romanticization of the "cosmopolitan", in contrast to the heartlander, is one who is globally oriented (but presumably lacking the core values of the heartlander), endowed with highly sought after market skills and talent, a conduit for globalization and a prime agent who embodies the best of Singapore's education and meritocratic policies. With these two types of Singaporeans conveniently demarcated, Goh went on to exhort a national identity that is the composite of the best qualities of the two. According to Goh, it was important to "get the heartlanders to understand what the cosmopolitans contribute to Singapore's and their own well-being, and to get the cosmopolitans to feel an obligation and sense of duty to the heartlanders".[41]

The PAP government's constant oscillation between the local and global creates a tension within the national identity because cultural assumptions of localness and cosmopolitanism come with different sets of political expectations that are often in conflict with each other. Liberal expectations regarding the role of the press, public culture, and pluralist democracy that cosmopolitan ideals evoke are not articulated by the PAP government. Instead, cosmopolitanism in government discourse is purged of political liberalism and deployed as *modus vivendi* for cultural and ethnic pluralism so as to prepare citizens for the presence of much needed foreign talent in the pursuit of economic growth. This brand of cosmopolitanism is identical to the government's own understanding of "multiculturalism", that is, cultural-ethnic differences should be played down in favour of social harmony and whereby no community should overstep its boundaries. To be sure, the advancement

of the "cosmopolitics" of human rights or post-national society is certainly not part of Singapore's cosmopolitan agenda.[42]

But perhaps the greatest problem that the PAP government faces when defining the Singaporean identity as local or global is the resistance from ordinary Singaporeans. According to Appadurai, just as the state or government strives to use the ideologies of "national belonging" or "national culture" to further its interests, subnational or local groups will similarly adopt cosmopolitan or transnational messages to challenge or resist these ideologies.[43] This is precisely what happened during the Myanmar junta crackdown on Buddhist monks in September 2007. An application by a Singaporean student to hold an outdoor protest against the violence in Myanmar was turned down by the local police for fear of more violence. Online criticisms of the rejected application were telling, many deploying the PAP government's favoured "global' slogans to highlight its authoritarianism. According to "Benjamin Cheah":

> In short, we cannot seize an opportunity to express our compassion in a city of possibilities and big-heartedness; demonstrate solidarity with fellow global citizens, in a global hub; and take risks in a country that relies on risk-takers; because of a legalistic police force in a country of innovation.
>
> Oh, and by the way, the State wants us to be more proactive in politics.[44]

"City of Possibilities" was, of course, the theme for the 2007 National Day Rally Speech while the "hub" trope is commonplace in government discourse, not to mention the government's exhortation for citizens to be less risk adverse in the attempt to nurture a more vibrant economy. Conversely, any state attempt to deploy cosmopolitan tropes for economic pursuit is often confronted by groups championing specific interpretations of the local. And this is nowhere more evident than in the national debate over Singlish.[45] The debate over the local vernacular is poised between its critics who argue that Singlish is poor English which prevents foreigners from understanding locals and is an obstacle to the global city ambition, and its proponents who argue that it is distinctively Singaporean, but most importantly, a "natural" non-state engineered piece of indigenous Singaporean culture.[46] Support for Singlish comes primarily from cultural producers and, ironically, English-speaking Singaporeans who cite Singlish as a marker of local identity. Popular local sitcoms such as *Phua Chu Kang* and local theatre, a decade before, have entrenched Singlish and vernacular identities such as "Ah Beng" and "Ah Lian" firmly in popular culture.[47] The fondness and attachment that Singaporeans

have for such vernacular identities comes from the human need to reaffirm local identity in the face of increased globalization and the influx of the foreigners. The harder the PAP government pushes the cosmopolitan-oriented national identity for its economic interests, the more attractive Singlish and vernacular identities become as sites for resistance.

CONCLUSION

The authorship of nation and national identities has been the sole privilege of the PAP government. This authorship was probably necessary at the point of separation from Malaysia and inevitable during the country's formative years. The imagining of the Singapore community was, as with most national communities, left to its political elite. For a postcolonial society such as Singapore, imaginations of its ethnic identities, territory, and the artefacts of its history have been profoundly shaped by the colonial state. The colonial hand over historiography and epistemology continues to be visible in contemporary expressions of nationhood where the politics of "memory and forgetting" have played an instrumental role delineating the Singapore nation — Rajaratnam's insistence that Singapore's history should only begin from 1819 being a key example of this. Nation and national identities were instrumentally deployed, or in Rajaratnam's phrase "renovated" as a strategy of "practical politics", for specific ends. This constant reshaping of nationalism and identity has endowed the Singapore nation with a fluid quality, in contrast to conventional notions of nation which are defined as timeless against the dynamic forces of capitalism and modernity. Indeed, dynamism and the ability to transform in accordance to capitalist demands is at the very heart of the Singapore nation.

The twining of national survival and economic growth has carried on into the twenty-first century. This is at the core of the government's global city ambitions as well as its economic strategy to serve as a hub for a variety of industries. Unlike previous economic strategies that relied on a disciplined, compliant, and hardworking domestic workforce, Singapore's global city ambitions demand a greater presence of highly skilled foreign workers. This has resulted in one of the greatest dilemmas facing Singaporeans and the Singapore nation today — on one hand, the nation cannot survive without Singaporeans developing a sense of rootedness to the county, and yet on the other, this rootedness will count for little without the transient presence of foreign talent. This dilemma has been the source of Singaporean tension over the worth of citizenship and perceptions of privileged treatment of foreign talent over locals.

And yet, this dilemma may also be the source from which a grassroots attempt to articulate a Singaporean narrative and voice could emerge. As we have seen, sections in society ranging from cultural producers, active citizens and civil society are beginning to counter government expressions of nationhood and identity, especially when such expressions exclude their interests or lifestyles. Such grassroots formations of identity, whether it is the use of Singlish or popular caricatures of the Ah Beng, are generally more visceral and entrenched in the everyday, thus endowing them with a sense of authenticity. It is this sense of authenticity that state-sponsored constructions of nation and identity cannot replicate primarily because they are premised on the dynamic and rapacious logic of capitalism. If the fluid nation is the result of the government's exclusive authorship of nation and national identity, then it is up to Singaporeans to manufacture authenticity for themselves.

NOTES

I am grateful to Daniel P.S. Goh for his insightful suggestions and comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

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3. Prasenjit Duara, "The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and National History in Modern China", in *Constructing Nationhood in Modern East Asia*, edited by Chow Kai-wing, Kevin M. Doak, and Fu Poshek (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).
4. W.E. Willmott, "The Emergence of Nationalism", in *Management of Success: The Moulding of Modern Singapore*, edited by Kernial Singh Sandhu and Paul Wheatley (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989), p. 581; original italics.
5. Willmott, "The Emergence of Nationalism", p. 591.
6. "Nationalism Re-examined", *The Mirror*, 21 October 1968, p. 3.
7. *The Mirror*, 21 October 1968, p. 6.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Lysa Hong and Huang Jianli, *The Scripting of a National History: Singapore and its Pasts* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2008).

11. Paul Hirst, *From Statism to Pluralism* (London: UCL Press, 1997), quoted in *Globalization: The Reader*, edited by John Beynon and David Dunkerley (London: The Athlone Press, 2000), p. 243.
12. Chan Heng Chee and Obaid Ul Haq, eds., *S. Rajaratnam: The Prophetic and the Political*, 2nd ed. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and Graham Brash Pte. Ltd., 2007), p. 130.
13. Chan Heng Chee, *The Politics of Survival 1965–1967* (Singapore and Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1971).
14. Ibid., p. 49.
15. *The Mirror*, vol. 2, no. 33 (15 August 1966); vol. 2, no. 34 (22 August 1966); vol. 3, no. 4 (23 January 1967), see Chan Heng Chee, *The Politics of Survival 1965–1967* (Singapore and Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 51.
16. Lee Kuan Yew, quoted in Alex Josey, *Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Donald Moore Press Ltd., 1968), p. 490.
17. Perhaps the most explicit link between the "rugged society" discourse and the introduction of national service came with a 1967 issue of *TIME* magazine. "Into government buildings bedecked with red and white bunting last week filed 10,000 Singaporeans with two things in common. All were 19 years old, and all were being drafted. It was a new experience for Asia's newest state, which has never even had an army before, but it did not mean that Singapore was preparing for war. The creation of a National Service was simply the latest and most dramatic step in Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's campaign to meld Singapore's polyglot population (1.5 million Chinese, 300,000 Malays, 175,000 Indians) into what he calls a 'rugged society'". Says Lee, "Societies like ours have no fat to spare. They are either lean and healthy or they die." See "The Rugged Society", *TIME*, 21 August 1967.
18. Kwa Chong Guan, "Relating to the World: Images, Metaphors, and Analogies", in *Singapore in the New Millennium: Challenges Facing the City-state*, edited by Derek da Cunha (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), p. 115.
19. David Brown, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 84.
20. David Birch, "Staging Crises: Media and Citizenship", in *Singapore Changes Guard: Social, Political and Economic Directions in the 1990s*, edited by Garry Rodan (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).
21. The Confucian ethics discourse has been examined thoroughly elsewhere. See Chua Beng Huat, *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); Terence Chong, "Asian Values and Confucian Ethics: Malay Singaporeans' Dilemma", *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 32, no. 3 (2002): 394–406.

22. Devan Nair, ed., *Socialism that Works ... the Singapore Way* (Singapore: Federal Press, 1976).
23. Seah Chee Meow, ed., *Asian Values and Modernisation* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1977).
24. White Paper on Shared Values, 1991.
25. Eddie Kuo, "Confucianism as Political Discourse in Singapore: The Case of an Incomplete Revitalisation Movement", in *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity: Moral Education and Economic Culture in Japan and the Four Mini-Dragons*, edited by Tu Weiming (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996).
26. Mark R. Thompson, "The Survival of 'Asian Values' as 'Zivilisationskritik'", *Theory and Society* 29, no. 5 (2000): 664.
27. Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).
28. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
29. Memories at Old Ford Factory, "The Exhibition", <http://www.s1942.org.sg/s1942/moff/exhibition1.htm> (accessed 1 May 2008).
30. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 187.
31. Hong and Huang, *The Scripting of a National History*, pp. 191–92.
32. Duara, "The Regime of Authenticity", p. 295.
33. Hong and Huang, *The Scripting of a National History*, p. 193.
34. Sun Yet Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall, "About Us — Our Story", <http://www.wanqingyuan.com.sg/english/aboutus/story.html> (accessed 1 May 2008).
35. Yao Souchou, "Moving Story: Transnational Mobility and Chinese Education in Malaysia", in *Globalization and its Counter-forces in Southeast Asia*, edited by Terence Chong (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008).
36. Leslie Koh, "Bigger Wage Gap Can't Be Avoided: Boon Heng", *Straits Times*, 20 June 2005.
37. "Singapore's Millionaire Ranks Swell to Almost 50,000", *Business Times*, 11–12 June 2005.
38. "S'pore Leads World in New Millionaires", *Business Times*, 2 July 2007.
39. "S'pore Now Has 77,000 Millionaires", *Straits Times*, 26 June 2008.
40. Goh Chok Tong, National Day Rally Speech, 22 August 1999, <http://app.internet.gov.sg/data/sprinter/pr/archives1999082202.htm> (accessed 20 November 2001).
41. Ibid.
42. "Cosmopolitics" has been described as an intellectual and political project to define common political norms and mutual translatability of socio-political values; see Peng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, eds., *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998). See also Thio Li-ann's "'More Matter, with Less Art': Human Rights and Human Development

in Singapore" in this volume for a discussion on how the PAP government defines and operationalizes human rights discourse.

43. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
44. *The Online Citizen*, "Police Reject Permit for Outdoor Protest by S'pore Student", <http://theonlinecitizen.com/2007/10/02/police-rejects-permit-for-outdoor-protest-by-spore-student/> (accessed 10 March 2008).
45. See Koh Tai Ann's "'It's Like Rice on the Table, It's Our Common Dish': The English Language and Identity in Singapore" in this volume for a discussion on Singlish and the government's crusade against it.
46. "Is Language Crucial? Remember My Fair Lady", *Straits Times* Forum, 22 January 2005; Tan Hwee Hwee, "A War of Words Over 'Singlish'", *TIME Asia*, 29 July 2002; "Authorities Challenge 'Unintelligible' English", *TIME Asia*, 5 May 2001.
47. "Ah Beng" and "Ah Lian" are local slang terms used to denote boorish, working-class young men and women, respectively. Lately, however, these terms have become fashionable amongst middle-class youth who use them as labels of authenticity.

28

SUFFER THE REBELLIOUS CHILDREN
The Politics of Remaking Singapore and the Remaking of Singapore Politics

RUSSELL HENG HIANG KHNG

POLITICS OF REMAKING SINGAPORE

When analyzing the Singapore social-political-cultural landscape of their times, contributors to the 1989 volume of *Management of Success* intimated at "clearly audible murmurs of discontent"[1] and how "de-politicization of the recent past has been replaced by a re-politicization of the citizenry".[2] Acknowledging the People's Action Party (PAP) government's awareness of these challenges, the book told its readers to expect a policy mix of containment and compromise to deal with a more contentious citizenry. Through much of the 1990s, concerned that growing individualism could spawn a Western-inspired rights-based polity (something the PAP leadership wanted to avoid), official programmes promoted moral education asuch as self-discipline, diligence, deference to authority, a readiness to sacrifice self-interest for the greater good of the community, and these were supposed to provide "cultural ballast" against "insidious elements of decadent Western culture".[3] To be sure, the PAP response also involved a new vision of a liberalized Singapore but the extent of any liberalization policy would be marked by a definition of political stability that must include itself at the helm. Nobody doubted that in the foreseeable future, the authoritarian grip of the PAP would be intact