RSIS S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
Nanyang Technological University

RSIS WORKING PAPER

NO. 305

ENGAGING RELIGION WITH PRAGMATISM

THE SINGAPORE STATE'S MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL ISSUES AND RELIGIOUS TENSIONS IN THE 1980s

MOHAMMAD ALAMI MUSA

S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
SINGAPORE

21 AUGUST 2017

About the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) was established in January 2007 as an autonomous school within the Nanyang Technological University. Known earlier as the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies when it was established in July 1996, RSIS' mission is to be a leading research and graduate teaching institution in strategic and international affairs in the Asia Pacific. To accomplish this mission, it will:

- Provide a rigorous professional graduate education with a strong practical emphasis
- Conduct policy-relevant research in defence, national security, international relations, strategic studies and diplomacy
- Foster a global network of like-minded professional schools

Graduate Programmes

RSIS offers a challenging graduate education in international affairs, taught by an international faculty of leading thinkers and practitioners. The Master of Science degree programmes in Strategic Studies, International Relations, Asian Studies, and International Political Economy are distinguished by their focus on the Asia Pacific, the professional practice of international affairs, and the cultivation of academic depth. Thus far, students from 65 countries have successfully completed one or other of these programmes. In 2010, a Double Masters Programme with Warwick University was also launched, with students required to spend the first year at Warwick and the second year at RSIS.

A select Doctor of Philosophy programme caters to advanced students who are supervised by senior faculty members with matching interests.

Research

Research takes place within RSIS' five components: the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS, 1996), the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR, 2004), the Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS, 2006), the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre, 2008); and the Centre for Multilateralism Studies (CMS, 2011). Research is also conducted in RSIS' National Security Studies Programme (NSSP), and Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies (SRP) Programme. The focus of research is on issues relating to the security and stability of the Asia Pacific region and their implications for Singapore and other countries in the region.

The School has four endowed professorships that bring distinguished scholars and practitioners to teach and to conduct research at the school. They are the S. Rajaratnam Professorship in Strategic Studies; the Ngee Ann Kongsi Professorship in International Relations; the NTUC Professorship in International Economic Relations; and the Peter Lim Professorship in Peace Studies.

International Collaboration

Collaboration with other professional schools of international affairs to form a global network of excellence is a RSIS priority. RSIS maintains links with other like-minded schools so as to enrich its research and teaching activities as well as learn from the best practices of successful schools.

Abstract

The Singapore state's relationship with religion has been one of pragmatism, rooted in the realities of the country's multi-racial and multi-religious society. This was clearly evident in the 1980s when Singapore was confronted with many challenging issues of morality and the practice of religion. On the one hand, the secular state viewed religion as a positive force in society and adopted a policy of neutrality and non-interference in matters of religion. On the other hand, it did not hesitate to intervene in the realm of religion when public order, security and economic survival were threatened. This is consistent with the view that to survive against the odds Singapore needs a strong, centralised government that subordinates all institutions, spiritual and temporal. The state's intervention in the religious domain in the 1980s should be understood in the context of the government's primary interest to ensure that society possessed the values that were necessary for economic progress and development. When increased religiosity and religious activism threatened social stability and encroached into the political space to challenge state sovereignty, the state moved to assert its authority to ensure that the practice of religion did not jeopardise the permanent interests of society (i.e. public order and long-term economic prosperity). The state's exercise of authority could be justified by the social contract that citizens had presumably entered. The state's assertion of authority was manifested in the late 1980s, which witnessed decisive action by the government to clarify the parameters of religion's role in society. It led to the institutionalisation of principles of governance in managing religious life within a plural, secular Singapore. The state's pragmatic approach in managing its relations with religion persists till today, giving space to religion generally but asserting its authority when the need to preserve social peace arises.

Key Words: Pragmatism, Moral Crisis, Religious Knowledge Programme, Proselytisation, White Paper.

****

Ambassador Mohammad Alami Musa is Head of Studies in the Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies (SRP) Programme. He is concurrently Singapore's non-resident Ambassador to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. Amb Alami also holds the appointment of Council President of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) and Singapore's Honorary Business Representative for the Middle East and North Africa.

As a keen observer of Muslim development in multi-cultural societies, Amb Alami was deeply involved in the Singapore Muslim Identity project, conceptualising, developing, writing and presenting seminars on the issue of the minority Muslim community's identity in a secular, multi-religious and culturally diverse society. He is an active promoter of positive inter-religious relations in Singapore. Regionally, Amb Alami was instrumental in starting up efforts to promote inter-religious relations.

Amb Alami studied Engineering at the University of Singapore. He proceeded to obtain his Master in Engineering from the same university.

The author wishes to acknowledge and thank SRP Research Analysts Afiqah bte Zainal and Nursheila Abdul Muez from the Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies (SRP) Programme at RSIS for assistance in the research and preparation of this paper.

Uncertain Beginnings of State

The birth of Singapore as a new state was fraught with uncertainties. Its raison d'etre was similar to that of other states—to provide a good life to people under its rule within recognised geographical boundaries. It was presumed that, as citizens, the people of Singapore had entered into a social contract where they were willing to be subjected to the legitimate authority of the state.[1] This social contract required the citizens to exercise self-restraint and accept some measure of control in return for the common goods, communal benefits and good life that the state was obliged to provide.[2]

The state of Singapore had set out to deliver this good life by providing prosperity through its housing, healthcare, job creation and economic development programmes. These are materialist goals, and in this respect Singapore behaves like a conservative state. The values preferred by the conservative state are those that support economic growth and social stability.[3] These are values that contribute to social peace, public order and national security.

The rhetoric and substantive task of nation-building were exclusively concerned with improving the material conditions of the population.[4] The cultural underpinnings for ideological formation, with regard to values and attitudes, thus had to be conducive to economic development.[5] Singapore, therefore, adopted a pragmatic, and not an ideological, approach in state-craft and a utilitarian attitude in its dealings with society.

The conservative state behaves and acts in ways to remove any tension that may cause social discord. Therefore, it is no surprise that the government in a conservative state will strengthen its public role and tend to align itself with the institutions of religion for the political objective of ensuring social peace.[6] This is because the government is aware of the social importance of religion and its possible advantages as a moral anchor for individuals as well as society. However, the fact that religion can also cause strife, therefore, means that the government has to be circumspect and pragmatic in its dealings with religion so that the benefits can be reaped while the threats contained. This explains why the role of religion and religious leaders has been carefully delineated in Singapore.[7]

---

[1] Heywood, Andrew. *Political Theory: An Introduction.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p 71.
[2] Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration.* Oxford University Press, 2016, pp 39–42; Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Edited by J.C.A. Gaskin. Oxford University Press, 1998, pp 198–205.
[3] Tamney, Joseph B. "Conservative Government and Support for the Religious Institution in Singapore: An Uneasy Alliance." *Sociological Analysis* 53 (1992), p 201.
[4] Chua Beng Huat. *Communitarian ideology and democracy in Singapore*. London: Routledge, 1995, p 132.
[5] Ibid, 14
[6] Tamney, Joseph B. "Conservative Government and Support for the Religious Institution in Singapore: An Uneasy Alliance." *Sociological Analysis* 53 (1992), pp 201, 213–214.
[7] Tong Chee Kiong. *Rationalizing Religion: Religious Conversion, Revivalism and Competition in Singapore Society.* Boston: Brill, 2007, p 241, 262.

Plural Society without Multi-Culturalism

A discussion of religion in Singapore has to be understood against the complex socio-political backdrop of state formation. When Singapore was accorded self-government by the British in 1959, it had to grapple with a new political reality forced upon its population under conditions beyond its control. As a religiously and ethnically diverse society, the cultural orientations of the people were to different homelands well before colonial rule.[8] Subsequently, British colonial policies further catalysed the mass movement of immigrant peoples to Singapore and established a system of social stratification based on ethnicity and occupation or trade specialisation. The pluralistic society of immigrants, primarily from China, India, Indonesia and Malaya, was characterised by closely-bonded ethnic groups that were divided from one another geographically and socially by culture, language, religion, trade and social class.[9] The population lived within the colonial model of plural living; they were not unified, but rather economically stratified along ethnic and hence similarly delineated religious lines. The people had a limited sense of belonging, merely living peacefully side by side, but separately within the same political unit. As the division of labour was based on racial lines, inter-racial interactions were mainly dictated and characterised by market relations.[10]

Ethnic and religious tensions arose during the tumultuous years (1963 to 1965) when Singapore was part of the Malaysian Federation. Leaders of the People's Action Party (PAP) of Singapore and those from Malaysia's United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in Kuala Lumpur clashed ideologically on the conception of the Malaysian nation. While the PAP battled for a Malaysia belonging to all ("Malaysian Malaysia"), UMNO remained adamant about their "Malay-Islam-Monarchy" politics of supremacy. Addressing the Malaysian Parliament, the PAP's Mr Lee Kuan Yew emphasised that "we cannot agree to anything but a Malaysian Malaysia. We are prepared to play it in accordance with the rules, perhaps wait five years or fifteen years, but the ideas we represent must come through." He added, "We stand by the Constitution… preserve, protect and defend it including that all the fundamental rights of all Malaysian citizens are equal."[11]

PAP leaders saw first-hand how communalism reared its ugly head and they were convinced that organising a multi-racial state on the basis of the supremacy of one race was the surest recipe for state failure. Their painful experience when Singapore was part of Malaysia left a lasting impact on their world view with regard to ethnicity and religion. These historically determined ideas and interests shaped their ideology in governing a plural society. Yet, these beliefs needed to be permeated to all levels of society. Thus, there was an urgent need to universalise the ideology and align it with the ideas and interests of the people who were seeking a materially good life.

[8] Chua Beng Huat, op. cit., 101.
[9] Turnbull, Mary C. *A Short History of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.* Singapore: Graham Brash, 1980, pp 34–77.
[10] Chua Beng Huat, op. cit., pp 101-102; Furnivall, John S. *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and the Netherlands Indies.* UK: University Press, 1948, pp 304–305.
[11] National Archives of Singapore. "Speech by Singapore's Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, during the debate in the Federal Parliament on 27th May, 1965, on the motion of thanks to the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong for his speech from the throne." Singapore Government Press Release, 1965.

New Ideology for Conformance and Social Peace

This universalisation gave rise to a normative value system which moulded the ideological system of the new state in Singapore. The desire for economic prosperity to achieve a materially comfortable life, and the ideas and values needed for economic growth, which included hard work, frugality and social order, were built into this ideological thinking. But these values and ideas were taken for granted as common sense reality, and their historicity of being shaped from the turbulent years when Singapore was a part of Malaysia needed to be better appreciated by the population.[12]

Given that Singapore unexpectedly became an independent nation, the government undertook the task of ideological formation by using a narrative heavily laced with the imperative for survival. The sense of nationhood in the early days of state formation, therefore, had to be developed based on the discourse of political leaders. According to Chua Beng Huat, this "discursive identity" that emerged enabled the multi-ethnic and multi-religious population to feel that they shared common interests, faith and destiny. This sense of identity and the ideological normative system were instrumental to ensure social discipline and facilitated the state's actions to achieve certain desirable ends.[13] For the state to legitimise such actions, it had to ensure that continued economic prosperity was achieved for the benefit of the population. Otherwise, the ruling elite would lose its credibility to rule.

The management of diversity in this early stage of state formation was undertaken within the context of creating a united society regardless of race, language or religion, and using ethnic pride and cultural tradition as a mobilising force to achieve prosperity.[14] The laws of the state provided the "sacred canopy" under which society functioned and religion operated.[15] Attempts to challenge the legitimate authority of the state or to undermine social order were decisively dealt with as these would affect the ability of the state to deliver economic growth. One case exemplifying this stern approach by the government was that involving the Angkatan Revolusi Tentera Islam Singapura (ARTIS), which sought to overthrow the government in 1961 by inciting the Malays to stand up to the Chinese. Communal riots involving the Malays and Chinese broke out in 1964 during a Muslim procession held to celebrate the Prophet Muhammad's birthday.[16] These tragic riots and the spill-over skirmishes in the aftermath of the May 13 communal riots in Malaysia in 1969 were other significant instances where the state took a tough approach to ensure the social peace and stability that were important to attract investors to the country. The creation of material wealth was, therefore, the basis of the state, and the state garnered the support of all elements, including religion, to reinforce this basis. Minister S. Rajaratnam summed up the government's approach by saying that more, and not less, authority and discipline were

[12] Chua Beng Huat, op. cit., pp 15–16, 44.
[13] Chua Beng Huat, op. cit., pp 102–103, 108.
[14] Gopinathan, S. "Moral Education in a Plural Society: A Singapore Case Study" *International Review of Education* 26 (1980), pp 171–185.
[15] Tham Seong Chee. "Religious Influences and Impulses Impacting Singapore." In *Religious Diversity in Singapore,* edited by Lai Ah Eng, pp 3–27. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008, p 25.
[16] Lau Albert. *A Moment of Anguish: Singapore in Malaysia and the Politics of Disengagement*. Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2003, pp 162–69.

necessary.[17] Although the state subsequently liberalised the economy, it still maintained tight social control.[18]

Emergence of Moral Crisis

Singapore developed its economy by courting foreign investors and big multi-national companies to invest and set up operations in the country's industrial estates. The influx of these foreign investors and multi-nationals, typically from the West, had its social consequences. In the late 1970s, Singapore's leaders felt that a moral crisis was emerging owing to what they saw as the wholesome importation of Western values. They observed that moral values had deteriorated and that the social ethos and work ethics conducive to economic survival had weakened.

The state's response to the perceived moral crisis in the 1970s and 1980s was reflected in the public articulations of government leaders, who commented on the social ills plaguing Singapore. Then President Benjamin Sheares stressed in his 1975 President's Address "the importance of arresting the trend of mounting crime rate."[19] The increasing rate of crime "such as robbery, theft, murder and the drug sub-culture" was aggravated by the fact that "most of those involved in such crimes were persons in their teens and early twenties."[20]

In his 1972 National Day Rally speech, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's prime minister, spoke about this serious loss of values. He said, "… only when we first know our traditional values can we be quite clear that the Western world is a different system, a different voltage, structured for purposes different from ours." Prime Minister Lee added that if society failed to preserve indigenous languages and cultures, it would be a completely de-culturalised lot**.** Singapore, in his view, was vulnerable as its ethos had weakened owing to the blind adoption of the individual-centred lifestyle of Western culture, especially by youths who lacked a sense of purpose, community spirit and citizenship.[21]

Other key members of the political leadership also expressed deep concern over the impact of the moral crisis. Minister Goh Keng Swee lamented the loss of traditional values and expressed his concern that a society unguided by moral values cannot remain cohesive under stress.[22] In a four-day interview with *The Straits Times*, he elaborated his view by giving examples of lapses in business ethics, such as the case of dishonest bankers, drug and theft problems among the military, snobbery among elite school students, aged parents being sent to welfare homes, and, most importantly, the decline in work

[17] Gopinathan, S. "Moral Education in a Plural Society: A Singapore Case Study" *International Review of Education* 26 (1980), p 175.
[18] Ooi Can-Seng. "Political Pragmatism and the Creative Economy: Singapore as a City for the Arts." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 16 (2010), p 405.
[19] Parliament of Singapore, *Singapore Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)* Vol. 34, No. 2, February 25–27, 1975, col: 134.
[20] Parliament of Singapore, *Singapore Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)* Vol. 34, No. 2, February 25–27, 1975, col: 134–148
[21] Ong J. H. "Community Security." In *Understanding Singapore Society,* edited by Ong J. H., C. K. Tong and E. S .Tan. Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1997.
[22] Goh Keng Swee. "Report on the Ministry of Education." Education Study Team, Singapore, 1978, p 5.

ethics.[23] In a speech at a seminar organised by the Hindu Centre, another senior leader, Minister S. Rajaratnam noted that "the moral crisis we face today…derives in one way or another from the gradual erosion of social morality."[24] According to the minister, without a strong sense of social morality, there could not be moral individuals. He openly criticised, and called for a review of, the then existing moral education programme, noting that "the teaching of social morality, if taught at all, has been unsystematic, desultory and possibly furtive." As such, the solution was to review moral education "towards the inculcation of private morality as well as social morality," which calls for the inclusion of religion. Rajaratnam said that "the truly religious man is also a moral man… the true objective of all religions is the moral perfection of man."[25]

From the discourse of Singapore's politicians and media reports of their speeches, it is evident that the perceived moral crisis of the late 1970s became a central concern for Singapore's leaders. There was, therefore, an urgent need to address the crisis in the interest of the economic survival of the young nation.

The Secular State's Turn to Religion

Government leaders began to attribute the moral crisis and the ineffectiveness of civic education in schools to the absence of a religious anchor. This absence was understandable as Singapore's ideology was based on secularism, and religion played a minimal role in the common space. The government thus began to refer to religion as the basis of moral development, acted as the key decision maker on matters regarding civic education in schools, and appropriated religious values to counter what it saw as the amoral conditions of Westernisation and globalisation.[26] It adopted what it believed to be bold measures, including using religious inputs in civic education and transmission of moral values extracted from religious teachings.[27] In doing so, policymakers, according to Fullan, resorted to "hyper-rational" assumptions[28] when introducing changes and utilised pragmatic reasoning in the discussion of ethics. The emphasis on "crisis and survival" justified the introduction of a religious knowledge programme in schools and the government's role in it, especially at the level of policy.[29] Notwithstanding what needed to be done, the government placed itself in a neutral space that compelled it to act in ways

[23] *The Straits Times.* "The grads who lack moral scruples." December 30, 1982, p 1.
[24] National Archives of Singapore. "Speech by S Rajaratnam, Minister for Foreign Affairs, at a seminar organised by the Hindu Centre at the PUB Auditorium on Friday 8 February 1980 at 8.00 pm." Singapore Government Press Release, 1980.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Tong Chee Kiong, op. cit., p 262.
[27] Tan Jason. "The Rise and Fall of Religious Knowledge in Singapore Secondary Schools." *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 29 (1997), p 611.
[28] Fullan argues that educational change fails partly because of the hyper-rational assumptions of policymakers. Hyper-rational assumptions refer to the assumption that the social world can be altered by seemingly logical argument; educational outcomes (such as moral citizens) are thoroughly prescribed without any feasible plan spelling out how to achieve them. Therein lies an overemphasis on the planning aspect, relative to the implementation aspect, and the consequent failure to take into account situational constraints faced by potential implementers. See Fullan, Michael G. *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, 4th ed. New York: Teachers College Press, 2007, pp 108–117.
[29] Hill, Michael. "The Macho-Management of Religious Diversity in Singapore." *Australian Religion Studies Review* 12 (1999), pp 71–72.

that did not privilege any particular group.[30] This was because Singapore was an avowedly secular state but a secular state that recognised religion.[31] The complex dynamics between the practice of religion by different faith communities and the need to be citizens committed to a secular state had to be managed in order to secure a harmonious existence.

The state determined that the problem lay in the "lack of spiritual or moral education of our young" and that youths needed to "imbibe those values traditional to Asian society" to counter the "more spurious fashions of the West" that resulted in "growing rootlessness".[32] Then Education Minister Goh Keng Swee stated that "religious knowledge would provide the intellectual basis which will bind the various moral qualities we deem desirable into a consistent system of thought."[33]

The debate on how moral education could sufficiently address the crisis and inculcate moral and ethical values in the young revolved around defining "Asian values". The success of the Asian tigers (Hong Kong, Korea and Taiwan) in achieving economic prosperity bolstered the legitimacy of "Asian values" as a positive influence. In defining Asian values, several members of Parliament made reference to the role of religion in defining morality. Religion was seen to be the source of morality and moral values necessary to counter the growing social ills and cultural rootlessness.

Although convinced that religion needed to be used to arrest the moral crisis, there were nevertheless practical issues to consider in incorporating religion into moral education, including the manner in which consultations with local religious leaders, foreign theology scholars, and school principals were carried out. The government's initial review of moral education was tasked to the Moral Education Committee headed by Ong Teng Cheong. As the committee consisted only of parliamentarians, its experience in dealing with education and morality was questioned.[34] The government also consulted key representatives it identified in its debate over the compulsory Religious Knowledge policy who included officials from the Singapore Buddhist Federation, the Ramakrishna Mission, Trinity Theological College and Muslim leaders.[35] Nevertheless, it did not consult others such as the Sikh Advisory Board.[36] Meanwhile, there was also reliance on external scholars, such as the use of Chinese scholars in the United States to draft the curriculum and textbooks for Confucian ethics.[37]

Even as the government used religion to counter the onset of the perceived moral crisis, several Members of Parliament noted the "potential areas of danger and friction", including religious conversion,

[30] Chua Beng Huat, op. cit., p 119.
[31] Tamney, Joseph B. "Religion and the State in Singapore." *Journal of Church and State* 30 (1988), p 109.
[32] Parliament of Singapore, *Singapore Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)* Vol. 34, No. 2, February 25–27, 1975, cols: 146-147; Goh Keng Swee Report, op. cit., p 5.
[33] Ong Teng Cheong. "Report on Moral Education." Moral Education Committee, Singapore, 1979, p iii.
[34] Gopinathan, S. "Moral Education in a Plural Society: A Singapore Case Study" *International Review of Education* 26 (1980), p 183.
[35] *The Straits Times.* "Religion to be a compulsory subject." January 17, 1982, p 1.
[36] *The Straits Times*. "Sikh studies added to list of subjects." August 4, 1983, p 1.
[37] National Archives of Singapore. "Statement by Dr Goh Keng Swee, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education." Singapore Government Press Release, 8 May 1982.

which could "upset our existing atmosphere, racial tolerance and religious harmony".[38] These concerns were echoed by parents and principals as well. The government responded to the concerns but reiterated the need for the Religious Knowledge programme, noting that any appeals for exemptions from it could be detrimental to society.[39] In the aforesaid interview carried in *The Straits Times* over four days, Dr Goh discussed the role of religion and moral education. Referring to religion as a "precious asset".[40] Dr Goh highlighted that religion played an important role in ensuring that "succeeding generations of Singaporeans will continue to know right from wrong".[41]

State-Imposed Moral Education—Pragmatism in State-Religion Negotiation

The pragmatic approach of the government was evident in its handling of the moral crisis. This approach was especially necessary, given Singapore's vulnerabilities following separation from Malaysia, and the need to ensure its survival as a newly-independent state.

The state was clear on the nexus between a strong sense of morality and successful economic development. Religion was seen to be the foundation of the moral values and morality necessary to counter the growing social ills and cultural rootlessness.[42] The state believed that morality, both individual and social, would contribute to personal discipline and social order, which would then lead to a citizenry that possessed values and attitudes conducive to economic growth. As a conservative state preoccupied with economic survival during its nascent stage, any significant development that might impede the achievement of its economic objective would be regarded as a crisis. Functioning within a typical conservative state typology, the government was decisive in defining the nature of the crisis, identifying the causes and developing solutions needed to overcome the moral crisis. The crisis and the economic imperative of a fledging nation impelled the government to take action by introducing a religious knowledge programme to strengthen the moral fibre of society. The government involved itself in the whole gamut of moral education, including policy formulation, curriculum planning, framing of issues and conduct of public discussions.[43]

The government's response to the perceived moral crisis illustrated its highly pragmatic approach to religion within the avowedly secular state. Although it maintained that the Singapore state was and should remain secular and neutral in its dealings with religion and adhered to the principle of non-interference in matters of religion, the policies proposed and undertaken in the early 1980s demonstrated that the state was prepared to intervene in the realm of religion when necessary to

[38] Parliament of Singapore, *Singapore Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)* Vol. 41, No. 11, March 17. 1982, cols: 1080–1084.
[39] *The Straits Times.* "Religion to be a compulsory subject." January 17, 1982, p 1.
[40] *The Straits Times.* "You've got something when you have religious faith…." December 29, 1982, p 1.
[41] *The Straits Times.* "Why moral education." December 28, 1982, p 1.
[42] Parliament of Singapore, *Singapore Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)* Vol. 46, No. 3, July 23, 1985, cols: 236; National Archives of Singapore. "Speech by S Rajaratnam, Minister for Foreign Affairs, at a seminar organised by the Hindu Centre at the PUB Auditorium on Friday 8 February 1980 at 8.00 pm." Singapore Government Press Release, 1980.
[43] Tan, Jason. "The Rise and Fall of Religious Knowledge in Singapore Secondary Schools." *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 29 (1997), p 608.

maintain stability, public order and long term economic prosperity. These are permanent interests of society which the practice of religion must not jeopardise.[44] As an unwavering guardian of Singapore's success as a small city-state, the government felt compelled to adopt a bold strategy of intervening in introducing the compulsory Religious Knowledge programme in schools despite the acknowledged sensitivities of religion.

In his theory of religion-state relations, Hobbes argues that while the function and operation of the state is primarily secular—i.e. providing peace and security—it is essential for the state to assume total command of all matters external to religion.[45] He maintains that the apparatus of the state should remain neutral on the truth claims of religious teachings and avoid inquiring into the inner lives of citizens to ascertain their true beliefs. Nonetheless, Hobbes concludes that the secular ruler cannot be indifferent to religious matters. Instead, the state has a legitimate role in matters related to religion to ensure that peace is maintained.[46] According to another scholar, Bhikhu Parekh, the secular state must be concerned with the moral and material interests of its citizens and not matters of their souls and other-worldly well-being.[47]

The Singapore government had argued that the Religious Knowledge programme would not deal with the spiritual, doctrinal and ritualistic aspects of religion. It would merely leverage on the teachings of religion that develop moral values in citizens so that they grow up to be socially responsible, community-spirited, law-abiding and economically productive citizens.[48] In short, the state was interested in the external or social aspects of religion that had a bearing on society and that contributed to social morality and the values needed for a successful economy. The state did not, through the Religious Knowledge programme, interfere in matters relating to the truth of religious teachings. In this regard, the state believed that its approach was in line with the principle of non-interference in the affairs of religion, as required of a secular state.

However, a study on Religions and Religious Revivalism in Singapore by the Sociology Department at the National University of Singapore (NUS) concluded that the Singapore government, through the introduction of compulsory Religious Knowledge programmes in schools, had not been entirely neutral in religious matters.[49] Only Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism were initially offered as part of the Religious Knowledge programmes; Sikhism was added later but Taoism and minority religious were not offered. Students without religious affiliations or religious preference could do a generic moral education course, such as World Religions or Confucian ethics. Upon review of the Religious Knowledge subjects offered, the then Education Minister Tony Tan pointed out in 1989 that the non-

[44] Weber, Max. "Politics as a Vocation." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology,* translated and edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946, p 77.
[45] Lilla, Mark. *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics and the Modern West.* New York: Alfred Knopf, 2007, pp 86–90.
[46] Blackford, Russell. *Freedom of Religion and the Secular State*. UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2012, p 67.
[47] Parekh, Bhikhu C. "Secularism and Managing Religious Diversity." Lecture presented at seminar organised by the Centre for Excellence in National Security (CENS), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, September 15, 2015.
[48] Ong Teng Cheong. "Report on Moral Education." Moral Education Committee, Singapore, 1979, pp 8–12.
[49] Kuo C. Y., Eddie, et al. "Religion and Religious Revivalism in Singapore." Ministry of Community Development, Singapore, 1988, p 38.

inclusion of some religions was not in accordance with the government's desire to be "neutral and even-handed in the handling of religious matters in Singapore."[50] However, the state offered limited explanation as to why some religions were offered while others were not.

The state effectively determined what "religion was and what religion was not" through its decision on what was to be included in the Religious Knowledge curriculum.[51] This decision could be considered inconsistent with the spirit of secularism, which emphasises that all citizens must be treated impartially and must enjoy rights which are not determined by their religious beliefs.[52]

As indicated by a Ministry of Community and Development report,[53] the implementation of the Religious Knowledge programme had compromised the neutrality of the state in the secular space, and it was made clear both in Parliament and to the public that it was not the intention of the government to veer from its policy of neutrality.[54] The state had exercised its legitimate authority and power to introduce a Religious Knowledge programme in schools in pragmatic ways to overcome a perceived moral crisis.

Threats to Society and State

The government believed that religious life in Singapore's multi-faith society needed to be judiciously managed by the various faith communities and should not be left unattended as the threat of communal strife was real. This concern was justified, given the Maria Hertogh riots in 1950 and racial riots in 1964. Lee Hsien Loong noted, "We have to find some way to compromise practically what is impossible to reconcile theologically."[55] A lot of hard work needed to be put in to ensure inter-religious harmony because religious diversity has the potential to generate misunderstandings among religious communities. As such, the government's position was to adopt a preventive approach, and even an interventionist approach, if necessary. Hence, "absolute religious freedom"—which inherently includes the unbridled liberty to practise and propagate one's religious teachings—was neither possible nor desirable.

The very transcendent nature of religion innately challenges the sovereignty of the state, for it provides a world view that extends beyond the temporal world. Furthermore, religion inherently concerns itself

[50] Parliament of Singapore, *Singapore Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)* Vol. 54, No. 7, October 6, 1989, cols: 575.
[51] Tamney, Joseph B. "Religion and the State in Singapore." *Journal of Church and State* 30 (1988), p 118.
[52] Parekh Bhikhu C. *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*. Harvard University Press, 2002.
[53] Kuo C. Y., Eddie, et al. "Religion and Religious Revivalism in Singapore." Ministry of Community Development, Singapore, 1988, p 40.
[54] Parliament of Singapore, *Singapore Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)* Vol. 54, No. 7, October 6, 1989, cols: 574–583; *The Straits Times*. "Bill to keep Religion, Politics separate 'soon.'" October 7, 1989, pp 1, 22.
[55] *The Straits Times.* "Restraints in the way religious groups practise their faith needed." January 31, 1990, 1.

with politics.[56] Throughout the course of history, religious movements have been fluid and volatile, marked by fierce proselytisation, crusades and bloodshed.[57]

The inherently complex nature of religion presented the Singapore government with the following implications. Firstly, the diasporic religious communities within the multi-religious society could be vulnerable to influences from external revivalist movements and sectarian divides. Secondly, tensions could revolve around unprecedented demographic changes owing to aggressive proselytisation and high rates of conversion. Thirdly, religion's all-encompassing world view would enable it to encroach into politics and challenge state authority.

Religious revivalist movements

Since the 1980s, there has been a strong resurgence of religious revivalist movements in Southeast Asia and throughout the world—the emergence of Liberation Theology in Latin America and the Philippines; the Islamic Dakwah Movement in the Middle East, Malaysia and Indonesia; a strongly resurgent Buddhist revivalist movement in Asia and America; and a Hindu resurgence in the Indian subcontinent.[58] Furthermore, such revivalist movements also tend to create sects within religions, creating not only inter-religious tensions, but intra-religious tensions as well.

The Islamic Dakwah Movement refers to the emergence and spread of a neo-fundamentalist orientation—a supremacist, exclusivist and puritanical attitude towards interpretations of Islam and demands for Islamic visibility in public life.[59] Another extremist movement, the "Ikhwan" or Muslim Brotherhood, took root in Singapore in mid-1978, with the long-term aim of establishing an Islamic state.[60] The Ikhwan was considered to have a subversive intent, hence it was undesirable in Singapore. The Singapore government invoked the Internal Security Act (ISA) to arrest five leading Ikhwan members while giving warnings to other members.

Other religions also struggled with intra-religious tensions.[61] The Shiv Mandir, a Hindu sect, angered the Tamil Hindus in 1989 by burning an effigy of Ravana, a Hindu mythological king, during a religious festival. In retaliation, the Tamil Hindus wanted to stage a protest demonstration at a Shiv Mandir function.[62] This effort was foiled by the authorities. There were also tensions among Christian denominations: Protestant groups distributed pamphlets and booklets denigrating the Roman Catholic

[56] Wolterstorff, Nicholas. "The Role of Religion in Decision and Discussion of Political Issues," In *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Reasons in Political Debate,* edited by Robert Audi and Nicholas Wolterstorff. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997, p 67.
[57] Hall, John R. "Religion and Violence." *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp 359–360.
[58] Khun Eng Kuah. "Maintaining ethno-religious harmony in Singapore." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 28 (1998), p 103.
[59] Mohamed Taib Mohamed Imran. "Neofundamentalist Thought, Dakwah, and Religious Pluralism among Muslims in Singapore." International Sociological Association (ISA) eSymposium for Sociology. Singapore, 2012, pp 1, 4.
[60] Government of Singapore. "White Paper on Maintenance of Religious Harmony." 1989.
[61] *The Straits Times*. "Government White Paper, titled Maintenance of Religious Harmony, released yesterday for public discussion." December 29, 1989, p 2.
[62] Government of Singapore. "White Paper on Maintenance of Religious Harmony." 1989, pp 14–15.

Church and the Pope, the Charismatics and the Ecumenists. The Catholic Church retaliated by condemning these attempts in their own publications.[63] The assassination of Indira Gandhi by Sikh extremists in New Delhi in 1984 brought about increased tensions between the Hindu and Sikh communities, which had a spill-over effect in Singapore. There were four reported cases of assaults on Sikhs, acts of vandalism on Sikh properties and several threatening phone calls to Sikh individuals and institutions.[64]

Aggressive proselytisation

The aforementioned shifts in religious trends carry long-term social implications, namely, the rise of aggressive proselytisation and a disproportionately large numbers of converts. The recognition by the state (hence legitimisation) of religion's contribution to moral values in Singapore through the Religious Knowledge programme in schools indirectly encouraged the main religions to adopt higher public profiles. Part of the challenge of a multi-faith society, where religions constantly interact with one another, is dealing with the possibility of "losing" the people of one faith to another faith. While the various religions in Singapore had traditionally abstained from systematically proselytising individuals, the religious revivalism in the 1980s created fertile conditions for a shift in this trend. The new proselytisation zeal was seen to be problematic to the state not only because it could potentially escalate to inter- and intra-religious conflict, but also because any dramatic shift in religious demographics would have implications for state policies.

From the mid-1980s, Internal Security Department (ISD) reports indicated how certain religious groups were becoming overzealous in their proselytisation efforts. This aggressive propagation of faith was affecting other religious groups, who were forced to respond to retain their followings.[65] The bulk of the proselytisation efforts was carried out by some Christian evangelical groups and Islamic Dakwah members. There were also attempts to convert vulnerable individuals in hospitals and in the universities.[66] Various government bodies received numerous complaints over aggressive proselytisation efforts.[67] The established religious communities whose members had been targeted in overt proselytisation acts by the more zealous groups responded to the religious competition by striving to be more prominent.

The need to address these changes in religious trends was highlighted in a study commissioned by the Ministry of Community Development in 1988. In the report titled Religion and Religious Revivalism, academics from the National University of Singapore acknowledged how "the religious composition of

[63] Ibid., p 15
[64] Khun Eng Kuah, op. cit., p 111.
[65] Parliament of Singapore, *Singapore Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)* Vol. 54, No. 11, February 22–23, 1990, cols: 1148.
[66] *The Straits Times*. "ISD Report cites cases of religious tension." December 30, 1989, p 25.
[67] Government of Singapore. "White Paper on Maintenance of Religious Harmony." 1989, p 13.

the population has changed", with "shifts in religious affiliation" that had and will continue to occur.[68] Further, they highlighted that "the shifting trends in recent years, both in the size of membership and in changing attitudes and activities, may threaten to disrupt the subtle and delicate equilibrium which has characterised the religious scene in Singapore for decades".[69] This is because a disproportionately large number of converts could potentially unsettle the religious harmony of the nation, as it meant a parallel decrease in the size of other religious communities.

As such, aggressive proselytisation had to be contained because it posed serious threats to religious and racial harmony and public order. "Unless all religious groups exercise moderation and tolerance in their efforts to win converts … there will be religious friction, communal strife and political instability".[70]

Religion's encroachment into politics

Another possible threat of leaving religion to take a natural course is its possible encroachment into politics. The separation of religion and politics and the relegation of religion to the private sphere are modern liberal concepts.[71] However, conservative, traditional movements often reject this distinction between religion and politics, arguing that politics is in fact central to religion. Thus, religion has the capacity to produce alternative meanings of social reality and social justice that can challenge the prevailing government ideology, thereby threatening the government's authority.

An example where religion was seen to have intervened in the political arena was the involvement of a number of Catholic priests in the discussion of various socio-economic issues concerning the nation in the mid-1980s. Separately, in May 1987, the government arrested 22 persons, including lay Catholic activists, in connection with investigations into a plot to establish a Marxist state. The government called them "new hybrid-pro-communist types [augmenting] traditional CPM [Communist Party of Malaya] tactics with new techniques and methods, using the Catholic church and religious organisations" in an attempt to "subvert the existing system of government and to seize power in Singapore".[72] As several of those arrested were Catholics activists, the government assured the Catholic Church and the general population that the crackdown was not an attack on the Church itself. Other examples include foreign theologians who spoke extensively about the "evil" of state policies and the need to challenge the secular state. These theologians were subsequently banned from re-entering the country.[73]

[68] Kuo C. Y., Eddie, et al. "Religion and Religious Revivalism in Singapore." Ministry of Community Development, Singapore, 1988, p 1.
[69] Kuo C. Y., Eddie, et al. "Religion and Religious Revivalism in Singapore." Ministry of Community Development, Singapore, 1988, p 2.
[70] *The Straits Times*. "ISD Report cites cases of religious tension." December 30, 1989, p 25.
[71] Heywood, Andrew. *Political Theory: An Introduction.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p 238.
[72] *The Straits Times*. "Two main fronts in conspiracy." May 27, 1987, p 14.
[73] *The Straits Times.* "Not proper to mix religion and politics in a pluralistic society." September 2, 1987, p 21.

In conclusion, the religious trends and events of the 1980s illustrate the volatile nature of, and the need for careful treatment of, religious activities. Given the transcendent and proselytising nature of religion and the external religious influences to which Singapore was susceptible, if religious activism had been left unmanaged, there might have been outbreaks of social disorder, which could have threatened social harmony. Government intervention was therefore necessary to maintain social order.

The State Reclaiming its Legitimate Authority

In response to the aforementioned threats, the government moved swiftly to exercise its legitimate authority to maintain religious harmony and social cohesion. The events of the mid-1980s stimulated a religion-state re-negotiation that more clearly defined the parameters of religion's role in society. The government believed that the shifts in religious trends indicated a need for immediate action before there was conflict that could permanently harm the delicate social stability. It is evident that the Singapore government saw it as its obligation to intervene to delineate religion's place in the public sphere and ensure that the actions of religious individuals or groups did not disrupt social peace and that the permanent interests of society (i.e. public order and economic prosperity) were protected.

Removal of Religious Knowledge from moral education

Heeding criticism, the government moved decisively to review the policy of promoting Religious Knowledge. The removal of Religious Knowledge as a compulsory subject illustrated the government's pragmatism and its preparedness to review policies that did not produce the desired results. Unlike the prior decision to introduce Religious Knowledge, the then Minister of Education, Dr Tony Tan urged that the government "should not take precipitate action on such a complex and important matter" but rather, "discuss the matter with parents, teachers and principals, community leaders and the heads of the established religions in Singapore, Members of Parliament, academics and the public" before making the final decision.[74] There was also extensive media attention to the public consultations, which gave the impression of greater inclusivity of opinions. In short, where the matter at hand was a serious one, the government was prepared to use public consultation and engagement albeit in a well-calibrated manner. Nonetheless, the final decision still rested solely with the government.[75]

Maintenance of Religious Harmony (MRH) White Paper

The presentation of the MRH White Paper and introduction of the MRH Bill signalled the government's strength and authoritative nature. Amid all the rivalries and competition for religious membership, the state responded with the introduction of the MRH Bill to prevent such latent tensions from becoming overt conflicts. The MRH Paper led to a set of principles of governance to guide religious life within the secular and plural state. With its stance that the state "must be a strictly secular state" in order to

[74] Parliament of Singapore, *Singapore Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)* Vol. 54, No. 7, October 6, 1989, cols: 575.
[75] The Straits Times. "RK to be replaced with Civics." October 7, 1989, p 1.

accommodate “totally different spiritual and moral beliefs”, the White Paper represented the juncture at which the separation of religion and politics in Singapore was clearly outlined. The paper also delineated the specific role of religious leaders in the public sphere, warning that the leaders “should not use their religious authority to sway their followers, much less actively incite them to oppose the Government”.[76]

Alongside the White Paper, key government officials also reiterated in public speeches and press releases the need for religion to stay out of politics. In a speech titled “Is God a Liberation Theologian?”, presented at the National University of Singapore on 14 August 1987, Mr S. Rajaratnam strongly emphasised that “Liberation Theology has nothing to do with God but politicised priests, ambitious bishops and smart Communists.”[77] This theme was reiterated in the President’s Address to Parliament on 9 January 1989, which noted that “religion must be kept rigorously separate from politics” and not “venture into radical social action.”[78]

In summary, it was within the context of a secular Singapore constitutionally guaranteeing religious freedom that the state was judicious in taking measures, even pre-emptive, to prevent potential religious conflict and be the final arbiter of religious disputes. The events of the 1980s reaffirmed the government’s firm stand to ensure religious harmony, and the state’s experience in managing the social issues and religious tensions in those years has had an impact on the management of religious diversity up till today. Yet, this delicate balance between secularism and freedom of religion will always be a point of tension and contestation in the future. The state is in the unenviable position of having to take the lead continuously in guarding against potential racial and religious tensions.

Looking Towards the Future

The developments of the 1980s provided a significant impulse for the state to re-shape its relations with religion and exercise its authority to ensure that religious activities were not taking place at the expense of social cohesion and peace. It is evident that issues of state-religion relations are complex, and challenges will continue to arise in response to foreign and local socio-political changes. The episodes that unfolded during those eventful years were profoundly instrumental in laying out the “basic requirements for maintaining religious harmony and the ground-rules of prudence and good conduct” in the context of multi-religious co-existence and religion-secular state relations.[79] These principles for harmonious multi-religious living are valid till today. They can be clustered into four categories guiding the conduct of religion: (i) within each religion’s own body of followers; (ii) within a multi-religious society; (iii) with respect to its involvement in politics; and (iv) with regard to the state.

[76] Government of Singapore. “White Paper on Maintenance of Religious Harmony.” 1989, p 6.
[77] National Archives of Singapore. “Speech by Mr S Rajaratnam, Senior Minister (Prime Minister's Office) at the Opening of the Seminar on ‘Tamil Language and Tamil Society’ at the National University of Singapore, Lecture Theatre 11 on Saturday, 18 July 1987 at 2.30 pm.” Singapore Government Press Release, 1987.
[78] Parliament of Singapore, *Singapore Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)* Vol. 54, No. 1, January 9, 1989, cols: 18.
[79] Government of Singapore. “White Paper on Maintenance of Religious Harmony.” 1989.

These principles of governance are applied within the context of a state that staunchly embraces secularism but at the same time recognises that religion has a positive role in contributing to social well-being and economic prosperity. In addressing Parliament in April 2016, Minister Shanmugam reiterated that while government would continue to protect racial as well as religious harmony and fight extremism as well as terrorism, it will not oppose any religion.[80] The state remains the custodian of harmony and peace by ensuring that religious communities abide by the principles set out in the Bill, which in summary are as follows.[81]

i. Religious communities need to recognise that even though Article 15 of the Constitution guarantees that "Every person has the right to profess and practise his religion and to propagate it", this freedom is not absolute as its exercise must not give rise to public disorder, health issues and disharmony. Furthermore, they must acknowledge the multi-religious character of the society, the sensitivities of other religious groups and respect the right of individuals to hold to their own beliefs.

ii. Different religious groups must exercise moderation and tolerance and do nothing to cause enmity or hatred. This means that they must not allow their members, followers or clergy to act disrespectfully towards other religious groups or incite them to violence. Religious groups cannot denigrate other faiths or insensitively try to convert those belonging to other religions.

iii. Religious leaders must not use their religious authority to pursue secular political objectives. Religion and politics must be kept vigorously separated. Religious leaders must refrain from promoting any political party or cause under the cloak of religion. Nevertheless, religious leaders can express political views but with circumspection.

iv. Religious groups must not incite their faithful to defy, challenge or actively oppose secular government policies and must not mobilise their members or their organisations for subversive purposes. However, religious leaders may campaign for or against the government or any political party but they must not do so as leaders of their religious constituencies.

These principles of governance weigh heavily on religious institutions and their leaders, placing the onus of maintaining religious harmony on them. The state is exercising its authority in no uncertain terms as it wishes to register its "no-nonsense" attitude and determination to act against any religious individual or group that ventures to disrupt the harmony. Nevertheless, the state balances its right to impose its power over religion by discharging its obligations as the guardian of a secular state. This entails the state dealing with all individuals fairly as citizens and not as members of specific religious communities, which implies that their rights and obligations are not based on their religious affiliations. Furthermore, the state should be concerned with the material and moral interests of citizens and not be

[80] Shanmugam, K. "Speech at Committee of Supply Debate (Ministry of Home Affairs), Parliament of Singapore, April 6, 2016.
[81] Government of Singapore. "White Paper on Maintenance of Religious Harmony." 1989.

involved in matters of the soul or their other-worldly well-being. Another established expectation for the state to preserve its uncompromising authority is that it neither enforce or institutionalise any particular religion nor take instruction from any religious organisation. Finally, the state does not rely on any sacred text or scripture to formulate its laws, policies and decisions; instead it depends on "Public Reason".[82] Singapore's Constitution, developed from the idea of Public Reason,[83] provides the state with its authority and the basis to draw up its body of laws. In a nutshell, the state is highly expected to conduct itself in a strictly neutral manner in its dealings with religions.

The state has always adopted a pragmatic relationship with religion till today because religion continues to bear great influence on Singaporean society, contrary to the view espoused by the notion of "Existential Security" that development and modernisation of society will cause a diminution of religion's social significance.[84] However, the state's negotiation with religious communities has become more challenging with the rise of charismatic religious leaderships that are recognised as the authority by their followings. The conduct of religious communities is influenced by such leaders. The significant categories of power developed by social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven help explain the power of such religious leaders to build loyalty and confer rewards ("reward power"). Leaders with the power can break rules, violate principles of governance to undermine inter-religious trust and understanding and disrupt the relationship between religion and the state. The Singapore government has two choices in responding to the situation. It can choose to counter this trend by using its legitimate power to ensure compliance. Yet, it prefers the option of persuading religious leaders to abide by the principles of governance, maintain religious harmony, avoid conflicts and steer clear of political involvement. The state only resorts to power under the various legal provisions as a last option to deal with the recalcitrant.

As a secular state, Singapore's mantra is to "grow the common space to build one united people". Singapore's embrace of secularism is of the assertive and not the passive type.[85] This requires the state to take an active interest in the engagements of religions in society. Thus, Singapore's secularism is a "comprehensive doctrine", a system of moral beliefs that characterises not only political institutions, but also permeates the realm of social virtues, form of relationships, and so on.[86] This is within the context of the state's obligation to defend secular political life and to maintain the unity of the nation. Thus, the state is required to act and intervene should the stability of the nation be threatened.

---

[82] Parekh, Bhikhu C. "Secularism and Managing Religious Diversity." Lecture presented at seminar organised by the Centre for Excellence in National Security (CENS), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, September 15, 2015.

[83] John Rawls developed the concept of Public Reason to refer to the common reason shared by all citizens in a pluralist society. Public Reason involves justifying a particular moral or political position in a manner that citizens of different moral or political backgrounds find acceptable. Essentially, each individual is free from being subjected to another person's moral or political authority. See Rawls, John. *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, and Quang, Jonathan. "Public Reason." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), Edited by Edward N. Zalta. Retrieved from http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/public-reason/

[84] Norris, Pippa, and Ronald Inglehart. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide.* UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp 3–5.

[85] Kuru, Ahmet T. *Secularism and State Politics toward Religion: The United States, France and Turkey*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

[86] Rawls, John. *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

To conclude, the Singapore government's pragmatic approach in its relations with religion persists till today. By adopting such an approach, the state allows itself a great deal of flexibility in dealing with challenges that would threaten racial and religious harmony and undermine peace, stability and economic progress. At the same time, the government maintains its secular and neutral policy towards all religions, not favouring one or the other. For their part, religious communities need to take it upon themselves to observe the principles of governance and contribute more ideas to expand the common space and enhance social solidarity, based on the pursuit of common interests.[87]

[87] Musa, Mohammad Alami. "Enhancing Singapore's Secularism." *The Straits Times*, February 4, 2016.

Bibliography

Blackford, Russell. *Freedom of Religion and the Secular State*. UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

Chew Oon Ai Joy. "Civics and Moral Education in Singapore: Lessons for Citizenship Education?" *Journal of Moral Education* 27 (1998): 505–524.

Chua Beng Huat. *Communitarian ideology and democracy in Singapore*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Fullan, Michael G. *The New Meaning of Educational Change,* 4th ed. New York: Teachers College Press, 2007.

Furnivall, John S. *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and the Netherlands Indies*. UK: University Press, 1948.

Goh Keng Swee. "Report on the Ministry of Education." Education Study Team, Singapore, 1978.

Gopinathan, S. "Moral Education in a Plural Society: A Singapore Case Study" *International Review of Education* 26 (1980).

Gopinathan, S. "Religious Education in a Secular State: The Singapore Experience." *Asian Journal of Political Science* 5 (1999): 15–27.

Government of Singapore. "White Paper on Maintenance of Religious Harmony." 1989.

Hall, John R. "Religion and Violence." *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. Cambridge University Press, 2003: 359–384.

Heywood, Andrew. *Political Theory: An Introduction.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Heywood, Andrew. *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Hill, Michael. "The Religious Factor in Singapore: Conscription and Containment." *Australian Religion Studies Review* 10 (1997): 29–37.

Hill, Michael. "The Macho-Management of Religious Diversity in Singapore." *Australian Religion Studies Review* 12 (1999): 70–93.

Hill, Michael. "The Singapore State's Response to Religion: From Co-optation to Legislative Control." *Religion-Staat-Gesellschaft* 27 (2001): 271–288.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Edited by J.C.A. Gaskin. Oxford University Press, 1998.

Khun Eng Kuah. "Maintaining ethno-religious harmony in Singapore." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 28 (1998): 103–121.

Kong, Lily. "Disrupting 'Asian Religious Studies': Knowledge (Re)production and the Co-construction of Religion in Singapore." *Numen* 62 (2015): 100–118.

Kuo C. Y., Eddie. "Religion in Singapore: An Analysis of the 1980 Census Data." Ministry of Community Development, Singapore, 1987.

Kuo C. Y., Eddie, and Jon S. T. Quah. "Religion in Singapore: Report of a National Survey." Ministry of Community Development, Singapore, 1988.

Kuo C. Y., Eddie, Jon S. T. Quah and Tong Chee Kiong. "Religion and Religious Revivalism in Singapore." Ministry of Community Development, Singapore, 1988.

Kuru, Ahmet T. *Secularism and State Politics toward Religion: The United States, France and Turkey.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Lai Ah Eng. “Religious Diversity in Singapore.” In *Management of Success: Singapore Revisited,* edited by Terence Chong, 309-334. Singapore: Institute of South East Asian Studies, 2010.
Lau, Albert. *A Moment of Anguish: Singapore in Malaysia and the Politics of Disengagement.* Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2003.

Lee Kuan Yew. *The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia.* Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1965.

Lilla, Mark. *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics and the Modern West.* New York: Alfred Knopf, 2007.

Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration.* Oxford University Press, 2016.

Mohamed Taib, Mohamed Imran. “Neofundamentalist Thought, Dakwah, and Religious Pluralism among Muslims in Singapore.” International Sociological Association (ISA) eSymposium for Sociology. Singapore, 2012.

Musa, Mohammad Alami. “Enhancing Singapore’s Secularism.” *The Straits Times*, February 4, 2016.

Norris, Pippa, and Ronald Inglehart. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide.* UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Ong J. H. “Community Security.” In *Understanding Singapore Society,* edited by Ong J. H., C. K. Tong and E. S .Tan. Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1997.

Ong Teng Cheong. “Report on Moral Education.” Moral Education Committee, Singapore, 1979.

Ooi Can-Seng. “Political Pragmatism and the Creative Economy: Singapore as a City for the Arts.” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 16 (2010): 403–417.

Parekh, Bhikhu C. *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory.* Harvard University Press, 2002.

Parekh, Bhikhu C. “Secularism and Managing Religious Diversity.” Lecture presented at seminar organised by the Centre for Excellence in National Security (CENS), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, September 15, 2015.

Parliament of Singapore. *Singapore Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)* Vol. 34, No. 2, February 25–27, 1975, cols: 38–164.

Parliament of Singapore. *Singapore Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)* Vol. 54, No. 1, January 9, 1989, cols: 11–20.

Parliament of Singapore. *Singapore Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)* Vol. 54, No. 7, October 6, 1989, cols: 574–583.

Quong, Jonathan. “Public Reason.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), Edited by Edward N. Zalta. Retrieved from http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/public-reason/

Rawls, John. *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

Shanmugam, K. “Speech at Committee of Supply Debate (Ministry of Home Affairs), Parliament of Singapore, April 6, 2016.

Tamney, Joseph B. “Religion and the State in Singapore.” *Journal of Church and State* 30 (1988): 109–128.

Tamney, Joseph B. “Conservative Government and Support for the Religious Institution in Singapore: An Uneasy Alliance.” *Sociological Analysis* 53 (1992): 201–217.

Tan, Charlene. “The Teaching of Religious Knowledge in a Plural Society: The Case for Singapore.” *International Review of Education* 54 (2008): 175–191.

Tan, Charlene. “From Moral Values to Citizenship Education: The Teaching of Religion in Singapore Schools.” In *Religious Diversity in Singapore,* edited by Lai Ah Eng, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, (2008): 321-341

Tan, Jason. “The Rise and Fall of Religious Knowledge in Singapore Secondary Schools.” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 29 (1997): 603–624.

Tan, Jason. “The Politics of Religious Knowledge in Singapore Secondary Schools.” In *Curriculum Politics, Policy, Practice: Cases in Comparative Context*, edited by Catherine Cornbleth, 77–1*.* Albany: SUNY, 2000.

Tan Tai Wei. “Moral Education in Singapore: A Critical Appraisal.” *Journal of Moral Education* 23 (1994): 61–73.

Tey Tsun Hang. “Excluding Religion from Politics and Enforcing Religious Harmony.” *Singapore Journal of Legal Studies* (2008): 118–142.

Tham Seong Chee. “Religious Influences and Impulses Impacting Singapore.” In *Religious Diversity in Singapore,* edited by Lai Ah Eng, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, (2008): 3-27

The Straits Times. “Religion to be a compulsory subject.” January 17, 1982.

The Straits Times. “Why moral education.” December 28, 1982.

The Straits Times. “You’ve got something when you have religious faith….” December 29, 1982.

The Straits Times. “The grads who lack moral scruples.” December 30, 1982.

The Straits Times. “Two main fronts in conspiracy.” May 27, 1987.

The Straits Times. “Not proper to mix religion and politics in a pluralistic society.” September 2, 1987.

The Straits Times. “RK to be replaced with Civics.” October 7, 1989.

The Straits Times. “Bill to keep Religion, Politics separate ‘soon.’” October 7, 1989.

The Straits Times. “Decision on RK for S’poreans’ good: Dr Tan.” October 7, 1989.

The Straits Times. “ISD Report cites cases of religious tension.” December 30, 1989.

The Straits Times. “Restraints in the way religious groups practise their faith needed.” January 31, 1990.

Tong Chee Kiong. *Rationalizing Religion: Religious Conversion, Revivalism and Competition in Singapore Society.* Boston: Brill, 2007.

Turnbull, Mary C. *A Short History of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.* Singapore: Graham Brash, 1980.

Turner, Bryan S. *Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularisation and the State.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Vineeta Sinha. “Theorising ‘Talk’ about ‘Religious Pluralism’ and ‘Religious Harmony’ in Singapore.” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 20 (2005): 25–40.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. “The Role of Religion in Decision and Discussion of Political Issues,” In *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Reasons in Political Debate,* edited by Robert Audi and Nicholas Wolterstorff. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997.

Weber, Max. “Politics as a Vocation.” In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology,* translated and edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946.

Wilson, Bryan R. *Religion in Secular Society.* London: C.A. Walker, 1966.

Yeow Tong Chia. “The Elusive Goal of Nation Building: Asian/Confucian Values and Citizenship Education in Singapore during the 1980s.” *British Journal of Educational Studies* 59 (2011): 383–402.

RSIS Working Paper Series

(from 2015 onwards)

305	Engaging Religion with Pragmatism: The Singapore State's Management of Social Issues and Religious Tensions in the 1980s *Mohammad Alami Musa*	(2017)
304	Incident Prevention and Mitigation in the Asia Pacific Littorals: Framing, Expanding, and Adding To CUES *Graham Ong-Webb, Collin Koh, Bernard Miranda*	(2017)
303	A Political Economy Analysis of the Southeast Asian Haze and Some Solutions *Prakash Chander*	(2017)
302	Waiting for Disruption?! Undersea Autonomy and the Challenging Nature of Naval Innovation *Heiko Borchert, Tim Kraemer and Daniel Mahon*	(2017)
301	The French Counter-radicalisation Strategy *Romain Quivooij*	(2016)
300	Analysing Transformative Leadership in Indonesia *Alexander R. Arifianto*	(2016)
299	Economic and Strategic Dimensions of Mega-Ftas: A Perception Survey of Asian Opinion Leaders *Xianbai Ji, Pradumna B. Rana, Wai-Mun Chia and Changtai Li*	(2016)
298	Orienting ASEAN Towards Its People: Enabling Engagement with Local NGOs *Serina Rahman*	(2016)
297	Russia's Asia Pivot: Engaging the Russian Far East, China and Southeast Asia *Bhavna Dave*	(2016)
296	China and the Middle East: Venturing into the Maelstrom *James M. Dorsey*	(2016)
295	To Shoot or Not to Shoot? Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern Militaries Respond Differently *James M. Dorsey and Teresita Cruz-Del Rosario*	(2015)
294	In Defence of Freedom of Speech and against the Publication of Certain Cartoons *Paul Hedges*	(2015)
293	Indonesia's Defence Diplomacy: Harnessing the Hedging Strategy against Regional Uncertainties *Iis Gindarsah*	(2015)
292	Soccer vs. Jihad: A Draw *James M. Dorsey*	(2015)

Visit the RSIS website at www.rsis.edu.sg/?p=48639

to access the full list of past RSIS Working Papers.