

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DEVADAS KRISHNADAS is the founder and CEO of Future-Moves Group, Southeast Asia's first foresight-driven strategic consultancy. He has an international reputation for thought leadership on strategy, foresight, and public and economic policy. He is the author of *Sensing Singapore* (2014), an anthology of his public commentaries on Singapore policy, and *FUSE* (2015), a landmark book on foresight-driven strategy. Prior to founding Future-Moves Group, Devadas played a pivotal role in fiscal and social policy in Singapore during his time in the public service.

At the crossroads of Singapore history, noted public intellectual and entrepreneur Devadas Krishnadas shares his insights on the intersecting realms of the social, political and economic spheres of Singapore, and where he thinks the country is headed.

In the past two years, pivotal events such as the 2015 General Election, SG50: Singapore's Golden Jubilee, and the passing of Lee Kuan Yew have captured the nation's attention and provide cause for much-needed reflection and debate. In this compilation of articles, Devadas examines the ebbs and flows in Singapore's societal, political, economic and external environment over the last two years, and offers practical solutions to the challenges that lay ahead for Singapore.

“The book in our hands is a high-stakes read. Devadas has done most of the hard work required to make way for clarity, objectivity and reflection. In the common interest of fair-play and balanced perspective, the least we owe our articulate author is the courtesy of reading his fascinating and challenging commentaries which allow and enable us to think for ourselves.”

— **Professor Kirpal Singh**
Singapore Management University

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Devadas Krishnadas

The Seduction Of The Simple

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The Seduction Insights on Singapore's Future Directions Of The Simple



Devadas Krishnadas

“In democracies, the old saying goes, ‘you get the government you deserve’. In the US Presidential Election, the rise of Mr Donald Trump to dominance in the Republican primary is putting that saying to an extreme test. However, the groundwork for Mr Trump was laid 15 years ago by Mr George W. Bush.

To any reasonable mind, both men are unqualified for the office of President. Neither was or is knowledgeable about world affairs, interested in the complexity of policy challenges, or has demonstrable moral character, and both operate from the simple premise that only one country matters in this world—America.

The appeal of both men is the seduction of the simple.”

— from the **Prelude**

As Singapore's politics become more populist, there is a rising risk of the seduction of the simple. There is thus a growing need to understand the complexity of our social, economic and political challenges and forces, and how they require us to make trade-offs. In this rich collection of commentaries first published between February 2014 and June 2016, Devadas brings to life these issues with his thoughtful reflections and shrewd analyses that are sure to resonate with the wider public.

For Review only

The strength that Devadas brings to Singaporean socio-political commentary is that he combines the best of two worlds: he was a public servant before becoming an entrepreneur. He is thus able to view public policy through a pragmatic bent, something a mere academic, or one who has spent his entire life in the bureaucracy cannot do. I thus highly recommend this compilation of Devadas's writings across different media.

— **Calvin Cheng,**
*Former Nominated Member of Parliament &
World Economic Forum Young Global Leader*

Populism is making a comeback not only regionally but also globally. Nothing wrong with populism, but the downsides are clear. One only needs to look to the last 60 years in our ASEAN region to know its devastating effects. It is Devadas' insistence on rigour (premised on an understandable framework, known theories, conventional models, and evidence that can be scrutinised) and naturally a firm ideology—that of serving Singapore's interest—that makes his writings well worth reading. While individuals and organisations may disagree with him, Devadas Krishnadas' ability to dissect complex issues of grave importance to the Singapore establishment and the region, boil it down to its essence and provide a policy recommendation that has merits—all done calmly within 800 words or so—is remarkable and much needed in these trying times when society is becoming increasingly alienated, emotional and precarious. I highly commend this book to all, but especially to politicians and policymakers in the hope that they engage with their constituents and stakeholders in a more intelligent and honest manner, as how Devadas does.

— **Greg Lopez,**
PhD, Lecturer, Murdoch University

For Review only

The Seduction Of The Simple

Devadas dares to care. This book is testament to that—a collection of thought pieces by Singapore’s public intellectual on issues that are critical for Singapore and Singaporeans. Devadas has the gift of sharply dissecting issues and presenting cogent arguments in a compelling fashion. Whether or not one agrees with Devadas’ views, this book is an excellent resource and reference point to encourage responsible and robust debate—which is crucial for building a resilient Singapore.

— **Nizam Ismail**,
*Head of Regulatory Practice, RHTLaw Taylor Wessing &
Co-Founder, RHT Compliance Solutions*

Devadas’ writing shapes public discourse in a clear, thought-provoking and punchy manner: whether you agree or disagree with his views, his writing cannot be ignored. *The Seduction of The Simple* will entice you into engaging in the age-old civic duty of debating the future of the Republic with its readability, wit and unapologetic opinions.

— **Remy Choo Zheng Xi**,
Director, Peter Low LLC

For Review only

The Seduction Of The Simple

Insights on Singapore's Future Directions

Devadas Krishnadas

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Cover photo by Lee Aik Soon (from unsplash.com)
Design by Benson Tan

Published by Marshall Cavendish Editions
An imprint of Marshall Cavendish International
1 New Industrial Road, Singapore 536196

Reprinted 2017



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Tel: (65) 6213 9300, fax: (65) 6285 4871. E-mail: genref@sg.marshallcavendish.com.
Website: www.marshallcavendish.com/genref

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Other Marshall Cavendish Offices:

Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 99 White Plains Road, Tarrytown NY 10591-9001, USA
• Marshall Cavendish International (Thailand) Co Ltd, 253 Asoke, 12th Flr, Sukhumvit 21 Road, Klongtoey Nua, Wattana, Bangkok 10110, Thailand • Marshall Cavendish (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, Times Subang, Lot 46, Subang Hi-Tech Industrial Park, Batu Tiga, 40000 Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.

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National Library Board, Singapore Cataloguing in Publication Data

Name(s): Krishnadas, Devadas.

Title: The seduction of the simple : insights on Singapore's future directions / Devadas Krishnadas.

Other title(s): Insights on Singapore's future directions

Description: Singapore : Marshall Cavendish International (Asia) Private Limited, [2016]

Identifier(s): OCN 953422784 | ISBN 978-981-4751-93-3 (paperback)

Subject(s): LCSH: Management--Singapore. | Singapore--Politics and government--21st century. | Singapore--Economic policy. | Leadership--Singapore.

Classification: DDC 959.57--dc23

Printed in Singapore by Fabulous Printers Pte Ltd

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All nations lament the dearth of real intellectual talent. And since Freud established the fact that human beings tend toward Pleasure rather than Reality, politicians everywhere are caught in a terrible dilemma: how to make people work for their money. Between these considerations and beyond immediate contexts, analyses and viewpoints surrounding the inherent paradox inhibiting real progress offer precious little by way of proactive action, ideology.

This is where *The Seduction of the Simple* takes centre-stage. The author, Devadas, strikes it big! Taking both small steps and giant leaps of reasoning and imaginative reach, he provides us with real and necessary “thought-points”, taking us on an extended journey which compels engagement. Why? Because it concerns us all and affects us all.

Take just two comments he makes assiduously. First—democracy is an amoral political system. So what are we to make of this assertion, made bold and robust by illustrative arguments to which we nod without realizing the subtle trap we find ourselves in. Is democracy truly, really, “amoral”? If indeed so, then it is simple logic that we need to question the very fundamentals on which democracy is founded and based.

Second—and nearer home:

In short the politics of SG have shifted from a construct where the state knew better than the people to one where the State has to do its best to please the people. An interesting formulation of a *quid pro quo* of the kind that many governments are prone to use as a working principle. The earlier observation that there was a construct that orchestrated how Singapore functioned politically in its formative years leads us to wonder what if this specific construct had been absent. Will we be where we are?

For Review only

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

And so this book provokes as it challenges and demonstrates. Through the eyes of a clear-minded, highly perceptive and perspicacious son of Singapore, we are made to note and mark significant high and low points pertaining to many aspects of life and living in our bustling Lion City. A thinking citizenry, must, of needs, come about so that we are spared the spoil and damage of simplistic, literal promises and actions. The seduction of the simple will be much less of a risk if Singaporeans are interested, informed and involved. Those three injunctives are hard to realize given just how rushed, busy, stressed and strained most of us are.

The book in our hands is a high-stakes read. Devadas has done most of the hard work required to make way for clarity, objectivity and reflection. In the common interest of fair-play and balanced perspective, the least we owe our articulate author is the courtesy of reading his fascinating and challenging commentaries which allow and enable us to think for ourselves.

Professor Kirpal Singh

Singapore Management University

July 2016.

As with my first book, *Sensing Singapore* (2014), *The Seduction of the Simple* is mostly an anthology of my public writing over a period of time. In this case, from February 2014 to April 2016.

During this 26-month period, a great deal of my energy and attention was devoted to building up my consultancy practice. The company I founded in 2012, Future-Moves, was restructured in April 2014 as Future-Moves Group (FMG) Pte Ltd. We expanded and then moved to new custom-designed premises in 2016.

To sustain a public writing schedule while building a company is not easy. Many of the issues which I wrote about were touch points in the social and political space which triggered discussion and reaction — mostly encouraging but occasionally negative.

To complete such an endeavour is not merely a matter of intellect but of emotional spirit and even physical stamina.

I was very fortunate to be sustained by the loyal support of staff and friends. Isabel Chew, Eunice Leong and Dr Li Bo from my pioneer batch of employees have been pillars of strength in building up the company and giving me the opportunity of occasional time and space to write.

Rachel Pang was most helpful in assisting me with the design and organisation of this book. Edward Neo, Justin Tang, Caren Suciono, Angela Chew, Tan Ling Yin, Benson Soh, Lynda See, Lim Kheng Yeow, Jo-Anne Aeria, Hazel Li, Yip Ching Ting, Anthony Yeo, Elyse Tay, Jeanette Quek, Christine Tan, Soh Siew Peng, Chew Huay Huay, who are also part of the FMG family or its alumni, are a big part of the reason that FMG continues to thrive.

For Review only

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Tan Kiat How, Professor Anastase Shyaka, H.E. Guillaume Kavaruganda, Chan Wei Gan, Debra Soon, Jayakrishnan Gopalakrishnan, Remy Choo, Greg Lopez, Lee Kok Fatt, Goh Hwee Lian, Nizam Ismail, Lucas Murenzi, Edwin Chow, Ambassador Umej Bhatia, Max Everest-Phillips, Jeffrey Siow, Lee Swee Siong, Elina Yu Jia, Chng Kai Fong, Ambassador-at-Large Peter Ho, Wu Ye-Her, Khor Su Min, Kirpal Singh, Jonathan Tow, Calvin Cheng, Lum Hon Yuen, Jeremy Lim, Christophane Foo and Gerard Pennefather were only the more notable of friends who supplied encouragement and a listening ear as I took on various topics of the day.

Many others reached out to me online through Facebook, LinkedIn and email to share their views or drop notes of thanks. In particular, I want to mention Jayagobi Jayaram, Joseph Tan, Russell Tham, Johnny Lee, Julie Chin and Edwin Fong, all of whom have followed my writing for the longest while.

All of their kindness and attention were welcome gestures which ensured that I felt validated in continuing to write and to persevere with building up FMG.

All of the above, named and inferred, have my gratitude and respect. Naturally, notwithstanding this wide and deep support network, all views or errors in this book are my responsibility alone.

This book is dedicated to the people of Singapore who have always been the focus of my efforts and remain the primary audience for my writing.

The Seduction of the Simple is an anthology of my public writing over a 26-month period from February 2014 to April 2016. The material appeared primarily in three forums—the Straits Times newspaper, the TODAY newspaper and on my Facebook public page. I would like to thank the Straits Times and TODAY for letting me reproduce the commentaries that appeared in their pages.

Given that most of the content has already been made public, the principal benefit of this book is to bring together the writing under a common theme—there is a need to understand the complexity of our social, economic and political challenges and forces, and how they require us to make trade-offs.

The book is organised along sub-themes but can be read buffet-style—with readers picking and choosing how they approach the material.

A further reason for the book is that several regular readers have asked to access commentaries which they have missed or which they would like to re-read. Bringing the material together in a book makes it easier for the reading public to pick up the thread from *Sensing Singapore*, which was published in February 2014, and follow through my writing to 2016.

It must be admitted that it takes a certain arrogance to assume that the public, having been punished to read one's writing once, would want to receive a second beating. However, every writer is to an extent convinced that his or her writing has a purpose, however nebulous; creates some effect, no matter how minuscule; and provides a spark of inspiration, even if very dim. That is the only way to keep putting one's inner thoughts onto paper for everyone else to pick apart.

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PRELUDE

REASONS

In order to respect copyright, the material reproduced from the Straits Times and TODAY has not been further edited. By and large, this has not interfered with the flow of the book.

Feedback from readers is always welcome on my Facebook public page or by email at devadask@future-moves.com

It remains for me to state for the record that my public writing, including new material in this book, reflects only my personal views and not that of Future-Moves Group Pte Ltd nor any person named in the acknowledgements.

When I completed my first book *Sensing Singapore* in February 2014, I had planned to conclude my time as a public commentator. However, I found myself compelled to pick up my pen time and again. About half of the content of this particular book was produced whilst I was working on my second book, *FUSE®: Foresight driven Understanding, Strategy and Execution* (Marshall Cavendish, Singapore, 2015) and while I was trying to consolidate my budding business. It was, to say the least, a hectic task and there were many instances when I had occasion to ask myself, why bother?

The answer is multi-layered.

The first is a certain inner compulsion to play a civic role. A recurring theme in and behind all my writing is that Singaporeans should be interested, informed and involved in the larger social, economic and political issues of the day. In a modest way, my writing is intended to provide a means of bringing these issues to the attention of the public in an accessible way.

Second, was the hoopla over Singapore's 50th year of independence—referred to in the vernacular as SG50—I felt that while a half-century of independence was notable, the range, degree and extent of the commemoration was excessive. More importantly, the hype seemed to make gods of the men who were our political pioneers. I thought and still do, that we do them greater justice if we see them as ordinary mortals who did their best under difficult conditions and who were prepared to make sacrifices and take risks—risks which for the

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most part, and happily so, have paid off for Singapore.

The second layer is that there was a great deal to engage with in terms of policy action. In the years running up to the 2015 General Election, a lot seemed to be at stake. The government introduced several structural and impactful policy adjustments in the period between 2011 and 2015. These were mostly on the social policy side of the spectrum. Policies on the issues of education, public housing, property markets, transport and health were modified to meet public demand for more access, lower prices and more equity. In addition to this, the generous Pioneer Generation Package followed by MediShield Life was also introduced. Hence, there was a lot to think about, make sense of and frame, not only as individual policies but also as a system of policies.

Third, these policy adjustments are expensive and have long tails. Being a former Ministry of Finance official, my eye is always on the question of affordability. The longer term implications of this significant increase in public expenditure are a complicated consideration but a critical one. It seems important the Singaporeans do not just demand services and conditions but appreciate that these have to be financed somehow and by someone. “Why it’s so hard for Singaporeans to Understand CPF” and “Time For A Ministry of Successful Ageing” were examples of commentaries in this vein.

Fourth, alongside these policy developments was a disturbing trend of self-appointed “guardians of the truth”. Political activists whose attempts to stir up social disquiet along political, ethnic or religious lines seem to be becoming more prominent. Incidents such as the disruption of an event for and by special needs children at Hong Lim Park and outrageous video tirades against political actors and religious communities made it even more imperative to offer the reading public an alternative of calm, collected and reasoned engagement based on facts. “Protests That Matter”, “‘All Lose, Lose All’ Risk if Political Provocateurs Win” and “The Political Forces Shaping Our Future” were examples of

commentaries motivated directly by the sense of a need to counteract this dangerous tendency.

Fifth, the passing of Mr Lee Kuan Yew, a man that I had the privilege to serve on several occasions when on detached duty as a Honorary Aide-de-Camp to the President, was a historical milestone. This was a man who gained for Singapore a reputation for success and realism. He secured for us, over decades, access to the most important world leaders, thus providing this small country with inordinate leverage on the international stage.

Our political leaders have to win three different elections at the same time. The most obvious is the political election where the struggle is to gain the majority vote of the people. Then there is the economic election where the object is to attract investments to resource our continued growth. Finally, there is the security election where we need to win the support of strategic allies to underpin our sovereignty with a network of deterrence. Mr Lee was successful in all three elections and set the standard for all political leaders that come after him. The commentaries, “Lee Kuan Yew’s Death Should Not Cause S’pore to Lose Confidence” and “Living Without Lee” were written as a personal response to the loss of Mr Lee.

I was honoured to be a guest commentator on Channel News Asia on the occasion of the special parliamentary session to commemorate Mr Lee’s passing. This broadcast would be the first of three significant appearances in 2015.

The two other occasions were the Nomination and Polling Day broadcasts on the General Election. 2015 was not only the SG50 year, it was also the GE2015 year. When asked to appear on the panel for both broadcasts I was diffident but finally persuaded by the sense that the public deserved an independent voice to be heard.

At the Polling Day broadcast, I was asked what my predictions were. My reply seemed to startle some. I said that the scenario where the ruling

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People's Action Party (PAP) won conclusively should be considered as realistic, if not probable. At the time, there was conventional wisdom was the PAP could at best, hold on to its level of support but could conceivably lose even more ground.

On Polling Day, after a marathon eight-hour live broadcast, my prediction was realised. The PAP regained all the ground it had lost in the 2011 General Election. The political opposition was almost obliterated.

These broadcasts and the national attention they received left me personally uncomfortable about doing further television appearances. I think my contributions are best limited to the occasional written commentary and as of the publication of this book I have declined to appear on news or commentary programmes.

My personal views on the electoral contest were confined not only to these broadcasts but also expressed in commentaries in the Straits Times, "The 'X' Factor in Voting" and on social media, "Voters Make Elections, Not Politicians". My motivation was not focused on promoting a particular party but advocating for a high standard of political discourse and a gentle warning that we needed leaders of quality.

In the months following the General Election, my thoughts turned to more structural as well as more personal issues. I looked at our tripartite framework, "Rethinking Tripartism", the debate over the elected presidency "Moral Roles of the Elected President" and looked for lessons on resilience and social strength from my reading and personal interactions in "Getting Perspective" and "Lessons from a Tireless Tyre Man".

A more recent development has been my setting up a public page on Facebook. I was pleasantly surprised to find that over 2,100 people are following the page as of June 2016. This has given me a more direct channel to reach out to the reading public. An increasing proportion of my writing has been appearing on the public page rather than the mainstream newspapers. I do not see it as an "either/or" situation, but

given the pressures of time, social media does offer a more efficient means to communicate. An unexpected but welcome upshot of the venture into social media is to find a community of supportive readers who engage with and extend the discussion originating from the posts. I mentioned some of the more notable ones in my acknowledgement. There are too many to mention by name but these few have been consistent in their reading and constructive with their comments.

These then are my reasons for the writing which follow. I hope that the effort to put the commentaries together into a book form will be rewarded with a new cohort of readers. That is the most any writer can or should hope for.

THE SEDUCTION OF THE SIMPLE

First published in the Straits Times, 4 March 2016

In democracies, the old saying goes, "you get the government you deserve".

In the US Presidential Election, the rise of Mr Donald Trump to dominance in the Republican primary is putting that saying to an extreme test. However, the groundwork for Mr Trump was laid 15 years ago by Mr George W. Bush.

To any reasonable mind, both men are unqualified for the office of President. Neither was or is knowledgeable about world affairs, interested in the complexity of policy challenges, or has demonstrable moral character, and both operate from the simple premise that only one country matters in this world—America.

The appeal of both men is the seduction of the simple.

Simple understanding, simple explanations, simple solutions, simple assurances simply made. This holds tremendous appeal to

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those who have a fear of uncertainty, are themselves ignorant, are prone to believe that someone other than they are to blame for their lack of achievement and who indulge in fantasies in which simplistic divides between right and wrong and good and bad actors define the world.

Democracy is an amoral political system. It sways in whichever direction the majority—variously interpreted depending on the actual democratic mechanism—wills. So while we commonly focus attention on political leaders, it is arguably more pertinent to focus on common folk who vote them into power. Citizenship under democracies must be personally invested. There is a responsibility to be interested, informed and involved.

Civic action, contribution of meaningful ideas and stepping forward to be seen and heard is what I mean by involvement. Stand up and be counted, and do so not anonymously but with your name. Citizens should have the courage of their convictions.

Singapore is also seeing the rising risk of the seduction of the simple as its politics becomes more populist—even if on a comparative basis we are still much less so than the United States. To an extent, this “populism” is a desirable adjustment from a tone-deaf approach adopted by the old ruling People’s Action Party (PAP) to a new PAP with bigger and more sensitive antennae, actively scanning for sentiment and concerns of the electorate. But there are insidious risks if care is not taken to hold citizens to a high standard of restraint when it comes to their interests, wants and biases.

First, if Singaporeans are not interested in the world around them, or too interested only in their own view of matters, then democratic action can easily give way to partisanship and demagoguery. The world is a very complex and interconnected place. Even the domestic social and economic challenges of this

small nation are impacted by what happens elsewhere.

So operating as if Singapore is in a vacuum or becoming too fixated on absolute views and philosophies creates an asymmetry between the complex interconnected reality and a simpler rendition in which this country can isolate itself from broader influences.

Second, Singapore’s response to complex challenges is constrained by resources and realities—some hard such as land, and some soft such as social norms. Singaporeans must be informed of this interplay between challenges and constraints because it requires trade-offs to be made.

In other words, not everyone can be satisfied nor stay satisfied all the time on everything. The ongoing debate on the Cross Island Line is a contemporary example of the trade-off between transport efficiency (time), the need to protect nature (feelings) and fiscal imperatives (costs).

There are many other less tangible but more powerful trade-offs, such as those made on citizen rights, on obligations of national service, on shared spaces, on accepting all religions and cultures as equal and on sharing the nation with visitors and more controversially, with newcomers.

Citizens need to be informed and by that, I do not mean that everyone should always agree. I am saying that agreements or disagreements must be fact-based, reasoned, premised on mutual respect and a recognition that an opposite position may also have claim to legitimacy.

Third, Singaporeans have to be involved. They cannot abdicate the responsibility to third parties—civil servants, grassroots, corporates—to adjudicate their democracy and then complain about how others do so. Complaining is a low standard of democratic involvement. But hiding anonymously behind a

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PART 1

POLITICS

keyboard and banging out opinions, slander, expletives, invective and accusations is no standard at all.

The response by some on social media to the tragic case of the student, Benjamin Lim¹, is an example in point. We should avoid jumping to conclusions, playing to biases and seeding distrust with rumour and innuendo.

Civic action, contribution of meaningful ideas and stepping forward to be seen and heard is what I mean by involvement. Stand up and be counted, and do so not anonymously but with your name. Citizens should have the courage of their convictions.

The seduction of the simple will be much less a risk if Singaporeans are interested, informed and involved. That is what is required to have a democracy which delivers, throws up the most equipped leaders available and creates the most capable institutions to serve the people's needs.

Politics in Singapore is the story of a maturing democracy. It is no longer over-dominated by one power. The passing of the older generation of political leaders and the advent of social media have coincided to make the political space more crowded and noisy.

An empowered electorate keen to make its voice and vote count has been the political theme for the past decade. It is a learning process as both political actors, the bureaucracy and the electorate learn new “rules of the game” and also how to cope with fringe activists, whose noise and antics, generate attention but little else.

This section contains writing which tried to make sense of the political landscape, warn against the superficial attractiveness of extreme views, conspiracy theorists or absolute idealists and to challenge both political actors and the electorate to lift the level of public discourse.

¹ Benjamin Lim was a 14-year-old student who, in January 2016, seemingly committed suicide by jumping from the window of his 14th storey flat, after being interviewed by police officers about an allegation that he had outraged the modesty of an 11-year-old girl.

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1.1 CHANGES IN SINGAPORE'S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

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'ALL LOSE, LOSE ALL' RISK IF POLITICAL PROVOCATEURS WIN

First published in the Straits Times, 12 June 2014

The People's Action Party (PAP) has made a sustained effort since the 2011 General Election to engage with the ground, update its policies and increase its investments in social issues. It has also appointed new political leaders and publicly introduced potential election candidates.

Such moves are implicit signals of a "New PAP"—one that is concerned about social and not just economic issues, one unembarrassed to provide Singaporeans with social spending and one which wants not to be seen as elitist.

Yet, there is considerable cognitive dissonance between what the PAP views as the "New PAP" and the public perception of the same.

First, with public sentiment shifting towards emotive nationalism, political leaders still come across as objective technocrats rather than patriots. Singaporeans want to hear, see and feel that political leaders recognise that leading Singapore means taking care of the interests of Singaporeans.

Second, the moves to govern the social media and artistic spaces through rule changes by the Media Development Authority give the public the impression that the PAP rule is still characterised by information control and censorship. Political leaders may have to choose their battles more wisely.

In such issues, it is impossible to separate policy from politics and the latter will define any discourse. Interventions, therefore, become the issue rather than the subject they address.

Third, the use of the defamation law, however justified, is politically outdated as a mechanism for political leaders to safeguard their reputations. They should perhaps let their record be their reputation and trust that reasonable Singaporeans will be able to judge fact from any malignity.

Taken together, the public perception is that while the PAP has done new things, this is but new wine in an old bottle.

To prove the case that the PAP has transformed from within, it will have to show more empathy, display less of a need to control and have greater faith in the good sense of the people.

As Singapore enters the second half of the current term of government, there is a sense that we are also entering the final lap of the political race to the next election. Policy adjustments have now spanned all the main areas. In Parliament, the Prime Minister has started the countdown to the next general election with a combative stance towards the opposition on constructive politics.

While many real policy changes have resulted since the last election, it is an uncomfortable truth that many real political changes remain to be realised.

The upshot of complicated policies and the muddled perception of the "New PAP" is that public discourse is in danger of being captured by critics at the margin who fall into three categories.

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One category is the utterly ignorant who have not bothered to educate themselves on the facts or who are poorly equipped to understand the policy system and hence resort to erroneous simplifications or totally false analysis.

Another category is those with a political axe to grind. These individuals cast every policy into an alleged wide web of conspiracy of government against the interest of the people.

What we are now beginning to see is the conflation of the two categories into a new collection of political provocateurs bound together solely to attack the PAP by creating as much doubt, distrust, cynicism and anxiety as possible in the citizenry. They offer many criticisms, few facts and no solutions. It would appear that baiting the Government to take counter-action is the best way to get public sympathy if not legitimacy; and shrill suggestions that Singapore is facing a “doomsday” scenario the best way to play up fear in our future. This is neither helpful nor healthy for the public discourse on important issues which concern every citizen.

Citizens need and deserve facts, intelligent analysis and rational arguments, not vitriol and demagoguery disguised as patriotism and martyrdom. The noise created by these critics at the margin sucks the oxygen away from more rational and balanced critiques of policy and national direction.

The real struggle is not between the opposition or this new collection of political provocateurs and the PAP.

The real struggle is about whether Singaporeans will allow themselves to go down a seductive and slippery slope of anxiety, despair, fear and anger about our future or whether Singaporeans will choose to have faith in themselves and what they already have and can achieve by working together, staying rational and committing to being invested in the Singapore project. The

former road needs only the suspension of objectivity, giving in to emotional and irrational, even if human, fears and conspiracies and a relinquishing of personal responsibility to play an individual role in making our collective future.

The latter road is a harder road which requires hard work to be informed, staying positive and a willingness to participate and ensures a process of public debate of policies based on facts, good ideas and an ability to make tough trade-offs. In short, we need good politics to get the good policies.

For the PAP, this means not only better communication but also greater transparency and willingness to tolerate—better still, engage—in meaningful debate.

For the opposition, this means stepping up their game to offer effective alternative ideas, not to just be an alternative. It also means not free riding on the antics of extremist political provocateurs. They should also take a stand.

For Singaporeans, it means focusing on the issues and engaging with their Members of Parliament regardless of political stripe, to push forward their concerns and ideas. Most importantly, there must be, and Singaporeans should insist upon, the recognition by the PAP and the opposition that both have a responsibility to ensure that Singaporeans take the harder road regardless of who gets, or loses, political points.

Because if they do not, and we slip down the murkier and more sinister path laid out by the provocateurs, then we all lose and we could lose all. That is the real doomsday scenario.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Devadas Krishnadas is a Singaporean by birth. His family, on both sides, migrated from the then British colony of Ceylon, in the early decades of the 20th century, to Malaya.

He served his national service in the Singapore Armed Forces before winning an International Merit Scholarship to read Modern History at the University of Sydney.

He then joined the Singapore Police Force as a directly appointed Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP). He served variously as a senior investigator, Officer Commanding of Light Strike Force (LSF) teams and Operations Officer at Police Headquarters. He was involved in several notable operations and received multiple commendations from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

He served as Aide to the Commissioner of Police from 2000–2001 and as Honourary Aide-de-Camp to the President of Singapore from 2001–2003. In 2002, he was selected to participate in the International Visitor Programme (IVP) sponsored by the State Department of the United States.

He was seconded to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Joint Operations Department, before winning the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship to read a Masters in Law and Diplomacy at the Fletcher School, Tufts University.

He served as Commanding Officer of a Neighbourhood Police Centre (NPC) before fulfilling his final uniformed appointment as the Head of Operations of a Police Land Division. Under his leadership, his Division won two consecutive Streetcraft competitions, an annual force-wide tests of front-line operational capability. He also served as manager

of the Division soccer team, which accomplished the rare feat of winning both Singapore Police Force League and Shield trophies in the same year.

He served in several strategy and policy roles at the then Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) and the Ministry of Finance, where he was the Lead Speechwriter for Budget 2011, Deputy Director of Fiscal Policy and the first Lead Foresight Strategist, and established the Whole-of-Government strategic planning capability. He was also Adjunct Lecturer on fiscal policy and foresight at the Civil Service College from 2011–2012 and Adjunct Fellow of the Centre for Strategic Futures.

He was trained in Scenario Planning at the Said Business School, Oxford University and in general management at the Judge Business School, University of Cambridge.

In 2012, he started his own consultancy practice, Future-Moves Group Pte Ltd. He published *Sensing Singapore*, an anthology of his public writing from 2012 to early 2014, in February 2014. He later published a book on strategy, *FUSE: Foresight-driven, Understanding, Strategy and Execution*, in August 2015. He is working on a new book on public policy, to be released in early 2017.

He came to national notice as a commentator for Channel NewsAsia during the 2015 General Election. He continues to produce public writing and, in addition to building his business, is in demand as a corporate and public speaker on strategy and political issues.