



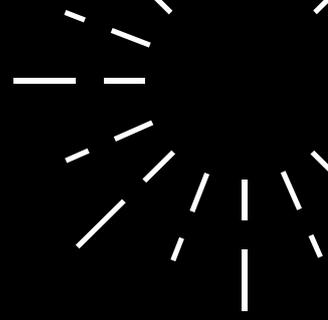
NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

OPMUN 2019

STUDY GUIDE

Question of Islamophobia
Question of Minority
Disenfranchisement

CHAIR BIOGRAPHIES



Get to know the dais of the National Steering Committee

CO-CHAIR: EISHWAR RAVICHANDRAN

In an unexpected turn of events, Eishwar finds himself steering his committee with his co-chair, Darrius, at OPMUN. Despite hailing from NUS High with a triple science combination, Eishwar does not let his passion for the sciences overshadow his fervour for current affairs and the humanities, participating in MUNs around Singapore as a chair, delegate, and sometimes, notepasser. Outside of MUN, Eishwar commits himself to his CCA, the Media Club, and his school's Biology Interest Group, being actively involved in them. Eishwar encourages all delegates to look beneath the surface of racial and religious harmony, and to explore the nuances of pertinent social issues in our country at OPMUN 2019.



CO-CHAIR: DARRIUS TAN

Darrius is a Year 3 student from Hwa Chong Institution. Like Eishwar, he takes the triple science combination. Once, he was just a 13-year old innocent kid who had stumbled into the world of MUN, not knowing a thing about the Rules of Procedure or how MUN even worked as he stepped into the lecture theatre. Since then, through the 13 MUNs he has attended as a delegate, notepasser, or chair, he has attained a variety of awards, from the glorious BD to the widely admired COP. He hopes that delegates will be willing to step out of their comfort zones, make new friends, and maybe learn a thing or two in OPMUN 2019





Introduction to NSC

The National Steering Committee (NSC) on Racial and Religious Harmony was formed in 2006 to provide platform of communication between the major faith and ethnic groups in Singapore and the government. Meaningfully, it is meant to function as a safe space to facilitate dialogue between racial and religious leaders,¹ and more importantly, to build a network of trust among the racial and religious groups via the exchange of different perspectives of these groups. The members of the NSC discuss pertinent issues in Singapore, strengthening social cohesion in the Singaporean community. It is chaired by Ms Grace Fu, the Minister for Community, Culture and Youth.

Mandate of the NSC

The NSC plays an advisory role to the Ministry of Community, Culture and Youth,² by planning and proposing policies to strengthen Racial and Religious harmony in Singapore. In addition to its advisory role, the NSC will promote communication between the government and the various cultural groups in times of crisis, namely during conflict and prejudice between these groups.

Moreover, during its appointment, the NSC on Racial and Religious Harmony effectively replaced the NSC on Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles (IRCC), which supervised and piloted IRCCs, and as such, the NSC on Racial and Religious Harmony now serves to direct and guide IRCCs. The NSC also supports major initiatives by the government, such as the Community Engagement Program (CEP) and the Broadening Religious or Racial Interaction through Dialogue and General Education (BRIDGE) initiative.

Resources

The primary resource of the NSC would be its IRCCs. IRCCs³ are platforms which aim to tackle racial and religious issues at the grassroots level, are crucial in the strengthening of social cohesion in Singapore. IRCCs are able to deepen the public's understanding of various cultures and their practices, through the organisation of inter-faith and inter-ethnic themed activities including heritage trails, inter-faith talks. Members of IRCCs are trained to respond quickly and effectively when racial and religious tensions flare, by acting calm and remaining resolute during times of crisis.

1: "Government appoints National Steering Committee on racial and ..." 7 Oct. 2006. <https://www.scribd.com/document/24805066/Government-appoints-National-Steering-Committee-on-racial-and-religious-harmony-Press-Release-07-Oct-2006>. Accessed 22 Jun. 2019.

2: "National Steering Committee on Racial and Religious Harmony - MCCY." 5 Mar. 2019. <https://www.mccy.gov.sg/sector/initiatives/national-steering-committee-on-racial-and-religious-harmony>. Accessed 22 Jun. 2019.

3: "Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles (IRCCs) - MCCY." 6 Dec. 2016. <https://www.mccy.gov.sg/Topics/Community/Articles/IRCCs.aspx>. Accessed 22 Jun. 2019.



Introduction to NSC (cont.)

Furthermore, they will aid in the restoration process, helping communities and the nation return to order. Currently there are 89 IRCCs across the country, each of them representing a constituency in Singapore.

In addition, the NSC can propose and carry out initiatives and programs.⁴ As previously mentioned, a key initiative the NSC supports is the CEP, an initiative to encourage cooperation between different racial and religious groups and prepare Singaporeans for times of crisis. Since 2008, NSC members have planned the annual Community Engagement Games Day, for different faith and ethnic groups to come together, and bond over recreational activities.⁵

Another initiative is BRIDGE. The main objective of this initiative is to encourage the appreciation of different racial and religious practices in Singapore through content and dialogue.⁶

It also aims to develop community expertise and capabilities to lead and engage discussions on sensitive cultural issues. In June 2019, the NSC spearheaded the Commitment to Safeguard Religious Harmony.⁷ This commitment has been signed by over 250 religious organisations and is viewed more as an enhancement to the existing Declaration of Religious Harmony, as it lays out many methods for Singaporeans to foster bonds with one another.

Some of the methods listed include eating together despite different religious dietary preferences, and expressing good wishes for and attending festivals of another culture. Furthermore, this commitment reaffirms the upholding of religious freedom in Singapore, and the right to profess, practise, and propagate beliefs different from one's own. Therefore, it is a key step in securing religious harmony in Singapore.

4: 2019. IRCC. <https://www.ircc.sg/ABOUT%20IRCC>.

5: "The National Community Engagement Programme (CEP) Dialogue" 13 Apr. 2013. [https://www.mha.gov.sg/newsroom/press-release/news/the-national-community-engagement-programme-\(cep\)-dialogue-2013](https://www.mha.gov.sg/newsroom/press-release/news/the-national-community-engagement-programme-(cep)-dialogue-2013). Accessed 22 Jun. 2019.

6: "Launch Of BRIDGE To Deepen Religious Understanding And Strengthen Social Cohesion". 2019. Mccy.Gov.Sg. <https://www.mccy.gov.sg/about-us/news-and-resources/press-statements/2017/jan-jun/launch-of-bridge>.

7: "Singapore'S Key Religious Organisations Affirm Commitment To Religious Harmony". 2019. CNA. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/singapore-religious-organisations-commitment-harmony-halimah-11642114>.

8: Website, IRCC. 2019. IRCC. <https://www.ircc.sg/COMMITMENT/About%20the%20Commitment>.

1: The Question of Islamophobia



INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

Islamophobia: A brief overview

As we advance into the 21st century, it seems that the rise of Islamophobia may rip the social fabric Singapore has nurtured over the course of its independence. Islamophobia is characterised by the fear or hatred of Muslims. Islamophobes view Muslims as accessories to terrorists, or as a threat to their country's political system. These people tend to project a hostile response onto all Muslims, without differentiation. These sets of enacted exclusionary reactions could include, laws designed to discriminate against Muslims, or hate speech and crimes against Muslims. Hence, as a multi-religious society, Singapore needs to come to terms with the fact that Islamophobia is rising and we need to denounce individuals who subscribe to this extremist ideology.

Background According to Researchers Benn and Jawad, Islamophobia has increased since Iranian politician Ayatollah Khomeini's 1989 fatwa, inciting violence under the pretext of religion, and since the 11 September attacks in 2001. Islamophobia has always been present in Western countries and cultures. However, in the last two decades, it has become accentuated, explicit and extreme. Such action may be reinforced by anti-Muslim political figures, who perpetuate Islamophobic sentiments. In the immediate months following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, an expected surge of media attention was devoted to American Muslims and Arabs. Despite the notable prejudice towards Arabs and Muslims after the terrorist attack, outlets like the New York Times printed opinion pieces discouraging the indiscriminate attribution of blame to one or more groups by the way of curtailing civil liberties and social freedoms. However, afterwards the American media became more critical of Muslim Americans. According to Media Tenor International, between 2007 and 2013, media outlets like NBC, Fox News, and CBS characterized Islam and the Muslim identity as one linked with violence and extremism. Other studies conducted by LexisNexis Academic and CNN found that media outlets devoted more coverage to terrorist attacks involving Muslims, especially Muslims who were not born in the United States.

9: "religious extremism, islamophobia and reactive co-radicalization - Muis." https://www.muis.gov.sg/-/media/Files/Muis-Academy/MOPS/6507_MUIS_MOPS-11_Final.pdf%3Fia%3Den%26hash%3D3D9FB32BFBF1C89BFFB11BA69683BA38E326CB4. Accessed 19 Jun. 2019.

10: "Societies Have To 'Face Squarely' The Reality That Islamophobia Is Rising, Says Shanmugam". 2019. CNA. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/christchurch-shootings-attack-shanmugam-islamophobia-11350984>.

11: Naina Patel, Beth Humphries and Don Naik, "The 3 Rs in social work: Religion, 'race' and racism in Europe"

12: "Fueling Our Fears: Stereotyping, Media Coverage ..." - Google Books." https://books.google.com/books/about/Fueling_Our_Fears.html?id=gbTGQ4zD6RQC. Accessed 20 Jun. 2019.

13: "Contesting Islamophobia: Anti-Muslim Prejudice in Media, Culture and ..." https://books.google.com/books?id=leeaDwAAQBAJ&pg=PT20&lpg=PT20&dq=media+tenor+arab+western&source=bl&ots=88KQlqmW-G&sig=ACU3U07mJKAbEB3p_rRIACib998s3aELA&hl=en. Accessed 20 Jun. 2019.

14: "No terrorist can ever change what my mosque means to me." 16 Mar. 2019, <https://thetempst.co/2019/03/16/news/personal-reactionary-to-new-zealand/>. Accessed 20 Jun. 2019.



INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC (Cont.)

BACKGROUND

It was not just a culture of hate and discrimination which affected Muslims on the ground, but also concrete policy changes that objectified and targeted their religion. Discrimination toward Muslims in Europe can now be found both in social standards and federal legislation and in recent years has taken the form of “burqa bans” across Europe. The significance of the burqa in Islamic culture has caused it to become a distinguished symbol for the growing influence of Islam in Europe. Over the last five years, almost a dozen countries have passed “burqa bans,”¹⁵ effectively removing the burqa from public spaces, including schools, government offices, public transportation, and hospitals, a brazen attack on the civil liberties of Muslims. France was the first country to pass these bans under the pretext of “homogenising France”, arguing that the burqas were too “divisive” and “controversial”.¹⁶ The decision went unchallenged in the Supreme Court.

Because of pressure within her own party as nationalist parties like the AfD gained traction in Germany, Angela Merkel, deemed by many as a moderate, announced that she would support a burqa ban in 2017.¹⁷ Closer to home, there have been Islamophobic sentiments perpetuated by various communities within the South East Asian Region. A prominent example would be in Myanmar, where the Rohingya Muslim population systematically discriminated against due to the 1982 Myanmar nationality law. As the law does not consider the Rohingya population to be amongst the official indigenous races, Rohingya Muslims are unable to acquire citizenship in Myanmar, denying them legitimate access to political, economic, and social resources.¹⁸ Moreover, the ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis has resulted in the deaths of more than 24,000 Muslims, most of whom were killed by the Myanmar military and the local radical Buddhist Monks. In Malaysia, Anti-Islamic sentiments are found in the margins of society and media, as traditional broadcast and print media is regulated in Malaysia. Islamophobic views are mostly found in the comment sections of online news articles and social media posts. Alvin Tan, a Malaysian blogger known for his criticism of Islam, posted a photo of himself eating pork, as a Ramadan greeting, intentionally offending Muslims in Malaysia.¹⁹ He has also defaced the Quran multiple times²⁰ and has attempted to raise Islamophobic sentiments within the nation’s ethnic Chinese community.²¹

Islamophobia is something that is admittedly not so prevalent in Singapore, after years of cultivating a culture in which Singaporeans can coexist together peacefully. However, some signs show that Singapore’s unity may be unstable. In a survey carried out by the Institute for Policy Studies, 15% of respondents “find Muslims threatening”.²² Researchers found that those who dwell in private housing were more likely to think that Muslims are threats, compared with those who dwell in Housing Board flats. Muslims were viewed most positively by Buddhists and Hindus, but about one in five Catholics, Christians and those with no religion said that Muslims were either very or somewhat threatening. A survey was carried out after the 2017 Presidential Election by Channel NewsAsia and the IPS that found that all three racial groups were less accepting of a president or prime minister of another race. In particular, a Malay-Muslim president would be much less²³ accepted compared to that of Indian or Chinese presidents.²⁴

It was shocking to note that only 53% of Chinese respondents would accept a Muslim president. Even though the youth supported presidents of other races to a relatively large extent, the youth are still not as supportive of presidents of other races as expected, with only 60% of those under 30 willing to support a Malay president. The fact is that Singapore, like all other societies, is in increasing danger of falling prey to Islamophobia; it depends on how we respond to these trends and tackle it head-on.

15: "Burka bans: The countries where Muslim women can't wear veils." <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/burka-bans-the-countries-where-muslim-women-cant-wear-veils/>. Accessed 20 Jun. 2019.

16: "Behind France's Burka Ban | The New Yorker." <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/behind-frances-burka-ban>. Accessed 20 Jun. 2019.

17: "German Parliament Passes Partial Burqa Ban - Newsweek." 28 Apr. 2017, <https://www.newsweek.com/germany-burqa-ban-niqab-veil-merkel-591419>. Accessed 20 Jun. 2019.

18: 2019. Burmacampaign.Org.Uk. <http://burmacampaign.org.uk/media/Myanmar%E2%80%99s-1982-Citizenship-Law-and-Rohingya.pdf>.

19: "Troll Or Hero? The Sex Blogger Who's Offending Muslims". 2019. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-32515516>.

20: Khoo, Jean. 2019. "Alvin Tan's Latest Outrageous Act With The Al-Qur'an Receives Brutal Flak From Netizens". Vulcan Post. <https://vulcanpost.com/447461/alvin-tan-al-quran-netizens-outrage/>.

21: Mohamed Nawab Bin Mohamed Osman. 2017. "Understanding Islamophobia In Asia: The Cases Of Myanmar And Malaysia". Islamophobia Studies Journal 4 (1): 17. doi:10.13169/islastudj.4.1.0017.

22: "15% of respondents find Muslims threatening: IPS report, Singapore" 29 Mar. 2019, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/15-of-respondents-find-muslims-threatening>. Accessed 20 Jun. 2019.

23: "Majority willing to accept president or PM of another race, but prefer" 20 Aug. 2016, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/majority-willing-to-accept-president-or-pm-of-another-race-but-prefer-one-of-their-own>. Accessed 20 Jun. 2019.

24: "Clear racial preference for Prime Minister, President: Survey - National" 18 Aug. 2016, https://lksypp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/td_clear-racial-preference-for-prime-minister-president_180816.pdf?sfvrsn=bd64710a_2. Accessed 20 Jun. 2019.

SCOPE OF DEBATE:

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN SPREADING ISLAMOPHOBIA

OVER-REPRESENTATION OF RADICAL ISLAM IN MAINSTREAM MEDIA

International mainstream media could contribute to the problem of othering and xenophobia by propagating and reinforcing negative stereotypes of Muslims, encouraging an over-sensationalized and fearful view of Muslims in general.²⁵ According to research published in the *European Journal of Communication*, the expression of Islamophobia and narratives in the media can be summarised into three themes: representing Muslims as the 'other' and a threat to the Western civilisation; Muslims being a danger to liberal and mainstream values; and the cultural and religious differences between Muslims and non-Muslims that can result in social and political tensions. Furthermore, there is significant evidence which demonstrates that the media depicts Muslims in a negative and reductionist manner.²⁶ A gradual increase of animosity toward Islam over the past two decades coincided with a growth of difference in the depiction of the faith by partisan media. It is important to note that this gradual rise in fear or hostility towards Islam has occurred despite a general increase in knowledge about Islam. This is likely because the benefits from education have been cancelled out by a negative shift in the attitudes of those who base their knowledge about the faith on the narrative created by partisan media.

This suggests that the framing of mainstream media is extremely influential, and is a key aspect in tackling Islamophobia.²⁷ Another noteworthy aspect of mainstream media is how the framing of negative stereotypes Islam has not been exclusively related to terrorism and violence. Many mainstream media outlets have increasingly emphasized the notion of Islam posing a cultural threat. In February 2006, a Danish cartoon in which some Muslims pitted themselves violently against free speech, one of the West's most cherished values, was published. In another example, *Charlie Hebdo*, a French satirical magazine, published cartoons which attacked and demonised the Prophet Muhammad.²⁸ However, there is a silver lining. Dr Paul Hedges, an associate professor in inter-religious studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), says that Singaporeans have a greater understanding that terror attacks carried out in the name of Islam are not related to the faith per se. Nevertheless, the global outlook, fuelled by certain media and various commentators adds to public discourse on the fear of Islam and hence, adds to Islamophobia.²⁹

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

As the influence of print media has waned, the influence of social media has exponentially grown. Social media allows individuals to publish their views online with ease, with a much greater degree of anonymity. Online, Muslims have endured racial slurs, dehumanizing photos, threats of violence, and targeted harassment campaigns, which continue to spread and generate significant engagement on social media platforms even though it's prohibited by most terms of service. In an analysis published in the *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, 494 posts and comments that were directly appointing hateful words towards Muslim individuals were found during the examination of 100 different social media pages.³⁰ This shows that social media platforms have not taken substantial action concerning the tracking and removal of Islamophobic posts. Another aspect of social media that is imperative to be addressed is the formation of echo chambers. In Islamophobic social media pages and groups, misconceptions and false assumptions of Islamophobes are often reinforced, as they are exposed to information from like-minded individuals. The added issue of anonymity further amplifies this problem, as the disincentive of being judged online is no longer present. As such, anonymity encourages these individuals to post more extreme content for other Islamophobes, perpetuating Islamophobia.

Over time, Islamophobes develop tunnel vision, where they are unwilling to consider other points and have a narrow information base. In addition, Islamophobists have exploited social media by using disinformation tactics, or "fake news" to perpetuate negative stereotypes about Islam. Overseas, more than one third of British people believe the falsehood that there are areas controlled by extreme sharia law in the UK. Half of the individuals who voted to leave the EU also believed this myth. This is an example where fake news has influenced a major referendum, and Singapore, being a highly connected nation, is especially vulnerable to fake news.

25: "The Role of the Media in the Spread of Islamophobia - Sam Woolfe." 7 May. 2018. <https://www.samwoolfe.com/2018/05/the-role-of-the-media-in-the-spread-of-islamophobia.html>. Accessed 20 Jun. 2019.

26: "Media Portrayals of Religion and the Secular Sacred - SAGE Journals." <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0267323114568001b>. Accessed 20 Jun. 2019.

27: 2019. Moses.Creighton.Edu. <http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2013/2013-3.pdf>.

28: "Charlie Hebdo attack: Three days of terror - BBC News - BBC.com." 14 Jan. 2015. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30708237>. Accessed 21 Jun. 2019.

29: "Islamophobia: Singapore Not Exempt From Global Climate". 2019. Rima.Sg. <http://www.rima.sg/rima-in-the-news/islamophobia-singapore-not-exempt-from-global-climate/>.

30: 2019. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305619150_Islamophobia_on_Social_Media_A_Qualitative_Analysis_of_the_Facebook's_Walls_of_Hate.

SCOPE OF DEBATE

PAST ACTIONS

Undoubtedly, the media has become a platform for Islamophobic views to spread undetected and uncontrolled; the question therefore lies in how the government should tackle the state of the media. Some call for a hardliner view under the principle that Islamophobia is a threat to the fabric of the nation at-large, and that the government should utilise authoritarian methods to quickly clamp down on any media site suspected of propagating falsehoods which could wreck national unity and heighten distrust between people of different religions and races. The government has chosen to act in this manner sometimes, through the shutting down of The Real Singapore, legalised through the Broadcasting Act and through coercing social media corporations to carry out more stringent checks for articles or posts which may go against national harmony under Singapore's recently passed fake-news legislation.

This policy granted sweeping powers³² to the police to investigate fake news and to take down online articles, circumventing to the judiciary to a large extent. However, the government drew much flak when it passed the fake news law this year, especially on social media, afraid that the government would be empowered to crack down on political dissent and opponents and that the freedom of speech will be stifled. Academia and political activists alike came out to oppose the bill, with the nominated members of parliament (NMP) in academia introducing amendments to the bill and with the opposition voting against the bill. There could be a softer approach with dealing with the spread of Islamophobia online, involving community-based education and public campaigns to encourage individuals to discredit sources that are not credible and to go against Islamophobia. The government has³³ in some cases, carried out these actions, through initiatives by the Ministry of Communications and Information like S.U.R.E., which focus on efforts to fight disinformation and fake news. It has been argued that softer measures decrease resistance to policies like fake news legislation, from the public.

HATE SPEECH AND SHAPING THE VIEWS OF SINGAPOREANS

After the Christchurch attacks³⁴ in New Zealand, in which a white supremacist killed 49 Muslims in a mosque in gruesome fashion, Australian senator Fraser Anning issued a media release which blamed the attacks against Muslims on Muslim immigration into the country. In many other societies, a permissive culture for citizens³⁵ to express their views has³⁷ been created; a trade-off in which citizens are entitled to broader freedoms of speech has been largely accepted by the public. However, it has been said that this culture of attacking other religions and race has given rise to violence and hate. There are grey areas in the definition of hate speech. The question is really about how to draw the line between hate speech and legitimate speech, and by extension, the types of speech that can be restricted. Some MPs like K. Shanmugam have called for an authoritarian approach on the definition of hate speech, to the extent to which speech deemed offensive by the government should be clamped down. The underlying principle is a utilitarian one, believing that radical actions which impede on the rights of others are justified if it benefits the greater good. They emphasise the fact that hate speech incites prejudice and violence, especially towards minority communities, and that it targets them on a personal level. Critics nonetheless have argued that utilitarianism is flawed because there is no objective way to define a "greater good"³⁹ with complete certainty, and that the principle legitimises gross abuses of power in making policy decisions. Another stance, especially taken by non-governmental organisations or external bodies, supports more free speech and believes in giving more leeway for individuals to say what they believe in.

The underlying principle of this stance is that certain rights are sacrosanct, such as the right⁴⁰ to practice one's religion or the right to speech because it is intrinsically attached to our identity and humanity at-large. On a utilitarian level, it has also been debated as to whether giving individuals leeway to state their viewpoints is legitimate, because it allows society to expose these horrendous and incorrect views and correct them and to identify who these individuals are. In 2017, two foreign Christian preachers had their applications to speak in Singapore under a Miscellaneous Work Permit (MWP) rejected by the Ministry of Manpower. These preachers made "denigrating and inflammatory comments of other religions" as stated by Home Affairs and Law Minister K. Shanmugam. One of these preachers had described Allah as "a false god" and subsequently went on to ask for prayers for those "held captive in the darkness of Islam" claiming that they can only be saved by converting to Christianity.

31: 'Singapore Passes Controversial 'Fake News' Bill | Time.' 9 May. 2019, <http://time.com/5586352/singapore-fake-news-law/>. Accessed 20 Jun. 2019.

32: 'Singapore Passes Controversial 'Fake News' Bill | Time.' 9 May. 2019, <http://time.com/5586352/singapore-fake-news-law/>. Accessed 21 Jun. 2019.

33: 'NMPs suggest 4 amendments to fake news Bill, including having ...' 30 Apr. 2019, <https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/nmps-suggest-four-amendments-to-draft-fake-news-law-including-having-independent-council-to>. Accessed 21 Jun. 2019.

34: 'WP calls to scrap fake news law Singapore opposition ... - MSN.com.' 7 May. 2019, <https://www.msn.com/en-sg/news/singapore/singapore-opposition-echoes-public-calls-to-scrap-proposed-fake-news-law/ar-AABIFMi>. Accessed 21 Jun. 2019.

35: 'S.U.R.E. Campaign | S.U.R.E. - National Library.' <http://www.nlb.gov.sg/sure/sure-campaign/>. Accessed 21 Jun. 2019.

36: 'Fury as Australian senator blames Christchurch attack on Muslim ...' 15 Mar. 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/15/australian-senator-fraser-anning-criticised-blaming-new-zealand-attack-on-muslim-immigration>. Accessed 21 Jun. 2019.

37: 'Societies have to face reality that Islamophobia is rising: Shanmugam' 16 Mar. 2019, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/christchurch-shootings-attack-shanmugam-islamophobia-11350984>. Accessed 21 Jun. 2019.

38: 'Shanmugam warns 'serious consequences can follow' when countries ...' 1 Apr. 2019, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/shanmugam-on-restricting-hate-speech-ministerial-statement-11400480>. Accessed 22 Jun. 2019.

39: 'The History of Utilitarianism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).' 27 Mar. 2009, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/utilitarianism-history/>. Accessed 22 Jun. 2019.

40: 'The challenge of drawing a line between objectionable material and ...' 28 Mar. 2019, <http://theconversation.com/the-challenge-of-drawing-a-line-between-objectionable-material-and-freedom-of-expression-online-108764>. Accessed 22 Jun. 2019.

SCOPE OF DEBATE

The other preacher had variously referred to “the evils of Islam” and “the malevolent nature of Islam and Mohammed”, and called Islam “an incredibly confused religion”, interested in “world domination”, and “a religion ... adhering to uncompromising and cruel laws often focused on warfare and virtual slavery”, MHA added in a following press release. Currently, all foreigners wishing to deliver a talk in Singapore that is related to religion, race or politics, is required to obtain an MWP. Later that year, two other foreign Muslim preachers, Ismail Menk and Haslin Baharim, controversially had their MWPs rejected. According to the MHA, both of them have preached ‘divisive’ teachings, with Menk preaching that it was the biggest sin and crime for a Muslim to wish a non-Muslim Merry Christmas or Happy Deepavali, and Haslin describing non-Muslims as “deviant”.⁴¹ Before the rejection, the government had consulted with the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS). Despite the ban, many Singaporean Muslims expressed their support for Mufti Menk on social media, claiming that he ultimately aims to promote cohesiveness. As such, Singapore needs to flesh out what is classified as hate speech against religion, and what is not. In a report from the IPS, over a fourth of Singaporeans said that they would allow religious extremists to post their views online, and half of these respondents were aged 18 to 25. The significant quarter of the population, as well as higher proportions among the young, who would permit such freedoms is worrying and Singapore needs to navigate this desire of freedom of speech pertaining to extremist views very carefully.⁴²

FOREIGN INFLUENCE

The situation in Singapore is significantly better compared to other countries in dealing with Islamophobia. However, Singapore remains vulnerable to the threat of political instability in other nations. For example, if a major terrorist attack carried out by an organisation which claims to be affiliated with a particular religion were to occur in a neighbouring country, the fallout is likely to be felt in other countries. This could be seen in the aftermath of the November 2015 Paris attacks, where terrorists affiliated with the radical Islamic group ISIL, executed a series of coordinated attacks in Paris. Politicians in neighbouring countries such as the Czech Republic and Poland increased their support for anti-Islamic groups. There was also a push from the public to reevaluate the ongoing EU migrant crisis then, citing the mass migration of immigrants from the Middle East, as the source of terrorism. Therefore, the government must prepare and educate Singaporeans to distinguish terrorist groups and the Islamic faith, to prevent dangerous and false generalisations. This could be done through the apparatus of the National Steering Committee because it can coordinate community-level initiatives and activities in religious bodies to unite Singaporeans together. Initiatives have been pushed out by the Singaporean government in the past that has been largely successful in Singapore but has not directly addressed by the problem of how individuals are likely to perceive religious groups after terrorist attacks in neighbouring countries. An example would be the Total Defence scheme created by the Singapore Civil Defence Force. Based on the six pillars of defence, the Total Defence scheme has educated Singaporeans on how best they can prepare themselves for conflict or war.

Out of all these six pillars, the most relevant for this discussion would be social defence which emphasises the need to prevent extremist ideologies and racial prejudice and discrimination to endanger social cohesion and harmony. It iterates the need to accept and understand different cultures and the necessity of social cohesion in times of crisis. In October 2019, the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (MRHA) was amended to safeguard against foreign interference. Notable amendments included the disclosure of foreign monetary donations that are above a certain amount and the declaration of any foreign affiliations. In addition, the majority of the executive committee or governing body of a religious group must be Singapore citizens. Such policies are preventive measures to impede excessive foreign influence in Singapore. However, the amendments do not encompass the mitigation of foreign interference on religious affairs in times of crisis, as well as the alleviation of the effects of said foreign interference after a crisis. We implore delegates to improve on the existing framework in safeguarding Singaporeans from the psychological threat of terrorism; delegates could research and look up examples online, both in Singapore and outside of Singapore, along with researching on how best to ensure that employers and Singaporeans in general have a better perception of the Muslim faith. The practices of the Muslim faith could be propagated through the media, and the public could be educated on the general beliefs of the moderate Muslim faith. However, delegates should keep in mind the secular nature of the government and are encouraged to look at the broader notion of religious harmony.

41: “Foreign Preachers Mufti Menk And Haslin Baharim Banned From Entering Singapore: MHA”. 2019. CNA. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/foreign-preachers-mufti-menk-and-haslin-baharim-banned-from-9357798>.

42: “Almost A Quarter Of Singaporeans Would Allow Religious Extremists To Post Views Online: IPS Report”. 2019. CNA. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/religion-singapore-private-public-sphere-survey-ips-11389142>.

43: “Singapore Terrorism Threat Assessment Report 2019”. 22 Jan. 2019. <https://www.mha.gov.sg/newsroom/press-release/news/singapore-terrorism-threat-assessment-report-2019>. Accessed 22 Jun. 2019.

44: “Czech PM Rebukes President For Supporting Anti-Islamic Groups: Paper”. 2019. U.S.. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-immigrants-czech-pm/czech-pm-rebukes-president-for-supporting-anti-islamic-groups-paper-idUSKCN0T91LY20151120#09u6r1hgyh14FLQ1.99>.

45: (www.dw.com), Deutsche. 2019. “Poland To Stop Accepting Refugees After Paris Attacks | DW | 14.11.2015”. DW.COM. <https://www.dw.com/en/poland-to-stop-accepting-refugees-after-paris-attacks/a-18850522>.

46: “News/Current Events (News/Activism)”. 2019. Freerepublic.Com. <http://www.freerepublic.com/tag/news-news/index?more=9356590>.

47: “Total Defence - SCDF”. 12 Apr. 2019. <https://www.scdf.gov.sg/home/community-volunteers/community-preparedness/total-defence>. Accessed 22 Jun. 2019.

48: WEI, AW. 2019. “Drive To Build Up Social, Psychological Defences”. The Straits Times. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/drive-to-build-up-social-psychological-defences>.

49: “Stronger Safeguards Against Foreign Influence, Updated Restraining Order As MRHA Amendments Passed”. 2019. CNA. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/religious-harmony-act-amendments-passed-restraining-order-11978508>.

PAST ACTION

APPROACHES TO ISLAMOPHOBIA

A top-down approach to Islamophobia

When tackling the issue of Islamophobia, delegates must discuss and understand the effectiveness of a top-down and bottom-up approach. A top-down approach focuses on causing change to structures and institutions within a society. This is based on the notion that changing such hierarchies would cause a subsequent change in the behaviour of individuals in a society since these structures dictate how society functions as a whole. The utilisation of a top-down approach usually involves making amendments to the law and involves political decisions that influence other major bodies in the country.⁵⁰ Generally, this approach is used by the government as Singaporeans tend to rely on the authorities to settle disputes arising from differences in religion. The government also sets guidelines and a multitude of measures to promote religious harmony, with key policies being debated at legislative platforms in Singapore.⁵¹ While this approach allowed Singapore to maintain its status of religious harmony for its first few decades as helps to prevent violence and dissent by rooting out problematic groups in society, it has its drawbacks. It has been widely criticised as it does not tackle Islamophobia at its roots and may further perpetuate Islamophobia.

Criticism of a top-down Approach

When a top-down approach is taken to tackle Islamophobia, it may create a cycle that backfires, raising Islamophobic sentiments in the public. Anthropologist Steven Vertovec proposes a model where institutional changes are enacted to counter this issue fuels Islamophobia, as the increased accommodation for the Muslim minority will draw resentment from the majority. This resentment will be directed towards the community that benefits from the change, and thus reinforce anti-Islamic ideology. To quote him, "As the public sphere shifts to provide a more prominent place for Muslims, Islamophobic tendencies may amplify" A top-down approach misses the element of dialogue and learning.⁵² Both of which can help in clarifying the misconceptions surrounding faiths and their people, therefore tackling the issue at its source.⁵³

A bottom-up approach to tackling Islamophobia

Instead of seeking to change institutions and structures, a bottom-up approach seeks instead to work at the level of relationships between the very people and communities most affected by the Islamophobia. This system aims to enact change by allowing communities to understand other another and develop a culture of appreciation and understanding. This approach promotes dialogue concerning Islamophobia, and elements of it can be seen in initiatives planned by the NSC and MCCY. However, the effects of such an approach will only be evident after a protracted time, since it takes time for bonds to foster between communities. Thus, delegates need to evaluate the effectiveness of bottom-up compared to a top-down approach and suggest an appropriate approach towards religious harmony.

52: KASTORYANO, RIVA. 2005. "Muslims In The West: From Sojourners To Citizens". *American Anthropologist* 107 (2): 287-288. doi:10.1525/aa.2005.107.2.287.

53: Ibid.

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER (QARMA)

QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can we change the perspectives of Singaporeans on the Muslim faith, especially the subset of individuals who currently find Muslims threatening?
- 2) How can we prevent the spread of Islamophobia via traditional media and new media? How should we address the phenomenon of fake news?
- 3) How can we draw the line between hate speech and legitimate speech? Using what metrics should we judge as to whether a type of speech should be restricted?
- 4) How can we prepare Singaporean society on a community level to mitigate Islamophobia stemming from foreign countries?
- 5) To what extent should a top-down or bottom-up approach be used to foster religious harmony?



2: The Question of Minority Disenfranchisement



In a fast-changing world, old ideas and the actual progress of the world in various issues are put into question. One such ideology is multiculturalism, a core tenet of governance since Singapore's independence when the late Prime Minister declared that Singapore would not be a "not a Malay nation, not a Chinese nation, not an Indian nation...Everybody would have a place in Singapore".⁵⁴ In Singapore, many people have now come to acknowledge that multiculturalism is under threat. Mr Lee Hsien Loong had once said that multiculturalism that we have cherished in Singapore today "is not something natural, nor something which will stay there by itself". Furthermore, with the rise of terrorism within South East Asia, many individuals are uncertain as to whether multiculturalism will be preserved in Singapore with the increased influence of radical preachers and extremists within the South-East Asian region.

After ISIS had been mostly defeated in the Middle East, it has since then focused on South East Asia due to large population of Muslims in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.⁵⁵ Furthermore, many individuals such as Yahoo News contributor Laavanya Kathiravelu believe that there is "racialised privilege" that exists, within corporations, narratives or even the government. Examples have been raised, such as the Ethnic Integration Policy, some which say disenfranchised minority homeowners who have to sell their homes at a lower price due to less market demand for their homes. Other examples include the Special Assistance Plan (SAP), which some believe to enable Chinese elitism because of the SAP's focus on preserving Chinese culture in historically Chinese-medium schools, rather than that of the Malay or Indian cultures. Hence, the council needs to tackle challenges in the inculcation of multiculturalism in Singapore and would need to discuss measures to allow for a more racially harmonious society.

54: "Race, multiracialism and Singapore's place in the world" 30 Sep. 2017, <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/race-multiracialism-and-singapores-place-in-the-world>. Accessed 12 Oct. 2019.

55: "ISIS Seeks New Outposts in Southeast Asia - Foreign Affairs." 16 Sep. 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/southeast-asia/2019-09-16/islamic-state-meets-southeast-asia>. Accessed 12 Oct. 2019.



BACKGROUND

MULTICULTURALISM: A SINGAPOREAN IDEOLOGY

The adoption of multiculturalism as a guiding policy for Singapore's governance was a point of disagreement between the PAP and UMNO, who believed that the Malay community was entitled to certain protections because they had been disadvantaged by society in the past. This was a factor which led to the separation between Malaysia and Singapore, because of the inability to reconcile differences between the PAP which wanted a "Malaysian Malaysia"⁵⁶, and UMNO, the dominant Malay-Muslim party, which supported a "Malay Malaysia". After independence, the government stood strong in its belief of a multicultural society, working to assure the minority races that they will always be protected and never treated worse by the majority. The government also ensured that the Chinese community, which had their rights trampled upon when Singapore was part of Malaysia, would not start to oppress the Malay Singaporeans in their midst.

The government envisioned a society where the bottom line was that discrimination should not occur at all costs, either against the Chinese community or the Malay and Indian community. Thus, the principle of meritocracy was an extension of the ideology of multiculturalism, which was the belief that everyone should be accorded equal opportunities in jobs or education, regardless of race.⁵⁷ To inculcate the idea of multiculturalism into Singaporean society, the government aimed to foster a national consciousness. The government abolished the practice of having different schools teaching in different languages, making English the language of instruction in all Singaporean schools because English would be perceived to be neutral in the eyes of all Singaporeans. This was not to say that the government wanted to homogenise Singapore, because "mother tongue" as a subject was then made compulsory.

Furthermore, national service was made compulsory for all males, wherein males would need to serve for a minimum of two-and-a-half years in the military with individuals from various races. This fostered cross-racial interactions between individuals from multiple races, allowing individuals to understand the practices and viewpoints of people of all races, thereby strengthening national unity. In the field of housing, the Ethnic Integration Policy was introduced to ensure that racial enclaves would not form in HDB estates, thus guarding against a potential rise in racial politicking, because a strict proportion of HDB apartments were to be sold to individuals from specific races. The underlying principle of these policies is that government intervention is required to ensure that no race is being discriminated against.⁵⁸ At first, the early government had opposed affirmative action policies for the minority community under that principle. However, in the 1980s, their stance began to shift to a small extent.

In 1988, the Parliamentary Elections Act was amended to allow for the Group Representation Constituencies. Under this plan, teams of candidates, instead of individual candidates, competed to be elected into Parliament as the Members of Parliament (MPs) for a constituency. One candidate in the team would have to be from a minority race. The idea was proposed so as to ensure that a minimum number of individuals from minority races would be represented in Parliament. In 2016, the Presidential Elections Act was amended by Singapore's parliament, so that a presidential election will be reserved for a community in Singapore if no one from that community has been President for any of the five most recent terms of office of the President. This meant that only Malay candidates could have run for office in the 2017 Presidential Election. This idea was proposed because of the fear that minority individuals might have felt disenfranchised if candidates of their race were consistently not elected at Presidential elections, because of the unequal playing field between Chinese candidates and minority candidates because of the overwhelming number of Chinese voters. The underlying principle was that political representation for minority groups was a must, and that government intervention was required to uplift the minority community, even if the majority-Chinese community had to give up some of their rights. However, the government has constantly not supported affirmative action through tangible policy changes in the areas of housing, education and the workforce.

56: "Behind the scenes: What led to separation in 1965, Opinion" 5 Aug. 2015, <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/behind-the-scenes-what-led-to-separation-in-1965>. Accessed 12 Oct. 2019.

57: "Multiracialism and Meritocracy: Singapore's Approach to ... - jstor." <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29770069>. Accessed 12 Oct. 2019.

58: "The policies that shaped a multiracial nation - TODAYonline." 8 Aug. 2017, <https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/policies-shaped-multiracial-nation>. Accessed 12 Oct. 2019.

BACKGROUND

MULTICULTURALISM AND RACIAL DISENFRANCHISEMENT

However, multiculturalism has not resulted in a completely colour-blind society. In a recent Institute of Policy Studies - Channel NewsAsia survey, according to Mothership.sg "four out of every ten Chinese respondents wouldn't say that they would accept a minority president"⁵⁹. This survey was carried out in 2016, before amendments to the Presidential Elections Act were voted on and approved by the parliament which allowed for a reserved Presidential election.

This is disheartening, because in the best case scenario, given two candidates of equal standing, four out ten of Chinese respondents would prefer the one who was not Malay. In the worst case scenario, perhaps this group of voters will support any non-Malay over any Malay candidate regardless of relative ability.⁶⁰ Firstly, multiculturalism is a concept that many Singaporeans do not practice in their daily lives, behind closed-doors. This is partially due to policies in relation to multiculturalism being an artificial creation, conducted through government interventions that focused more on retributive justice, through policies such as harshly shutting down and identifying perceived racial chauvinists.

Even though the implementation of such authoritarian, heavy-handed policies possibly limited the damage done by such extremists, it did not fully inculcate the value and importance of multiculturalism to Singaporeans. Secondly, the success of multiculturalism is one that depends on individuals from all races and all segments of society. Under the duress of racial discrimination by another group, multiculturalism would be upset due to backlash and retaliation from both opposing sides, resulting in more radical discourse calling for racial supremacy. With the advent of the internet, it is much harder for the government in the status quo to control these events.

Because of this, an implicit Chinese privilege exists in our society, harming individuals from minority groups because individuals from the majority race do not feel obliged to cater to the interests of the minority race, thereby impacting the harmony of the society. As a grassroots-level council, the NSC must thus use its influence and ties to the community to strengthen multiculturalism and to improve the state of multiculturalism within Singapore, in order to reduce racial disenfranchisement.

59: "The Singapore presidential (s)election: A monumental" 15 Sep. 2017, <https://mothership.sg/2017/09/a-monumental-miscalculation/>. Accessed 12 Oct. 2019.

60: "The Elected Presidency | HSSE Online." <https://www.hsseonline.edu.sg/journal/volume-6-issue-1-2017/elected-presidency>. Accessed 12 Oct. 2019.



Scope of Debate

DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

According to an Institute of Policy Studies - OnePeople.sg survey in 2019, more individuals in the minority feel that they are being discriminated in the workplace, through hiring schemes and lower pay packages, for instance. According to the researchers, this may be due to “greater awareness of the presence of discriminatory behaviour in the workplace and how this might have affected some minorities”. However, this survey still shows that more protections need to be in place, so as to turn the tide against workplace discrimination. Government attitudes towards workplace discrimination in Singapore along racial and religious lines have been laissez-faire because of the government’s pro-business stance. For example, according to the Tripartite Alliance for Fair & Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP), workers may report workplace discrimination by writing to them. However, four out of five complaints submitted to TAFEP do not result in concrete actions taken against the employer. Furthermore, there is no legislation on workplace discrimination in Singapore; according to TAFEP, this is because “the experience of other countries is that anti-discriminatory laws alone might not adequately change mindsets in this area”.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING / ETHNIC INTEGRATION POLICY (EIP)

According to a survey carried out by YouGov, 23% of Singaporeans have faced racial discrimination in renting a house before. Minority races faced more discrimination in renting a house; 49% of Indians and 34% of Malays said the same, compared to 18% of Chinese individuals.⁶⁴ According to a news report by CNBC, owners of private residential properties routinely exclude individuals from tenancy based on race, to the extent of stating in advertisements that “no Indians/ PRC” (slang for People’s Republic of China) or “no Malay” can rent their apartment. Furthermore, at least 49 listings across popular housing portals PropertyGuru, Craigslist, and Gumtree clearly stated that at least one of those three ethnicities were not eligible tenants. It is evident that racial bias does play a role in the decision-making calculus of many such homeowners; because of a decreased supply of housing which minorities can rent, the price of housing for minorities become more unaffordable, thus harming the interests of minorities by increasing their cost of living. There is no legislation to regulate the discrimination that occurs between a lodger and a landlord, with the exception of some guidelines produced by the Council of Estate Agencies (CEA) which are not binding.⁶⁵ The Ethnic Integration Policy (EIP) was introduced in 1989 to ensure a “balanced mix of ethnic groups living in HDB estates, so as to promote racial harmony and strengthen social cohesion”.

It applies to the sale and purchase of all new and resale HDB flats and is implemented for all ethnic groups.⁶⁶ The EIP has also been criticised by some quarters. First, on a practical level, the Ethnic Integration Policy makes HDB apartments harder to sell for minority groups, especially in more mature, expensive estates. Under the EIP, homeowners of a certain race may only sell their flats to homeowners of the same racial category (i.e. Chinese, Malay, Indian/Others), subject to appeals to the Ministry of National Development which are approved only about 20% of the time, a low figure.⁶⁷ Because there are fewer homeowners to purchase the apartments, the likelihood of minority homeowners receiving an offer decreases. Minority homeowners hence have less bargaining power and have to settle for lower compensation for their flat. Second, some argue that the Ethnic Integration Policy institutionalises the race differences amongst Singaporeans and makes them more obvious. However, the EIP is not without its benefits. The government has argued that the EIP was necessary to break up racial enclaves, which allows for more radical racial beliefs to be formed and spread. This was especially so in the 1960s; Bedok, for example, was inhabited predominantly by Malays, while the Chinese favoured settling in Hougang.⁶⁸ Thus, a way to improve the state of the housing market towards minorities is to propose amendments to the EIP, for parliament’s pleasure, or to propose new legislation to counter renting issues in relation to racial discrimination.

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE PLAN (SAP)

Many parents started to send their children to English-medium schools after the 1950s, resulting in the closure of many vernacular schools. In order to preserve the Chinese culture, the government accords special assistance to historically Chinese medium schools under the Special Assistance Plan (SAP) to inculcate traditional Chinese values in our future generations.⁶⁹ SAP schools are given more funding and resources; each student receives S\$300 in funding to develop their proficiency in Mandarin.⁷⁰

62: “Contact Us - Tripartite Alliance Limited.” <https://www.tal.sg/tafep/Contact-Us>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

63: “Singapore employees still face discrimination at work.” <https://sbr.com.sg/source/humanresources-magazine/singapore-employees-still-face-discrimination-work>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

64: “Almost 1 in 4 Singaporeans experienced racial discrimination ...” 10 Jan. 2019. <https://motherhip.sg/2019/01/racial-discrimination-renting-property-singapore/>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

65: “Be professional and sensitive when conveying your ... - CEA.” <https://www.cea.gov.sg/docs/default-source/cepo/educational-materials/Tips-of-the-month/be-professional-and-sensitive-when-conveying-your-landlord-client-s-preferences-for-tenant-profiles.pdf>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

66: “Oral Answer by Ministry of National Development on Ethnic ...” 2 Oct. 2018. <https://www.mnd.gov.sg/newsroom/parliament-matters/view/oral-answer-by-ministry-of-national-development-on-ethnic-integration-policy>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

67: “More appeals made for waiver of HDB’s ethnic integration ...” 2 Oct. 2018. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/hdb-ethnic-integration-policy-more-appeals-for-waiver-10780666>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

68: “Is the HDB Ethnic Integration Policy and ethnic quota ... - 99.co.” <https://www.99.co/blog/singapore/ethnic-integration-policy/>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

69: “Special Assistance Plan schools | Infopedia - NLB eResources.” 21 Jul. 2016. http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_2016-07-21_154021.html. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

70: “Parliament: SAP students get S\$300 more a year; those taking ...” 1 Mar. 2019. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/parliament-sap-students-get-300-more-a-year-those-taking-language-electives-get>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

Scope of Debate

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE PLAN (SAP)

However, some critics argue that SAP schools harm multiculturalism in Singapore. Firstly, many of these SAP schools are ethnically exclusive due to their strong focus on the Chinese language, which means that students from the minority would not want to go with that school; for example, in Hwa Chong Institution, there are only 5 students in the first four levels who are minorities. Hence, students within these SAP schools rarely interact with individuals from different faiths and races, which means that such students may not be as tolerant of racial differences, and may act inappropriately to individuals from minority races. Secondly, the SAP system is perceived as a representation of Singapore's inequality. Many SAP schools are in high demand; hence, the bar for admissions into SAP schools are usually extremely high. Because SAP schools are perceived to be "better" by parents, the students within SAP schools may not attend such schools to learn more about Chinese culture or to boost their Chinese proficiency, but may not end such schools due to other various reasons.⁷¹

It is believed by some that the SAP system entrenches Chinese privilege; first, students who attend SAP schools are likely to be more successful due to the state's recognition and promotion of these SAP schools. Second, the SAP system is not used for all other races, subtly implying that the Chinese culture is a superior culture that deserves more protections by the state. Some also argue that the traditional values that the SAP system promotes are not relevant to society as well, according to Yuen Sin of the Straits Times.⁷² However, some have defended the SAP system. According to Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Education, "SAP schools continue to be relevant, as it is part of Singapore's approach to allow every community to preserve and practise their cultures."⁷³ He argues that the SAP system plays an important role in developing bilingualism among students at a time when multiple countries are creating a bilingual curriculum due to the importance of bilingualism in the 21st century. He further disputes that SAP students receive more funding than a normal student because SAP schools are bigger. Last, critics argue that specialised programmes for the languages (e.g. Malay Special Programme) do exist.

71: "As Long As SAP Schools Exist, 'Chinese Elitism' in Singapore" 4 Jun. 2019, <https://www.ricemedia.co/current-affairs-opinion-sap-schools-chinese-elitism-singapore/>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

72: "SAP schools: Time for rethink?, Opinion News & Top Stories" 13 Feb. 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/relook-their-role-in-light-of-how-they-have-changed>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

73: "Special Assistance Plan schools remain relevant: Ong Ye" 23 Feb. 2019, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/special-assistance-plan-schools-relevant-ong-ye-kung-11282680>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

74: "Rap video by local YouTube star Preeti on 'brownface' ad" 30 Jul. 2019, <https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/rap-video-by-local-youtube-star-preeti-on-brownface-ad-crosses-the-line-not-acceptable>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER:

- 1) What are the causes of minority disenfranchisement? To what extent does minority disenfranchisement occur in our daily lives, and to what extent should the government intervene in issues in relation to minority disenfranchisement?
- 2) How can we encourage individuals to be more cognizant of the struggles people of other racial groups face? How can the majority be more accommodating towards the minority?
- 3) How can we implement solutions that tackle racial disenfranchisement without alienating the majority Chinese?
- 4) How can we close the racial divide between different racial and religious groups?

CONCLUSION

"This rap video insults Chinese Singaporeans, uses four-letter words on Chinese Singaporeans, vulgar gestures, pointing of middle finger, to make minorities angry with Chinese Singaporeans," said Mr K Shanmugamm, the Minister for Home Affairs and Law during the Preeti Please saga, in which two content producers produced an offensive rap that blamed the Chinese race for using 'brownface' in an advertisement. This rap was deemed offensive to many Chinese Singaporeans and could have had possible repercussions if the state had not handled the incident well because the rap targets Chinese Singaporeans and incites feelings of ill-will. The Preeti Please saga showed Singaporeans that we have not reached an ideal stage of multiculturalism yet.

There is more work to be done to allow for multiculturalism to fully be inculcated organically within the minds of all Singaporeans, especially our future generations. In order to allow for this ideal state of affairs to be reached, structural barriers to equality between races need to be overcome through concrete policy measures and cultural shifts, especially in the areas of labour, housing and education.