

# **Institutionalized Leadership: Resilient Hegemonic Party Autocracy in Singapore**

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## **Abstract**

In the age of democracy, the resilience of Singapore's hegemonic party autocracy is puzzling. The People's Action Party (PAP) has defied the "third wave", withstood economic crises and ruled uninterrupted for more than five decades. Will the PAP remain a deviant case and survive the passing of its founding leader, Lee Kuan Yew? Building on an emerging scholarship on electoral authoritarianism and the concept of institutionalization, this paper argues that the resilience of hegemonic party autocracy depends more on institutions than coercion, charisma or ideological commitment. Institutionalized parties in electoral autocracies have a greater chance of survival, just like those in electoral democracies. With an institutionalized leadership succession system to ensure self-renewal and elite cohesion, this paper contends that PAP will continue to rule Singapore in the post-Lee era.

*“All parties must institutionalize to a certain extent in order to survive”  
Angelo Panebianco (1988, 54)*

## Introduction

In the age of democracy, the resilience of Singapore’s hegemonic party regime<sup>1</sup> is puzzling (Haas 1999). A small island with less than 4.6 million population, Singapore is the wealthiest non-oil producing country in the world that is not a democracy.<sup>2</sup> Despite its affluence and ideal socio-economic prerequisites for democracy, the country has been under the rule of one party, the People’s Action Party (PAP) for the last five decades. No substantial opposition party has existed since 1960s. Unlike its regional neighbours, the cosmopolitan, well-travelled middle-class in Singapore is surprisingly compliant and does not agitate for political change<sup>3</sup>. Singapore’s stubborn refusal to embrace competitive party politics confound democratization theorists; even leaving some to exclude it as a deviant case that permits no meaningful cross-country comparison (Neher 2002, 174). As Huntington said, “the anomaly remains Singapore” (1993, 38).

With the global economic downturn, export-dependent Singapore now faces its worst financial crisis since independence.<sup>4</sup> More critically, as the PAP’s founding leader, Lee Kuan Yew turn 86 years old<sup>5</sup>, doubts are raised on the prospects of the PAP in the period of economic and political uncertainty. As we know, apart from exogenous shock that undermines the resilience of all autocracies, internal split and leadership succession are the two known causes of authoritarian breakdown (Geddes 2003; Haggard and Kaufman 1995; O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986). Will the PAP regime remain resilient and continue to rule in the face of crisis and after Lee’s passing?

Building on an emerging scholarship on electoral authoritarianism<sup>6</sup> and the concept of institutionalization, this paper argues that the resilience of hegemonic party autocracy depends more on institutions than coercion, charisma or ideological commitment (Perlmutter 1981, 66). Like electoral democracies, institutionalized parties in autocracies have a greater chance of survival than weakly institutionalized ones. As Panebianco says, “all parties must institutionalize to a certain extent in order to survive”. For a party to persist, it must first distribute selective incentives (prestigious positions, career opportunities) to its party members and collective incentives (sense of belonging or “value infusion”) to its activists. Without the consolidation of this incentive system – comprising selective and collective incentives – party institutionalization cannot take place and organization survival is at stake (Panebianco 1988, 54).

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<sup>1</sup> Hegemonic party autocracy builds on Sartori’s definition of hegemonic party (1973, 230). This regime type is also known as “competitive authoritarianism” (Levitsky and Way 2002; Howard and Roessler 2006); “electoral authoritarianism” (Diamond 2002; Schedler 2002); “semi-authoritarianism” (Ottaway 2002); predominant party system (Greene 2007); illiberal democracy (Bell 1995) and single-party regimes (Geddes 2006). Essentially, it refers to a hybrid regime that combines both democratic and authoritarian institutions to govern, creating an uneven electoral playing field between the ruling party and opposition (Diamond 2002; Magaloni 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Singapore’s per capita income surpassed US \$10,000 in 1990s and US \$20,000 in 2000 (Statistics Singapore 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Most surveys found Singaporeans to have no strong demand for more democracy or greater civil society (see Asian Barometer and Asian Values Survey 2008). One survey characterized Singaporeans to be “passive, deferential, acquiescent, and lacking political mobilization” (Sinnott 2006, 45).

<sup>4</sup> In Apr 2008, the unemployment hits 4.8 percent, a spike from its annual average of 2.8 percent (ST 30 Apr 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Lee Kuan Yew has had two heart operations in 1996 to clear a blocked heart artery. He was hospitalized again in Sep 2008 for abnormal heart rhythm and has since implanted a cardiac pacemaker (ST 1 Dec 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Free and fair elections and civil liberties are necessary but insufficient for consolidated democracy, if unaccompanied by efficient government, political participation and a supportive democratic culture (EIU 2008, 1).

In hegemonic party autocracies, the hegemonic party has the primary control over who and how one gains access to political power. The problem of succession remains an intra-party affair and the study of how succession is arranged goes directly to the heart of the problem of hegemonic party survival (Huntington 1970, 30). In this paper, I explain the exceptional resilience<sup>7</sup> of Singapore's hegemonic party from an institutionalist approach. Moving away from large-scale theorizing on regime change and breakdown, I focus on the PAP's complex system of selective incentive distribution system – an increasingly formalized and routinized elite recruitment and candidate selection process that foster renewal and elite cohesion in a semi-competitive, electoral setting. Large-scale phenomena such as democratization and regime breakdown result from a convergence of different factors and processes. No one simple theory is able to adequately explain a compound outcome (Geddes 2003, 2). What this paper aims to do is to disaggregate key processes and trace the intra-party mechanisms that bring about the final regime outcome.

This paper will examine how the PAP institutionalized succession in three parts. First, it introduces the theoretical framework on institutionalization and the criteria for operationalizing the institutionalization of elite recruitment and candidate selection process (elite reproduction system). Second, it defines the concept of hegemonic party autocracy and examines Singapore's party and electoral system that sets the "rules of the game". Third, it analyzes how these rules influence the PAP's candidate-selection for: 1) the parliament; 2) cabinet, and 3) prime ministerial position, paying special attention to the background, qualifications and motivations of aspirants and attitudes of gatekeepers. The focus here is on the individual party as the institutionalization of the hegemonic party is expected to lead to the institutionalization of the party system.<sup>8</sup> The goal is to theorize and generate testable hypotheses for further research.

### **Party Institutionalization**

Scholars use the terms institution and institutionalization differently. There is considerable disagreement with regards to the way institutionalization is defined and measured.<sup>9</sup> For example, Huntington defines institutionalization as the "process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability" and measures institutionalization by its "adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence of its organizations and procedures" (1965, 394). And building on Huntington's definition, Mainwaring and Scully identify stability; stable roots in society; legitimacy and party organization as four criteria for the institutionalization of democratic party systems (1996, 4). To complicate matters, the same dimension of institutionalization is sometimes analyzed under different labels: Huntington's complexity is similar to Mainwaring and Scully's party organization. Please see Appendix A for a summary of the approaches.

While debates ensue, there is a general consensus that the concept retains its utility, as long as its definition, unit of analysis and core dimensions are clearly laid out. Based on Huntington (1970) and Panebianco's (1982) classic work on party institutionalization, this paper posits that a strongly institutionalized hegemonic party is more resilient than weakly institutionalized one. Following

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<sup>7</sup> Regimes refer to the formal and informal organization of power that determines who has access to power and how those who in power deal with those who are not. Regime resilience refers to the ability to recover quickly to its original institutional arrangement when challenged and expectation to remain in existence.

<sup>8</sup> The relationship between individual party institutionalization and the institutionalization of party system has not been clearly examined. Within the literature, there is an assumption that institutionalization of the party leads to the party system. This assumption holds here, for more see Randall and Svasand (2002, 7).

<sup>9</sup> See Levitsky (1998), Meleshevich (2007) and Randall and Svasand (2002) for an in-depth critique of the concept.

North, institutions are defined as rules of the game that shape interaction and “reduce uncertainty by providing a structure to everyday life” (1990, 3). As he says, “institutions are not necessarily or even usually created to be socially efficient; rather, they are created to serve the interests of those with the bargaining power to create new rules” (1993, 6). Institutions thus represent a social order that has reached a certain state or property; institutionalization denotes the process of its attainment.

Institutionalization ought to be empirically observable. For example, when the rules, procedures or patterns of behavior are institutionalized, they are routinized, stabilized, predictable, and a stable sets of expectations form around them, promoting systemness (Levitsky 1998, 80; North 1990; O’Donnell 1996). Here, the density and regularity of interactions, that constitute the party as a structure and the development of prevalent rules, norms, conventions and practices are treated as indicators of systemness.

This paper views the political party as an organization and not an institution.<sup>10</sup> It is through time, that a party, as an organization, becomes an institution or becomes institutionalized (Randall and Svasand 2002, 12). The chronological age of the party contributes to its institutionalization: the longer the party remains in existence and dominates electorally, the more likely it is institutionalized and control institutional changes to its advantage.<sup>11</sup> Party institutionalization thus implies that the party as an organization is valued on its own right, rather than an instrument for the achievement of a political goal (Gunther and Hopkin 2002, 196). It is a process by which an organization incorporates the founder’s values and aims, and its survival becomes a goal and is “valuable in and of itself” (Huntington 1968, 12).

As Panebianco argues, for a party to survive, it must first distribute selective incentives to some of its ambitious members and collective incentives to its members and supporters (1988, 54). A party’s incentive distribution system is complex as it could range from private incentives such as material rewards of patronage to the satisfaction of being involved in collective affairs. As an initial study, this paper will focus on the party’s elite recruitment and candidate selection processes as part of its selective incentive distribution system. Specifically, it proposes to measure the degree of institutionalization of the elite reproduction cycle based on two dimensions: 1) decisional autonomy; and 2) systemness (routinization)<sup>12</sup> (Levitsky 1998; Randall and Svasand 2002).

### **Institutionalization of Elite Recruitment and Candidate Selection**

Elite recruitment and candidate selection processes are important as they ensure self-renewal in any political party. They are especially important in hegemonic or one-party regimes, as only one party dominates the electoral arena. Elite recruitment refers to the process through which individuals are inducted into active, high profile political roles and candidate selection is part of this wider recruitment process (Czudnowski, 1975: 156). Candidate selection is an intra-party mechanism by which parties select their candidates before the general elections (Barnea and Rahat 2007, 376). On the intra-party level, methods of candidate selection affect the way party members behavior and elite

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<sup>10</sup> Some see institutions as rules of the game while others see them as formal organizations; patterned behaviour or as “myths” and ideational structures (Levitsky 1998; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Randall and Svasand 2002).

<sup>11</sup> The literature assumes that the longer the party has been institutionalized, the more it is adaptable and stable. Here, I exclude adaptability as a dimension of party institutionalization as I consider it an effect of institutionalization rather than a feature of institutionalization. Also see Randall and Svasand (2002, 17).

<sup>12</sup> As Levitsky (1998, 85) suggests, there is less risk of tautology if we adopt the routinization definition as opposed to “value infusion” definition as the outcome to be explained (cohesion) is not treated as an aspect of institutionalization.

cohesion (Gallager and Marsh 1988, 265; Hazan and Rahat 2006, 368). On the party system level, the formal and informal rules, regulations, norms and procedures guiding who can or cannot be selected as party leaders and candidates have a direct impact on the composition and representativeness of the legislature.

This paper posits that the degree to which a party's elite reproduction cycle is institutionalized be measured by its decisional autonomy and systemness. A highly institutionalized elite-reproduction cycle is expected to display high levels of autonomy and systemness. Decisional autonomy refers to the party's control and freedom from interference in determining its own policies and strategies. The elite reproduction system is considered highly institutionalized if the party selectorate<sup>13</sup> has exclusive rights and jurisdiction over the recruitment eligibility and criteria for elections. This means, the selectorate must be able to manage its own recruitment and exclude any invasions by intruders who do not meet its own admission requirements, as they are the products of another organization with different roles and value system (Lovenduski and Norris 1993, 321). If a party has the exclusive control to set its own requirements for candidacy; to nominate or appoint its candidates without due influence from external organizations such as the trade union or church, it is considered to have a high level of decisional autonomy. See Table 1 below for a summary of the candidate selection methods, measured by its degree of inclusiveness and exclusiveness.

**Table 1: Methods of Candidate Selection (Harzan and Rahat, 2006, 110-1)**

		Inclusiveness	Exclusiveness			
1	<b>Party Selectorate</b>	General Electorate	Party membership	Selected party agency	Non-selected party agency	Single leader
2	<b>Candidacy</b>	All citizens	Party members			Party members & additional requirements
3	<b>Electoral method</b>	Voting		Appointment		

Conversely, if the selectorate is too inclusive with permeable borders, having little say or control over the experience or quality of candidates, the party is considered to have a low level of autonomy. Finally, if the candidates are selected through an election that involves a large selectorate as opposed to an appointment system, then the party's decisional autonomy is considered low. On the inter-party level, the number of independents in the legislature may be another indicator of the party's autonomy. A legislature with high number of independents may indicate that the party lacks decisional autonomy in selecting candidates for higher office and political parties are not the exclusive channel to power (also see Meleshevich 2007, 27).

Systemness or routinization is the second dimension of party institutionalization. It refers to "the regularization of patterns of social interaction, or the entrenchment of the formal and informal "rules of the game" (Levitsky 1997, 88). Based on interviews with party members, party publications and media publications on the formal and informal rules, norms and procedures for the selection of party chairman party committees etc, this paper assesses the extent of routinization of elite recruitment

<sup>13</sup> Party selectorate refers to the body that selects the candidates. It can compose of one person or many people (including the whole nation) (Harzan and Rahat, 2006, 110).

and candidate selection in continuous terms. This means that if there are formal (party charters) and informal rules (patronage network), established guidelines (education qualifications, seniority or ethnicity) in the selection of candidates for top party and consequently, national leadership positions, and these rules and procedures are accepted without contest by a large majority of party members, then, the degree of institutionalization is considered high.

Conversely, if these rules are constantly circumvented or manipulated to suit the short term needs of one individual or group of social or political class; or challenged by a large majority of party members, then, the degree of institutionalization is considered low. A party may be unevenly institutionalized, displaying a high level of autonomy and low level of systemness, or vice-versa. To capture the possible uneven institutionalization, a simple four-cell matrix is proposed below.

**Figure 1: Dimensions of Party Institutionalization for Elite Reproduction Process**

	<b>Decisional Autonomy (DA)</b>	
<b>Systemness (S)</b>	<b>High S &amp; High DA</b>	<b>High S &amp; Low DA</b>
	<b>Low S &amp; High DA</b>	<b>Low S &amp; Low DA</b>

To recap, the hypotheses of party institutionalization are summarized below:

H1: Strong party institutionalization is imperative for the long-term survival of hegemonic-party regimes. Party institutionalization entails the consolidation of incentive system – selective and collective incentive distribution system.

H2: Intra-party elite recruitment and candidate selection processes are part of a party's selective incentive distribution system. The degree to which the party's elite reproduction cycle is institutionalized is measured by its decisional autonomy and systemness.

H3: A strongly institutionalized elite-reproduction cycle is expected to display high levels of autonomy and systemness. And conversely, a weakly institutionalized elite reproduction cycle shows low levels of autonomy and systemness.

H4: A party with more exclusive candidate selection methods has higher decisional autonomy. Conversely, a party with more inclusive candidate selection methods has lower decisional autonomy.

H5: A party that has formal and informal rules guiding the recruitment and candidate selection of top party and national leadership positions; and these rules are accepted by a large majority of party members without contest, then, the degree of systemness is high. Conversely, if these rules are circumvented to suit the short term needs of one individual or a group; or challenged by a large majority of party members, then, the degree of systemness is low.

## Singapore as a Hegemonic Party Autocracy

Following Sartori's definition of hegemony, Singapore under the PAP (1968-2009) is classified as a hegemonic party autocracy<sup>14</sup> because: 1) opposition parties are "second class, licensed parties" which cannot compete with hegemonic party on equal terms, 2) the hegemonic party outdistances the other parties; and 2) alternation of power is not envisaged (1976, 230). Unlike one-party states<sup>15</sup> in Vietnam or China that ban party pluralism, there are 24 registered opposition parties in Singapore. However, only 4 to 5 opposition parties are active, while the rest are dormant or never competed in elections. Please see Appendix B for the list of political parties and their status.

Based on Sartori's calculation of relevant parties and ideological pluralism<sup>16</sup>, Singapore has an effective number of 1.03<sup>17</sup> relevant parliamentary parties (1968-2006), a moderate level of party pluralism and low party fragmentation (Croissant 2002, 334-5; Reilly 2007, 198). A combination of restrictions on the freedom of expression<sup>18</sup>, organization of public rallies and use of libel suit to intimidate opposition leaders have turned Singapore's party system into a "two-tier system" in which the PAP "tolerates and discretionally allocates a fraction of its power to subordinate political groups", treating them as satellite and inferior parties (Sartori 1976, 230).

Elections are held regularly in Singapore.<sup>19</sup> And the PAP treats elections seriously as they are considered foundational to its political legitimacy (Rodan 2002, 110). It is not a pseudo or sham democracy that rigs election or commit electoral fraud to stay in power.<sup>20</sup> However, the methods that the PAP used to disadvantage the opposition, such as announcing constituency boundary changes (gerrymandering) three months before the elections and restrictions on the freedom of expression, the organization of public rallies and use of libel suits to intimidate opposition leaders reinforces the view that the electoral process is free but not fair (Mauzy and Milne 2002, 253). Freedom House (2008) has consistently rated Singapore as "Partly Free" with scores of "5" and "4", signifying constraints in political freedom and civil liberties from 1972 to 2007.

As a former British colony, Singapore has a Westminster, unicameral parliamentary system. It instituted a compulsory voting system in 1959, the same year the country attained self-rule and held its full Legislative Assembly Election.<sup>21</sup> In this election, the PAP won 43 out of all 51 seats and

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<sup>14</sup> The use of electoral engineering and the reliance of libel suits to intimidate oppositions have led most observers to exclude Singapore as a liberal democracy (see Englehart 2000; Freedom House 2008; IBA Report July 2008).

<sup>15</sup> As Sartori argues that the term "one-party system" is meaningless, as a party itself cannot produce a system of its own (1976, 43 and 221-2).

<sup>16</sup> According to Sartori, a party must satisfy three criteria: 1) electoral strength or "strength in seats"; 2) coalition potential and 2) "blackmail" potential to be considered a "relevant" party (1976, 122-4).

<sup>17</sup> Croissant uses a threshold of 1 percent of parliamentary seats as the minimum for a party to be relevant (2002, 334).

<sup>18</sup> All newspapers in Singapore are owned by the Singapore Press Holdings, a GLC controlled by the Singapore Ministry of Information and the Arts (Ooi 1998: 392). The compliance of editors and reporters are also encouraged informally by "OB" (out-of-bounds) markers (Case 2004: 116-7). See Tsun (2008); Gomez (2006) and Rodan (2006) for the restriction of free press and impact on opposition parties in Singapore.

<sup>19</sup> According to the Singapore's Parliamentary Elections Act, elections are to be held every 5 years, within 3 months of the dissolution of Parliament.

<sup>20</sup> Unlike Levitsky and Way (2002, 54), I do not consider Singapore in the 1990s as a "façade" electoral regime. As the U.S. Dept of State reports, "elections were generally fair and free of tampering" (2008).

<sup>21</sup> The Rendel Constitution was introduced in 1955 to allow self-government. From 1955 to 1959, limited elections were held where 25 out of 32 seats were contestable while 7 seats were reserved for British appointees. The PAP competed in 1966 and won 3 out of 4 seats contested. The Legislative Assembly (1955-1965) was renamed Parliament of Singapore after its independence in 1965. See Mauzy (2002, 38-40) for the early history of the PAP.

became the country's ruling party and has not lost power since. Elections were competitive in the 1950s and 60s. By 1968, the PAP has emerged as a hegemonic party and won every seat until 1981, where a by-election broke the monopoly. However, the opposition's solitary victory did not lead to further gains as it only managed to win a maximum of 2 to 3 seats since. Besides, the number of independents who contested in elections has dwindled substantially, from 39 in 1959 to nil in the latest 2006 GE. See Table 2 in the next page for the electoral results since 1968.

As Table 2 shows, the popularity votes for the opposition party have hovered around 30 to 40 percent (except for 1980 and 2001 GE). However, this 30 per cent popular vote does not translate to seat shares. In fact, the opposition has gained only between 1.2 to 4.9 per cent of seats in Parliament. Due to Singapore's majoritarian system, the strongest party stands to gain. As SM Goh says, "Singapore is, therefore, like one big constituency. Hence, in a first-past-the-post Westminster system of democracy, it must be that any party that wins, wins big" (Goh's Speech, 26 Jul 2008).

**Table 2: General Election Results in Singapore (1959-2006)**

	Total No. of Seats	No. of Contested Seats	No. of Un-contested Seats	Seats Won by PAP (%)	Seats Won by Opp. Parties (%)	Independents	PAP's popular vote (%)	Opposition Parties' popular vote (%)
<b>Legislative Assembly</b>								
30 May-59	51	51	0	43 (84.3)	8 (15.7)	39	53.4	46.6
21 Sep-63 <sup>22</sup>	51	51	0	37 (72.5)	14 (27.5)	16	46.9	53.1
<b>Parliament</b>								
13-Apr-68	58	7	51 (87.9)	58 (100)	0	5	84.4	15.6
2-Sep-72	65	57	8 (12.3)	65 (100)	0	2	69	31
23-Dec-76	69	53	16 (23.2)	69 (100)	0	2	72.4	27.6
23-Dec-80	75	38	37 (49.3)	75 (100)	0	0	75.5	24.5
22-Dec-84	79	49	30 (37.9)	77 (97.5)	2 (2.5)	3	62.9	37.1
3 Sep 1988*	81	70	11 (13.6)	80 (98.8)	1 (1.2)	4	61.8	38.2
31-Aug-91	81	40	41 (50.6)	77 (95.1)	4 (4.9)	7	61	39
2-Jan-97	83	36	47(56.6)	81 (97.6)	2 (3.4)	1	65	35
3-Nov-01	84	29	55 (65.5)	81 (97.6)	2 (2.3)	2	75.3	24.7
6-May-06	84	47	37 (44)	82 (97.6)	2 (2.3)	0	66.6	33.4

Source: Yeo (2002, 210); Tremewan (1995, 181) and Singapore Elections website.

\* The PAP government introduced the GRC scheme in 1988.

"The pillar of hegemonic party regime is its monopoly of mass support, which in turn allows the regime to deter elite divisions and to manipulate institutions by unilaterally controlling constitutional change" (Magaloni 2006, 15). To ensure an overwhelming majority in the legislature, hegemonic parties such as the PAP simulates an electoral market to "mix electoral manipulation and electoral persuasion" to win elections again and again (Schedler 2006, 15). It strives for oversized governing majority and projects an image of invincibility to deter the formation of opposition coalition and control institutional change to their advantage.

In its post-independence constitutional development, the PAP has made a series of constitutional amendments to its original electoral system, introducing schemes such as Group Representative Constituencies<sup>23</sup> (GRC), Non-Constituency Member of Parliament<sup>24</sup> (NCMP), Nominated Member

<sup>22</sup> The only election held when Singapore was a state of Malaysia (1963-1965).

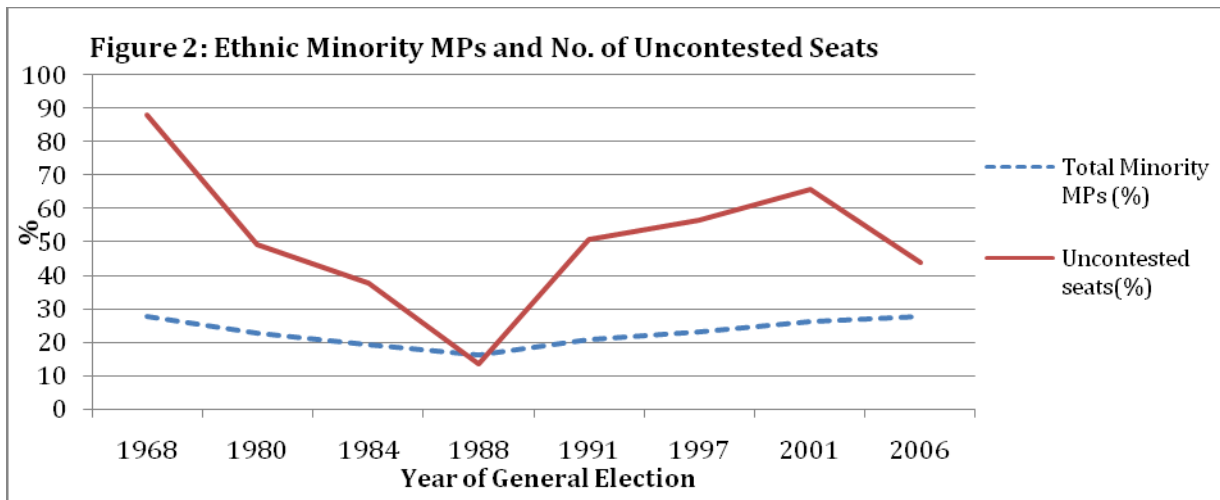
<sup>23</sup> In the GRCs, the candidates contest in teams of 5 or 6 and voters cast their votes for the entire team. In a SMC, voters vote for one candidate. In 2006 GE, there were a total of 14 GRCs (75 seats) and 9 SMCs.



of Parliament<sup>25</sup> (NMP) and Elected Presidency<sup>26</sup>, which now ought to be regarded as a unique system of its own (Tsun 2008, 611). As Rodan notes, “Singapore is an example of a major transformation of Westminster rather than adaptation, with formal political institutions often operating as an adjunct to, rather than as a constraint against, the authoritarian regime” (2005, 114).

### Electoral Engineering

The electoral system in Singapore is now a mixture of single-member constituency<sup>27</sup> (SMC) and GRCs of five to six candidates based on a one-man-one-vote system and simple majority. The Parliament is represented by 23 electoral constituencies: 9 single seats, and 14 GRCs consisting of 5 or 6 seats. In 2006 GE, the Parliament has a total of 84 seats for elected MPs, 9 seats reserved for NMPs and up to 3 seats for NCMPs. There are safe seats in every legislature. But since the introduction of the GRC in 1988, the number of uncontested seats has risen sharply from 13.6 percent in 1988 to 65.5 percent in 2001; easing to 44 percent in 2006 GE. See Table 2 for the distribution of seat shares and Figure 2 for the representation of ethnic minority MPs and rise of uncontested seats.<sup>28</sup>



From 1991 to 2001, more than 50 percent of seats were uncontested. This meant that a disproportionate of PAP MPs took office by “appointment” and more than half of the electorate did not exercise their right to vote. The rationale for the GRC scheme was to include at least one ethnic minority candidate and ensure minority representation in the Parliament. But the overall minority parliamentary representation was not severely imbalance to begin with. As shown in Figure 2, the introduction of GRC in 1988 has only improved the ethnic representation slightly from a low of 22.7

<sup>24</sup> In May 1984, the NCMP scheme was introduced to allow more opposition voice in parliament. NCMPs are appointed seats that go to the top opposition losers with more than 15% of the votes in their respective constituencies. The Parliamentary Elections Act allows up to 6 NCMPs from the opposition.

<sup>25</sup> In 1990, another constitutional reform was made for the appointment of up to 9 NMPs to ensure a wider representation of community views in Parliament. NMPs are non-partisan, citizens appointed by the President of Singapore for a term of two and a half years on the recommendation of a Special Select Committee of Parliament chaired by the Speaker.

<sup>26</sup> From 1965 to 1991, Singapore has a non-executive president with very limited powers. But in 1991, a major constitutional amendment transformed the presidential office into an elected one. In Aug 1993, a direct presidential election was held for a president with veto powers over budget decisions, financial reserves spending and appointment of senior officials. See Tan (1997) for more.

<sup>27</sup> Like the British parliamentary system, Singapore is divided geographically into constituencies. These constituencies are classified as SMC or multi-member GRC seats in Parliament.

<sup>28</sup> For a more in-depth analysis of the origins and effects of electoral reforms, see Thio (1997) and Mutalib (2002).

percent in 1980 to 27.7 percent in 2006.<sup>29</sup> Since 1988, all minority MPs have been elected through the GRC scheme and the PAP has not lost any GRC to the opposition. Opposition parties feel disadvantaged by the GRC scheme as they find it difficult to recruit high-quality ethnic-minority candidates to stand in election (Interview with WP Chairman, Sylvia Lim, 6 Feb 2007). See Appendix C for the ethnic representation in Parliament and ethnic demography of Singapore.

The high number of uncontested seats meant that more MPs are now “appointed” to their seats. The arbitrary enlargement of GRCs has reinforced the view that GRCs were created to enable rookie candidates to ride on the coattails of heavyweight PAP candidates without having the need to undergo the “baptism of fire.” (ST 24 Apr 2006) As SM Goh admits, the GRC: “allows the PAP to recruit younger and capable candidates with the potential to become ministers... Without some assurance of a good chance of winning at least their first election, many able and successful young Singaporeans may not risk their careers to join politics. In the present Cabinet, young ministers are inducted into politics without even contesting in elections. For example, Minister without portfolio Lim Swee Say has had three walkovers since joining politics in 1996.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, Education Minister Dr. Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Community Development Youth and Sports Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan and Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts Rear Admiral (NS) Lui Tuck Yew have never contested in elections since joining politics in 2001 and 2006. All three cabinet ministers entered politics via the GRC – now seen to a PAP strategy to ensure promising new candidates a place in government.<sup>31</sup>

From 1968 to 2006, the PAP has consistently earned around 70 percent of popular vote. However, it has maintained more than 98 percent majority of seats. Singapore’s electoral disproportionality<sup>32</sup> is at an average of 29.02% for the last 10 elections – one of the highest in Asia (see Crossiant 2002, 329). The dramatic increase of uncontested seats and persistent high level of electoral disproportionality shows that Singapore’s electoral system has a poor record of representativeness with strong majoritarian effects where the strongest party is over-represented in the Parliament (Crossiant 2002, 333). See Singapore’s electoral disproportionality calculated based on Lijphart’s index (1994) in Table 3 below<sup>33</sup>.

**Table 3: Degree of Electoral Disproportionality in Singapore’s Parliament**

Country	Elections Held	Elections Included	Degree of Disproportionality (%)	
			Average	Latest Election
Singapore (1968-2006)	10 (1968-2006)	7 (1968-97)	29.03	31 (2006)

<sup>29</sup> Minority parliamentary representation (Malays, Indians and non-Chinese) was consistently between 23% ad 29%, approximating and even exceeding the national racial composition. Now, both Malays and Indian MPs reflect a gradual upward trend but not significantly different from the pre-GRC system (Tan 2005, 423).

<sup>30</sup> A former SAF overseas scholar and civil servant, Lim Swee Say has helmed many positions in the Ministry of Defence and Economic Development Board (EDB) since joining politics in 1996. Lim has had walkovers in Tanjong Pagar GRC in 1997 GE and in Holland-Bukit Panjang GRC during 2001 GE and 2006 GE.

<sup>31</sup> Wong Kan Seng, a minister who has been in office for 6 terms, has only contested once in his political career.

<sup>32</sup> Disproportionality means the deviation of the party’s seat shares from their vote shares. Perfect proportionality is the situation in which each party receives exactly the same share of seats with the share of votes it receives (Croissant 2002, 329; Lijphart 1994, 57-77). Critics argue the size of GRCs secured the system’s disproportionality in favour of the ruling party (Croissant 2002, 331).

<sup>33</sup> This index uses the largest deviation in an election result as an overall index of disproportionality The index is derived by the absolute difference between the total percentage of votes (Vi) for the most over-represented party and the total percentage of seats (Si) obtained by the most over-represented party.

While Singapore has all the democratic electoral institutions in place, the rejection of the possibility of party alternation differentiates its party system from T.J. Pempel's "uncommon democracies" (1990). Unlike predominant parties such as the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan or Swedish Democratic Party in Sweden, the PAP is adverse to confrontational and combative politics. It rejects inter-party competitive politics in new democracies such as Taiwan and South Korea for its disorderliness and inefficiency. As Senior Lee says, "The problem with popular democracy is that candidates are not judged during elections on how well they can govern, but on their persuasive powers" (BP 26 June 2008). Lee and his successors insist that party alternation is a "revolving door" style of government "which Singapore cannot afford" (ST 4 Apr 2007).

The PAP leaders make no apologies for its hegemonic party rule as PM Lee Hsien Loong, the elder son of former PM Lee Kuan Yew assures the public: "As long as the PAP changes itself, and continues to provide clean and good government, and the lives of Singaporeans improve, the country is much better off with one dominant, strong, clean, good party."<sup>34</sup> (ST 16 Nov 2008). Like his father, PM Lee equates multipartyism with bad governance as he said:

"In Asia, it very seldom works because having two or more parties has not guaranteed good governance or progress...In the last decade, its [Taiwan] unhappy voters had swung from the Kuomintang (KMT), to the Democratic Progressive Party, and back to KMT again. By Western definitions of democracy, Taiwan qualifies because it's got two changes of government - in, out, in. But it is not a political system which is working properly. And I don't think you want that kind of political system in Singapore." (ST 16 Nov 2008).

### **Elections, elite recruitment and candidate selection in Singapore**

In electoral democracies, political parties face the inconvenience of losing (Friedman and Wong 2008, 1). In Singapore, electoral institutions are crafted to increase the ruling party's certainty of winning. While alternation of power is possible, it is not envisaged. As a result of high number of uncontested seats; high disproportionality; over-representation of the strongest party; discrimination against opposition parties, only one party dominates the electoral market. This means that the PAP's elite recruitment and candidate selection processes are more important than elections as they determine who becomes a MP and is eligible for the running for the PM position. Elections act as democratic institutions for selecting political leaders and are opportunities for distributing patronage, settling disputes, and reinforcing the ruling coalition. They are regularized methods and procedures for power sharing; self-renewal and instruments to manipulate and co-opt dissidents into the regime (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Magaloni 2006, 8). Even when outcome is predictable, elections allow party leaders to recruit, reward loyal supporters and remove dissatisfied party members from the "inside" circle of power structure, re-enforcing elite unity.

In Singapore, regular elections conducted every 4 to 5 years provide the PAP the opportunity to recruit new candidates and ensure new blood in its rank and file. In every election, the average turnover rate is around 20 to 24 MPs, or a third of each cohort. See Table 4 for the rate of turnover in Parliament. In 2006 GE, 25 MPs relinquish their MP positions. 4 out of the 25 MPs only served one term and no reasons were given for their removal. According to ex-MPs, the decision to step down is always communicated directly to about one-quarter of each cohort of PAP MPs, around 6 months before polling day. Usually the PM, who is also the party secretary general, meets the selected backbenchers personally over lunch, in groups of two to three, to break the news that they

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<sup>34</sup> As Sartori reminds us, one-party pluralism cannot replace inter-party competition (1976, 51).

are asked to step down (NP 29 Oct 2005). Even when some MPs are reluctant to leave, they often obliged without much complaint or public protest.<sup>35</sup>

**Table 4: Rate of Turnover in Parliament (1980-2006)**

Year of Election	Total Elected MPs	No of New PAP candidates	MPs retired/gave up position
1980	75	18	11
1984	79	24	20
1988	81	18	14
1991	81	11	9
1997	83	24	18
2001	84	25	23
2006	84	24	24

Source: Compiled by author based on data from Singapore Elections and Singapore Parliament websites.

In most autocracies, the question of leadership succession is perilous as it raises expectations and changes that could de-stabilize the regime's balance of power. For example, when Taiwan was under the Kuomintang Party's (KMT) rule in the 1980s, speculations and publications on the prospective successors of ailing strongman Chiang Ching-Kuo were banned (Chang 1984, 425). Strong leaders usually strive to hold on to power for as long as possible or show little interest in developing a means of providing a successor. However, this is not a case in Singapore. Founding PAP leader, Lee Kuan Yew and his successors have made leadership succession, a foremost priority in their job. Recently, a public conference was even held to discuss the prospects of Singapore in the event of Lee's death (ST 21 Apr 2009).

The present 11<sup>th</sup> Parliament, constituted by the election held in 2006 consists of 83 elected MPs<sup>36</sup>, 1 NCMP and 9 NMPs. At the core of the government is the Cabinet headed by the PM. The PM is the leader of the political party who secures the majority of seats in parliament. The Cabinet consists of 18 to 20 elected MPs selected by the PM. The following sections will examine the "rules of the game" for the recruitment and selection of the: 1) elected MP for the legislature and 2) the cabinet ministers and the PM in the executive. Based on the candidate selection framework by Rahat and Hazan (2001), it will focus on answering the following questions:

- a. Candidacy: Who has the right to be selected as a candidate? Are there any restrictions on candidacy? Where are candidates normally recruited?
- b. Party selectorate: Who selects the candidates? Are there restrictions imposed on the candidate selection process? How does this impact on the size and type of candidates?
- c. Place of candidate selection: Are candidates selected by a national or sub-national selectorate? Are candidates selected formally as representatives of social groups?
- d. Candidate nomination: Is candidacy determined by voting procedure or appointment?

<sup>35</sup> In earlier days, old guards such as Toh Chin Chye, Lee Koon Choy and Ong Pang Boon were more public with their dissatisfaction over the speed of the renewal.

<sup>36</sup> There were originally a total of 84 elected MPs. However, MP Ong Chit Chung passed away suddenly on 14 July 2008, leaving his seat in Jurong GRC empty. His death sparked a motion to amend by-election laws in parliament in Aug 2008. However, the motion was rejected by the House. See "A House fired up", ST 28 Aug 2008.

## 1) Candidacy: Who has the right to be a candidate?

Singapore's legal restrictions on candidate eligibility are fairly universal and uncontroversial and only three key legislations govern Singapore's Parliamentary Elections.<sup>37</sup> A person is qualified to be a candidate for election as a MP as long as he is a citizen<sup>38</sup> above 21 years and in residence for more than 10 years. Besides, candidates must possess language proficiency in one of the 4 national languages: English, Malay, Mandarin or Tamil and not incapacitated by blindness or other physical cause. Besides, candidates must also not be subjected to the disqualifications specified in Article 45<sup>39</sup> of the Constitution. Anyone who has been sentence by a court of law in Singapore or Malaysia and imprisoned for not less than one year, or a fine of not less than S\$2,000 will be ineligible for candidacy or disqualified from Parliament.

Singapore's legal restrictions on candidacy may appear generic. But critics argue that Singapore's rule of law have been used by the PAP to prevent opposition opponents to stand in Parliament for significant periods of time (IBA Human Rights Report 2008, 28-9).<sup>40</sup> For example, the first opposition MP, JB Jeyaretnam of Worker's Party (WP) was disqualified in 1984 for mis-stating party funds and again as an NCMP in 1997 because of bankruptcy lawsuits brought by PAP leaders.<sup>41</sup> Besides JB Jeyaratnam, other opposition candidates such as WP members Wong Hong Toy, Tang Liang Hong, R. Murugason and SDP Secretary General Chee Soon Juan were also excluded from parliament as a result of lawsuits brought by the PAP leaders.<sup>42</sup> In contrary, present Finance Minister, Tharman Shanmugaratnam, a former Administrative Service Officer and Director of the Economics Department in the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS), who was charged and found guilty of breaching Official Secret's Act in June 1992, was fined only S\$1,500, an amount that would allow him to contest in elections as a PAP candidate.<sup>43</sup>

Most countries require candidates to place a monetary deposit to stand for legislative election (Massicotte et al. 2004, 61). Singapore is no exception. Since its first Legislative Council Election in 1948, a deposit amount of \$500 was required of each candidate.<sup>44</sup> However, by 2006 General elections, the deposit amount has increased twenty-seven fold to S\$13,500. Constitutionally, the deposit amount is calculated based on 8 percent of the total allowances payable to MPs in the preceding year. With the dramatic increase in ministerial and civil servant's salary in the last two decades, the deposit amount has also skyrocketed. As the annual salary of a MP in Singapore in year

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<sup>37</sup> The three legislations are: 1) The Constitution of Singapore (The Legislature - Part VI); 2) The Parliamentary Elections Act (Chapter 218); 3) The Political Donations Act (Chapter 236); and Subsidiary Legislations.

<sup>38</sup> Citizenship is a widely accepted as a criterion for candidacy. The basic rationale is that one must be a bona-fide member of the community in order to lead or represent its citizens (Massicotte et al. 2004, 55).

<sup>39</sup> Article 45 states that if a potential candidate is convicted of defamation as a criminal officer; imprisoned for one year or fined with at least S\$2000 or liable to pay damages in a civil suit so large as to bankrupt them, the Constitution provides that they are ineligible to stand for elections for five years.

<sup>40</sup> The PAP has pointed out that countries such as Australia (Constitution Section 44) have similar provisions as that in Singapore. But the disqualification in Australian constitution does not apply to fines, but limited to jail imprisonment.

<sup>41</sup> For a more on the lawsuits brought against JBJ and his party members, see the Worker's Party (WP) website at [http://www.wp.org.sg/party/history/1981\\_1986.htm](http://www.wp.org.sg/party/history/1981_1986.htm)

<sup>42</sup> See Mauzy 2002, 134-6 for a summary of the key lawsuits.

<sup>43</sup> See Worthington (2003, 155-163) for an in-depth account of the events leading to the "accidental prosecution" of administrative elites such as T Shanmugaratnam.

<sup>44</sup> In 1963 GE, the first election conducted while Singapore was a state of Malaysia, a total of 92 candidates lost their deposits. Then, the deposit amount required was S\$500.

2008 was S\$225, 000<sup>45</sup>, the deposit amount for the GE 2006 was S\$13,500. See Table 5 for the deposit amounts and number of candidates who have forfeited deposits.

**Table 5: Deposit Amount for Legislative Candidates in Singapore**

Election Year	Deposit Amount	Candidates who forfeited deposit	Names of parties <sup>46</sup> (No. of candidates)
1968	\$500	3	WP (1); Ind (2)
1972	\$500	22	BS (1); UNF (19); WP (1); Ind (1)
1976	\$1, 200	3	UPF (2); Ind (1)
1980	\$1, 500	7	UF (2); UPF (5)
1984	\$1, 500	2	AI (1); UPF (1)
1988	\$4, 000	5	AI (1); PKMS (2); UPF (2)
1991	\$6, 000	5	PKMS (1); IND (4)
1997	\$8, 000	2	DPP(1); SPP (1)
2001	\$13, 000	2	DPP(1); IND (1)
2006	\$13, 500	0	0

Source: Compiled by author based on data from Singapore Elections website.

The official rationale to impose monetary deposit is to screen out farcical candidates. However, the large sum of deposit deters poor candidates and parties to contest and it acts as a filter that privileges resource rich, incumbent PAP candidates. Thus far, only independent candidates or opposition candidates have forfeited deposits. No losing PAP candidates have forfeited their deposits. This precedence thus discourages qualified opposition candidates to contest in elections and exacerbate the rise in uncontested seats.

In most legislatures, there are prohibitions of dual mandates. Conventionally, serving in the legislature while being a member of civil service is a basic conflict of interest as MPs are expected to control the bureaucracy.<sup>47</sup> Legally in Singapore, senior categories of officers from the Public Service<sup>48</sup> (Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), Singapore Civil Service (CSC), Singapore Legal Services and the Singapore Police Force (SPF)) are prohibited to hold public office and be a MP at the same time (Chapter IV of Singapore's Constitution). Yet, this prohibition does not prevent the PAP from recruiting its candidates from the Public Service. In fact, the Civil Service, statutory boards and the SAF are prime recruiting grounds for the PAP and hand-picked candidates are fast-tracked into ministerial positions (Rodan 2005, 116). As Table 6 shows, the bulk of Singapore's ministers and PAP MPs were former career civil servants, university professors and military officers before entering parliament and later the Cabinet. The average percentage of the MPs drawn from the ministries, government linked corporations and statutory boards is now 49 percent – nearly half of the Parliament.

<sup>45</sup> Press Release by the Prime Minister's Office, 13 Dec 2007.

<sup>46</sup> See Appendix C for the list of political parties in Singapore.

<sup>47</sup> A study by Massicotte et al. (2004; 59) shows that as many as 46 countries do not allow public servants to serve simultaneously as elective officers at the national levels. Hence, horizontal integration of elites is absent and hardly any former senior civil servants are found in the Parliament (except France and Germany).

<sup>48</sup> The Singapore Public Service employs some 110,000 public officers working in 15 Ministries, more than 50 Statutory Boards and nine Organs of State. Within the Public Service is the Civil Service, comprising more than 60,000 officers working in the Ministries and Organs of state. They work in various schemes of service, including the Administrative Service, legal, education, police, civil defence as well as other generic schemes.

**Table 6: Occupational background of MPs (1963-2006)**

	1963	1968-84	7 <sup>th</sup> Parl 1988-91 (%)	8 <sup>th</sup> Parl 1991-6 (%)	9 <sup>th</sup> Parl 1997-01 (%)	10 <sup>th</sup> Parl 2002-6 (%)	11 <sup>th</sup> Parl 2006- (%)
Bureaucrats	8 (19.5)	23 (23.9)	14 (17.3)	13 (16)	13 (15.7)	11 (13.1)	14 (16.9)
Govt Linked Co. (GLCs)	0	1 (1.04)	4 (4.9)	4 (4.9)	3 (3.6)	4 (4.8)	4 (4.8)
Military	-	2 (2.1)	3 (3.7)	5 (6.2)	6 (7.2)	6 (7.1)	6 (7.2)
<b>Academics</b>	2 (4.8)	22 (22.9)	<u>21 (25.9)</u>	<u>20 (24.7)</u>	<u>16 (19.3)</u>	<u>10 (11.9)</u>	<u>9 (10.8)</u>
Professors			15	16	14	9	7
Teachers			6	4	2	1	2
Journalists	5 (12.2)	7 (7.3)	1 (1.2)	5 (6.2)	6 (7.2)	5 (6)	4 (4.8)
<b>Subtotal (%)</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>57.2</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>42.9</b>	<b>44.5</b>
<b>Professionals</b>	3 (7.3)	14 (14.6)	<u>10 (12.3)</u>	<u>11 (13.6)</u>	<u>14 (16.9)</u>	<u>26 (31)</u>	<u>22 (26.5)</u>
Medical doctors			4	4	4		8
Lawyers			5	5	7		13
Others			1	2	3		1
Trade Union links	11 (26.8)	12 (12.5)	7 (8.6)	5 (6.2)	3 (3.6)	5 (6)	4 (4.8)
Company Managers	3 (7.3)	14 (14.6)	14 (17.3)	18 (22.2)	18 (21.7)	14 (16.7)	17 (20.5)
Party Staff	9 (21.9)	2 (2.1)	3 (3.7)	1 (1.2)	1 (1.2)	1 (1.2)	2 (2.4)
Others /Unknowns			4 (4.9)	3 (3.7)	3 (3.6)	1 (1.2)	1 (1.2)
Total of MPs	41	96	81	81	83	84	83

Sources: Data for 1963 to 1984 are from Ikuo (2003, 352); the rest compiled by author based on official Singapore Parliament and Singapore Election websites.

Coding:

Bureaucrats = Officers from Administrative Service, Government Investment Corporation, the various government ministries and Statutory boards (excludes GLCs)

GLCs = Government linked companies are companies in which some of the shares are owned by the government.

Trade Union links = National Trade Union Congress (NTUC) is a family of 63 trade unions with more than 470000 members.

Academics = University profs, polytechnic lecturers and teachers

Journalists = Journalists and Senior managers from SPH (Straits Times, Lianh Zhaobao and Berita Harian – Newspapers under SPH)

Professionals = Lawyers, doctors, accountants & engineers

Company Managers = Directors, CEOs, Chairman and Senior managers of private companies

Military = Regular military officers from the Singapore Armed Forces

Party staff = administrative or party activists (includes People's Association with strong ties with PAP)

To most observers, the “politicization” of the civil service is a key feature of Singapore’s political system that is distinctively un-Westminster style (Vannewald 1994). Since the PAP’s split in 1961, the locus of power has shifted slowly from the party to the bureaucracy. As Mauzy and Milne observe, “the PAP is everywhere, but it is the PAP government, not the party apparatus” (2002, 49). The close relationship between the executive, legislative and bureaucracy in Singapore is best captured by Chan’s concept of “administrative state”<sup>49</sup> - where the PAP relies heavily on state resources and unloads its traditional party functions to the state and para-political organizations to bolster its policy formulation capacity (Chan 1975; Rodan 2005). As Worthington’s study of the fusion between the bureaucracy and the executive finds:

“In Singapore, hegemonic rule is achieved not through democratization but through oligarchic means. The bureaucratic, political and business elites are integrated through a bourgeois party which

<sup>49</sup> Singapore’s “administrative state” entails 1) a depoliticization of the citizenry; and 2) a significant increase in the power of bureaucrats which blurs the distinction between the civil service and the executive (Chan 1975, 510).

uses meritocratic assessment based on educational and other achievements to select the public sector and political leadership. Because of the high degree of penetration of the state into the market and society, the party selected elite also penetrates these sectors thus perpetuating oligarchic control” (2003, 10).

The implications of the horizontal integration of government elites into the ranks of the PAP and impact on party cohesion and representativeness of the Parliament will be examined later.

## 2) The CEC: Exclusive Party Selectorate

The PAP was formed in 1954 as a mass-based party with its decision-making process based largely on the Leninist principle of “democratic centralism”<sup>50</sup>. After the failed takeover attempt by the pro-Communist members in 1957, the PAP instituted a cadre system and introduced a bloc voting system for the selection of Central Executive Committee (CEC) members and maintains regular re-registering of party membership to prevent outsiders from takeover (Mauzy and Milne 2002, 41; Pang 1971, 35). Four categories of membership were introduced (probationary, ordinary, probationary cadre and cadre) and only full cadres are allowed to vote in the election of the CEC; regular PAP members are excluded (Chan 1989, 73).<sup>51</sup> As Pang describes, the CEC voting is a “closed system” in which “the cardinals appoint the pope and the pope appoints the cardinals” (1971, 36).

The exact number of the cadres has never been disclosed, but it was reportedly 1000, 6.7 percent of the total party membership of 15, 000. Normally, a cadre is nominated by his MP, from among the outstanding party activists in his party branch. As a pragmatic, “catch-all” party that seeks an ideological middle-ground, the PAP cadre selection committee seeks fair representation from diverse backgrounds, age, race, language and religion and educational qualifications. Annually, around 100 candidates are selected by three interview panels of 4 or 5 ministers and MPs (ST 4 April 1998). The cadre recruitment process encourages elite cohesion as it filters like-minded members into the inner-circle and excludes those with extreme views. While being a cadre comes with no extra incentives or privileges<sup>52</sup>, the sense of exclusivity on being the selected few serves as a “collective incentive. As Wong Kan Seng, the PAP’s first Assistant Secretary General said: “You know you are among the elite, the trusted few. People are quite happy when told they have become cadres” (ST 4 April 1998). My interviews with PAP cadre members also confirm that the prestige and honour of being a PAP “insider” rather than material incentives were sufficient to generate loyalty and “a sense of belonging”.

The CEC is the pinnacle of the party’s decision-making body. It is dominated by the party secretary who selects the cadre, who, in turn endorses the CEC at a biannual party conference. Consisting of around 18 members, the CEC is the party selectorate of legislative candidates. A majority of the CEC are also cabinet ministers. In the latest CEC formed in Dec 2008, 15 out of 18 CEC members are in the Cabinet. Instead of discussing policy formulation within the party, the PAP uses the Cabinet meetings as forums for discussing ideas and developing policies, not the party as forums for policy discussions.

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<sup>50</sup> This refers to the principle of internal organization in Leninist party where party members are free to discuss and debate policy. But once the decision of the party is made, all members are expected to uphold the decision.

<sup>51</sup> The CECs from 1954 to 1957 were elected by all the Party members, after 1957, they were elected by party cadres.

<sup>52</sup> The PAP government is widely known for its anti-corruption, clean governance that does not condone gift giving or patron-client relations. As a party, the PAP is also publicly against the use of party or cadre membership to further personal gains (see also the PAP recruitment website). Critics have argued that political corruption manifests itself in different form, see Tarling (2004).



### 3) Candidate Nomination and Selection based on Appointment

There is no primary election for the PAP's selection legislative candidates. Like its exclusive cadre selection method, the search of a potential MP is conducted through an elaborate nomination and appointment process. In the past, candidate selection was more ad-hoc. But since 1976, the selection process has become more systematic and formalized under former PM Goh. As the party's organizing secretary in charge of candidate recruitment Dr. Ng Eng Hen says, the PAP recruitment committee relies on its "network of contacts...The net is cast wide, covering the civil service, the corporate sector, and professions such as law, banking and medicine." Promising and outstanding individuals in the various professions are identified and shortlisted (ST 15 Apr 2006).

Generally, the PAP candidate selection process comprise of the following six stages:

Stage 1: Candidates are "talent spotted" and recommended by PAP activists, corporate leaders, MPs and senior civil servants to PAP recruitment committee. At this stage, the recommendation of names is informal and drawn from a network of contacts. In 1984 GE, more than 2000 names of potential candidates were compiled from lists of local government scholars, returned scholars and registers of professionals as well as those in the party ranks (Ooi 1998, 371). Potential candidates are usually professionals, peers from the "top of their cohort" from the Civil Service, the private sector, and professions such as law, banking and medicine.

Stage 2: Groups of six to eight candidates are then invited to meet with one of three ministers in small tea discussions. Each tea session lasts around 60 to 150 minutes. During the sessions, the minister will ask probing questions to ascertain the ideas, motivation and political inclinations of the potential candidates on various issues and ability to be a "team player" (ST 18 Apr 1996). Around 100 potential candidates are invited for the tea sessions a year (Mauzy and Milne 2002, 48). Due to the large number of "talents" who are studying or working abroad, "tea sessions" are now also conducted overseas (ST 15 Apr 2006).

Stage 3: Shortlisted candidates then undergo two formal interviews by a high level panel at the party headquarters. If they clear the interviews, they will be invited to meet with cabinet ministers. Successful candidates who passed the second formal interview are invited to meet the Cabinet ministers. Party activists or grassroots members who are familiar with the key office holders may skip the first three stages.

Stage 4: The CEC, which is the party selectorate, reserves the final authority to endorse the selected candidates. In 1997 GE, 24 new PAP candidates were fielded out of 300 interviewed (Ooi 1998, 372). This means each prospective candidate has an 8 percent chance of being fielded.

Stage 5: Months before an election, the selected candidates are deployed to the different constituencies to undergo training and learn the ropes of running party branch work by understudying a veteran MP. If one spots new faces touring with a senior MP during his "Meet-the-People-Sessions" or walk-about in a constituency, that means election is around the corner. The training period of the candidates differ, ranging from a few months to 4 years<sup>53</sup>.

Before the election, prospective candidates are also sent for courses on public speaking and communications skills to learn ways to handle press questions and how to field questions during

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<sup>53</sup> One PAP MP, Inderjit Singh said that he was sent to work with grassroots groups in 1994 and was only introduced to contest in 1997 GE (ST 20 Feb 2009).

hustings. For example, MP Ong Kian Min, a two-term MP revealed that the training usually focuses on TV appearances where they are told to avoid shifty eyes or gesticulating too much when speaking in front of camera (ST 4 Feb 2006).

Stage 6: Selected candidates who have been deemed to have ministerial quality will be asked to go through an additional stage of psychological tests of over one thousand questions that lasts around one-and-a-half days (Mauzy and Milne 2002, 49). At this stage, the PAP adopts the system of potential appraisal system developed by Shell oil company to assess the personality and disposition of its candidates. The psychological tests focus on identifying four basis qualities, denoted by the acronym HAIR: 1) “helicopter quality” (an individual’s ability to examine a problem from a higher vantage point while simultaneously being able to zoom in on the details); 2) “power of analysis” (ability to rationally and rigorously analyze issues, 3) “imagination” (creativity to develop fresh approaches to a problem) and “sense of reality” (ability to integrate vision and imagination with realities on the ground) (Neo and Chen 2007, 351). In each election, five to six candidates are identified to have ministerial qualities and carefully groomed for higher office. The elaborate candidate selection process is summarized in a flow chart 1 below.

**Chart 1: Candidate Selection Process of a PAP Legislative Candidate**



### **Background and qualities of PAP candidates**

Conventionally, a person interested in political office would register with a political party, work up the ranks and file and cozy up to party leaders and hopes to be spotted for his party work and be nominated as a candidate. But this is not the case for the PAP. The PAP is odd<sup>54</sup> as it avoids vertical integration of its cadres and professes to avoid rewarding party loyalty. As senior Lee said: “We have resisted the temptation, and the pressure, to fill up the Parliament with party loyalists. We have to field the best that Singapore has” (Petir 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Issue 1984, 22).

Since 1984, the PAP has adopted the rigorous process that the government uses in the recruitment of its civil servants, specifically, the officers of the Administrative Service – the apex of the civil

<sup>54</sup> As Mauzy notes, the PAP is odd in many other ways: the party began as a left wing mass party but it is no longer left-wing; it espouses social democratic policies; but it abhors welfarism; it stands for law and order, family values and is pro-business; but it is not a conservative party; it is organized as a communist and cadre party; yet it ignores party bureaucracy between elections; it recruits from the civil service and professions rather than from its ranks and file; while the party is dominated by Lee, it is institutionalized and capable of forcing out old guards (2002, 246-7).

service hierarchy.<sup>55</sup> As discussed, the PAP “talent spots” mainly from within state structures and horizontally integrates them into the party. The PAP’s incumbency advantage and access to state institutions such as the Public Service Commission (PSC), which administers 13 different prestigious government scholarships, helps to channel highly qualified scholars into its party (Chen and Neo 2007; Barr 2006). The PAP relies on the government scholarship scheme as a main “talent spotting” mechanism to identify and nurture outstanding returning scholars who work in government agencies and the private sector. View this way, the PAP’s cadre party structure may be evolving into a state-party cartel model where the “colluding parties become agents of the state and employ the resources of the state to ensure their own collective survival” (Katz and Mair 1995, 5). As Minister Mentor Lee explains:

“Our problem was not to find loyal cadres who can do the rank and file work and running of the party, even to be MPs, and the grassroots, but to find people who can be MPs and ministers to run the government...and the only way we could overcome that was by going out recruiting, talent spotting...A person who has done well in Singapore’s scholarship system will eventually be ‘spotted’ and ‘headhunters’ from the party will look for him. That is the system that has evolved” (1999, 133).

In the present 11<sup>th</sup> Parliament, there are now a total of 23 former government scholarship holders,<sup>56</sup> or also known as “scholar MPs” who were sponsored for higher education in prestigious foreign universities by the PSC. These “scholar MPs” were formerly “headhunted” and now form part of the ruling elite and groomed for higher leadership roles.<sup>57</sup>

In the latest Cabinet of 21 ministers constituted on 1 Apr 2009, 71.4% were government scholars. Most notably, PM Lee Hsien Loong and Deputy PM Teo Chee Hean and Foreign Affairs Minister George Yeo were holders of both President and SAF Overseas scholarship – two most prestigious scholarships in Singapore. Out of this batch, six ministers (28.6%) were former military regular officers (Lee Hsien Loong; Lim Hng Kiang; Lim Swee Say; Lui Tuck Yew; Teo Chee Hean and George Yeo). As shown in Table 7, the bulk of the cabinet ministers are either former scholars; civil servants from the elite Administrative Service or military officers. Between 2001 to 2009, only an average of 10 percent of ministers were from the private sector.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Since 1984, Lee Hsien Loong has adapted the promotions system that uses psychological tests by Shell oil company to assess the PSC Administrative Service officers and PAP candidates. For more see Chen and Neo (2007, Chapter 7).

<sup>56</sup> Out of 83 elected MPs, there are a total of 6 President Scholars; 8 Colombo Plan Scholars; 2 EDB-Glaxo Scholars; 2 Singapore Police Force Scholar; 1 Commonwealth Scholar and 5 SAF Overseas Scholars.

<sup>57</sup> In the last 2006 GE, PM Lee earmarked Grace Fu, Lee Yi Shyan, Masagos Zulkifli and Lui Tuck Yew as four new MPs for higher office (CNA, 3 May 2006). Lui Tuck Yew was promoted to Acting Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts in Apr 2009 cabinet reshuffle.

<sup>58</sup> The average cabinet duration is 45 months (Croissant 2002, 340).

**Table 7: Profiles of Cabinet Ministers (2001-2009)**

	2009	2008	2006	2004	2003	2001
Administrative Service	5 (23.8)	4 (20)	3 (16.7)	3 (15.8)	3 (16.7)	3 (17.6)
Government Scholars	15 (71.4)	13 (65)	12 (66.7)	13 (68.4)	13 (72.2)	14 (82.4)
Civil Service	7 (33.1)	10 (50)	10 (55.6)	11 (57.9)	11 (61.1)	10 (58.8)
/Stat. Board						
GIC/GLC	3 (14.3)	3 (15)	3 (16.7)	3 (15.8)	2 (11.1)	2 (11.8)
Military	6 (28.6)	4 (20)	4 (22.2)	4 (21.1)	4 (22.2)	4 (23.5)
Private sector	5 (23.8)	3 (15)	1 (5.6)	1 (5.3)	1 (5.6)	1 (5.9)
Average Age	56.9	58.1	56.9	54.4	54.8	53.7
Female	1	0	0	0	0	0
Ethnic Minority	5	5	4	4	3	2
Total Ministers	21	20	18	19	18	17

Source: compiled by author based on data from official Singapore Cabinet website and PAP publications.

The PAP prides itself on having developed a leadership recruitment system that is based on the concept of meritocracy.<sup>59</sup> As PM Lee acknowledges, it is a “uniquely Singapore approach” and compared itself to the Communist party in China (Lee’s Speech, 6 May 2008). As he says: “Singapore adheres to the philosophy of government by elite. We must pick elites from different industries and trades to participate in the running of the country. The prerequisite is that these elites must have a sense of social responsibility and they must be willing to serve the people.” (ST 8 July 2008). Besides being academically brilliant, the candidates must have a proven record of outstanding career achievements and qualities such as “ability, integrity and commitment” and “character, motivation, judgment, stability, temperament, ability to connect with people” (Petir 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Issue, 1984, 22).

A typical PAP candidate is thus one who is a professional or expert, former government-scholar from a prestigious university overseas, married male in his 30s and 40s with a few children to lend support to the government’s population and pro-family program.<sup>60</sup> As Singapore is a multicultural society, language abilities are also prized assets. While the first batch of PAP leaders were mostly English speakers, with the rise of China and globalization, knowledge in information technology and bilingualism are now essential qualities for aspiring office bearers.

Singapore has a low female representation in Parliament. Unlike efforts to address ethnic imbalance in Parliament, the PAP does not advocate gender quota or affirmative action policy. In 1959, the Parliament had 5 women MPs. But since the sole female MP Chan Choy Siong retired in 1970, there was no female representation for 14 years. It was only in 1984 that the PAP surprised many by fielding 3 female candidates.<sup>61</sup> Dr. Seet Ai Mee, later joined the three female candidates in 1988. As

<sup>59</sup> For an insightful analysis of the myth of meritocracy in Singapore, see K Tan (2008).

<sup>60</sup> The recent batch of new PAP candidates has three single women (Indranee Rajah; Penny Low and Fatimah Lateef – breaking the PAP’s convention of fielding only married candidates.

<sup>61</sup> The first 3 female PAP candidates were: Dr. Aline Wong; Dr. Dixie Tan and Mrs. Yu-Foo Yu Shoon.

an acting incumbent minister, she was narrowly defeated in 1991GE<sup>62</sup>. Stung by this loss, the PAP has not fielded female candidates in SMC since.

Due to public pressures, the PAP has only fielded female candidates in GRCs, increasing from 10 in 2001 to 17 in 2006. In the cabinet reshuffle in April 2009, a former Administrative Service officer and director of the government's investment arm, Temesek Holdings, Mrs Lim Hwee Hua, was promoted to a ministerial position – became the first female representative in Cabinet since 1991. In the 11<sup>th</sup> Parliament, there are now a total of 17 elected women MPs (20.5%). See Table 8 below.

**Table 8: No of women MPs in Singapore Parliament (1980 – 2006)**

	11 <sup>th</sup> Parl 2006GE	10 <sup>th</sup> Parl 2001GE	9 <sup>th</sup> Parl 1997 GE	8 <sup>th</sup> Parl 1991 GE	7 <sup>th</sup> Parl 1988 GE	6 <sup>th</sup> Parl 1984 GE	5 <sup>th</sup> Parl 1980
Female PAP MPs	17	10	4	2	4	3	0
Female Opposition MPs	1 (NCMP)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total elected Female MPs (%)	17 (20.5)	10 (11.9)	4 (4.8)	2 (2.4)	4 (4.9)	3 (3.8)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>75</b>

Source: Compiled by author based on data from Official Singapore Parliament website.

### Who will be the next PM?

The secretary general of the PAP, who is the party's supreme leader, is usually also the country's prime minister. Over the last five decades, the PAP has successfully engineered two party leadership successions without public display of infighting or power struggles. In 1959, Lee Kuan Yew became the country's first PM when it attained self-government as he was the Party's secretary general<sup>63</sup>. In 1990, he voluntarily relinquished his PM position and endorsed Goh Chok Tong as PM in a carefully managed leadership transition. While Goh was not Lee Kuan Yew's preferred successor<sup>64</sup>, he eventually deferred the choice to the Cabinet and Goh was popularly selected by his cabinet colleagues (Mauzy and Milne 2002, 115-6). Lee accepted their decision, and the first leadership transition was completed when he gave up his secretary general position 2 years later.

Goh was widely seen as a "seat-warmer" for Lee's up and rising son, Lee Hsien Loong. However, he held on to his position for 12 years and earned respect for his consensus-based, leadership style (Asiaweek 3 Dec 1999). Meanwhile, young Lee<sup>65</sup> waited patiently at the helm, supporting Goh as Deputy PM. See Table 9 below for the PAP Secretary Generals and PMs.

**Table 9: List of Prime Ministers In Singapore**

Prime Minister	Years as Sec. Gen	Age as PM	Former Profession	Election Method	Tenure	Gave up PMship	Post PM position
1. Lee Kuan Yew	1954- 1992	36	Lawyer	Elected in an intra-party contest	1959- 1990 (31 years)	Resigned	Minister Mentor
2. Goh Chok Tong	1992- 2004	49	Economist (Admin Svs.)	Nominated by PM and endorsed by a select group of cabinet ministers	1990 –2004 (14 years)	Resigned	Senior Minister
3. Lee Hsien Loong	2004- present	52	Army Brigadier	Nominated by PM & endorsed by cabinet	2004 -	In office	-

<sup>62</sup> Dr. Seet was an incumbent acting minister who lost her SMC seat to SDP's Ling How Doong by 654 votes (2.8%).

<sup>63</sup> Lee Kuan Yew's leadership was not preordained. In a party leadership contest in 1959, Lee was elected by a single vote over Hokkien-speaking and populist politician Ong Eng Guan (Mauzy 2002,5).

<sup>64</sup> Lee had preferred Tony Tan as his successor as he was doubtful of Goh's public-speaking ability and perceived lack of toughness. Eventually, he endorsed Goh's leadership after some "mutual adaptation" (Mauzy 2002, 118).

<sup>65</sup> Lee's diagnosis of lymphoma in 1992 was another reason why Goh had remained as PM longer than expected.

			General	&ministers and elected PAP MPs			
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In preparation for the second leadership transition, Goh formalized a selection procedure for the PM in May 2004. Accordingly, the three-step formal procedure begins with: 1) a meeting of all the Cabinet Ministers nominating a leader based on consensus; 2) then, all the PAP MPs meet to show their support of the PM candidate in a separate venue. At this stage, the PAP MPs could nominate other names and their nomination will be considered separately by the CEC. 3) Finally, the CEC meets to mediate and endorse the final decision. Based on this formal procedure, Lee Hsieng Loong was selected and appointed as the country's third PM in Aug 2004.

This more formalized selection method is significant as it was introduced to mediate the possibility of power struggles. As Goh says, "The confidence of MPs is important. I want to put in place a process so that, in future, if there is a contest for the position, there's a process to follow." (Petir May/Jun 2004). This new formalized method meant that choice of future successor is no longer arbitrarily decided by one leader or the selected cabinet ministers. Rather, the party selectorate is widened to include endorsement by all Cabinet ministers and PAP MPs. This procedure is expected to build elite cohesion and legitimacy as "the next prime minister will be chosen by his or her own peers. Having chosen the leader, the team would then be obliged to support him or her fully" (Petir Jul/Aug 2008).

In Singapore's short history, two PMs have voluntarily step aside for a younger successor. As Goh once asked why he would voluntary step down, he answered:

"I would because Mr Lee had set the example...In the PAP, we have institutionalised a planned and orderly system of political succession. The old generation systematically identifies and prepares the next generation to take over. It steps aside when the successor generation is ready. This is the way to defy the march of time, retain the Party's youthfulness and continue to appeal to the electorate"(Goh's Speech at PAP 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 2004).

Singapore's leadership succession is different from its neighbours as the PMs retire voluntary from their position of power – not an easy feat, considering how often coups, crises and protests are the main mechanisms for leadership change. This precedence of PM voluntarily stepping down for a younger successor is expected to continue. While no voting procedure or specific years of office is introduced, the PAP's formal selection procedure is a step forward to improve party systemness and the decisional autonomy of the party selectorate. Besides, the new procedure also offers a more democratic channel that includes more junior party leaders such as the PAP MPs to participate and nominate an alternative candidate. In the event that a disagreement should arise with the nomination made by the Cabinet or the CEC, an intra-party process is in place to mediate potential conflict and foster elite unity.

Another significant feature of Singapore's leadership transition is that retired PMs do not leave the cabinet, but continue to stay in office to lend expertise and advice as Senior Ministers (SM) or Minister Mentor (MM). Presently, there are two SMs and one MM. This innovation creates more paid positions in the Cabinet and becomes a form of "selective incentive" that helps to mitigate potential power struggle that comes with leadership transition as: 1) the outgoing leader is compensated with a high-profile position and high salary; and 2) the new leader can tap his predecessor for knowledge and expertise. While the job portfolios of the newly created positions are unclear, the current MM and SMs are seen to travel extensively to build foreign and economic relations to improve Singapore's standing in the international community. Domestically, they also grace governmental functions and publicly support policies undertaken by the present government.

Despite criticisms of having a bigger Cabinet, Singapore's cabinet is still one of the leanest in the world.

### Potential Problems

Three decades ago, Chan has described the PAP's recruitment and selection method as weak as it has "no strength other than the adoption by the party leadership". She also predicted that the party will suffer leadership struggles as "party discipline that is the very strength of the party will become its major weakness in future because when the present leadership leaves the scene, there would be a whole generation of politicians who are short on manipulatory (oratory) skills because manipulation within the party has been discouraged and the ability of such politicians to stick together must surely be questioned" (1975, 301). Chan's prediction has not come to pass. Internal rivalries and power struggles within PAP, if any, are kept under wraps and not evident to outsiders.

However, despite having its leadership succession system institutionalized, the survival of the PAP as a party organization may be at stake for the following reasons. First, while the horizontal integration elites promotes elite unity, it does not help to foster ties between party leaders and members. The PAP continues to struggle with its image as an elitist party and its party membership has not increased in the last 35 years. While the total Singapore population has increased from 2.1 mil in 1971 to 4.4 mil in 2006, the number of PAP member has remained the same. The percentage of PAP members relative to the population has reduced from 0.71% in 1971 to 0.34% in 2006 (See Table 6 below).

**Table 10: Singapore's PAP Membership and Population**

	1971	2006
Total PAP Membership	15,000	15,000
Total Singapore Population	2.1 mil	4.4 mil
% of membership out of Singapore population	0.71%	0.34%

Source: 1971 data from Pang (1971, 51), others from PAP website and Singapore Statistics 2008.

The PAP is aware of the problem as shown by its aggressive recruitment drive and extensive efforts to appeal to younger Singaporeans to join the party. To address the disconnect between party leaders and members, the PAP has also initiated a PAP Policy Forum (PPF) in 2004 to close the distance. One of the PPF's roles was to institutionalize a feedback mechanism and organize regular policy forums such that younger party members can meet with party leaders and participating in party affairs and policy formulation.<sup>66</sup> Like other political parties, the PAP has also undertaken a gradual intra-party democratization process by allowing elections and voting procedure to take place for different party committees such as the Youth Wing<sup>67</sup>, Women's Wing and at the district level<sup>68</sup>. As these initiatives were recently implemented, the effects of the intra-party democratization on party cohesion are still too early to tell.<sup>69</sup>

Second, unlike most parties that prize party loyalty and grassroots experience, the PAP recruits widely from different sectors and "parachutes" candidates without strong party ties or grassroots experience to stand in elections. Overtime, this could undermine the relevance of the PAP as a

<sup>66</sup> See "PAP Policy Forum - A Vibrant Singapore" and "PAP policy Forum – PAP Giving Voice to the Rank and File." *Petir* Jul/Aug 2006.

<sup>67</sup> 30 positions in Young PAP were for grabs in its first internal elections in 2004 (ST 6 Mar 2004).

<sup>68</sup> The positions on the previously exclusive executive positions on the Headquarters are now slowly opened to the rank and file members. Now, two district elected members can have two seats in the HQ executive committee.

<sup>69</sup> There is no conclusive evidence to link inclusiveness to party cohesion. For more on the debate see Carty (2004); Katz and Mair (2004); Rahat (2007); Rahat and Harzan (2001).

political organization as it is no longer the primary source for supplying candidates. PAP's "talent spotting" function is also slowly being replaced by a government arm such as the PSC. Ambitious cadre members and party careerists who are "leapfrogged" may become disaffected and leave.

Third, as a result of five decades of hegemonic rule, the PAP now behaves like a "party government" where the line distinguishing the party from the government is blurred<sup>70</sup>. The fusion between government and party is compounded by the fact that the CEC membership overlaps with the Cabinet. As a party-state, the party exercises little influence on the government and the "CEC is only a rubber stamp for government decisions, and that the party has lost its role in giving direction to society" (Mauzy 2002, 49). Besides, the PAP also keeps its organization lean with less than nine salaried administrative staff in a humble headquarters located far away from the city centre. Instead, the party leaders relies on state resources to develop a sprawling network of para-political organizations such as the People's Association, Community Development Councils, Town Councils, and Community Centres to serve the constituencies (see Tan 2003). These grassroots sectors have slowly replaced the traditional roles of the PAP as a party. Without more deliberate party-building efforts, the PAP may lose its organizational strength and internal coherence.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, the PAP's meritocratic-based recruitment and candidate selection process is viewed as "ruthless winnowing process" that promotes elitism and "politics of envy" (Barr 2008; Tan 2008). Singapore PM, cabinet ministers, MPs and civil servants are one of the highest paid in the world<sup>72</sup>. As the political elites are rewarded with larger prizes, a growing income inequality may evoke a sense of resentment, social disengagement, and envy among those who are excluded from this elitist system. Besides, the PAP may result in the ruling class renewing itself with people of same mindset, promoting in-breeding of ideas and inflexibility. The Parliament is now filled with technocrats, experts and professionals. With few MPs with strong party links and grassroots experience, the Parliament may lack empathy<sup>73</sup>, be disconnected from the ground and unable to effectively represent the problems of the ordinary people<sup>74</sup>.

## Conclusion

Current party politics literature tends to equate party institutionalization with party democratization. My study of the PAP in Singapore challenges this teleological bias by showing how the institutionalization of intraparty processes such as leadership succession fosters authoritarian resilience. To explain the persistence of hegemonic party autocracies such as the PAP, this paper has adopted an institutionalist approach to focus on how the "rules of the game" constraint inter-party competitiveness. On the party system level, it demonstrates how the PAP's overwhelming majority in parliament enabled it to initiate electoral reforms to tilt the level-playing field to their advantage. To paraphrase T.J. Pempel: dominance begets more dominance (1990, 16). Five decade of

<sup>70</sup> For fusion of the bureaucratic and party elites see Vennewald (1994); Worthington (2002) and Iwasaki (2003).

<sup>71</sup> Croissant has characterized the PAP as a programmatic party which offers voters the real choices between competing programmes and able to sustain linkages between voters and themselves – the most conducive for the consolidation and stability of democratic regimes (2002, 346).

<sup>72</sup> The salary for Singapore President (2008) is S\$3.87 mil and S\$3.76 mil for the PM. A MP receives \$225, 000 annually (PSC Press Release 13 Dec 2007). The high ministerial salary is controversial and hotly debated in Singapore.

<sup>73</sup> As senior civil servant, Ngiam Tong Dow warned, elites may lack empathy as most of the new younger Cabinet ministers hail from upper-middle class backgrounds and they "do not know the impact of policies such as a 10-cent bus fare hike on ordinary families" (Ngiam's interview with ST 22 May 2008).

<sup>74</sup> In contrary, Mauzy and Milne observe that despite the complaints of elitism in Singapore government, voters will rarely vote for a person who is not well educated or qualified professionally (2002, 64).



hegemonic dominance of the PAP has enabled it to gain access to state resources and project an image of invincibility to deter the formation of opposition coalition. A strategy of “electoral manipulation and persuasion” has helped the party to win elections again and again.

On the intra-party level, this paper argues that an increasingly formalized and routinized elite recruitment and candidate selection process foster leadership renewal and elite cohesion in a semi-competitive, electoral setting. As Huntington reminds us: “the institutional strength of a political party is measured, in the first instance, by its ability to survive its founder or the charismatic leader who first brings it power” (1968, 409). The institutional strength of the PAP’s elite reproduction system is found to be high in terms of its decisional autonomy and systemness. Since 1980s, the PAP has gradually entrenched a complex system of elite recruitment and selection process that is based notionally on the concept of meritocracy – the best man or woman for the job. Today, the PAP appears exceptionally resilient and cohesive with no signs of factionalism or power struggle.

Institutionalization entails a “routinization of charisma”, a transfer of authority from the leader to the party, and few parties led by personalist leaders survive this transfer (Panebianco 1988, 53). Most observers contend that the PAP’s cohesion over 50 years has owed much to Lee Kuan Yew’s forceful personality. But from the party’s elite reproduction system, this paper has attempted to show that Lee and his successors have institutionalized a process by which the PAP as an organization has incorporated the founder’s values and aims. Now, the party’s survival has become a goal and is “valuable in and of itself” (Huntington 1968, 12). As Senior Lee said: “My colleagues and I have institutionalized honesty, integrity and meritocracy into the systems we have created. Each generation of leaders has the duty to recruit the people of integrity, ability and commitment as their successors” (cited in Rodan 2009, 192). The notion of leadership selection based on meritocracy and integrity is now institutionalized and widely accepted by most party members and a large majority of Singaporeans. With the injection of right people and concerted attempt to address the disconnect between ordinary party members and leadership, the PAP is likely to survive the passing of its founding leader and continue to rule the country for many more years to come.

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## Appendix A

## Criteria of Party and Party System Institutionalization Proposed by Selected Scholars (in-progress)

Author	Dimensions	Indicators	Unit of Analysis
Huntington (1965, 68)	Adaptability Complexity Autonomy Coherence	Chronological age; generational age and functional resilience Diff of org. subunits, degree of personalism Independence from other social groups, recruitment from within Ratio of contested succession, dissent	Political system
Mainwaring and Scully (1996)	Stability Stable roots in society Legitimacy: Parties to determine who governs Party organization	Index of electoral volatility (patterns of interparty competition) No cross-country comparative data (survey data/electoral geography/longevity/voting patterns) Rough estimates (survey data) Party loyalty, discipline, presence in local and national levels (factionalism/party switching)	Democratic party system (excludes one-party states)
Panbianco (1988)	Autonomy: relationship with ext. environment Systemness: internal structure	Resource independence, chooses leaders from within Interdependence between homogenous sub-groups	Party organization
Randall and Svasand (2002)	Autonomy Systemness Value infusion Reification		Party
Levitsky (1998)	Behavioral routinization Value infusion		Party
Meleshevich (2007)	Autonomy Stability	no. of independents (majoritarian systems); political outsiders on party list (PR); party participation in cabinet formation and geographical patterns of voting  % of votes by old parties and Pedersen's index of electoral volatility	Party system

## Appendix B

## List of Registered Political Parties and Status in Singapore

Name	Acronyms	Participation in Elections	Date of Registration
1. Alliance Party Singapura	APS	Never contested	17 February 1966
2. Angkatan Islam	AI	Dormant	6 August 1958
3. Barisan Socialis	BS	Dormant	15 August 1961
4. Democratic Progressive Party	DPP	Dormant	16 March 1973
5. National Party of Singapore	NPS	Defunct	26 February 1971
6. National Solidarity Party*	NSP	Contested	6 March 1987
7. Partai Rakyat, Singapore State Division	PR	Defunct	3 December 1956
8. Parti Kesatuan Ra'ayat (United Democratic Party)	UDP	Contested	18 June 1962
9. People's Action Party	PAP	Contested	18 February 1961
10. People's Republican Party	PRP	Dormant	30 August 1973
11. People's Liberal Democratic Party	PLDP	Dormant	2 May 2006
12. Persatuan Melayu Singapura		Never contested	2 February 1952
13. Pertubohan Kebangsaan Melayu Singapura (Singapore National Malay Organization)*	PKMS	Contested	20 February 1961
14. Reform Party	RP	Never Contested	3 July 2008
15. Singapore Chinese Party	SCP	Dormant	26 September 1950
16. Singapore Democratic Alliance	SDA	Contested	2 July 2001
17. Singapore Democratic Party	SDP	Contested	8 September 1980
18. Singapore Indian Congress		Never Contested	7 August 1962
19. Singapore Justice Party*	SJP	Contested	10 August 1972
20. Singapore National Front	SNF	Never Contested	15 August 1991
21. Singapore People's Party*	SPP	Contested	21 November 1994
22. The People's Front	PF	Defunct	21 May 1971
23. The Workers' Party	WP	Contested	30 January 1961
24. United National Front	UNF	Contested	6 March 1970
25. United People's Front	UPF	Contested	20 March 1975
26. United People's Party	UPP	Dissolved	14 July 1961

Sources: Singapore Yearbook 2008, available at [http://www.sg/SG\\_Yrbook2008/Gov&Politics.html](http://www.sg/SG_Yrbook2008/Gov&Politics.html) and unofficial Singapore Elections website at [http://www.singapore-elections.com/political\\_parties.html](http://www.singapore-elections.com/political_parties.html)

\* Four parties joined an umbrella alliance and were registered as Singapore Democratic Alliance (SDA) on 3 July 2001 in preparation for 2001 GE. SDA, led by Chiam See Tong, consisted of four parties including SPP, NSP, SJP and PKMS. NSP left the alliance after GE2006.

## Appendix C

**Ethnic background of Elected MPs (1989-2009)**

	<b>2nd Parl 1968-72 (%)</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> Parl 1980-4 (%)</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> Parl 1984-8 (%)</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> Parl 1989-91 (%)</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> Parl 1991-7 (%)</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> Parl 1997-01 (%)</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> Parl 2001-6 (%)</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> Parl 2006-10 (%)</b>
Chinese	42 (72.4)	58 (77.3)	64 (81)	68 (83.9)	64 (79)	64 (77.1)	62 (73.8)	60 (72.3)
Malays	9 (15.5)	9 (12)	9 (11.4)	8 (9.9)	10 (12.3)	11 (13.3)	12 (14.3)	13 (15.7)
Indian	4 (6.9)	7 (22.7)	5 (6.3)	5 (6.2)	7 (8.6)	8 (9.6)	10 (11.9)	8 (9.6)
Others	3 (5.2)	1 (1.3)	1 (1.3)	0	0	0	0	2 (24.1)
Total Minority MPs	16 (27.6)	17 (22.7)	15 (19)	13 (16.1)	17 (20.9)	19 (22.9)	22 (26.2)	23 (27.7)
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>83**</b>

\*Sources: ST 2 Aug 2008, Petir Magazine and Singapore Parliament website.

\*\*Jurong GRC MP Ong Chit Chung passed away suddenly in Sep 2008. Total number of MPs reduced from 84 to 83. No by-election was called despite motions to amend by-election law.

**Ethnic breakdown of Singapore population (1960s-2008)**

	<b>S'pore Population Mid 1966s (%)</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2008</b>
Chinese	78.7	77.0	78.3	77.8	76.8	74.7
Malays	12.1	14.8	14.4	14.1	13.9	13.6
Indians	6.6	7.0	6.3	7.1	7.9	8.9
Others	-	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.4	2.6

Sources: Pang 1971, 52 and Statistics Singapore, Singapore Department of Statistics 2008, 5.