



The 50 Year Future for Singapore in Asia and the World

FOREWORD



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On the 9th of August 2015, Singapore will mark its 50th anniversary as an independent city-state. Many of this year's SG50 celebrations have focused on commemorating our country's history, thanking our pioneers for their contributions to the nation. But Singapore can also continue to thrive in the future. It is therefore equally important for us to look forward, to assess the challenges and opportunities ahead.

It is also critical that we look beyond our shores. 2015 is also a landmark year for our region. In December, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will officially establish the ASEAN Economic Community, a development that will be closely watched in Asia and beyond. As a small island city-state, Singapore will always be affected by developments in the world around us, and we must be aware of the shifting landscape of geopolitical rivalries and regional alignments.

This is why the Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA) created the Future50 (F50) programme in 2013 to map out "The 50 Year Future for Singapore in Asia and the World". This report sums up key ideas expressed by panellists and participants across the course of our discussions and dialogues. It comprises five sections, covering geopolitical, economic, governance, social and environmental trends that need to be watched in the coming decades.

I have been privileged to personally serve as part of the SG50 Economic and International Committee, working with organisations in Singapore to establish meaningful programmes as part of the SG50 celebrations. When I conceived of Future50, it was my hope that the SIIA could do its part, contributing to the ongoing debate about the future for Singapore.

Like the small city-state of Singapore, the SIIA is a small and independent think tank. The institute was established in 1962, and has grown with Singapore through its turbulent early years, making us very conscious of the need for active engagement, not only within Singapore, but with the wider world. For our F50 events, which were free and open to the public, we invited not only panellists based in Singapore, but also visiting commentators from around the world. The aim was to provide both 'inside' and 'outside' perspectives on the future for Singapore. Similarly, our discussion groups involved people from a wide range of backgrounds, including both senior CEOs and young professionals, and both Singaporeans and citizens of other countries living here.

Beyond being a part of SG50, I see Future50 as part of a larger goal – to encourage people in Singapore to develop interest, empathy, and responsibility, helping shape a better world as 'global citizens'.

On behalf of the Advisors, Council, Fellows and Staff of the SIIA, I would like to thank all our speakers and participants who have contributed to this effort, as well as the Lee Foundation, Jebson & Jessen (SEA), Temasek and other sponsors who, along with the SG50 Committee, have helped make F50 possible. The efforts of the F50 Co-Directors, Mr. Nicholas Fang and Dr. Parag Khanna, are gratefully acknowledged, as is the work of present and former SIIA staff, Mr. Aaron Choo, Ms. Denyse Yeo, Ms. Mylene Tan, Ms. Beverly Faye Becker, Mr. Ethan Nava and Ms. Jannah Cheang at various stages of this project.

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The 50 Year Future for Singapore in Asia and the World

About the F50 Co-Directors



Mr. Nicholas Fang

Nicholas Fang is Executive Director, Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA), and concurrently Supervising Editor, Singapore Desk, MediaCorp, and Executive Director, Black Dot. Nicholas was Chef de Mission for Team Singapore in the 2015 Southeast Asian (SEA) Games, and from 2012 to 2014 he served as a Nominated Member of Parliament in Singapore. As F50 Co-Director, Nicholas chaired the Future50 panels and acted as lead facilitator for the Future50 discussion groups held from 2013 to 2015, also contributing his insights to this report. As the Executive Director of the SIIA, he oversees the institute's operations, particularly in research and media.



Dr. Parag Khanna

Parag Khanna is Senior Fellow at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, and concurrently Managing Partner of Hybrid Reality, a geostrategic advisory firm, CEO of Factotum, a boutique content strategy agency, and Adjunct Professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. As a futurist and strategic thinker, Parag provided thought leadership for Future50, helping shape the course of discussions and contributing original analysis to the Future50 report. As a Senior Fellow at the SIIA, he works with the institute to study US-Asia relations and Singapore's ties with the wider Asian region.

About the SIIA

The Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA) is a non-profit and independent organisation dedicated to the research, analysis and discussion of regional and international issues. Founded in 1962, the SIIA is Singapore's oldest think tank. Through policy research and dialogue, we aim to bridge the gap between policy-makers, private sector decision-makers and experts to shape public influence as well as impact policy and social responses. The SIIA is a membership-based organisation and our individual members are admitted from among the most prominent figures in society, who have made a positive contribution to their sector and profession. Our corporate members include leading Singaporean and multinational companies with regional businesses. Ranked as the top think tank in Asia and the Pacific in 2014 by the University of Pennsylvania's 'Global Go-To Think Tank Index', we are also a founding member of the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies network.

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OPINION

IS THE GLOBAL BALANCE OF POWER SHIFTING TOWARDS ASIA?

Quotes from dialogue participants

“The problem is that Asia is still highly fragmented, with different countries in different stages of growth. We still have huge issues with our neighbours. It’s going to be many more years before we can truly say Asia is for Asians.”

January 2014

“The decisions of multinational companies will be made in Asia – in a more Asian way with an Asian view. Looking West will become less relevant. Companies that can understand Asia will make better strategic decisions in the long term.”

January 2014

“There is wealth in Asia, but it does not mean Asians have the same power in international politics. They do not have the institutions to influence international decision-making. There still needs to be more rebalancing in the region.”

February 2015

Part 1

GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS AND SECURITY RISKS – PARTICULARLY IN ASIA

The world has entered an unprecedented era of multi-regional, multi-civilisational multipolarity. North America, Europe and the Asia Pacific are all world regions with global or superpower influence. At the same time, South America is also a crucial player in international commodities markets, Africa is rising in world trade and consumer markets, and the Middle East has become a lucrative economic zone. Despite today’s economic uncertainty, financial contractions, military drawdowns, demographic transitions, and social dislocation, the United States, European Union and China appear willing and able to retain their global power status into the coming decades, and will be joined by India and Brazil at that level.

In addition, the trend of robust regional integration appears to be accelerating on all continents as well, indicating that the further one looks into the future, the more likely it is that the main pillars of world order will be regional constellations, such as the European Union (EU), North American Union (NAU), Union of South American Nations (USAN), African Union (AU), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), ASEAN, and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The world would thus move from geopolitical hierarchy, though not into simple bipolarity between the US and China, but a genuinely dispersed form of network multipolarity.

As the world’s most populous region, Asia will itself have an internal multipolar dynamic. Northeast Asia is a potent zone of intense geopolitical and economic change, a significant intersection where China, the Korean peninsula, and Russia come together. Japanese power has long been seen as waning, but under Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the nation is gradually rebuilding its presence on the international stage. Looking further into the future, the potential reunification of North and South Korea portends significant dynamism in commodities and industry. Today’s rising number of ethnic Chinese and Koreans spreading into the Russian Far East, and the growing infrastructural connections across Northeast Asia, assure that Asian’s growth will impact Russia as well. Siberia is set to see increasing agricultural productivity, particularly as climate change warms once-frozen tundra.

Capitalising on trends

Singapore has already begun to capitalise on these Northeast Asian trends. Recent joint Sino-Singaporean delegations have visited the Russian Far East to invest in food processing and other industries. With its unique relationship with North Korea, as one of the few nations that has maintained some level of ties with the reclusive state, Singapore’s infrastructure service providers and commodities trading firms are well-placed to capitalise on any potential economic opening of North Korea. And with Japanese capital increasingly flowing offshore to Southeast Asia, Singapore has become the main conduit for Japanese investment in cost-saving production in the region.

It is essential for us both to continue to leverage our strong ties with mainland China, while also capitalising on any opportunities to strengthen ties with other powers in the immediate region. The next 30 years of Sino-Singaporean relations will not be the same as the last 30 years, in which China very much

depended on Singapore as a role model. Singapore continues to profit immensely from trade and investment with China, having nearly one dozen Singapore-operated special economic zones located across the country. But China has moved rapidly up the value chain to acquire advanced technology and management skills from all over the world. China's growth trajectory and investment levels remain impressive, but a continuation of the same type of commercial relations between Singapore and China may bring diminishing returns. New modes of cooperation need to be sought. For example, the rise of Sino-Singaporean co-investment in ASEAN and even other markets like Africa could be very profitable, riding on the trend of growing outbound Asian foreign direct investment (FDI) to other high-growth markets.

The coming decades should also witness ASEAN come into its own. Already the world's fourth largest economic area, its combined GDP is larger than India's, even though it has approximately half the population. Importantly, ASEAN's younger population and lower wages have made it a larger destination for FDI than China for 2013-14. Assuming that the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP) and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) all come to pass on current timelines, by 2030 or sooner ASEAN will have become the world's next factory floor with robust supply chain distribution across the region and global exports in all directions.

However, ASEAN's internal disparities are stark, with a huge gap between the most developed countries, such as Singapore, and the least developed, such as Myanmar and Cambodia. These deepening economic ties must be leveraged to increase prosperity and diminish the region's severe income inequality. Rising FDI must be coupled with a main focus on infrastructure development and social policies such as healthcare and education.

India aspires to do the same under recently elected Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India's growth rate has already surpassed China's, and its economic base continues to expand with rapid urbanisation and a new wave of national infrastructure investment. If India manages to grow into a manufacturing powerhouse while also thriving as a global services hub, it could harness its demographic advantage in time to maintain several decades of steady growth, just as China has done.

The timing of India's renewal and ascent is propitious for Singapore. Already the Modi government has welcomed Singaporean firms to help build the country's planned 100 "smart cities", indicating India could substantially augment China's role in buttressing Singapore's niche as an exporter of infrastructure services. Secondly, as a large commodities and, increasingly, goods importer, India could rely even more on Singaporean transshipment and commodities brokerage. Finally, Singapore has existing deep cultural and historical ties with India, and stands to gain from India's belated globalisation. Singapore will be a natural partner for India, with commercial and demographic flows certain to expand even further.

Risks ahead

Amid tremendous growth and new opportunities, there are also substantial risks that Asia will have to surmount if it is to achieve its potential. Of the major global power centres, Asia is the least institutionally mature, with far more internal or regional rivalries than Europe or North America. Generally speaking, the risk of conflict between China and Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, and between China, the Philippines and Vietnam over the Spratly Islands, has increased in recent years. But the stakes have also risen, as economies become more interdependent and the volume of shipping



Q&A

CHINA'S ECONOMY AND THE REGION



DR. XIAO GENG

Dr. Xiao Geng is Vice-President (China) of the Fung Global Institute. He spoke at our Future50 public lecture on 31 March 2015 on "China in Asia: The Past, Future, and Singapore's Responses". A video of this interview is online at www.future50.sg

Q. How would China's economic slowdown affect Asia and ASEAN?

Dr. Xiao: China creates 27 per cent of global growth, so it is very important for the world and particularly for ASEAN countries, because they run a trade surplus with China. The slowdown in China would affect its neighbours quite a lot.

Q. China is an increasingly important financier. How would this shape regional and global political dynamics?

Dr. Xiao: This is a very good change. China has been supporting international organisations like the World Bank, and new organisations like Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). It will put pressure on these existing institutions, especially on how to improve transparency and standards.



PERSPECTIVE

A PIVOTAL MOMENT IN HISTORY



DR. MATHEW BURROWS

Dr. Mathew Burrows is director of the Atlantic Council's Strategic Foresight Initiative and author of The Future, Declassified. This is an excerpt of his comments made at our Future50 session on "Power and Wealth" on 25 February 2015.

Charles Dickens started his novel about the French Revolution, *A Tale of Two Cities*, with a famous phrase, "it was the best of times, it was the worst of time, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness". It is a saying I come back to when I think about the moment we live in now. Humanity has never been more successful. Conflicts – both between states and inside them – are at an historic low. Global economic growth has been historically high over the past few decades, so much so that we can begin to see the end of widespread poverty and the birth of a middle-class world. Soon, the developing world will account for the largest proportion of world GDP, displacing the West.

The gender gap in education is closing. Young girls have as many opportunities as young boys the world over to be educated. Indeed, young women in many developing countries are doing better than their male counterparts

at university, just like in advanced countries. In the next few decades, most deaths in Africa will be caused by non-communicable diseases, just like in the rest of the world. Men and women are living longer; the rate at which longevity is increasing is accelerating because of medical breakthroughs. There are worries about ageing, not just in advanced economies but in developing ones, too. Without a large working-age population, high growth rates may be out of reach and seniors will not get generous benefits in retirement.

Be careful what you wish for. Our worries about whether we will have enough food and water are based partly on climate change, but also because the burgeoning middle class is demanding a richer diet. Meat and farmed fish require a lot more resources to produce than grains. We cannot support a planet where everyone wants to consume the level of resources that Americans do.

More than ever, countries need to cooperate. Whether it is climate change, terrorism, proliferation or poverty, no one country can solve them. In an increasingly economically interdependent world, what could be more natural than cooperation? It is not as easy politically as it sounds. In terms of climate change, China, India and other developing countries have long made the case that the responsibility lies with the industrialised Western world, which has historically emitted the most carbon into the atmosphere. The West does not want to shoulder the burden alone because of the economic pain it would cause.

We are seeing China experiment with the founding of alternative institutions independent (so far) of Western ones. The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) want to separate themselves from what they see as a Western-dominated international order. From order, ironically, one could see growing disorder, a world that, as it grows more multipolar, becomes less multilateral. A world in

which big powers jostle one another, each trying to dominate, would not be good for small countries like Singapore that depend on a rules-based international system.

The Middle East is a region that is the most broken. In Syria, there looks to be no end to the fighting. Conflict begets conflict. My worry is that the instability cannot be contained. A successful conclusion to the P5+1 negotiations with Iran limiting its nuclear capabilities could lower regional tensions. Alternatively, the lack of an agreement could lead to eventual military action by the US or Israel, further inflaming tensions. Even in the best case, it might take a generation to rebuild the Middle East on a path to peace and prosperity.

Technology could be a time bomb. It has helped bring globalisation and high growth rates. Robotics is essential for replacing ageing workers. Given the speed with which it is being perfected, it will replace many younger workers, too. What jobs will be left? Every technological revolution has produced many new occupations. There is no reason this will not happen again. However, there could be a gap before new jobs come online.

I remain cautiously optimistic. Understanding developing trends is a first step to defusing dangerous ones and enhancing beneficial ones. At a minimum, we are headed into choppy waters. Looking back on the French Revolution, about which Dickens was writing, we now see it as ushering in the modern world where progress was achieved, most notably in its recognition of individual political and human rights. But the French Revolution and the accompanying Industrial Revolution triggered years of turmoil and upheaval that still convulsed Europe at the end of the 19th century. As we head into another revolutionary period, the hope is the disruption will not be as harmful and, with our better understanding of current trends, we can mitigate the worst of the risks.

through these strategic water grows. Hence while these territorial conflicts continue to be in the headlines, we have seen a move towards de-escalation.

The ongoing diplomatic efforts to establish a legally-binding Code of Conduct in the South China Sea will be crucial. It is not out of the question that a significant maritime conflict may still emerge, looking decades ahead. If the worst happens, it is likely China would emerge the victor and continue its infrastructural development of strategically located islands. In such a scenario, the question then becomes whether commercial ventures for extraction and management of South China Sea resources will deliver shared gains among all the littoral states – or not.

This relates to the global re-alignment of US forces currently described as the “pivot” or “rebalancing” to Asia. While current tensions have invited American naval partnerships to strongly resume across the region – with many speaking of an “Asian NATO” comprised of India, Australia, South Korea and Japan – the US pivot to Asia also hinges on Washington’s ability to convince countries to sign up to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) multilateral free trade agreement, which would give them preferential, but reciprocal, access to the US market. Only such an integrated package of US security guarantees and economic incentives would draw Asian countries away from the current gradual shift towards regional integration with China.

What must happen if Asia is to be more peacefully self-governing without the need for foreign hegemony? For now, Asia still needs to leverage the current American security umbrella to resolve conflicts and build stronger diplomatic, commercial and military cooperative structures that minimise the risk of miscalculations. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and East Asian Summit (EAS) have been early efforts in this regard. In the coming decades, such regional mechanisms will have to become much stronger if Asia is to achieve the kind of internal stability other global power centres enjoy.

Singapore: The Capital of Asia?

Singapore can be a crucial player in regional institutional development. While there is no Brussels or Washington of Asia, Singapore plays a de facto role as a pan-Asian hub, trusted by China, America, India, Australia and Japan at the same time, and considered diplomatically savvy and competent. Our diversity makes us a microcosm of Asia – but also a reminder that building unity across two dozen countries with such diverse cultures will be much more difficult in Asia than even in post-war Europe.

However, a more prominent regional role for Singapore should not mean a lesser role for ASEAN. ASEAN’s economic integration must also be coupled with a push for the grouping to develop a meaningful diplomatic voice. This applies not only to the outstanding maritime disputes in contested waters, but also emerging challenges, such as the damming of the Mekong River, ethnic tensions and the outflow of refugees from Myanmar’s borders, and other crises. To move from crisis management towards consistent efforts to build stability, ASEAN must consider steps to police its region more effectively – such as creating a common peacekeeping force, a proposal which has been supported by several ASEAN members including Indonesia and Malaysia.

Influencing China

If ASEAN continues to evolve in these positive directions, and Singapore also strengthens its role as a regional capital, then both ASEAN and Singapore can hope to shape Chinese behaviour as the world’s largest economy undergoes



OPINION

HOW SHOULD SINGAPORE MANAGE ITS FOREIGN RELATIONS IN A CHANGING WORLD?

Quotes from dialogue participants

“Singapore must continue to be everyone’s friend. But Singapore can no longer depend on simply being a bridge between the developed and developing world. Other countries are also trying to fill that role.”

February 2015

“Singapore and ASEAN have been neutral, and tried to balance relations between larger powers. But this has been a bit of a luxury. There may be a tipping point where we are asked to choose, otherwise the implicit security guarantee from the United States that has allowed prosperity may not be there in the future.”

March 2015

“(Japanese think tanks) have implied it is naive to stay neutral: ‘don’t you think that Singapore and ASEAN should align with Japan and the US?’ But Singapore has to remain neutral. For a small country, it is not tenable to try and take a stance.”

January 2014

a period of major transformations in governance, economic structure, and strategic orientation.

The Chinese leadership's willingness to embrace change should not be underestimated. Both Communist China and the modern, increasingly capitalist China were built by the same party. China's current economic liberalisation of municipal bond markets, business registrations and *hukou* reforms all indicate a society that will be much more driven by local competitive dynamics rather than central planning. At the same time, today's anti-corruption drives and political purges signal little change in the centralised Party structure and its procedures for leadership selection. In between, significant reforms of key institutions, such as the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), indicate that elements within China's leadership are genuinely focused on steering provincial adoption of best practices in avoiding rigged over-investment, while also encouraging more sustainable economic growth, for instance, through tighter environmental regulations. China will clearly become more politically, economically, and ideologically complex in the years to come, both more democratic and the local level and more technocratic at the top level. Confucianism may remain a foundational ethos for the country, but other religious and philosophical beliefs such as Christianity may increasingly become more publicly legitimate.

It can safely be predicted that whatever tweaks in governance styles China's leadership chooses, the emphasis on internal order and regionally beneficial security arrangements will remain top non-negotiable priorities. The domestic execution of the "China Dream" involves physically binding and militarily pacifying China's most remote and restive provinces of Tibet and Xinjiang, while also promoting ethnic and demographic homogenisation through major internal migratory shifts. With more land boundaries than any other country in the world, China also seeks border stability and deep infrastructural integration with Russia, Mongolia, Southeast Asia and its Central Asian neighbours to access their raw materials and smooth its exports all the way to the Middle East and Europe.

Indeed, more than anything else, the most consistent geopolitical trend since the end of the Cold War has been China's deepening linkages across Eurasia. The Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) is only the latest manifestation of a clear long-term programme aimed at maximising connectivity and opening markets from east to west. This also includes its interests in developing Arctic shipping routes and gas pipelines from Myanmar and Iran. Projecting forward, the momentum for continuation of these transnational functional and energy-related ventures looks very strong, and opposition to them very weak.

ASEAN: Together we stand

A connected Asia serves Singapore's ambitions better than a divided one. Our investment vehicles can benefit from long-term returns in building, operating, servicing and training infrastructure developers across the many new urban projects that are springing up across Asia, as one of the world's most populous and growing regions.

Singapore has always been wary about ceding any of its competitive advantages as a logistics hub, financial centre, and liveable city to our regional rivals such as Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, or Bangkok. This concern is, in part, justified. For example, Malaysia's growing role in gas refinery and commodities transshipment, and the growing flows in energy markets that



PERSPECTIVE

CHINA: A CONTINENTAL OR MARITIME POWER?



DR. WANG GUNGWU

Dr. Wang Gungwu is Chairman of the East Asian Institute and Professor at the National University of Singapore. He shared his views at our F50 public lecture on “China in Asia” on 31 March 2015. The following is an excerpt from his remarks, focusing on how China has historically been a continental power, looking towards its land borders rather than the sea.

What is the centrality of China in a globalised world? This has been very clear in the past 200 years, at least for us in Asia. A globalised world also means a maritime one. We could not have the kind of globalisation we have had if not for the navies of the world, maritime trade leading to maritime power.

In that kind of world, where do the Chinese stand? China has 2,000 years of history balancing between the continental and maritime, but that era is over. If they want to be part of the globalised world, they have to pay attention to the maritime world.

They have recognised that they can never stop being a continental power. It is very clear geopolitically. Two-thirds of their borders are land borders. Only a third are sea borders. In the last 150 years, all the dangers have come from the sea. So they have had to adjust. Yet, they cannot afford to neglect their land borders; their traditional threats and challenges have always come from overland. This is so deeply rooted in their history that I doubt they will ever forget it.

In Singapore, we tend to see everything from the maritime perspective. We do not understand the continental problem for China. But it is a basic historical problem for the Chinese. The maritime problem – which we take for granted – is new for them. All of our experiences – with the globalised world, economics and geopolitics – have been based on maritime power.

Xi Jinping talks about the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road and the overland Silk Road Economic Belt. Underlying it all is a sense of balance between the continental and maritime challenge to China, which they can never forget. This is the lesson of the last 200 years.

Finally, they have come to the idea that if China is to have any kind of centrality at all, their balance has to be couched in both continental and maritime terms. Their biggest challenge today is to get this smaller Maritime Silk Road and the Silk Road Economic Belt to work for them in a positive way, and hope the rest of the world will understand why China needs this new way of looking at the world.


avoid the Straits of Malacca, all signal a potential decrease in our centrality across a number of commercial sectors. However, any erosion of Singapore’s regional role must also be viewed within the context of the potential new opportunities for our industries that will also arise as our neighbours modernise – growth in the region benefits Singapore as well.

There are many variables that determine whether global cities retain their centrality. While Hong Kong and Singapore are of similar size in terms of GDP today and may continue to be so in the future, Hong Kong has also suffered from its loss of political autonomy and growing roles of Guangzhou and Shanghai as financial centres. In Southeast Asia, Singapore is often compared with Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok. However, Singapore remains relatively stable, politically. In contrast, the political landscape in Malaysia and Thailand is highly volatile, which weakens any claims their capital cities could make to be the region’s leading hub at this point in time.

It is possible that several decades from now, Malaysia’s increasingly diverse economy and Thailand’s robust size and central geography will make Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok much more important in the region. If this occurs, the task for Singapore is to leverage the growth of our neighbours, investing more in them, and building closer economic connections for our mutual benefit.

Perhaps the greatest opportunity for Singapore lies just across the Straits in Indonesia. While today there are still signs of historical misunderstandings

and suspicions in bilateral relations, such as the diplomatic row sparked by Indonesia's decision to name a naval vessel after the Indonesian marines that carried out the MacDonald House Bombing in 1965, Indonesia is still Southeast Asia's largest economy, and good relations with Indonesia will be vital to Singapore's future success.

Indonesia's leadership is pragmatic, and the nation is interested in attracting investment and modernising its vast underdeveloped rural areas, providing opportunities for Singaporean investors. Likewise, Indonesian capital is already significant for Singapore's finance industry and sectors such as real estate. These two-way ties should become even stronger, with Singapore potentially positioning ourselves to capitalise on strategic investments across Indonesia, as well as investment outflows from Indonesia in the coming generations. 



OPINION

DOES SINGAPORE NEED ASEAN?

Quotes from dialogue participants

YES

"Singapore is not entirely without an immediate hinterland. It has started to integrate with Iskandar, but that is small. It needs to invest all the way to southern Malacca, as well as into Batam and Bintan. But this is not going to be easy. Singapore has an awkward relationship with our neighbours. We have a history of political and cultural differences. But it is not irreversible. It will be hugely beneficial for both sides."

January 2014

"The Singapore mindset is highly competitive. But you don't need to be the best every time. You can be the one cheering others on."

August 2014

"Singapore can look at connecting ASEAN outwards, instead of benefiting Singapore only. It needs to give back to the region to build trust and good relations. It needs to be seen as a visible advocate for ASEAN."

August 2014

NO

"Should we tie our fate to ASEAN? Being a 'servant-leader' for the world may be better."

August 2014

"Singapore can gain more from a weak ASEAN, providing capital and know-how to neighbouring countries. In this way, the country can continue to be the regional hub for companies who wish to penetrate into the ASEAN market. Singapore is unlikely to gain much from a strong ASEAN. If everyone is on the same playing field, Singapore would lose its comparative advantage."

August 2014

"Negotiating a collective like ASEAN is difficult. Someone would have to subsidise it. For instance, Germany is subsidising the European Union, and is by far the biggest loser. Singapore might end up subsidising ASEAN integration, emerging as a loser in the process."

March 2015



PERSPECTIVE

ASEAN'S COMING OF AGE



H.E. KHAIRY JAMALUDDIN

H.E. Khairy Jamaluddin is Malaysia's Minister of Youth and Sports. He is also the Leader of UMNO Youth and the Chairman of Barisan Nasional Youth. He spoke at our Future50 session on "Connecting Singapore and Our Neighbours" on 23 April 2015. The following is an excerpt of his comments.

ASEAN was created as a bulwark against communism, but it has evolved in so many ways. It has evolved to become an economic and social cultural community. Yet, at this important coming-of-age moment for ASEAN, it is confronted by many new challenges.

We are going to usher in the ASEAN Economic Community at the end of this year. But after that, the tough part is filling in its ethos. When you talk about an ASEAN Economic Community, the first thing that comes to mind is a comparison to other economic communities, like the European Union. But there are major differences between ASEAN and the European Union.

I think details have to be filled in for the ASEAN Economic Community. What is next?

(We are already) reducing trade barriers and tariffs – 98 per cent of tariffs and trade barriers have been reduced. Now we have to talk about the tougher stuff, like non-tariff barriers, about how to harmonise customs regulations, about how to have seamless movements of capital, goods and skilled labour within ASEAN, which really is not happening on the ground.

So these are challenges we have to face, and these are tough decisions that governments across ASEAN have to make.

We have to also talk about certain standards of good governance. The ASEAN Way has worked. It has been a tremendous success. A lot of people complain about the ASEAN Way. They say it is boring. They say it avoids talking about the tough stuff. But if you look at ASEAN as a region, it has worked. We have avoided cross-border confrontation and conflict. ASEAN is more prosperous than it was 50 years ago. So the ASEAN Way has worked.

But we are also confronted with a new generation of electorate, all over ASEAN, whether it is in Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar or Vietnam. People want better standards of governance. People want more open societies. And it is something that ASEAN as a whole has to tackle.

We have a non-interference policy. But what does that mean? We do not have a minimum standard of governance, or a commitment towards human rights and civil liberties.

We have to talk about dispute settlement. Within ASEAN, we tackle dispute settlements bilaterally. We have competing territorial claims,

such as those between Malaysia and Indonesia. We have disputed territorial claims between Malaysia and Singapore as well.

These issues will be more pronounced in the future. How do we handle dispute settlements within ASEAN, and between ASEAN and the rest of the world? By this, I mean the South China Sea, and how ASEAN as a whole deals with China. So these are the big challenges confronting ASEAN.

The last big challenge for ASEAN is its identity. It is all well and good to talk about ASEAN as a political community. It is all well and good to celebrate the communiqués and the summits, but ASEAN needs to exist beyond the walls of the summit. ASEAN also needs to exist beyond trade and business. It has to be celebrated, but the consciousness of being part of a bigger community within ASEAN is very low. It is not pronounced enough.

We need to do more in identifying ourselves as part of a bigger region. I have been discussing with the sports and youth ministers of ASEAN to use sports as a way of creating a 'game-changer' within ASEAN. We are talking about the idea of bidding for the soccer World Cup 2034 – a joint bid for the FIFA World Cup.

This would bring people together more than the communiqués, more than the summits, and more than just business. We have to find different ways of bringing ASEAN together, and of community identification where young people see themselves as part of ASEAN, not just their parochial identities as part of their home country.



Q&A



INDONESIA'S RELATIONS WITH SINGAPORE AND ASEAN

Dr. Dino Patti Djalal is former Indonesian Vice Foreign Minister and former Indonesian Ambassador to the United States. He spoke at our F50 lecture on "Connecting Singapore and Our Neighbours" on 23 April 2015. The video of this interview is available on www.future50.sg

Q. How will Singapore-Indonesia relations develop under President Jokowi's leadership?

President Jokowi knows Singapore quite well, even before he became President. When he was governor of Jakarta, he visited Singapore. Of all the countries in the world, Singapore is the one where he probably is most familiar with. His son went to school here, and so on. So that familiarity will help keep relations on a good track, as it has been all these years. We have a lot of agendas in our bilateral relations but I'm sure that Singapore will continue to be a priority.

Q. Under his administration, will ASEAN feature prominently in Indonesia's foreign policy?

Yes. I can categorically say 'yes', because we don't have any choice. In Indonesia's foreign policy, we have a lot of global interests, but the one natural geopolitical space for us is in our own backyard and in ASEAN, which is a source of our strength. The notion of an ASEAN family is very much embedded in our regional and international outlook. So presidents and ministers may come and go, but none of them have any choice in always placing ASEAN first as their foreign policy platform.

Q. As economic nationalism takes priority in some ASEAN states, how will it affect regional integration efforts like the AEC?

(There are) two things that we need to look at. One is nationalism and the other is populism. They are similar but not necessarily the same. Both nationalism and populism will play a role in Indonesia's foreign policy and perhaps in the foreign policy of other ASEAN states.

I think we should take it as a given that this is a fact of political life in Indonesia. What is important is that the government remains committed to regionalism. And what is important is not just the president, but the politicians and the parties in our parliament, and the ministers and government departments, they all remind and educate the public that nationalism is important. But nationalism has to be coupled with internationalism.

We have a long tradition with this argument – the notion that nationalism and internationalism are two parts of the same coin. But the population needs to be reminded constantly of this. Otherwise, it will degenerate into narrow nationalism, you know, "us against them", which is not healthy.

Part 2

GLOBAL ECONOMIC SHIFTS, NEW FINANCIAL CENTRES, AND CAPITAL FLOWS

In addition to its role in ensuring regional political and social stability, deeper Asian integration is also essential if our region is to weather future macro-economic volatility. Today's trends of quantitative easing, interest rate divergence and currency devaluations, combined with new regulatory requirements at the global and regional level, portend a world of financial insecurity, despite new macro-prudential measures aimed at preventing a repeat of the 2007-2008 financial crisis.

Fortunately for Asia, the 2007-2008 crisis did not significantly hurt our overall GDP and trade growth – largely because intra-Asian exports have proven a strong substitute for diminished exports to the US and European Union. However, Asia remains dangerously exposed to Western portfolio capital and other financial flows denominated in US Dollars. This particularly affects some of the most high-growth markets, such as India, Indonesia and Thailand.

It is thus imperative that Asian countries deepen their efforts begun with the Chiang Mai Initiative in 2000, not only to expand each other's access to liquidity in the event of currency crises, but the far more important long-term priority of deepening regional capital markets through long maturity local currency bond markets and regional-scale financial institutions that channel stable funding to SMEs and other companies across the region. It is the crucial step in the coming decade and beyond to insulate Asia from the West's structural weaknesses.

This is also a crucial period for Asian countries to take advantage of structurally low commodities prices to boost fixed investment. While China, South Korea, Japan and Singapore have high fixed capital formation ratios, this figure is far too low in very populous countries such as India, Indonesia and the Philippines. Low-cost oil and gas, as well as other raw materials for the construction sector, are essential to enabling governments to accelerate urbanisation while remaining within fiscal boundaries, and also cutting wasteful and costly subsidies.

A more stable fiscal outlook for Asia, and in particular Southeast Asia, will improve the investment climate and encourage more projects, such as the highly successful "Growth Triangle" involving Malaysia's Johor and Indonesia's Batam. Current trends suggest a deepening of Singapore's joint master planning with its neighbours to enhance their comparative advantages in industries such as ship-building, while expanding urban development along the corridor from Singapore to Malacca and northward.

Playing this forward, Singapore's economic footprint through joint transportation and industrial zone development could potentially continue to stretch northward into Malaysia and further across the Indonesian archipelago – we would effectively co-invest with our neighbours in spreading greater infrastructural development and growth.



OPINION

BUSINESS LEADERS GIVE THEIR VIEWS, FEBRUARY 2015

Q. What kind of jobs will our children's children have?

"In the last 50 years, generations of Singaporeans endeavoured to make Singapore a world-class, diversified and resilient economy. Today, Singaporeans enjoy a wealthy and healthy society where safety is not a luxury. As per Maslow's hierarchy of needs, once the basic needs are satisfied, one can indulge in activities that boost self-esteem and gratify the urge of self-actualisation. The next generation of Singaporeans will develop new sectors where creativity is the kernel... There will be a lot of designers, inventors and poets."

Mr. Ramzi Saouma,
*Director, Financial Markets,
Standard Chartered Bank*

Q. What role will Singapore play in our region's future?

"Within ASEAN, Singapore will continue to be regarded with great respect and admiration... and with a hint of envy. While its thoughtful voice will be listened to intently, it will always have to remain soft and unobtrusive, never shrill and moralistic. Singapore's voice is the voice of pragmatism, of reason based on clinical analysis. Singapore will continue to quietly provide extraordinary benchmarks for others in the region to strive toward and strategies for them to emulate, albeit sometimes belatedly and less rigorously."

Mr. Johann Heinrich Jessen,
Chairman, Jebsen & Jessen (SEA)

“While Singapore is regarded as a thriving modern city, it had to overcome many challenges of urbanisation and industrialisation. Countries experiencing similar challenges can tap on the learnings of the unique economic and social models that have transformed Singapore. Companies here with strong technical expertise, management and track records can also help the region develop solutions to address critical issues of sustainability arising from its growth, such as rising demand for energy and water.”

Mr. Tang Kin Fei,
Group President & CEO,
Sembcorp Industries

“Singapore will continue to be the key link that connects businesses and communities across the region and beyond. Our world-class infrastructure and connectivity will provide an efficient and secure home for businesses, institutions and individuals, and allow them to interact in ways that transcend the geographical boundaries that exist today.”

Ms. Chua Sock Koong,
Group CEO, SingTel

Q. What is critical for Singapore's society in the next 50 years?

“A key challenge is to find the right balance in growing our economy and maintaining our competitive edge, while meeting the aspirations of society, preserving our living spaces and sustaining the environment. Singaporeans need to understand the city-state's vulnerabilities and appreciate the need for continued economic growth to make Singapore an even better place to live, work and do business in the next 50 years and beyond.”

Mr. Gan Seow Kee,
Chairman and Managing
Director, ExxonMobil Asia Pacific


Connecting the region

As the most mature financial centre in Asia, Singapore must play a central role in these crucial economic transformations. Global liquidity needs a more permanent presence in Singapore with greater allocations to Asia's internal frontier markets, whether Papua New Guinea and Sumatra or Cambodia and Myanmar. The central banks of Southeast Asia should buttress regional bond markets to enable long-term investment horizons. Crucially, more public and private funding – whether through export promotion agencies (which Singapore itself lacks) or banks – should be allocated to trade finance to allow more Asian companies to reach global markets as China has so capably done over the past decades.

Indeed, another global structural economic trend on which Asian countries must continue to capitalise is the prevalence of cross-growth market regional trade as the main driver of globalisation today – and likely in the future. It is worth pointing out, for example, that the TPP trade agreement currently being negotiated only represents a subset of Asia's rising trade with Central and South America. Already the so-called Pacific Alliance – which includes Mexico, Colombia, Chile and several other Latin countries – has a combined GDP larger than Brazil and faster growth as well. ASEAN should continue an open regional orientation focused on building as many mutually beneficial trade relationships as possible.

As in geopolitical matters, Singapore is a price-taker rather than price-setter in geo-economics as well. Navigating the global financial system's slow transition from US Dollar dominance towards a multi-currency landscape will therefore be integral to our own nation's economic health and to make the most of volatile capital flows. It is likely that even the US Dollar's current strengthening and Sing-Dollar's commensurate weakening will not substantially boost Singapore's manufacturing exports, in the face of intensifying competition over supply chains in Asia. Our competitiveness strategy must therefore be based on non-monetary factors, such as technology productivity and strengthening of our services sector, both within Singapore and as a hub for regional and global firms.

Further denominating trade in diverse currencies may become essential to Singapore's financial strategy. This would put pressure on the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) to hold even larger capital reserves in Renminbi in addition to the US Dollar and other currencies. While Singapore is already a hub for Renminbi trading and “dim sum” bonds, China's capital account liberalisation will require that Singapore be prepared for far larger-scale inflows and outflows simultaneously with China.

The evolving complexity of the global – and Asian – monetary and financial landscape, and the impact this will have on our domestic economy, underscores the need for Singapore to build stronger and more flexible ties with other financial centres and regional economic hubs. Regulators in Asia will need a better handle on the stability of each other's financial markets and health of companies exposed to cross-border corporate debt. Being the de facto capital of Asia will be more than a diplomatic responsibility for Singapore; it will also be an economic one. 



PERSPECTIVE

WHAT KIND OF WORLD WILL SINGAPORE FIND ITSELF IN?



MR. DAVID PILLING

Mr. David Pilling is Asia Editor at the Financial Times. He spoke at our Future50 session on "Singapore's Economy" on 3 December 2014. The following is an excerpt from his remarks, looking at the idea of convergence, which is the hypothesis that poorer economies can grow faster and catch up to developed economies.

If the convergence theory is right, then what does it mean? In 2065, it would probably mean that countries in the world would have converged on the rough GDP that some of the richer countries have today. China and India would be, by far, the richest countries in the world, by virtue of their populations, and Asia would be the centre of world power. China would be the size of America and Europe combined, in total economic size, and India would be bigger still. Countries like Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Brazil, and, of course, the US – because it still has a big population – would be rich.

Now, do we believe this? There are many reasons not to. But it is worth considering as a theory. So what would this mean for Singapore? It would be here in Asia – clearly the part of the world with the most GDP – which would benefit Singapore greatly. Of course, it would be a minnow; it is only so large and can have only so many people. The wealth gap with other countries would have shrunk dramatically. So where is Singapore's advantage? Why would people bank here? Why would people choose to live here, if Jakarta was just as pleasant a place to live as Singapore?

But maybe the convergence theory is rubbish. Maybe it is wrong. A good paper called "Asiaphoria Meets Regression to the Mean", co-authored by Larry Summers, argues that the most notable fact about economics is that after a relatively short period, all economies regress to an average growth rate of about two per cent. That is quite counter intuitive – we have seen China growing at 10 per cent, or something close, for 30 years. But what Summers says is that these are exceptions. So Taiwan was an exception, and South Korea was an exception; China and India are exceptions now. If you believe the paper, then perhaps China is going to slow very quickly, and maybe India will never get going.

This is really a warning against extrapolation. In the 1960s and 1970s, Brazil was growing at nearly six per cent a year, and everyone thought it was a miracle economy. Who could have predicted

then that from 1980 to 2002, Brazil's GDP per capita went up precisely zero.

So today's performance is not a very good guide to tomorrow's performance. The beauty of Summers' paper is that you do not have to say why or what is going to go wrong. All you have to do is look at the statistics, and say this is what has tended to happen in the past.

One could say that China is different. Perhaps it has discovered something that other economies did not. Perhaps it is bigger. Perhaps that confirms an advantage on China, and perhaps on India. But we could hazard a guess as to what could go wrong.

So if convergence does not happen, then what kind of world does Singapore find itself in? It is still richer than other countries, but the world is probably more unstable. Partly because people have gotten used to the idea that they can become wealthier. I was in India in May 2014 in the run-up to the Modi wave, and it was clear that people in the villages – through mobile phones, TV and computers – know how the wealthy are living and want some of that now. India is a very aspirational society – and that goes right across Asia. If politicians cannot deliver, the possibility of social unrest is quite high.

Depending on which of those (convergence) scenarios happens, it is clear that geopolitics could change quite radically in this region.

Singapore's ability to slalom ride those changes is very important.

Part 3

THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL COMPACTS – PAST AND FUTURE

Beyond observing political and economic trends at the regional and global level, Singapore also needs to consider its domestic challenges and the nation's social stability as it crosses the historic 50-year milestone.

The social compact or contract between a people and its government is among the most critical relationships in any society. Defined as an implicit agreement between the governed and the government, it shapes and sets limits for the rights and duties of each member of society.

However, the 21st century has seen the nature of society rapidly shift in many countries around the world, especially Southeast Asia. This has been attributed to a variety of factors, including the rise of a growing and increasingly vocal middle class in countries like Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and even Singapore, accompanied by surging levels of education and standards of living, as well as the pervasiveness of social and digital media.

Looking at Singapore's closest neighbours, recent years have seen a growing disenchantment among ordinary citizens, with their governments. In some cases, such sentiment has been a long-standing feature of their domestic political scenes. A look at these countries may nonetheless be useful in considering the future for our own society.

Malaysia

Across the Causeway, Malaysians are increasingly questioning their nation's social compact. Last year, this debate rose once again to the fore, with prominent political leaders interpreting the country's social contract as primarily focused on having Islam as the state religion, guaranteeing Bumiputra privileges, with Bahasa enshrined as the national language. These are important pillars for Malaysian society, but if they are the key foundations of the nation, then non-Malays have no place in the social contract, or are at least marginalised.

The Malaysian constitution has provisions to safeguard the rights of minorities. Theoretically, Malaysia's social compact is about equality and equal opportunity. Yet, in the 2013 General Election, the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition only narrowly managed victory, having lost the popular vote to the opposition Pakatan Rakyat coalition. The shift was blamed on the "Chinese Tsunami", a reference to the large number of ethnic Chinese voters who were dissatisfied with the party's performance. The question of whether Malaysia is a truly inclusive multiracial and multicultural society, or simply, a Muslim one, remains a conundrum for our closest neighbour.

Thailand

Looking further north, Thailand's existing social compact is a top-down model, based on faith in the Royal family and structure of society, and influenced by Buddhist beliefs. However, with the current uncertainty surrounding the King's health and the debate over the legitimacy of the lèse-majesté law, which prohibits defamation against senior members of the royal family, some observers say that the allegiance of Thai citizens to the royal family may not be enough to ensure unity and stability in the country for much longer.

Thailand may need a new social contract that includes horizontal decision-making processes. The fact that former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's parties, in all their incarnations, were voted into power over the past few years underscores the divide between Thailand's lower-income and rural populace on the one side, and the middle class and elites on the other.

Today, the military-led government remains in power, and while ordinary Thais have been remarkably supportive of the situation, it is not sustainable. The country cannot rely on military coups to restore order, and the military is similarly not designed to run a modern, 21st-century country. The recent process to create a new constitution under the military government raises uncomfortable reminders of Thailand's failed attempts to establish reconciliation in the past, and has been criticised as another top-down, heavy-handed way of imposing order on a nation still in crisis. The path to a stable and accountable Thai society has yet to be defined.

Indonesia

Like other Southeast Asian nations, our largest neighbour in the region has grappled with authoritarian regimes in the past. Former Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has been criticised for inaction and for not living up to his potential while in office. Nevertheless, it is clear that he did at least one thing right – leading Indonesia to where it has seen a clean and fair transition of power to a new elected government. Today, the presidency of Mr. Joko “Jokowi” Widodo is seen as a way for Indonesia to finally establish itself on the world stage as a stable democracy.

Like many countries in the region, Indonesia is home to an increasingly aspirational people, who are young, better educated and want more from their country. President Jokowi is popularly known as “the people’s president”, raising hopes that he could rewrite Indonesia’s social compact – or perhaps ensure that it works as it should always have.

However, having come into power, he now faces the dilemma of having to play the political game, which entails dealing with different parties, coalitions and individuals. This could leave him effectively hamstrung when it comes to creating greater clarity over a social compact for Indonesia. Commentators are already comparing him to US President Barack Obama, arguing that the expectations surrounding President Jokowi are so high, it is almost inevitable that his supporters will find themselves disappointed.

The dilemma of aspirational citizens is not unique to Indonesia. Southeast Asia is now home to an educated and informed populace, which has resulted in greater pluralism within society and a greater diversity of views that needs to be considered. They are demanding for a shift from more authoritarian, top-down forms of government to ones that include greater citizen participation.

There is also a struggle to define the country’s national identity in a way that minimises the discrimination and alienation within society, such as the reconciliation of non-Malay and Muslim identities with the national identity in both Malaysia and Indonesia. As Southeast Asian countries continue to develop, there is a need to balance the values and traditions of the past with the new expectations and prospects of the future.



OPINION

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SINGAPORE SOCIETY

“Governments are being scrutinised. There are low or no barriers of entry for people to give their opinions on social media. Governments don’t seem to know how to deal with vociferous citizenry. There is this divide between the Government and citizens on social media.”

Mr. Nizam Ismail,
Council Member, SIIA,
January 2014

“Media freedom is now a silly issue. If there is enough noise online about something, the newspapers have to run the story. So government control over the press is now not an issue... Singaporeans have the image of the government as a ‘control freak’ for everything. But liberalisation of culture is inevitable; it is not something the government can control.”

Professor Chua Beng Huat,
Provost Professor and Head of the
Department of Sociology, National
University of Singapore,
September 2014

Singapore

These are lessons that Singapore will need to grapple with in the coming years as well. Although Singapore shares common challenges with our neighbours, we are also different. Singapore is a city-state. It would be overly simplistic to compare a city-state with huge countries and conclude that Singapore has done a better job in ensuring social stability and equal representation in politics. Singapore cannot be compared to other cities around the world – we lack the friction arising from ideological differences between an urban and rural population, but also do not have the economic cost-pressure valve and other benefits provided by having a hinterland.

Our small size has also made it easier for our leaders to implement policies, which are almost municipal rather than national ones, in terms of scale. Thus, we in Singapore can only compare ourselves to other countries to a certain degree. It is therefore important that Singapore look inward as well as outward, engaging in critical self-reflection. To a degree, the only city that Singapore can be compared to is itself.

Singapore’s unique place in Southeast Asia is the result of a convergence of historical factors. Today, it prides itself for being a successful nation based on meritocracy, where anyone can – in theory – excel and upgrade him or herself, regardless of race, religion or social background. But we must remember that Singapore’s leaders and former colonial masters never intended for our island to be an independent nation. The separation from Malaysia in 1965 was in many ways a worst-case scenario. Singapore has therefore followed a very different path of development from many of its neighbours, focusing on economic growth as a priority to help the nation and its people to develop as quickly as possible. This was an imperative in the early years, for a country that was facing an uncertain future and without any significant resources or hinterland to fall back on.

Today, this sense of vulnerability has been internalised in Singapore society and our political culture. There is nearly universal agreement that because Singapore is small and our future is uncertain, we must preserve our unity and avoid “rocking the boat”. The people of Singapore have come to appreciate the benefits of following the government’s lead, in order to maintain the country’s, and consequently their, prosperity and success. Paradoxically, the same impetus that has led to a unity of purpose also contributes to a degree of political apathy in Singapore.

The Singapore government under the People’s Action Party (PAP) has always placed an emphasis on solving material needs by focusing policy on providing jobs, adequate housing and related amenities. But criticism from Singaporeans is growing on the government’s ability to meet these material needs and on the trade-offs involved. This is in part due to recent failures of infrastructure, such as overcrowded buses and MRT breakdowns, but has grown to include unhappiness with the growing number of foreigners here, fears over retirement adequacy and rising income disparity. The rise of social media has meant that such criticism is heard more widely now than before. The government is finding it harder to deflect such criticism. In the 2011 General Election, the PAP garnered just over 60 per cent of the vote, the lowest result since Independence.

Participants at Future50 (F50) events generally agreed that it is impossible for Singapore’s leaders to ignore what people are now saying online. It would be tempting for politicians to dismiss criticism or complaints posted on social media or alternative news websites as merely the ranting of bored netizens with too much time on their hands. While it is difficult to determine

Q. What will be the biggest challenges for Singapore in the next 50 years?

	%
Dealing with population and overcrowding	38%
Maintaining political stability and good governance	31%
To keep innovating our economy so we stay competitive in the global economy	24%
Providing income security for the elderly	22%
Maintaining cultural harmony in Singapore society	19%
Being alert against threats from terrorists	13%
Maintaining peace and friendly relations with neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia	12%
Preparing for the impact of global warming/ climate change	12%
Maintaining a strong and fair education system	11%
Total	100%

Source: Blackbox Research, May 2015 (nationally representative sample n=1,000)

***Societal challenges:** Dealing with population issues and maintaining good governance in Singapore were the top two challenges identified by people in Singapore in a survey by Blackbox Research commissioned for the SIIA in May 2015. People were primarily concerned about domestic policy challenges, rather than international or external threats.*

how much a particular view expressed online reflects popular sentiment, we now live in an era where any speaker or author can find a public platform and a nation-wide, even international audience, as the cases of Roy Ngerng and Amos Yee attest.

The onus is now on Singapore's governments to meet the rising expectations of a vocal, informed, and increasingly networked citizenry. Any failure to engage with the public could irrevocably damage Singapore's social compact in the years to come.

Many citizens still believe in the need for strong and capable leadership. In the current political climate, strong leadership needs to come alongside greater citizen empowerment. Singapore's leaders must ensure that they listen to more diverse views and opinions, and continue to focus on policies that address long-term issues requiring sustainable solutions, not short-term quick fixes.

Even as the government adapts, Singaporeans will need to change as well. This does not simply entail the government catering to the demands of Singaporeans. It also means a sense of belonging and genuine civic awareness is needed, where citizens, as well as other residents, are willing and able to offer constructive views to be heard and considered. Participants at our F50 sessions often voiced the idea that individuals in Singapore need to start thinking about how they can make a difference and take action – proposing solutions and alternatives, rather than merely complaining or finding fault with current policies.



OPINION

DEBATE AND DISSENT IN SINGAPORE

“Before the General Election in 2011, Singaporeans were not supposed to engage in debate. But now we are supposed to debate like the BBC. We have to accept a transition period. We have to accept the Roy Ngerngs. We can’t have only good ideas bubbling up. There will always be some good ideas, and some bad ones... Singapore, 15 to 20 years from now, may resemble East Asian democracies like Taiwan and South Korea. It may be boisterous. People cling to the idea we don’t want to be like Taiwan... but we may have to accept that.”

Mr. Sudhir Thomas Vadakesh,
Author, June 2014

“Given the range of Singapore’s policy challenges and heterogeneity of Singaporeans, our political system is too narrow... the government tends to be very self-selecting. You tend to pick people like yourself.”


Mr. Donald Low,
Associate Dean, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, June 2014

Singapore has embarked on consultative programmes in the past, for instance the landmark “Our Singapore Conversation” in 2013. However, there are still many who believe Singapore needs more inclusive and wide-ranging discussions about the future. The official “Our Singapore Conversation” report promised that Singaporeans’ feedback from the dialogue sessions did not simply vanish into a black hole. But the fact it was deemed necessary to explicitly convey this to the public underlines the cynicism of many Singaporeans.

In addition to hearing the voices of Singapore citizens, it is equally important that the voices of non-citizens be heard. This includes Permanent Residents and shorter-term residents studying or working here. In the years to come, Singapore will need to resolve the ongoing debate regarding how open the city-state should be towards foreign labour and immigration. But Singapore will always rely to some extent on foreign talent; non-citizens will always be a part of Singapore’s society and care must be taken not to alienate foreigners, or discriminate against them, as this could have drastic implications for Singapore’s economic growth and social stability.

A crucial element of any stable social contract for the future is trust. This is a challenge that Southeast Asia governments are grappling with, in order to secure a mandate to govern from their people. In Singapore, a perennial concern is the disconnect between the government and the governed. The Central Provident Fund (CPF) debate in 2014 showcased how easily government policy can appear opaque to ordinary people. Initially, official defences of the CPF focused on the macroeconomic logic behind the policy. But they failed to address the microeconomic concerns of individuals, who were worried about having enough money for retirement, rather than whether the policy made sense for the national budget.

There is also a perceived lack of diversity among the present generation of government leaders, for instance, compared to Singapore’s founding fathers. The current cabinet, and the majority of our Members of Parliament, come from similar backgrounds, often a narrow selection of highly-paid professional fields. This is perhaps an unintended consequence of Singapore-style meritocracy, but there is a danger that the public’s confidence and trust will be further eroded in the coming decades, if they perceive leaders are out of touch with Singaporeans.

Public discourse on social compacts and their challenges is a relatively new phenomenon in Singapore. We are now in an era where discussion of social and political trends is not only acceptable, but welcomed. This will likely be a key focus in the decades ahead. 

Part 4

WHAT KIND OF SINGAPOREANS DO WE WANT?

As Singapore considers its future over the next 50 years, another critical element to consider is not just the shape of our government in the years ahead, but also our character as a people. The public discourse over the fate of Singapore also needs to be directed inwards – at ourselves.

Singaporeans are inclined to be introspective, but much of this self-examination is focused on practical rather than existential concerns, with people asking what type of living conditions or lifestyle they would like in the future, rather than the type of people they would like to become.

How did we get here?

The Singaporean of today is a product of the country's first 50-year growth story. The focus on economic growth, security and the need for rapid development has become synonymous with Singapore's early years as an independent nation.

As a consequence, Singaporeans have acquired a reputation of being industrious, well-educated and trained in the most advanced systems and techniques world-wide, and also "clean", in comparison to the levels of corruption that some of our neighbours in the region are notorious for.

Conversely, we are also now known for less positive traits – a lack of compassion, tolerance, and interest in non-pecuniary pursuits; an obsession with academic and career advancement; and a general tendency to in turn blame the government for any and all woes experienced and demand that it resolve all problems.

The increasing penetration of the Internet, along with the high level of Internet usage and the advent of social media, means that Singapore society is dominated by more and more vociferous complaints, with people expressing dissatisfaction with the status quo.

This applies not just to the political environment, but also to infrastructure issues, such as the transport system becoming increasingly stretched due to the growing population, and concerns surrounding the influx of foreigners into the country.

Making a positive difference

In some cases, the complaints have been accompanied by suggestions for improvement, and the government has sought to engage public opinion through its traditional feedback platforms as well as efforts such as Our Singapore Conversation.

However, most of the time, the negative feedback is not accompanied by constructive suggestions, but often paired with calls for instant gratification,



OPINION

ARE SINGAPOREANS TOO COMPLACENT?

Quotes from dialogue participants

“Are we victims of our own success? The key challenge is one of attitude. People are becoming materialistic and insular – they do not want to leave their comfortable Singapore.”

August 2013

“We are becoming a population of over-achievers. But we are becoming out of touch with reality. Singaporeans may not be willing to take on tough jobs, especially lower-income jobs, if they are constantly groomed to reach higher and expect more.”

August 2013

“We have a superiority crisis. Singaporeans always think they are right. The human resource departments of major multinational corporations say that Singaporeans don’t do well in teams – they don’t want to learn from others.”

June 2014

despite the government’s best attempts to address the various issues identified. These trends are not unique to Singapore and Singaporeans but take on greater significance, given the other structural challenges facing the country.

For a relatively young nation with little or no natural resources, and whose greatest asset is its people, the character and development of Singaporeans will be crucial to the nation’s future success.

The city-state is seeing potential fractures, an alarming trend in a society that has long been known for its stability and business-friendly nature. Fault-lines are now visible, including income inequality, anti-foreigner sentiment and the political divide between ordinary Singaporeans and perceived economic or social elites.

Fortunately, there appears to be a growing awareness among Singaporeans that mere criticising, without any effort to understand the full situation and suggest solutions, is not only unproductive but irresponsible as well.

If this sentiment continues to spread, the nation could see positive change driven from the ground up. Singapore needs to see solutions come from below – not from the top down – allowing input to be heard from all quarters of society, and for different perspectives to be shared and appreciated.

Who are we?

The speed of development in Singapore in the last 50 years has been nothing short of phenomenal. But whether as a result of the demands of society or because of their own ambitions, Singaporeans have become largely materialistic in nature, focused heavily on progressing our careers and accumulating wealth to improve our standard of living.

This focus has led to other aspects being neglected, such as social inclusiveness, consideration for others, and compassion for the less fortunate and an appreciation. Singapore has inadvertently bred an unhealthy mindset of performance and perceived success. A strong consumerist culture evidenced by the high density of shopping malls is motivating people to strive for higher education and professional skills, but also creating a narrower definition of success in the form of better jobs and salaries.

This has created the paradox where there is a need to bring in foreign labour for unwanted blue-collar jobs that Singaporeans see as below their self-worth, which in turn sparks outrage from those who see foreigners as a threat to society. A change in mindset must take place to encourage Singaporeans to explore a wider variety of pathways that are not defined by monetary success alone.

At our F50 dialogue sessions, we asked participants about Singapore’s character as a nation, particularly how we treat society’s most vulnerable members. There have been many instances where Singaporeans have shown an ugly side, for instance, the poor treatment of foreign workers and domestic helpers, abandonment of elderly parents, and cruelty towards animals.

Yet, Singaporeans are capable of great generosity. Some employers include foreign domestic workers as part of the family. According to the National

Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre, the rate of volunteerism in Singapore has risen steadily in the past few years. And examples abound of Singaporeans responding generously to humanitarian disasters in the region and beyond.

The country also has a strong record in philanthropy. Singapore Ambassador-At-Large Tommy Koh has written that it is extremely unfair to call Singaporeans an unkind people. But he also argues that we should aspire to be kinder to all who share the spaces that we work, live and play in, regardless of age, gender and ethnicity.

The need for an ethos of greater tolerance, inclusivity and respect applies to Singapore civil society. Singapore has a thriving community of non-government organisations representing a range of causes, but at present many default to an “appeal to higher authority” approach, appealing to the state to bring about social change, rather than being more self-driving.

The decline in creativity and adaptability in Singapore is often lamented, with the younger generation criticised as having a sense of entitlement, or being overly comfortable with current lifestyles. Singapore’s nature as a nanny state has exacerbated this tendency towards complacency in society. But more people recognise the need for innovation and for a spirit of risk-taking to spur economic growth.

Measures must be taken to change this culture of entitlement to a culture of opportunities, through educating younger generations on personal and social responsibilities. Encouraging a spirit of entrepreneurship that embodies traits like creativity and adaptability is essential for Singapore to evolve as a society and be resilient in this new globalised era.

That said, the proliferation of more civil society groups and a more active citizenry could lead to opposing lobbies, where people speak out against each other as much as against the authorities.

It will be difficult to ensure that Singapore avoids the scenario of gridlock while moving towards alternative possibilities of toleration or resolution. This will require the cultivation of a future generation of social leaders who are able to contribute to debate and discourse, and work towards the broader picture.

Some might say that “soft” issues like a more developed civil society do not have a direct impact on “harder” aspects such as economic development and growth. However, the demand for democratic development, driven by an increasingly large proportion of politically active, well-educated younger people, is a significant factor that cannot be ignored.

The fact that this demographic is informed and connected by social networking technology as never before in history only makes it a more influential force. While there will be those like teenager Amos Yee who use social media to propagate views that cause turbulence in the broader society, technology enables an increasingly activist public to check, make accountable and influence policies in real time.

Many experts believe that policy-making at a micro level – and politics at a macro level – will never again be free from this unprecedented level of public scrutiny and influence.



PERSPECTIVE

SINGAPORE: WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Quotes from dialogue participants

“Dissent seems to have been pushed into marginal channels of communication such as blogs and social media. Traditional media – broadcast and press – could and should play a much larger role in holding government, state agencies, corporations, and individuals to account.”

June 2014

“We need to be cognisant of Singapore’s limitations in terms of population and land size. We were able to reach this level of development by providing stability and predictability to global capital allocators who willingly brought capital and jobs into this country. Can we transition to a model that encourages dissent and debate, leading to less ‘stability’ and predictability, without much social and economic disruption?”

June 2014

“ OPINION

HOW DO WE DEFINE ‘SINGAPORE’ AND ‘SINGAPOREAN’?

Quotes from dialogue participants

“Foreigners should not be made to feel as though they are part of the problem. Singapore will find it difficult to transform into a global hub if foreigners are made to feel like scapegoats. We should recognise their contributions, such as enriching our culture and propelling economic growth.”

August 2013

“What do we mean by ‘Singapore’? Do we include the Singaporean diaspora when we talk about Singapore? Fifty years from now, more Singaporeans may live overseas than in Singapore.”

August 2014

“Singaporeans may need to get used to the fact that Singapore will not be their permanent home. They may need to live in Iskandar and take transport in every day, like Londoners or Shanghainese...”

August 2014

“...But the difference is that the Londoners and Shanghainese who move out of the city are still in their own countries! If we are living elsewhere, then what is the meaning of Singapore?”

August 2014

Q. What do Singaporeans and Permanent Residents feel about Singapore?

	Citizens	Permanent Residents	Sentiment gap
Sense of national pride	92%	58%	-34%
Identity as a Singaporean	91%	57%	-34%
Singapore is my home	89%	81%	-8%
Contribute to the country's future	84%	81%	-3%

Source: Blackbox Research, April 2015 (nationally representative sample n=1,000)

National sentiment: Both for “national pride” and “identifying as Singaporean”, PRs have a gap of more than 30 per cent compared to Singapore citizens. This gap significantly shrinks on other aspects such as “Singapore as a home” and “contributing to the country’s future”. This suggests that most PRs remain more emotionally connected to their home countries, but are still eager to make their mark and work hard for Singapore’s success.


Discovering a national identity

One contributing factor to dissatisfaction in Singapore is the nation’s continued introspective struggle. Is there such a thing as a Singapore identity? Even after 50 years as a nation, public opinion remains mixed on this question. The negative reactions to the growing number of foreigners working and living in Singapore, and the claims that their presence somehow erodes the “Singaporean-ness” of the country, smacks of insecurity.

While it is important to retain a strong sense of belonging to a country, it does not imply that Singapore’s identity needs to be exclusionary. Singapore prides itself on its multiculturalism and diversity, and should continue to provide that sense of belonging not just to its citizens and Permanent Residents, but also to other groups within society.

More effort must be made to create a sense of belonging, especially among those on the margins of society. By cultivating an identity that can be shared by all who live in Singapore, we will be able to project our identity on the rest of the world, instead of worrying about its erosion. If we as a people are not secure enough in who we are, or believe that our own identity is not strong enough to endure, then there is not much any government can do. We are the custodians of our own identity.

The ability to define a true and honest identity of our own will need to be driven by an awareness of our own history, the critical events in the Singapore story, and an understanding of the personalities that shaped our nation and the decisions that they made. It will require an interest in all facets of our life in Singapore, not just those restricted to shopping malls and cinemas.

The story of this island is a rich tapestry that stretches back for centuries, before the birth of the independent state of Singapore in 1965. It is a story that all of us should get to know intimately, and devote time and effort to consider. This will allow us to understand who we are as a people and develop the self-awareness that will allow us to face the challenges that await us in the decades ahead. 



PERSPECTIVE

THE GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVE

Quotes from government leaders at Future50 dialogues



"Kampung spirit is something that many speak fondly of. We really want to relive the old days where there is comfort and warmth, through heritage, shared memories and cultural spaces"

Mdm. Halimah Yacob,
Speaker of Parliament, July 2013



"Singapore has done well. Not just in fiscal infrastructure, housing and so on, but more importantly, in forging a nation out of diverse migrants. We are starting to see the evolution of a Singapore identity."

Mr. Heng Swee Keat,
Minister of Education,
September 2013

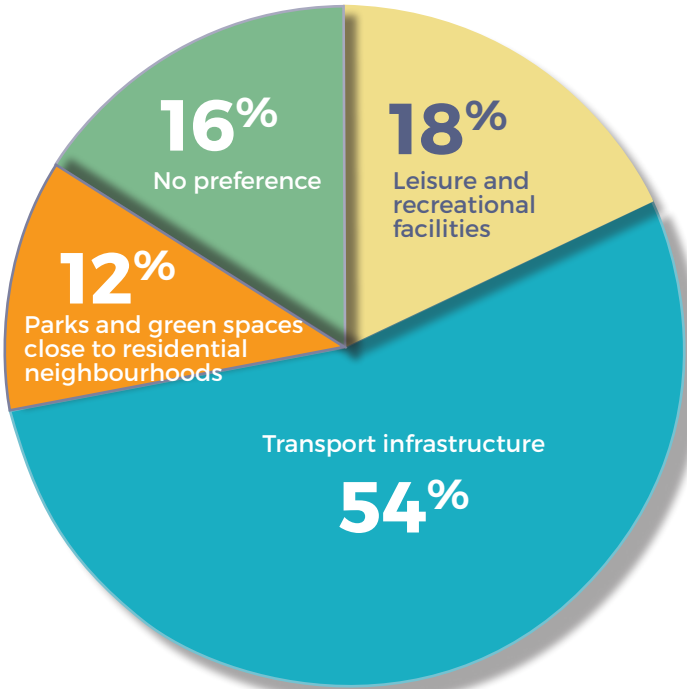
Part 5

SUSTAINABILITY AND LIVEABILITY IN SINGAPORE AND THE REGION

Over the course of Future50, the SIIA sought to engage F50 participants on environmental issues. However, we found that other topics such as Singapore’s role in the regional economy and the future of Singapore’s own society were generally ranked higher on the agenda. The fact that our community in Singapore is mainly concerned with political, economic and social challenges rather than the environment is not surprising – Singaporeans are a pragmatic people.

Yet, there are signs this attitude is changing. In 2013, record high levels of air pollution hit Singapore, Indonesia and parts of Malaysia, caused by fires raging in Indonesia’s forests and peatlands. The return of the transboundary haze was a wake-up call for Singapore, demonstrating how easily we can be affected by regional environmental problems.

Q. What public projects should the government invest more money on, in the next five years?



Source: Blackbox Research, November 2014 (nationally representative sample n=1,000)

Practical concerns: The environment is not top of mind for Singaporeans. Only 12 per cent would prioritise parks and green spaces for public spending, if given free choice. Singaporeans also prefer better transport and connectivity over a higher quality of leisure opportunities and green spaces.

Singaporeans and Malaysians only rarely feel the effects of the haze, when the wind direction turns against us. But air pollution is a fact of life for Indonesians living closer to the fires. It would be easy to point fingers at agriculture and forestry companies operating on the ground, but any irresponsible practices by plantations or farmers are merely symptomatic of Southeast Asia's overall struggle with sustainability, given the insatiable demand for commodities such as palm oil.

It is not just governments, agribusiness and financial institutions that have a role to play, but also us as individuals who consume the end products, or hold shares in the firms that produce them.

In addition to our Future50 events in conjunction with SG50, last year saw the launch of a new annual forum by the SIIA, the Singapore Dialogue on Sustainable World Resources (SWR). The dialogues and roundtables we have held to date have focused on promoting sustainable practices in sectors such as pulp and paper and palm oil, as well as facilitating exchanges between non-governmental organisations, governments and business. We hope to expand these discussions in the years to come.



OPINION

BUILDING A LIVEABLE CITY

Quotes from dialogue participants

"Central planning in Singapore has been effective so far. Singapore is already labelled as a 'Garden City'. More public participation (if not handled well) might in turn stall our development process."

November 2014

"Singapore has always had forward-looking policies, for example, in our water supply, Singapore has been able to stay ahead of demand. There's no threat of an extreme water shortage. The PUB has done well. Can such a forward-thinking model be applied to other resource and environmental challenges in the future?"

November 2014

"Singapore does not have a framework law on environmental protection

and management, which makes it hard for civic organisations to argue their cases. The old Malay cemetery at Kampong Glam, for instance, was built in the pre-Raffles period and clearly has historical significance. Yet it has been demarcated for residential and commercial development. Civic organisations are increasingly required to support their cases with scientific and historic evidence."

November 2014

"Thinking about our urban environment is not a priority for the poor."


November 2014

"The environment should not be viewed as a luxury. It is intertwined with our everyday lives."

November 2014

For many in Singapore, the haze is the most visible environmental problem. But there are other challenges to consider as the nation moves beyond its 50th anniversary. For instance, although the nation's water, food and energy security is stable for now, Singapore is far from self-sufficient. We cannot assume that this will continue, given uncertain regional and global conditions.

There is also the question of how the island's future landscape will look like. Singapore has prided itself on being a garden city, but with the nation facing increasing demands to provide more or better housing and transportation infrastructure, the preservation of Singapore's green spaces is far from guaranteed.

Singapore is a small, densely populated island city-state, and hence inherently vulnerable. But Singaporeans and residents are not powerless. As a regional hub for trade and finance, home to an educated and informed population, there is much that Singapore can and should do to encourage sustainability, both here and across the region. 



OPINION

SINGAPORE'S ROLE IN SUSTAINABILITY, AND STOPPING THE HAZE

Comments made at SIIA's Second Singapore Dialogue on Sustainable World Resources, on 13 May 2015

"Sustainable practices are not an end itself but the means to an end. Let us not forget that we live in a part of the world that is entitled to make developmental progress, but we want to do so in a sustainable way. That is the most enlightened, long-term way to achieve progress in a fair manner without having a large segment of your population being penalised and being fair to all your stakeholders within your country and region."

Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan,

Minister for Environment and Water Resources

"When I talk to Singaporeans, Malaysians or Indonesians, they feel helpless to solve this huge problem of the haze. I think not. I think there is extreme power in the hands of every individual in Singapore."

Dato Darrel Webber,

Secretary-General, RSPO

"Responsible consumption is the fastest growing sentiment in the market. It's becoming more mainstream, not only in Europe or the US but in Asia. If a worker that sews jeans is paid less than a dollar a day and working in unsafe conditions, (consumers) don't accept that anymore. So why should they accept that anything they buy has a negative impact on the planet?"

Mr. David Kiu,

Vice President (Communications & Sustainability, Global Markets), Unilever



PERSPECTIVE

SECURING OUR FUTURE



MR. SUNNY VERGHESE

Mr. Sunny Verghese is the Co-Founder, Group Managing Director and CEO of Olam International Limited. He shares his views on the biggest developmental challenges facing Singapore – particularly water and food security.

Singapore's focus on sustainability has always been ahead of its time. Besides being ranked as one of the world's greenest cities, it has set an example on sustainable living across multiple areas, including eco-friendly buildings, development of green and blue spaces, promoting the use of public transport with high standards for vehicular emissions, energy-efficient technologies, promoting minimum water efficiency standards, waste recycling, improving air quality and public cleanliness. A nation that was not meant to be is today one of the most liveable cities in the world.

I see six developmental challenges we must all face up to this century, challenges that all stakeholders, including Olam, must address. These challenges are: a) food security; b) water security; c) impact of climate change; d) energy security; e) sustainable growth without massively depleting "natural

capital"; and, f) inclusive growth. Each of these issues has interlocked causes and we must start integrating how they are dealt with because they are closely linked together.

The first two developmental challenges of food and water security are challenges Singapore has worked hard to address since its founding.

Singapore's demand for water today is estimated at 400 million gallons per day and is expected to double by 2060. Singapore's water management strategy comprises of a four-'tap' plan which includes: a) local catchments for capturing rainwater through 17 reservoirs linked through a comprehensive network of drains and canals; b) imported water from Malaysia (Johor); c) recycled water (NEWater) by recycling and treating Singapore's used water; and d) desalination. NEWater and Desalination is expected to meet 80 per cent of Singapore's water demand by 2060.

This four-pronged strategy has significantly reduced Singapore's reliance on imported water. Singapore's domestic water consumption per capita has reduced from 156 litres per day in 2008 to 151 litres in 2013. There is a nationwide drive to improve water usage efficiency among companies. NEWater has been a disruptive innovation and a game changer.

Given our relative lack of arable land, the risk of food security is another key challenge that has been proactively addressed by our nation.

Without the right security of supply and diversity of sources for securing

our food supply, geopolitical conflict, climate change and natural disasters can make countries like ours vulnerable to fluctuations in food supply, prices and food safety. The Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore's food security roadmap for Singapore includes encouraging investments in food supply chains abroad.

This is one of the areas where Singapore corporates such as Olam can play an important role. We operate from seed-to-shelf in 65 countries across 44 agri-commodities. That makes us an enabler in the global food supply framework. Similarly, partnering with organisations like Temasek Life Sciences can help us leverage their breakthrough innovations to enhance farm productivity.


Continued focus and enhanced partnerships are two of the fundamental elements required to address the ongoing challenge of food and water security. Building a sustainable city, country and society cannot be the sole responsibility of the government.

We must all do our part. Businesses in particular must understand that generating profits by depleting natural capital from the world's scarce environmental resources is not, in the long run, a sustainable proposition.

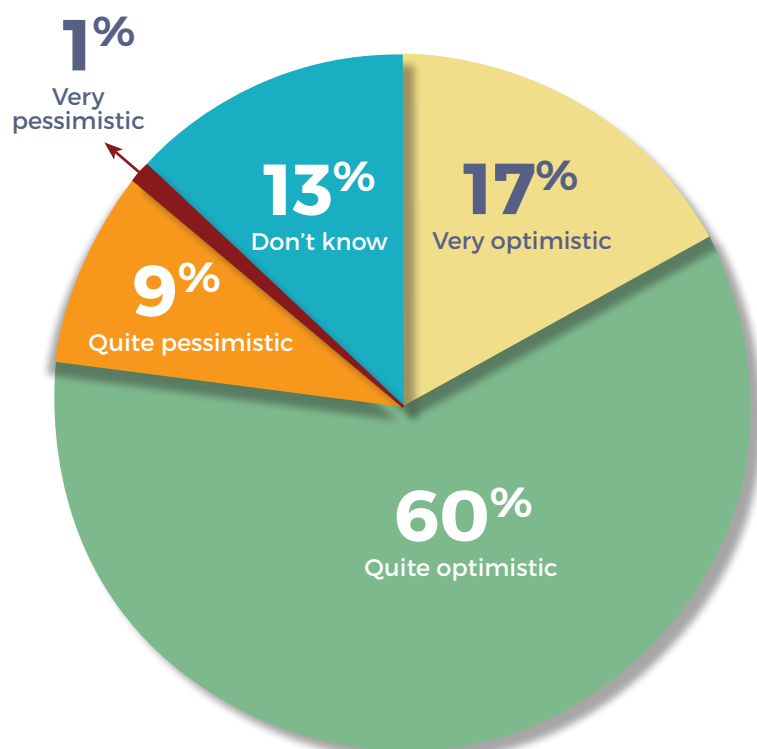
Olam's focus on "Growing Responsibly" is driven by that fact. It means we have been working to make "Growing Responsibly" an integral part of our business model. It means embedding commercial, environmental and social responsibilities in equal weighting and value natural capital, the benefits that flow from nature to us.

CONCLUSION

The Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA) began the Future50 process in 2013, initially as our own contribution to the debate about Singapore's future, and later as part of the SG50 nationwide campaign of events and activities marking this historic milestone for Singapore. Over the past two years, our F50 events have encompassed both small discussion groups as well as larger dialogues involving renowned experts, government leaders and academics – both from Singapore and other countries, in order to give a wide range of perspectives. Our discussions included not only Singaporeans and Permanent Residents, but also others working or studying here.

Throughout the discussions, a common thread was clear. Despite their different backgrounds, ages and ethnicities, participants were generally optimistic about Singapore's future. This was not naive optimism, but an informed one. Most people in our discussion groups were well aware of potential pitfalls in Singapore's foreign and economic relations with the rest of the world, or voiced criticism regarding certain aspects of Singaporean society and politics. But the overall tone was constructive. A common refrain from Permanent Residents and other non-citizens in the discussion groups was that Singaporeans are often too hard on themselves. While the past 50 years have not been perfect, Singapore has done well, and the nation has the capacity to tackle the challenges ahead. 

Q: Optimism about Singapore's long-term future



Source: Blackbox Research, May 2015 (nationally representative sample n=1,000)

APPENDIX

FUTURE50 PUBLIC LECTURES AND DIALOGUE SESSIONS (2013 TO 2015)

Date	Topic
19 Jul 2013	Future50 Preview: ASEAN Futures and the World (<i>Panel</i>)
27 Aug 2013	An International Conversation: The Next 50 Years for Singapore (<i>Panel and Discussion Groups</i>)
21 Oct 2013	A Changing China: Vision and Values (<i>Panel and Discussion Groups</i>)
21 Jan 2014	SIIA Annual Members Circle 2014: Can Asia Keep it up? Risks for 2014 and Beyond (<i>Roundtable Discussion</i>)
24 Jun 2014	Alternatives for Singapore's Future (<i>Panel</i>)
1 Aug 2014	Singapore and the ASEAN Economic Community (<i>Discussion Groups</i>)
23 Sep 2014	Diversity in Society – Singapore and the World (<i>Discussion Groups</i>)
20 Nov 2014	Singapore as a City: Public Participation and Resilience (<i>Discussion Groups</i>)
3 Dec 2014	Singapore's Economy: Past and Future – “Economic Transitions: The Next Phase for Singapore” (<i>Public Lecture</i>)
25 Feb 2015	Power and Wealth: What History Can and Can't Tell Us About the Future (<i>Public Lecture and Discussion Groups</i>)
31 Mar 2015	China in Asia: The Past, Future, and Singapore's Responses (<i>Public Lecture and Discussion Groups</i>)
23 Apr 2015	Connecting Singapore and Our Neighbours: Competition, Cooperation and Integration (<i>Public Lecture and Discussion Groups</i>)
25 Jun 2015	Singapore Society and Emerging Challenges (<i>In Conversation and Panel</i>)

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