The Singapore Conundrum

A Discourse Analysis of Political Legitimacy through Lee Kuan Yew's Memoirs

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Abstract

The exceptionality of Singapore's success story owes its raison d'être to a unique polity led by Lee Kuan Yew for almost half a century. The legitimisation of the People's Action Party founded by Lee to rule Singapore uninterruptedly is grounded on three factors: the delivery of excellent policies and high living standards, a national culture of neo-Confucianism and cosmopolitanism and an ethnic balance. Thus, a critical discourse analysis of Lee's second volume of memoirs, as the father of modern Singapore, will shed light on how these three drivers legitimise the Singaporean Government to rule over what to all intents and purposes seems a meritocratic, thriving society.

Keywords

Singapore, discourse analysis, Lee Kuan Yew, political legitimacy.

Resumen

El carácter excepcional de la historia de éxito de Singapur debe su razón de ser a un sistema de gobierno único dirigido por Lee Kuan Yew durante casi medio siglo. La legitimación del Partido de Acción Popular fundado por Lee para gobernar Singapur de forma ininterrumpida se asienta sobre tres factores: la aplicación de políticas públicas excelentes y la consecución de un elevado nivel de vida, una cultura nacional de neo-Confucianismo y cosmopolitismo y un equilibrio étnico. De este modo, el análisis crítico del discurso del segundo volumen de las memorias de Lee Kuan Yew, en tanto que padre del Singapur moderno, arrojará luz sobre la manera en que estos tres determinantes legitiman al Gobierno de Singapur para gobernar sobre lo que, a todos los efectos, parece una sociedad meritocrática y floreciente.

Palabras clave

Singapur, análisis del discurso, Lee Kuan Yew, legitimidad política.

List of abbreviations

3G: Global Governance Group

AOSIS: Association of Small Island States

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis/ CDS: Critical Discourse Studies

CIP: Community Involvement Programme

GIC: Government Investment Corporation

GLCs: Government-Linked Corporations (see also SOEs)

GRCs: Group Representation Constituencies

HDB: Housing Development Board

HHRR: Human Rights

LKY: Lee Kuan Yew

MAS: Monetary Authority of Singapore

MPs: Members of Parliament

NE: New Citizenship Initiative

NICs: Newly Industrialised Countries

NMPs: Nominated Members of Parliament

NWC: National Wages Council

PAP: People's Action Party

PM: Prime Minister

PS21: Public Service for the 21st Century Programme

RK: Religious Knowledge Programme

SMEs: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

SOEs: State-Owned Enterprises (see also GLCs)

SWFs: Sovereign Wealth Funds

TINA: "There Is No Alternative"

UN: United Nations

UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

WTO: World Trade Organisation

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1. Introduction & Purpose

Singapore seems like a conundrum to the outside world. Bound to a doomed existence as a client state of more powerful neighbours, Singapore not only survived in a volatile region, but guaranteed its independence amid glaring affluence. Its miracle of climbing "from Third World to First" stands as the testament of Lee Kuan Yew (LKY), the man who shaped Singapore's destiny for half a century and founded the People's Action Party (PAP) which has governed the only city-state in the world ever since. Singapore sparks admiration in Africa for its speedy development, and in the West for its illiberal yet prosperous polity. Like the tale of the elephant and the blind men, each seems right but all miss the big picture, because no other country combines the perfect storm of factors that has made Singapore the unique story it is, with is many and inextricable mixed blessings.

Thus, Singapore's one-of-a-kind story of success against all odds has been recorded by its begetter LKY in his two-volume memoirs. "Aiming always to be correct, not politically correct" in his own words (2000), LKY focuses in the second volume, titled *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story – 1965-2000*, on the real transformation of Singapore since its extrusion from Malaysia in 1965 which unexpectedly threw the country into independence, until the dawn of the 21st century. Such autobiography becomes even more valuable seeing that most explanations of Singapore's success have both lacked any interdisciplinary approach and failed to take notice of LKY's own words on the country that he built and shaped for over forty years. Even more, Singapore seems to contradict long-standing postulates that tie economic success to democracies as the most legitimate and effective actors in attaining high standards of living.

In fact, the seemingly inescapable contradiction between Singapore's authoritarian Government and its affluence has been intensely debated, but very little has been written on the inverse relation of how inclusive and sustainable prosperity underpins and legitimises authoritarianism. Yet, without legitimacy to rule, LKY's project for Singapore would have quickly crumbled in so assailed and diverse a nation. The fulfilment of LKY's promise to its people at the state's inception in the 1960s, namely that of excellent policy delivery amid high living standards, has intensified the fine-

tuning process of the PAP Administration's legitimacy to rule. Hence the growing importance of the legitimacy mechanisms of the Singaporean Government, which this dissertation will aim to explore through the lens of its craftsman LKY. The application of critical discourse analysis to LKY's second volume of memoirs will thus shed light on Singapore's unique polity and the legitimacy drivers that underpin its success.

2. Research Questions & Objectives

The original idea of this dissertation emerged from curiosity over the success of Singapore. The first question triggering this research project was the following: how is it possible that a tiny country with no natural resources and ruled by an autocratic government has risen to become an exemplary success story inspiring developing countries across the globe? The connection between rapidly earned prosperity and authoritarianism seemed particularly fascinating, in its contradiction of widespread Western-liberal rhetoric that democracy and development come hand in hand. Given that authoritarianism is usually deemed less legitimate than democracy, and even less so in attaining the goals of development and social peace, such linkage was then narrowed down to the question of political legitimacy. Namely, how does the authoritarian Government of Singapore legitimise its tight grip over a prosperous, advanced, even cutting-edge, society?

Accordingly, the main question of this dissertation became the following: which are the drivers of the PAP Government's legitimacy to rule over a society that is one of the most open, developed, and technically advanced in the world, and yet lacks basic democratic and Human Rights (HHRR) like free speech or free association? How can LKY's vision for Singapore cast light on this seemingly inexplicable paradox of authoritarianism and balanced prosperity? More specifically, can *From Third World to First* provide a powerful account of the transformation of Singapore that illustrates the PAP's legitimacy to rule? Which are those particular determinants of the legitimacy to rule of the Singaporean Government? In accordance with these research questions, the objectives of this dissertation include:

- A general objective, aimed at answering the main question that gives meaning to this dissertation: to determine the drivers of the PAP's legitimacy to rule and thus prove how an autocratic government can hold to power by constructing a prosperous and confident nation-state.
- Specific objectives dependent upon the general objective that focus on one of the three drivers, that is:
    - To examine the PAP Government's commitment to excellent policy-making, its comprehensive social policy and the accomplishment of development and high living standards as the main buttresses for legitimacy to govern in Singapore.
    - To assess the repercussions of a fine-tuned, nation-building process that champions "Asian values" and Confucianism as the State's and society's ideology and singles out Singapore from the world. To ascertain their relationship to the legitimisation of the PAP's mandate to rule over Singapore.
    - To establish the impact of the racial balance policies of the PAP in nurturing a Singaporean identity and thereby driving the PAP's legitimacy to rule.
- An overarching methodological objective that integrates all others, *id est*, to take up the lens of LKY himself via *From Third World to First*, and apply discourse analysis to such textual basis in order to explain the dynamics of political legitimacy in Singapore and thus meet both the general and specific objectives.

3. Hypothesis

In accordance with the previous sections, the central thesis of this paper will be the following: the legitimacy of the PAP Government to wield power in Singapore relies on three main drivers: (1) a fulfilled promise of delivering economic prosperity and high living standards kept through excellent policy-making, responsibility-driven social schemes, and a top-notch public service, (2) a vigorous nation-building process that touts "Singaporean exceptionalism" as superior to any democracy on the basis of

Confucian values like meritocracy and a paradoxical Chinese-Asian and global-cosmopolitan identity, and (3) an obsession with an ethnic balance to ensure a level playing field. Therefore, the hypothesis will bring together these three drivers of the legitimacy to rule earned by the Singaporean Government, so as to ascertain why and how these have been (and continue to be) an acceptable trade-off for the Singaporean population in exchange of surrendering their liberty and democratic rights to the hands of LKY and his successors.

4. Methodology & Time and Geographical Frameworks

This dissertation will draw on extensive academic literature in order to base the analysis of political legitimacy in Singapore. Thus, the State of the Art section will ground the theoretical framework on academic discussions in two main fronts: first in political legitimacy *per se*, and second in discourse analysis as the chosen method to analyse From Third World to First and extract from it the legitimacy mechanisms running deep inside the Singaporean state. Then, the State of the Art section will focus on our case study, Singapore, offering a panorama of the political, economic, social, cultural, and foreign policy dynamics shaping the city-state and underpinning the PAP's legitimisation discourses on Singapore's exceptionality and superiority. Once the theoretical foundations for our work have been laid, the second section will address the question of what grounds the legitimacy to rule of Singapore's authoritarian Government. This will be undertaken via a text-based analysis of From Third World to First. This piece of work is deemed the best alternative account of the "Singapore miracle", as through the eyes of its main architect, LKY himself, it sheds light on the legitimacy drivers of Singapore's Government.

Accordingly, the dissertation will be restricted not only to the nation of Singapore, but also to its frantic development process from 1965 until 2000. Such geographical and time settings, respectively, will dovetail with our purpose to analyse how an authoritarian state exploits its success to legitimise its clout over the population. In this way, the notions of political legitimacy, the tool of discourse analysis, and the insight

into Singapore's structures all laid down in the first section will now be put to work. By intertwining them, the analysis of political legitimacy in Singapore through the lens of LKY's memoirs will cast light on why the PAP's authoritarian Government has hold and continues to hold to power, unrivalled in Singapore. Then, the main purpose of this dissertation shall be fulfilled.

5. State of the Art

5.1. Theoretical Framework

5.1.1. Political Legitimacy

Political legitimacy remains a contested idea in the world of academia. As M. S. Weatherford (1992) acknowledges, the chasm between theory and practice still has to be bridged. The broad spectrum of political legitimacy theories ranges from macro-views that stress formal procedures to micro-views that focus on citizens' attitudes. In accordance with Weatherford (1992, pp. 152-157), all factors at the stake of political legitimacy must be properly calibrated and balanced, which this dissertation will undertake by mixing different theories of legitimacy to suit research purposes. This author also identifies a traditional approach to political legitimacy that lists a number of legitimacy drivers, such as: wide public participation in political processes, accountability and regularity, the protection of minority rights, efficiency in achieving society's objectives, procedural and institutional fairness, or distributive fairness for everybody (1992, p. 151). All of these legitimacy drivers have consistently inspired PAP actions since the times of independence, and hence the convergence of Weatherford's theory with the reality of Singaporean politics. Further, this traditional approach tilts toward the relation between citizens' participation in the political processes and the flourishing of wider support and stronger legitimisation of a government. Such circumstances coincide with the PAP's encouragement of voting and promotion of civil service jobs.

For his part, Peter (2017) provides an introductory account to the concept of political legitimacy, believed to constitute an intrinsic feature of political institutions and decisions. All notions of legitimacy revolve around the justification of power, be it

coercive power *per se* or political authority, whether its creation or simply its justification. Legitimacy is also tied to authority understood as the right to rule, to issue commands and have them obeyed by resort to coercion, which unarguably constitutes an inherent trait of power (Peter, 2017). As one of the first accounts of legitimacy, Max Weber's descriptive theory points at three sources of legitimacy: (1) tradition as time makes politics legitimate, (2) charisma as faith in the ruler makes politics legitimate, and (3) rational trust in rule of law as the predictability and fairness of the legal process makes politics legitimate (1964). In contrast, normative accounts of legitimacy often set a benchmark of the acceptability or justification of political power or authority, even the obligation to submit to it. Both have been criticised for focusing on some factors and overlooking others, as Weatherford warns (1992). On the one hand, normative accounts have come under attack for their fixation on processes and general conditions. On the other, descriptive accounts have been accused of ignoring people's overarching beliefs in the justifiability of political power actors (Peter, 2017).

In particular, normative theories developed from social-contract philosophers like Immanuel Kant, for whom a legitimate state becomes "one who obeys public reasons and enacts only laws to which all individuals consent" (1999). The coercion of power must thus emanate from rights, because freedom shall be curtailed only when one's freedom restricts the equally worthy freedom of one's fellow. The relevance of Kant's thinking also lies in its opposition to the much popular "right to revolution", seeing that the obligation to obey the state is not conditional upon the ruler's performance, neither does it cease when the laws are unjust (Kant, 1999). Indeed, most normative accounts of legitimacy focus on coercion as the main subject of justification. Namely, Jean Hampton posits that coercion becomes a necessary trait for the state by enabling it to provide effective solutions to political problems. Importantly, Hampton's distinction between this minimal legitimacy and the full moral legitimacy earned by a just political authority pervades most discussions about political legitimacy (Hampton, 1998). Still, many coercion-based accounts remain firmly grounded on moralised conceptions of legitimacy.

As the most prominent example of a moralised conception of legitimacy, Allen Buchanan defines political authority as both the right to be obeyed and the justification for

exerting political power (2002, pp. 689-691). As such, political authority entails political legitimacy (but not vice versa), which becomes tantamount to the normatively sufficient justification for the act of imposing rules, but not the obligations of the subjects of powers towards its wielders. The duty to obey stems not from the coercion of political authority but from the respect owed to fellow persons. Further, Buchanan goes on to criticise consent-based views of political legitimacy, for which political legitimacy is based on the consent by power subjects to have rules imposed upon them. If loyalty to the government stems from the pledge of compliance we make when we consent to such power, Buchanan argues, no political entity would ever be legitimate, since reluctance to consent may always arise from whichever citizen (2002, pp. 696-701).

Instead, legitimacy is achieved by the promotion of HHRR. Buchanan goes on to enumerate three requirements for a government to be legitimate, of which Singapore would only meet the non-usurpation of power, because the PAP Government neither protects all basic HHRR nor provides mechanisms for their protection (Buchanan, 2002, p. 703). His moralised view of legitimacy contradicts the PAP's understanding of political legitimacy with regard to its advocacy of democracy, grounded on the fact that only a democracy's majoritarian processes can equalise power and bridge the gap between a few holding power for and over many (Buchanan, 2002, pp. 710-714). Still, this minimalistic concept of legitimacy explains some PAP tendencies, like its fixation with electoral processes seeing that LKY and his successors always made sure to earn the highest votes in every election. In this sense, Buchanan's stress on procedural legitimacy dovetails with the PAP's preoccupation with accessing power through a "democratic majority" to underpin their legitimacy to have ruled Singapore without interruption since independence (2002, pp. 717-719). In addition, Buchanan's distinction between the State as the persisting institutions wielding political power and the Government as the temporary occupants of those roles, modifies the subjects of legitimacy and in particular the matter of obligations to comply. Precisely, obedience is owed to the Government, not to the State (2002, p.691).

Dworkin goes even further by separating political obligations from political authority. Because political obligations constitute "a normative concept in its own right", they do not emanate from political authority but instead from membership in the political

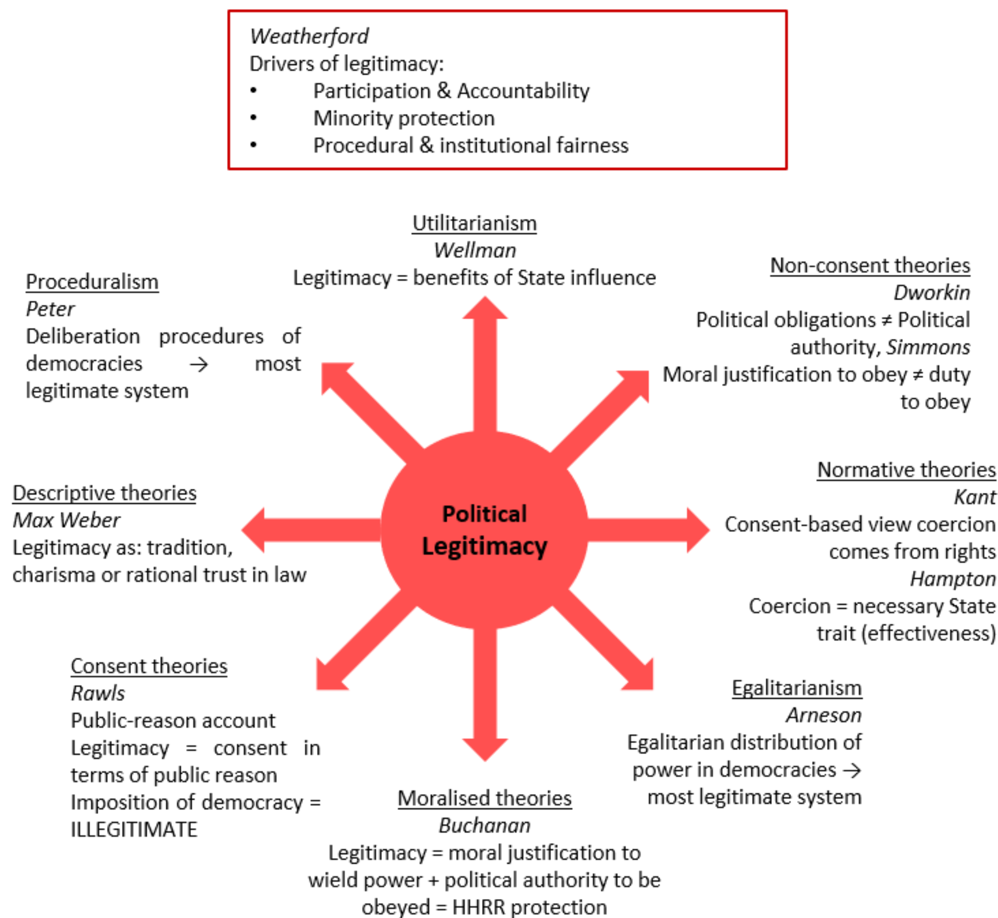
community (Dworkin, 1986). The duty to obey is also part of political legitimacy in John Simmons's thinking, based on a distinction between two states' legitimacies. On the one hand, states may generally be morally justified if they are morally defendable, that is, if their existence can be justified on moral grounds. On the other hand, a particular state and its directives may generate and enforce a duty to obey only if they are consented, although the lack of such moral duty to obey does not render a state illegitimate (Simmons, 1976).

Moreover, the debate over consent as a necessary condition, if not the defining one, for political legitimacy, remains at the core of academic discussions of the legitimacy to rule. Consent can be understood as the direct driver of legitimacy, or one condition that a legitimate government must fulfil. Critics of consent theory attack the equation of legitimacy to moral justification because the legitimisation of political authority via consent "is at best wishful thinking" (Peter, 2017). For instance, Christopher Wellman reinforces the utilitarian argument that legitimacy arises from the benefits of state influence bestowed upon the community, rather than a Samaritan sense of duty to help those in need (Wellman, 1996). On the contrary, public-reason accounts strongly oppose utility as a measure of political legitimacy in their endeavour to explain how consent underlies legitimacy. Rawls's conception of consent as hypothetical, substantive, and reasons-based gives birth to an idea of public reason, namely, a constitution endorsed by all citizens in a rational way and according to which power must be exercised if it is to be legitimate (Rawls, 1971).

Finally, an overwhelming majority of theories of political legitimacy have made democracy a *conditio sine qua non* for political legitimacy, be it democracy in itself, or most often, specific political instances produced by a democratic system (Peter, 2017). For example, Richard Arneson (2003) posits that the legitimacy of political institutions and decisions is conditional upon how closely they match an ideal egalitarian distribution, whereas proceduralist authors focus on democratic decision-making as the evidence that democracies are the most legitimate systems of rule. Specifically, Peter defends that the political and epistemic fairness from the deliberative decision-making featuring democracies underpins their legitimacy. Last but not least, political legitimacy, to the extent that it refers to states or governments, also conveys an international

dimension. In this regard, state actions should also comply by international standards of justice, as authors like Buchanan (2002) or Kant (1999) advocate. Most importantly, Rawls (1971) stresses that, although democracy is generally deemed the most legitimate system, its imposition upon other states at the global level is neither feasible nor morally acceptable. Accordingly, in those occasions when the Singaporean Government's non-democratic character has been exposed, its response of rejecting external meddling and stressing the uniqueness of Singapore might be valid and coherent with its mechanisms of political legitimacy.

Figure 1: Flow Chart of Political Legitimacy Theories



Flow chart that highlights the different conceptions of political legitimacy. Opposing theories are placed facing each other (normative vs descriptive, egalitarian vs proceduralist, etc.) (Source: own elaboration).

5.1.2. Discourse Analysis

Although theories of discourse analysis address the features of discourse in general, the focus here will be on political discourse and discourses of legitimacy. Despite the lack of a widely agreed definition, discourse can be roughly considered as an open and hybrid phenomenon shaped continuously by intertextuality, social practices, and political circumstances (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, pp. 65-66). In addition, most authors converge on the idea that discourse is a form of social action that (1) undertakes an ideological work in shaping society and culture, and (2) constitutes power relations linking society and text by mediation (Scollon, 2001, p. 141). Political discourse in particular shares all of the above features of general discursive phenomena but is more context-based and ideology-laden, since it determines what is left said and unsaid, explicit and implicit, etc. Political discourse also tends to be strongly persuasive and argumentative, and therefore relies heavily on semantics to serve the speaker's purposes (Moore, 2018). Anyway, the discussion in this section will treat discourse in general terms, revolving around a specific strand of discourse analysis named CDS (Critical Discourse Studies) whose different accounts, amid their rich heterogeneity, share a recognition that power influences the choice of words that we use or, more rigorously, that certain structures and systems of discourse are dependent upon social conditions (Van Dijk T. A., 2009).

Within CDS or CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis), Teun Van Dijk's cognitive bias is nuanced by Ruth Wodak's interdisciplinary pragmatism, and counterbalanced by Norman Fairclough and Michel Foucault's tilt to linguistics. Theo Van Leeuwen develops further that CDA should concern the study of discourse as an instrument of power and control and a tool for the social construction of reality (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, pp. 2-9, 14-17). In this sense, CDA is not an empirical method but rather a motley cluster of approaches grounded on the same theoretical base and research questions. Thus, data collection and analysis concur in the same phase, with different authors focusing on different language features deemed the most relevant in making transparent power relations, or more precisely social disparities. For Siegfried Jäger, the gist hovers around argumentative markers, for Ron Scollon, it is generalisation or participant observation, for Fairclough and Wodak, it includes the semiotic aspects of discourse along with interdiscursivity (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, pp. 25-30). Where all versions of CDS converge

is on the cruciality of ideology in forging unequal power relations. As such, CDS understand that language is not power *per se*, but instead becomes so through the use that people make of it, inasmuch as discourse echoes power interactions (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, pp. 10-11)

CDA traces its roots back to the French philosopher Michel Foucault, who finds in exclusion procedures the main reflection of domination in language. As the instances that control discourse in every society, the so-called exclusionary procedures establish what can and cannot be said (taboo), in which circumstances (rituals), and by whom (privileged right) (Foucault, 1992, pp. 5-8, 33). Hence the necessity of a critical approach to discourse so as to identify these drivers of power that shape our cosmovision. Thus, discourse expresses not only static power relations but also the dynamic battle for power. Foucault sharply rebuts that Europe's alleged universal communication of knowledge and free flow of discourse are supposed to be less restrictive than the monopolised wisdom of Oriental tyranny (1992, pp. 22-24). Specifically, discourse is curtailed by three exclusionary procedures: the forbidden word or taboo, the adaptation to circumstances or rituals, and the quest for truth that determines who has the privileged right to say what. This third exclusionary mechanism rules what is "truthful" and what is "false", where the "truth" is what services power and consequently, the quest for the truth can underpin the legitimacy of any discourse , its validity and appropriateness (Foucault, 1992, pp. 9-11). Furthermore, these exclusionary mechanisms of discourse need not be external, but also internal, as in self-censorship.

Foucault also identifies the main instance of societal domination in access to discourse, with regard to the establishment of the conditions for the delivery of discourse, as in mainly the setting of rituals that determines who can access to and understand a discourse, establishing the limits of a discourse's coercive value. In line with that, knowledge becomes a vital tool in both providing discourse with meaningful content and (correspondingly) enforcing domination and exclusion from power. As a result, education is also vital in establishing conceptions of truth and falsehood, and presenting a discourse as the legitimate representation of reality (Foucault, 1992, p. 27). Following similar lines, Jäger focuses on knowledge as the meanings to interpret reality (2001, pp. 33-38), Therefore, discourse becomes a flow of knowledge through which power is

exercised. In line with Foucault's treatise *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), Jäger asserts that discourse shapes reality and drags it to change, because objects shift their identity with a new discourse. Qualitatively speaking, the reconstruction of knowledge to suit veiled interests becomes the "matter" that embodies discourse and expresses power relations. The ensuing conclusion is that knowledge and power have a positive relation. Where there is power, there is knowledge and vice versa, since undermining knowledge can mean undermining power (Jäger, 2001, pp. 58-60).

Van Dijk also tackles the notion of knowledge as encompassed within mental models, which determines the relevance of explicit and implicit information in a discourse and its impact upon each individual person (2001, pp. 108-113, 117). The Dutch author represents discourses as icebergs where only a small tip of context-relevant information is visible, while a vast mass of presupposed knowledge of sociocultural background floats below. Furthermore, mental models mediate on the cognitive interface that links discourse and society, the local and the global. This author distinguishes between personal, group, and cultural knowledge. The two last ones are collectivity-based and of outmost importance in showcasing power relations (Van Dijk T. , 2001, pp. 113-115). In his seminal treatise *Discourse and power*, Van Dijk defends a conception of discourse as a type of communication featuring social interactions and practices contextualised in specific environments. On this basis, power impacts discourse by creating and perpetuating preferential access to it and control of it. This is the reason why Van Dijk's main concern in analysing discourse will be to demonstrate the functioning of its preferential access (2009, p. 22).

For his part, Fairclough advocates a semiotics-based version of CDA, given that semiosis mediates in social practices and the representations of such social practices (2001, pp. 122-125). Language and semiotics are believed to shape the formation of ideological constructs that determine assumed knowledge and background. Therefore, Fairclough's CDA draws upon functional linguistics in line with Michael Halliday. As an example, the notion of a "knowledge-based economy" entails a discourse-based economy in itself, because knowledge is mainly expressed and consumed as discourse. Thus, the current global capitalist system has a discursive dimension duly exploited to showcase its ineluctability (Fairclough, 2001 pp. 126-132) via:

- the lack of liable and accountable social agents,
- the presentation of facts in a timeless, ahistorical present,
- the categorical statements delivering unmodalised truths, and
- the shift from an economically-reasoned “is” to a politically-laden “must be”.

Even the use of specific verbal tenses like the present simple and present perfect contributes to this aura of historical depth and irreversibility that surrounds change in the global economic order. The patent use of reinforcing figures of speech like metaphors, allusions, repetitions, or parallelisms is also recognised as a resort of power, together with an advertising lexicon based on aggressive advocacy, the semantical dichotomy of connotation and denotation, or the exaltation of novelty (Moore, 2018). Thus, Fairclough targets current discourse on globalisation and economic policy to prove the manipulation of language via discourse for political purposes. Following Margaret Thatcher’s well-known expression that “There is no alternative” (TINA), the capitalist globalised economic order is presented as given and inexorable (2001, pp. 133-135).

For Van Dijk, manipulation emerges as the dimension of discourse that most patently signals abuse of power, the exercise of some form of illegitimate influence through discourse. Because it requires preferential access to public discourse through mass media and other sources, manipulation highlights how discourse amplifies and socially reproduces power, besides reinforcing inequality (Van Dijk, 2009, pp. 351-357). Manipulation perpetuates a dialectic dynamic between dominant and dominated groups, between insiders or ingroups and outsiders or outgroups, which pervades all sorts of discourse (2009, pp. 23-24). Wodak already identifies a dichotomous black-and-white rhetoric that constructs a world of extremes as a typical phenomenon of political discourse. Contrasting “our world of law and order” with “their world of crime and disorder”, political discourse builds an overarching ideological framework that exalts sameness and execrates difference (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, pp. 86-88). As Van Dijk understands it (2009), CDA is concerned with ideologically-biased discourse and the polarised representation of dominant ingroups, the “Us”, as opposed to dominated outgroups, the “Them”. According to all this, the usefulness of manipulation lies in its appeal to emotions that facilitates this ideological polarisation as well as the

concealment of any potentially refutable factual information. Van Dijk also notes that manipulation is conditional upon the cognitive models of the manipulated, without which manipulation may be ineffective (2009, pp. 358-368). Thus, manipulation requires the manipulated to lack relevant knowledge or undeniable norms, and/or hold strong emotions or social positions that force them to accept the dominant discourse.

It is precisely this slant towards domination that singles out Van Dijk's thinking, where a discourse becomes illegitimate if it enforces inequality and counters the interests of non-dominant groups, for whom access to public discourse remains to a bigger or lesser extent barred. The relevance of discourse for power lies above all in that "power is exercised and expressed directly through the differential access to the diverse genres, contents, and styles of discourse" (Van Dijk T. A., 2009, p. 65). In this way, the control undertaken by those dominating discourse can be legitimised through either total control imposed by the threat of force or partial control sanctioned by an elite, a majority, or a consensus. Control is made easier by the fact that discourse manufactures consent, inasmuch as it is a function of power and through it, of political legitimacy (Van Dijk, 2009, p. 121). Namely, control over discourse also implies more power to the extent that it triggers control over context (participants or place), text (verbal production or timings), and minds (credibility of the information, education, or presence/absence of alternative discourses) (Van Dijk T. A., 2009, pp. 158-174). These features subjectively shape the reconstruction of discourse into a mental model (Van Dijk, 2009, pp. 158-174).

Furthermore, domination can also be exercised through instances of symbolic power, like education and mass media. As a subtler and often neglected form of domination, symbolic power moulds people's minds to restrict access to discourse and thereby perpetuate the hegemony of the same elites (Van Dijk T. A., 2009, pp. 30-36). It is exercised by symbolic elites, responsible for the elaboration of the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, norms, and ideologies that conform a society. Symbolic elites buttress the legitimacy of political systems and social practices by constructing an ideology understood as a social cognition that represents reality in accordance with specific interests (Van Dijk T. A., 2009, pp. 63-67). Because political systems as power institutionalisations are linked to specific modes of discourse, symbolic elites condition the genesis and evolution of discursive phenomena. In other words, symbolic elites

determine what people think, what is taught, or what is deemed acceptable and inacceptable. Consequently, their grip on people's minds is the strongest amid power-wielding groups (Van Dijk, 2009, 67-71, 75-77). Mass media and educational elites represent the two sides of the coin of the reproduction and textual legitimisation of societal power. On the one hand, mass media shape interpretations of reality and derive their strength from the widespread use people make of them as first-resort and most trusted sources of information. Besides the wider coverage granted to the more powerful, the worthiness of facts to become news can be, and is indeed manipulated. On the other hand, education also sways people through textbooks that determine what is/is not taught and how it is taught (Van Dijk, 2009, pp. 95-106).

Alternative dimensions that shape discourse include emotions and context. The first primarily determine the reception of discourse and the second, its pragmatic and stylistic features (Van Dijk, 2009, p. 267). Moving into cognitive models, Van Dijk differentiates between different types of knowledge, such as the "Common Foundations" that cement interactions within a society and are assumed, unarguable, and taken for granted. With the same characteristics, there is also group discourse, as factual beliefs that not society but a specific group shares. The exploitation and manipulation of these two "truthful" modalities of societal knowledge, together with that of knowledge clusters of evaluative criteria (good versus bad) is what determines opinions at the group level, which determine ideology, which in turn determines power relations (Van Dijk, 2009, pp. 271-275). It is thus how the cycle that ties discourse and power together is closed.

5.2. Case Study: The Singapore Exception

As part of the Malay Federation, an independent Singapore was never meant to exist, until it was unforeseeably expelled by Malay leaders eager to teach ambitious Singapore a lesson of humility. To their dismal surprise, Singapore never grovelled for readmission, neither did it succumb to outside powers as everybody predicted. On the contrary, it became a one-party authoritarian state as well an economically prosper global hub for trade, finance, education, and transportation (The Economist, 2015, p. 1). Singapore

tops international charts in Human Development, corruption levels, crime, transparency, or competitiveness, ruled by the PAP uninterruptedly since independence. For example, in 2016 it ranked 7th country globally (84/100) in the Perceived Corruption Index (Transparency International, 2017). Despite its prosperity, the Singaporean soul remains deeply cognizant of its past and present liabilities. The country's violent independence process and its nature as an island city surrounded by Indonesia and Malaysia, two relatively massive countries with little affection for Singapore, profoundly shaped its policies (The Economist, 2015, p. 3). To overcome these constraints, LKY relentlessly pursued self-sufficiency and independence for Singapore in his more than forty years of tenure, drawing talent from all over the world and enforcing an open and tolerant society. LKY himself stressed that "no-one owes Singapore an existence, and no-one owes Singapore a living." (Lim, 1997).

Where Singapore excelled was in connecting the needs of multinational companies with its labour supply, so that it could service the port and airport and gradually forge a regional hub. Proverbial for its conducive business "ecosystem", the Lion City has built its image as a safe basepoint for the expansion of companies through Asia, by contrast with other economically booming but politically unstable and corrupt countries. It fiercely competes with other Asian economic poles to lure companies and retain top talent (The Economist, 2017). Despite the commercial protection of certain industries like manufacturing, "soft factors" attracting workers and investors, such as an efficient bureaucracy, political stability, low taxes and crime, or high quality of life, abound. Admittedly, there is room for improvement: the public transport system still grapples with the population boom and the Stock Exchange remains relatively underdeveloped (The Economist, 2015, pp. 7-8). Yet, The Economist remains sanguine about Singapore's economic prospects, highlighting the "fifty years of breakneck economic growth" that have yielded a resilient economy with subdued inflation, low unemployment, robust public finances, and a structural surplus on the current account" (2015, p. 7).

Further, labour unrest is contained through a corporativist approach to labour relations via trade-offs between a government concerned about skill upgrades and a labour force drained by competition from emerging economies. Labour policies are particularly sensitive in Singapore because the prevalent governance philosophy entrusts the State

with the provision of jobs and mediation in socio-economic equity (Chong, 2007, pp. 972-974). Thus, the forced improvement of technical education of the workforce, which triggered the flourishing of high value-added technology and human capital-based industries, was implemented with careful consideration (Martin-Jones, 1997, pp. 122-126). Likewise for the expansion of so-called “brain services” including retail, electronics, finance, or tourism, reinforced by an efficient public policy that promotes flexibility in labour markets and gradually tightens supply and demand to build an “international city of distinction” (Martin-Jones, 1997, pp. 126-127). Admittedly, the dependency on cheap foreign labour contradicts the PAP’s discourse on self-sufficiency and is both politically contentious and economically unsustainable. Still, immigration remains vital for the Singaporean Government in invigorating disappointing fertility rates and furnishing this voracious labour market (The Economist, 2015, p. 3).

Moreover, top-notch economic management through an unrivalled regulatory and institutional excellence has traditionally been the hallmark of the Singaporean Government, which trumpets its role as the sole guarantor of stability and prosperity (Lim, 1997, p. 167-169). Competent economic policies enabled steady recoveries from disruptive crisis that, like the 1993 Asian crash, have reinforced the Government’s self-esteem in navigating downturns (Yap, 2003 p. 239). In the words of Deputy PM Lee Hsien Loong, it is a “prudent fiscal stance” and the subsequent “strong budgetary position” that, via “high savings rates and current account surpluses”, enables an adequate response to local and international shocks (Chong, 2007, p. 957). In this regard, Singapore’s development and its nation-building philosophy cannot be separated from a public service of exceptional quality and efficiency, which draws from pools of national talent to staff its leadership and nimbly executes governmental policies with a decent grasp of national imperatives and results-driven pragmatism. Renowned for its fairness and impartiality, it enforces Singaporean values like meritocracy, responsibility, and a hard-work ethics with zero tolerance for corruption (Lim, 1997, pp. 169-171). Singapore’s public service articulates initiatives like PS21, a streamlining programme nurturing an attitude of excellence in service for a public with high standards of courtesy and quality, while promoting cost-effectiveness and boosting the morale of public servants (Lim, 1997, p. 171-172).

Accordingly, a bird's eye view of the public service yields an optimistic picture of excellent public policies due to a pragmatic approach that aims to tweak both government and market imperfections (Wu & Ramesh, 2013, p. 310). For instance, housing policy illustrates how calibrated governmental intervention in real estate markets via manipulation of subletting requirements and mortgage rates has produced a stable, transparent sector with a wide array of options for different budgets (Ming & Sing, 2016). Ditto for Singapore's experience in tackling traffic congestion, where flexibility in using a variety of public policy tools, from fines for breaching speed limits to efficient and cheap public transportation, facilitated success (Wu & Ramesh, 2013, pp. 310-315). Likewise, the fine-tuning of the health system with minimal public expenditure has rested on a stress on individual responsibility and self-financing through compulsory savings and insurance schemes (Wu & Ramesh, 2013, pp. 310-315). These reforms were not without their problems, and promoting competition among hospitals without impairing access for the poorest proved a thorny issue. Prompt government intervention prevented the inflation of hospital bills and the acquisition of expensive technology, while increased subsidies ensured continued access to medical care for the most disadvantaged (Wu & Ramesh, 2013, pp. 315-318). Consequently, the success of the PAP Administration's public policies reaffirmed it in its in its pragmatic results-driven approach to public policy, striving for innovative policy mixes that could address both market and government shortcomings (Wu & Ramesh, 2013, pp. 318-319).

This regulatory success also stems from the Singaporean Government's credible commitment to delivering excellence in all its policies. Specifically, its practice of bargaining with capitalists in a participatory framework has successfully assuaged "investors' concerns regarding investment in less democratic NICs"(Yap, 2003, p. 240). Such commitment is expressed through (1) punishment for non-performance to enforce meritocracy, and (2) tight controls of the Government itself by expanding private sector's inputs into the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of governmental policies. On the one hand, the Government strives to demonstrate before investors that it is not preying on their investment, that arbitrary confiscations to fill holes in public coffers are unthinkable, and that their voices are heard in redressing policy failures (Yap, 2003, pp. 240-241). On the other, it steadily enhances private sector participation in

policy-making as well, setting ad-hoc mechanisms to compensate both investors and workers whenever the economy falters. This promise of exceptional policy delivery has arguably been fulfilled thanks to a consistent specialisation drive that has earned the PAP Government the nickname "Singapore, Inc." for a reason (Yap, 2003 pp. 243-245).

Moreover, the economic prosperity of Singapore owes its *élan vital* to a remarkably stable political system. In a context of unrigged, regular, secret, and compulsory voting, the PAP has won every election since Singapore's independence and without any blatant vote-buying, intimidation, or ballot-box stuffing (The Economist, 2015, p. 4). Reportedly, the Government engages in discreet gerrymandering, delays public projects in opposition wards, and summons elections at self-serving timings to disadvantage opposition parties (Chen, 2015). To that are added the Group Representation Constituencies (GRC), ethnic and electoral requirement schemes theoretically to increase minorities' visibility but clearly hindering the formation of opposition candidates for each constituency (The Economist, 2015, p. 4). Nonetheless, the electoral success of the PAP rather emanates from their superior political capital. LKY's party draws most of Singapore's talent, forging a technocratic, incorruptible, and highly competent leadership against which no other party can compete. Allegedly, such electoral hegemony has sometimes come under threat, as in the 2011 elections featured by the PAP's worst results in history: a meagre 60% of the vote (Chen, 2015). Propelled to do some "soul searching", the party took up a more populist line that heeded key demands of curbing foreign labour and increasing social benefits for the elderly and the worse-off. It won handsomely in the next election (The Economist, 2015, p. 5), as public housing blocks undergo improvements and new high-rise apartments have their construction in progress (Ming & Sing, 2016).

Considered a "liberalising autocracy", Singapore generally obtains modest freedom ratings, with a positive evolution in some indicators (Zakaria, 1997, pp. 23-40) (Diamond, 2015, p. 154); and a stagnation in others with for instance 4/7[1] in the Freedom House Index (2018). Early predictions that globalisation and communications technologies would dilute Singapore's authoritarianism have underestimated the resilience of the

[1] In the Freedom House rating system, 1 = most free and 7 = least free.

dominant political culture (Subramaniam, 2001, p. 75). An example might be Singapore's tamed press, a loyal partner in the nation-building process that nevertheless fails to provide adequate checks on the Government (Li-ann, 2008, p. 42). In the last few years, the PAP-opposition gap is tightening in the wake of newer generations that feel less indebted to the ruling party. Born into an affluent Singapore and used to its international standing, many young global-minded Singaporeans cannot imagine it any other way and demand change for a PAP that still lives on the prestige of LKY's economic miracle (Dobson, 2015). Yet the Singaporean Government is aware of this pressure since, in the words of incumbent PM Lee Hsien Loong, Singaporeans "know that their government is generally doing the right thing," even if they want someone "to put a bit more chilly on the government's tail" (Loong, 2014). The PAP Administration can also afford to relax socially, politically, and economically without the risk of breakdown. A starting point has been the shift in the Government's approach to its citizens from " strict headmaster" to "benevolent parent caring for its wayward children" (The Economist, 2015, pp. 5, 10).

In the last few years, cyberspace has become the new frontier in the Government's endeavour to silence its critics. Blogs for instance, are considered a public space and hence liable to legal sanctions. Despite some notorious cases, the Singaporean Government adopts a "light touch" strategy in policing the Internet: it promotes self-censorship through co-optation of interested stakeholders and seldom blocks access to any particular content (Li-ann, 2008, pp. 42-47). This dovetails with a more general approach of calibrated rather than blunderbuss management of dissent that, following LKY's exploitation of the law itself as his preferred cudgel, also impacts the treatment of parliamentary opposition (Li-ann, 2008, p. 52). Namely, Singapore's non-PAP parties remain scattered, weak, and constantly assailed by the defamation lawsuits for which the Singaporean Government is notorious. Their ensuing bankruptcy also ensures that a career in opposition politics in Singapore will never look attractive (The Economist, 2015, p. 5). Furthermore, the insignificance of political forces beyond the PAP complicates the party's quest for a "Goldilocks opposition" (following The Economist's metaphor), one that could provide just the right amount of quality feedback that the Government allegedly welcomes (2015, p. 5).

Indeed, the margin for criticising the Government remains as thin as ever, in accordance with the PAP's belief that excessive concessions to political liberties are inimical to the socio-economic development and communitarian Asian values that build up an orderly Confucian society (Li-ann, 2008, pp. 25-29). Article 14 of the Singaporean Constitution enshrines free speech, while empowering the Judiciary to curtail it on "reasonable grounds" like national security, or public order and morality (Li-ann, 2008, pp. 25-32). Public consultation is indeed promoted on general policies, but banned on sensitive issues ranging from LKY's family to taxation. As of 2017, stiffening penalties for minor issues reinforce widespread fears of political retribution, thereby rendering this express encouragement of grassroots feedback even more meaningless (The Economist, 2017). At the same time, a judicial approach that mature citizens must take responsibility for what they say translates into a harsh enforcement of the law. For instance, political engagement by foreigners is a no-go, since "domestic matters ought to be reserved for Singaporeans" (Li-ann, 2008, pp. 36, 47). The PAP and the Singaporean Government, between whom limits remain blurred, coincide in the designation of specific public spaces to channel criticism in quite a constricting way. Among those is the Speakers' Corner, where anyone can voice their grievances only after seeking prior permission from the Government. Such terms of free speech allow the Government to both reject accusations of heavy-handedness and subtly scrutinise and quench any dissent (The Economist, 2017).

In addition, the well-oiled machinery of Singapore's public administration has succeeded in enforcing racial calm amid a complex socio-ethnic fabric. The obsession with striking an ethnic balance has the Chinese, Malay, and Indian races[2] intermixed in every neighbourhood to thwart any potential ethnic enclave. The Economist sharply points that the Singaporean Government seems to behave "as though the country was just a few drinks and an inflammatory newspaper editorial away from vicious ethnic violence" (2015, p. 6). Albeit the promotion of mainland Chinese emigration, clashes among the majoritarian and most successful Chinese, the Indians, and the traditionally disadvantaged Malays have shone for their absence. Still, the dismal economic and

[2] The ethnic composition of Singapore's population is the following: 74.3% Chinese, 13.4% Malays, 9.0% Indians, and 3.2% other minorities as of 2017 (Department of Statistics, 2017)

educational performance of Malays, as well as their sense of alienation, points at an underlying cleft amid the peaceful harmony that features Singapore's multiracial society (Mutalib, 2012, pp. 70-73). The PAP Administration has partially succeeded in boosting Malay's academic, economic, and professional performance (Mathews, 2017), but it has failed to garner grassroots support given that most Malay leaders are seen as imposed from atop. The legitimacy crisis for the Malay leadership is rooted in the quandary of serving both Malay interests out of their ethnicity and Chinese interests out of their majority constituents. This dual-clientele electoral setting hampers effective policies and fails to solve Malay problems (Mutalib, 2012, pp. 76-78).

Problematically, uplifting the Malays, with its obvious canvass intentions, comes into conflict with both the ideal of meritocratic justice and the ethnic Chinese as Singapore's majority constituents and the core of PAP ranks. Hence the cruciality of the transnational phenomenon of "Singaporean Chineseness", a double-edged sword for the Government that shores up a nationhood centred on Chinese values while seeking a prudent distance from the Chinese motherland, as Tan affirms (2003, pp. 751-752). What is more, the emphasis on Chineseness has become a political weapon calibrated to suit the PAP's interests. Initially, a nascent Singapore downplayed transnational ties to nurture its identity as a "multicultural oasis". On the contrary, the "Asianisation policies" of the 1980s leveraged the "East Asian Tigers Miracle" promulgated by the World Bank whereby Singapore self-proclaimed as the "Asian values" spokesperson (Tan, 2003, pp. 750-760). The return to one's cultural roots and the restoration of an immaterial "national heritage" targeted all ethnic groups, although it clearly leant on the Chinese elites as the main cultural force. Likewise, the affluent society of the 1990s necessitated some remoralising measure of Chineseness through a Confucian ethos. Indeed, Confucian values, tantamount to "Asian values", are crucial for the PAP because they:

- Legitimise the PAP's technocratic rule to work for the "common good",
- Help socio-economic development,
- Enforce an orderly and fair society,
- Reaffirm family and community ties,
- Revert ageing and infertility trends (Tan, 2003, pp. 763-764) (Chen, 2015).

Yet, the engineering of monolithic society through the defensive screen of Asian values remains unfeasible due to inescapable contradictions. Neither does Singapore's religiosity and motley social fabric tally with a global city "reaching out to the world", nor does a communitarian ideology for domestic consumption tally with a liberal trade policy for external consumption (Martin-Jones, 1997, p. 136).

In particular, the Confucian tenet of meritocracy remains at the heart of both the national culture and the political legitimacy of the PAP's authoritarianism (Chen, 2015). Meritocracy provides coherence to a system of government based on academic and professional success rather than class, racial, or gender lines, exalting Singapore's uniqueness framed in a national branding that relies heavily on education. Namely, the Government unabashedly manipulates textbooks to "manufacture" good citizens, driven by a sense of patriotism, meritocracy, and responsibility; and to mould a nationalist imagery that simultaneously heralds cosmopolitan multiculturalism and Chinese-rooted Confucianism (Weninger & Kho, 2014, pp. 614-622).

As a proxy for political participation, the New Citizenship Initiative (NE) nurtures a virtuous cycle of biopolitics whereby docile citizens engage to the extent desired by the Government. With the goal of skewing a chronically adrift youth into the right path, NE battled the "contamination" of Western values like the materialism inherent in Singapore's all-out mission for development. Initiatives like the Community Involvement Programme (CIP) fostered a sense of national pride exalting Singapore's uniqueness (Weninger & Kho, 2014, pp. 618-621). Another vital tool for retrieving Singapore's "rotten morals" comprised the Religious Knowledge Programme (RK) that reintroduced religious studies in schools but could not conceal a purpose of promoting neo-Confucianism. Anyway, the meritocratic, technocratic, cosmopolitan, and competitive traits cherished by the Singaporean Government did not make sense for a return to social conservatism and a religious revival. Hence a gradual religious relaxation even if Confucianism remains the unarguable core of Singapore's nationhood (Tamney, 1992, pp. 212-214).

6. Analysis: CDA Applied to *From Third World to First*

As explained earlier, this dissertation will employ CDA as the main tool with which to analyse *From Third World to First*, drawing on different strands of CDA to tackle different dimensions of the reflection of power in the Singaporean Government's discourse. The basic postulates of CDA that language becomes power only through the use that people make of it and that discourse echoes power interactions (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, pp. 10-11), will guide our textual analysis of discourse in *From Third World to First*. Further, such analysis will be structured into the three main drivers of the PAP's legitimacy to rule, so that each of them can be extracted from the textual analysis of *From Third World to First* through CDA.

Table 1: Categorisation of the three legitimacy drivers

Legitimacy driver	Ideological and policy components	Values enforced
Development	• Excellent policy delivery • High living standards • Top-notch public service • Extensive social networks	• Excellence • Incorruptibility • Technocracy • Professionalism
National culture	• Neo-Confucianism • Communitarianism • Social conservatism	• Patriotism • Loyalty • Meritocracy
	• Cosmopolitanism • Embrace of globalisation	• Adaptability • Resilience • Tenacity
Ethnic balance	• Ethnic parity • Uplifting of Malays • "Compassionate meritocracy"	• Rule of law • Equality • Social peace • Fairness

The above table highlights how the three legitimacy drivers of the Singaporean Government might be broken down into more specific items, be it in terms of the elements that they encompass (whether ideological tenets or tangible policies) or in the values enforced to legitimise the power of the PAP.

6.1. Policy Excellence and Development in *From Third World to First*

Of the three legitimacy drivers of the PAP Administration, this is certainly intended to be the widest label since it encompasses both politics and policies, both domestic and foreign, as well as everything related to development and the attainment of high-living standards. It is also the most important one, given that if anything was ever clear to LKY and his team, it was that only the delivery of tangible improvements in living standards for every Singaporean could protect their political hegemony and avoid the disintegration of such vulnerable polity as Singapore was (Beng-Huat, 1985). What is more, given the enormous sacrifice that developing a resource-deprived vulnerable city into a world-class metropolis entailed, effective discursive mechanisms became even more necessary in legitimising the collective suffering that was (supposedly) traded for a blurry future.

Arguably the most important discursive strategy in legitimising developmental policies is the narrative of the ineluctability of the PAP's choices. By presenting their line of decision as the only viable alternative, LKY effectively shields himself and his party from criticism, while limiting their liability in case of blatant and avoidable blunder. Unsurprisingly, Fairclough identifies this strategy in how most governments present competition in the global economy as an immutable given (2001, p. 130). The inexorable acceptance of globalised capitalism is also undertaken by the Singaporean Government, who champions its role as the guarantor of development and stability. At the end of the day, the adaptation to globalisation and the obsession with economic performance becomes a choice between the devil and the deep blue sea, because Singapore cannot really afford to do anything else. LKY and his team had to make Singapore succeed, because otherwise (they argue) a remerger on Malaysian terms gloomily awaited (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 14). This is particularly important in justifying the heavy-handedness for which the Singaporean Government is notorious. For instance, when LKY details how the Communists (allegedly) self-destructed, he legitimises the crackdown on Communist unrest on the grounds that "politics was no longer a game of mass rallies and demonstrations. It had become a matter of life and death" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 109).

The presentation of LKY's tough decisions as unavoidable and inexorable is supported by a "There Is No Alternative" (TINA) rhetoric. Such narrative legitimises not only the government's non-democratic nature, but also its policies and positions in a wide array of issues, i.e. globalisation. The resort to a TINA discourse entails four specific tactics identified by Fairclough (2001, pp. 126-132).:

1. The lack of liable and accountable social agents, which is relatively unimportant in *From Third World to First* because LKY does not mince words in detailing who did what, in taking credit for Singapore's successes and thoroughly describing what his adversaries did wrong and why.
2. The presentation of facts in a timeless, ahistorical present. Other verbal tenses like the present simple or the present perfect also contribute to this aura of historical depth and irreversibility. An example can be found in: "Singaporeans know that more foreign talent will create more jobs." (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 143).
3. The categorical statements delivering unmodalised truths, in for instance defending the implementation of English as the sole language of education because it was "the only acceptable neutral language, besides the language that would make us relevant to the world" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 149), or more illustratively, in sentencing that "law and order provide the framework for stability and development" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 212).
4. The shift from the economically reasoned "is" to the politically laden "ought to be". Hence the consistent use of verbs of obligation like "must" or "have to", as in "we had to train our people" or "We had a real-life problem to solve and could not afford to be conscribed by any theory or dogma" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 58).

Indeed, this deliberate manipulation of other alternatives to present them as unfeasible or unacceptable serves well in the reinforcement of development as a political legitimacy driver. Such was asserted as the utmost priority mainly because it was the most tangible way in which the PAP could prove to Singaporeans their ability and worthiness to rule Singapore. That in turn justified both external policies, like LKY's diplomatic manoeuvres to leapfrog the animosity of Kuala Lumpur and Yakarta, and internal policies, like the cool-eyed pragmatism that inspires Singapore's governance philosophy (Kuan Yew, 2000). Indeed, Singapore not only evidences natural economic

reasoning that the quality of public service impacts the economy and polity, but also provides a living example of the thesis that the NICs' success lied in strong governments limiting citizens' participation and ignoring their policy preferences (Yap, 2003, p. 237). The thorough social engineering of the PAP Administration and its inevitable curtailment of civil and political freedoms, unthinkable in any democratic system, is condoned as an acceptable concession for a government that delivers safe streets, good public transport, first-rate health care, and a clean, responsive public service (The Economist, 2017). Hence the idea of a "performance legitimacy" for the PAP, at least in what this legitimacy driver of development and policy excellence is concerned (Dobson, 2015).

Within this discursive strategy, the justification of problematic decisions on the protection or wellbeing of those subject to power, identified by Van Dijk (2001, pp. 90-100), is particularly important because of both its ubiquity in *From Third World to First* and its cruciality in reinforcing the PAP's performance legitimacy. For instance, as the initial governmental protection over national banks was gradually lifted to ensure their competitiveness in the global economy, LKY explains how they engaged in intense dialogue, heard complaints and disseminated information on public policies, yet remaining inflexible because in the long run the trade-off would be positive (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 80-82). Likewise for the change of paradigm as Singapore's Stock Exchange developed, when Singapore had to grant more leeway to risky ventures, a calibrated loss that would turn into a benefit in the future (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 78-80). The eradication of "damaging habits" also squares with this idea, in that the anti-spitting campaigns, the ban on chewing gum, or the crackdown on smoking all served the purpose of making Singapore clean and green with more international attractiveness and more jobs (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 173-184). Many problematic decisions were also justified on the grounds that otherwise, the PAP would not have got things done. Such justification of political power tallies with Hampton's view of political legitimacy in a minimalistic sense as a vindication of coercion, which becomes necessary for the State in allowing it to provide effective solutions to public problems (Hampton, 1998).

Most illustratively, the chapter titled "Winning Over the Unions" explains how LKY reined in labour unrest, with use of force if necessary, towards the greater goal of attracting investments to shore up Singapore's development. In LKY's rationale, the

means by which policies are implemented are just as important as the outcomes they intend to generate. On the one hand, the desired goals of a plethora of jobs being created or incomes significantly enhanced, were amply fulfilled thanks to the PAP's tight labour policies. As LKY himself puts it, labour leaders had to understand that "the Government would not allow any union to jeopardise Singapore's survival" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 85). On the other hand, such stark terms of negotiation were nuanced by an emphasis on the entire process of dialogue, cooperation, and conciliation whenever possible, materialised in off-the-record meetings, or the creation of the National Wages Council (NWC) as a tripartite of trade unions, management, and the Government (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 82-85). In addition, some of the direst effects of the Government's labour policy were softened, as in the subsidies on some condominiums for workers' use. Hence a discursive strategy that, besides stressing the long-run benefits traded for the current sacrifice, implements a procedural focus to cushion some negative dislocations and soothe the shifting process. Such emphasis on deliberative procedures is also present in many conceptions of political legitimacy, including Buchanan's minimalistic legitimacy or Peter's defence of democracies (Buchanan, 2002) (Peter, 2017).

The PAP's focus on procedural legitimacy is all the more revealing on account of their "electoral obsession". Namely, LKY is adamant about the consistent victories of his party in every election celebrated since independence, deemed "referenda on the level of our support, not whether we would win" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 134). In this sense, the fact that LKY takes for granted the electoral dominance of the PAP already strips any non-PAP Government of its legitimacy. Acknowledgedly, the father of Singapore does recognise the flaws of the system, even its bias in favour of the PAP in for instance the resort to pork-barrel politics. Yet he quickly points that such shortcomings constitute a common denominator of Western democracies and do not make Singapore's system less fair or equal (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 131-134). Interestingly, there is scant detail throughout the book for Singapore's electoral politics, a silence that might signal at a reluctance to tackle such sensitive issues because, as LKY recognises, the priority of development necessitated a strong government. He also makes a warning for the future, forecasting that the electoral hegemony of the PAP will depend on the ability of its leaders to respond to the demands of a "better educated people, and to their desire for

greater participation in decisions that shape their lives" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 134). Therefore, the fixation on procedural legitimacy and its subsequent domination of political discourse in Singapore are here to stay.

Moreover, LKY and his team do not waste time in taking ownership for Singapore's successes, for instance when in the preface LKY reminds the reader that "public order, personal security, economic and social progress, and prosperity are not the natural order of things", instead depending "on ceaseless effort and attention from an honest and effective government that the people must elect" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. xiii). LKY links the current prosperity of Singapore to the industrious, competent, and patient savoir-faire of himself and his party, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy driver of development in exchange for political acquiescence. Predictably, negative by-products of Singapore's explosive development, such as its intense inequality expressed by one of the highest Gini coefficients in the world (The Economist, 2015, pp. 6-7), are hardly mentioned. Despite this blatant disregard for the many shadows in Singapore's history, LKY's tone moves away from swaggering chest-beating, careful as he is to attribute most of Singapore's prosperity to both the leadership and the people, understood as a cohesive team working in the same direction. For example, he summarises Singapore's success in the word "confidence", which is attributed to the Singaporean nation as a whole (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 60-67). In another paragraph, the key to success is credited to "the quality of the people in charge" because "Singaporeans were competent, disciplined, and reliable, a people who would learn the skills they required soon enough" (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 62-63).

LKY and his team effectively take ownership for Singapore's successes mainly thanks to their nature as a highly-competent, technocratic aristocracy (in a Platonian sense). The reverence for the PAP leadership as an unrivalled team of know-it-all experts is a textbook example of unequal power relations that impact discourse, in line with Van Dijk (2009, pp. 80-92). Thus, the superiority of LKY's Government in deeming what is best for Singapore and promptly delivering it becomes a handy resource to buttress this technocratically-legitimised control over the ignorant layman. Likewise, Van Dijk's stress on these discourse modalities as drivers of the legitimacy of hierarchies (2009, pp. 80-92), makes sense out of Singapore's Confucian meritocracy that venerates the elderly

and enshrines loyalty to one's professional and academic superiors including, naturally, the Government. In addition, LKY even details how he bypassed criticism from fellow ministers and other members of his team, eventually getting his own way because sometimes everybody else was wrong and only he was right, as time would tell (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 83-91). Thus, the exaltation of Singapore's technocracy exemplifies the use of knowledge to exert power through discourse, especially with regard to its exclusionary effects (Fairclough, 2001, p. 27). Then, the stature of the PAP Government as the knowledgeable leaders of Singapore can enable them to reconstruct reality to suit their interests, because where there is knowledge, there is power, and viceversa (Jäger, 2001, pp. 58-60).

Another constant in *From Third World to First* is the listing of the tasks that "had to be done" and that the PAP set about to duly complete, *id est* the problems that the PAP met with prompt and efficient solutions. The fact that many chapters are titled as specific "homework" activities to be completed further reinforces this point, as in "2. Building an Army from Scratch", "5. Creating a financial centre", "12. Keeping the Government clean", or "13. Greening Singapore" (Kuan Yew, 2000). In line with this, and making honour to the nickname "Singapore, Inc.", the book also depicts many policies and initiatives as mere administrative partisan-devoid procedures awaiting to be done. For instance, the phase-out of Mandarin Chinese and its replacement by English as the language of instruction and labour is presented as an inexorable decision and a simple matter of time, again feeding on the recurrent discourse of ineluctability justified by future fruits. This underscores a narrative whereby public policies are implemented in a predictable cycle, a wax and wane of government interference in the private sphere. This tendency materialises in for instance economic policy, where the boom and bust cycles are buffered by a complex but efficient institutional framework set up to oversee the economy and channel inputs from the private sector into policy-makers (Yap, 2003, p. 242-244). As a result, the reliance on the PAP's technocracy is strengthened, while the reader is coaxed into sympathising with LKY's developmental agenda.

Alternatively, LKY mentions how his Government avoided succumbing to easy temptations in developing Singapore, such as the decision to deny licenses to well-connected banks with opaque and suspicious activities. This decision was tied to the

determination of the Monetary Authority of Singapore or MAS (not LKY's) to build up a reputation of thorough and unyielding rule of law and an elitist selection of only institutions of unblemished repute (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 74-80). Furthermore, LKY's objective "not to maximise returns but to protect the value of our savings and get a fair return on capital" exalts the PAP as a socially-conscious leadership with clear long-term objectives that eschew the allurement of short-term easy gains (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 80). Particularly exemplifying is the entire chapter "Keeping the Government Clean", which describes how LKY, "sickened by the greed, corruption, and decadence of many Asian leaders", sought to redress the corruption of Asian societies (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 157). Acknowledgedly, the success of LKY's efforts are patent in Singapore, whose competitive advantage is often tied to an honest leadership "clear about what their country did and did not have, methodical in their planning and execution, and steadfast in their follow-through" (Spar, 2015). With "a deep sense of a mission to establish a clean and effective government", the fight against corruption becomes not only "a task to be done" and an "unavoidable choice", but also a tide which the PAP Government could have easily drifted with but instead chose to fight against (Kuan Yew, 2000).

Thus, the storm of reforms to ensure minimal corruption is also described in thorough detail, so as to persuade even further the reader about how LKY battled the tide of times to enforce positive ideas that improved Singaporean society. Furthermore, the high-profile cases of several ministers that made the headlines, especially the one who committed suicide, showcase to the reader that nobody is above the law in Singapore, a stress on values and principles that reinforces the persuasive impact of *From Third World to First*. LKY also congratulates himself on a climate of public opinion that threw public notoriety into corruption offenders (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 158-162). To all that is added the realisation that the high moral standards required to eradicate corruption must be cultivated through time with unswerving determination. LKY credits the institutions he and his team built and staffed with outstanding talent for the change in such firmly-rooted habit as corruption was (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 159-163). Therefore, the portrayal of the Government as an incorruptible elite that best seeks to advance the prosperity of ordinary Singaporeans reinforces a positive image grounded on the appeal to emotions and values, as the next section will explain in detail.

Equally ubiquitous is the endurable tale of an independent Singapore surviving against all odds, as a sort of modern-day David triumphing over innumerable Goliaths, as in "Tremendous odds with an improbable chance of survival" and Malaysia's pressure to have Singapore "clobbered into submission" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 4-6). The internal and external boycotting of Singapore is widely showcased throughout the book, as when LKY details all the Malaysian-backed race riots that in fact justify the creeping militarisation of Singapore's early years. Against such backdrop, the triumph of an independent and industrious Singapore becomes even more patent, as when LKY narrates how, against Indonesia's pressure to sway Singapore, the Little Red Dot made itself useful to industrial countries and thereby "changed the survival equation" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 267). In fact, an entire chapter is titled "Surviving without a hinterland", detailing how a beleaguered Singapore survived thanks to the strength of its people, rightly guided by its wise leaders. The overwhelming majority of LKY decisions and the PAP's public policies are, to a bigger or lesser extent, painted with this messianic tone of fighting against the tide. For example, LKY elaborates on how Singapore crafted a financial centre out of nothing, lacking the advantages of other regional hubs like Hong-Kong's backing by the pound sterling, as an example of this typically-Singaporean Herculean effort to stand out from the crowd (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 72-73).

The rhetoric of a Singapore swimming alone in a hostile sea of chaos and competition has been appropriately exaggerated to galvanise the Singaporean population towards the goals set by the PAP (i.e. development or patriotism). Still, it also highlights the honesty and transparency that has normally featured Singapore's leadership, at least in what describing the starkness of the real situation is concerned. LKY tends to be open throughout the book about what the purposes of the PAP were, why policies were implemented, which were deemed urging problems, and which solutions were tailored to those. He even recognises the usefulness of this approach in making many difficult decisions more acceptable, for example by affirming that "(…) if we remained honest and kept faith with the people, we would be able to carry them with us, however tough and unpalatable our policies" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 111). Even more, he sometimes hints the electoral or political ends behind certain policies. An example can be found in the following passage:

> "Singaporeans are unlike their counterparts in Hong-Kong, Taipei, Seoul, or Tokyo, who have high wages but pay vast rents for tiny rooms which they will never own. Such an electorate would not have re-elected the PAP with solid majorities in successive elections." (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 105).

Therefore, the officially-sanctioned and widely-accepted account of Singapore's transformation is one of state-managed, market-oriented development made possible by the relentless social engineering of a technocratic ruling elite (Martin-Jones, 1997, p. 131). The discursive strategies to legitimise this in *From Third World to First* include the presentation of LKY 's development agenda as an inexorable choice between the devil and the deep blue sea. Its difficult decisions were warranted by the future benefits they would yield, as well as an obsession with procedural legitimacy and electoral support. To that effect, LKY also takes ownership for the Lion City's triumphs while highlighting the "team work" with the Singaporean people. Both discursive tactics strengthen the Confucian tenet of a "technocratic government by the competent" that also explains the success of the PAP in rallying the nation around the goal of development (Chong, 2007, p. 956). Thus, the blind trust in the PAP Government to rule Singapore rests not only on a tangibly excellent policy delivery, but also on a well-oiled state narrative that appropriately exploits these accomplishments to present LKY's Government as an incorruptible elite with the honesty and transparency to assert the inescapable sacrifices, and with the moral courage to reject easy temptations and drive the country against the tide.

6.2. Nation-building through Cosmopolitanism and Asian Values in *From Third World to First*

This second legitimacy driver focuses on the construction of a specific sense of nationhood in Singapore, with two crucial pillars in a cosmopolitan global identity and Asian values anchored in Confucianism. The figure of LKY will also be analysed in this subsection, given its inseparability from the modern Singaporean nation. Indeed, the creation of a national culture that blends cosmopolitanism and globalisation with Confucian-Asian values and communitarian conservatism is galvanised around the

leadership of LKY and his team. In sharp contrast to Western distrust of the State, this governance philosophy positively regards the Government as the natural defender of the "common good", as per the Confucian ideal of "good government by good men" (Tan, 2003, p. 764). In particular, the Confucian tenet of meritocracy builds up a cosmovision whereby Singapore's small size and vulnerability are compensated by free competition, technocratic excellence, and sacrifice to accomplish ambitious goals as virtues that must be cultivated in life. This mentality stems from a conception of power that largely dovetails with Van Dijk's listing of the properties of discursive power:

- power results in curtailing freedom,
- power is indirect and operates on mindsets,
- power requires a resource base,
- power requires an ideological framework (particularly important in Singapore, as LKY himself acknowledged). and
- power must be analysed against counter-power as the resistance to it (2009, pp. 61-63)

Thus, power in Singapore as expressed through the PAP's discourse has amply fulfilled all of these categories. LKY and his team have often curtailed freedom, by for instance expelling Communist Party cadres for their infringement of the law. In this case, LKY shields himself from criticism by both listing their crimes and clarifying the PAP's benevolent policy of allowing them to come back to Singapore on the promise that they won't threat the internal security of the country (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 115-119). PAP leaders have also impacted Singaporeans' mindsets by erecting a complex, occasionally paradoxical, but still resilient and persuasive ideological framework. They have built up a strong resource base by drawing pools of talent, as LKY repeatedly boasts throughout his memoirs. Last, they have analysed and exercised power with regard to their opponents, who were duly portrayed as security threats or otherwise discredited.

The TINA discourse already discussed in the previous subsection also reinforces Singapore's national culture, by ruling out the existence of alternatives to whichever values the Singaporean Government's social engineering deems necessary to be enforced, implanted, or strengthened. As proved by many cases, those values needn't

be aimed at its legitimacy directly, but could simply suit specific policies. Conversely, certain policies were also used to shore up particular values. For example, LKY expressly claims that his fixation with a home-owning society was linked to the promotion of patriotism, because he wanted to persuade conscripted Singaporeans that they were fighting for themselves and not for a rich elite. LKY's "primary preoccupation was indeed to give every citizen a stake in the country and its future" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 95). Likewise, the promotion of English as the main professional language tried to underscore a cosmopolitan society reaching out to globalisation. Then, in the 1980s when economic development was no longer the utmost priority and the menaces of Communism and external interference had withered, the Government strove to equip citizens with an ethical core of tangible Chinese roots as in the "Speak Mandarin" campaigns (Martin-Jones, 1997, pp. 134-135) (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 150-155). In this sense, both the Chinese value of promoting Mandarin and the cosmopolitan value of promoting English cancelled out each other, but it did not matter since for the PAP the aim was to underscore different policies at different moments in time.

On the one hand, the exaltation of Singapore as a cosmopolitan global metropolis tallies with the omnipresent narrative of a Singapore that survives against all odds and fights against the tide. In this sense, the rhetoric of Singaporeans as cunning adventurers that turn liabilities into assets and weaknesses into strengths underlies cosmopolitanism by legitimising the PAP's approach to globalisation (Spar, 2015). Given that in *From Third World to First* globalisation is presented as an immutable given with no way out, then what could become a disadvantage in for example trade dislocations on job creation is understood as an advantage in for example opportunities for business expansion. The dual depiction of globalisation as a threat and an opportunity reinforces the rugged and adaptable nature of the Singaporean people, driven by flexible-minded and pragmatic leaders. On the other hand, the PAP's pervasive discourse on "values", the often-dubbed "Asian values" in fact amounts to an *à-la-carte* neo-Confucianism, giving a civilizational-cum-philosophical justification to both the uniqueness of the Singaporean polity and its superiority to any liberal democracy (Tan, 2003, p. 763).

Both sets of values profit from a clear discursive strategy of manipulation in *From Third World to First* that targets cognitive models and social representations, in accordance

with Van Dijk (2001, pp. 99-108). For instance, "transforming personal experiences into a politics moral" can be found when LKY explains how his troublesome Malaysian and Indonesian peers enhanced his diplomatic skills and pushed Singapore to work harder (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 227-293). More illustratively, LKY expands on several pages about the cultural shock for many rural poor Singaporeans to relocate to the high-rise subsidised flats that the Government had built for them. He even details how some of these peasants avoided the lift for ignorance what it was for, took their farm animals into the flats, etc. This thorough depiction of personal experiences by everyday people and how LKY's rule changed their lives is extremely effective in persuading the reader of the beneficial effect of his policies. Again, this dovetails with Van Dijk's idea that the discourse reproduction of power is by definition persuasive, as it strives to cloak dominance by convincing those lacking it that the exercise of power by a few is in their interest (2001, 78-80).

Interestingly, LKY tends to opt for the "we" rather than the "I", presumably to emphasise the collective character of his project for Singapore and to attribute Singapore's success to its people. For example, in the preface he points at the 1993 crisis as a turning point from which they were confident that they could make it in their own (Kuan Yew, 2000). Then, in the first chapter referring to Singapore's independence path, he asserts that "we had to make extraordinary efforts to become a tightly knit, rugged, and adaptable people who could do things better and cheaper than our neighbours (…) We had to be different." (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 9). Furthermore, the success of the trade-off between the Singaporean people and its leaders is attributed to both of them, since the first were "hard-working, thrifty, eager to learn", and the second were cautious not to alienate the first "with misgovernment and corruption" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 11). Again with Singapore's industrialisation, LKY uses the "we" to highlight both the competence of his team and the communal nature of Singapore's push for a better future, as in "we established good labour relations and macroeconomic policies" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 61).

The "we" rhetoric dovetails suitably with the polarised dichotomy of the ingroup "Us" vs the outgroups "Them" that CDA identifies as an typical phenomenon in discourses of domination. Specifically, this black-and-white rhetoric contrasts "our world of law and order" with theirs of "crime and disorder", strengthening an overarching ideological

framework that stresses commonalities to build a collective mentality (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, pp. 86-88). The chapter "The Communists Self-Destruct" illustrates this discursive pattern implemented by LKY in an innovative way. Namely, instead of the prototypical "we are great" vs "they are evil", LKY expounds on the incompetence of Communist leaders as the key to their downfall. Thus, the classic discourse on how the triumph of "Us" crashes the enemy shines for its absence. Of course, the Communist Party would not have disappeared were not for the boycott and assault on them by the PAP, by for instance ruthlessly repressing Communist-induced street unrest. Still, LKY insists on the thesis that it was the Communists' flawed choices that self-propelled them to their doom, which both cleans the hands of the PAP and contrasts it with its adversaries, so incompetent that they were unable to halt their own downfall. In particular, the decision of the Communists to leave the constitutional arena is asserted to have given "the PAP unchallenged dominance of Parliament for the next 30 years" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 108).

In this way, the consistent bashing of LKY's adversaries as despicable blunderers is crucial for political legitimacy, as it dovetails with one of the three dimensions of Weber's legitimacy: charisma as faith in the ruler rendering politics legitimate (Weber, 1964). What is more, by portraying his rule over Singapore as a life experience and adding a personal tone, LKY reinforces a personality cult that reveres him as the father of the nation and exalts the Singapore of today as his most glorious legacy to the world. Already in the foreword written by Henry Kissinger the references to LKY's admirable personality and unyielding quest for success are exalted (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. x-xi). Emotionalisation also invigorates the legitimisation of his paternalistic rule as the wise father of the Singaporean nation, such as when LKY takes credit for forcing a shift in labour culture from "a defiant flouting of the law to reasonable give-and-take" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 86). Regarded simultaneously as an unapologetic taskmaster, "the most successful dictator of the 20th century", a sharp critic of Western democracy and welfare states, and a champion of Asian values (Dobson, 2015), the LKY of the book is a trusted father that knew best for Singaporeans.

Accordingly, detailing the virtues of the Singaporean people in surviving against all odds or listing the problems that were promptly met with appropriate solutions reinforce a constantly positive self-portrayal grounded on moral superiority and uniqueness (Van

Dijk T., 2001, pp. 99-108). Lexical selection and semantical manipulation serve this purpose in describing the Singaporean people as “hard-working”, “competent”, “success”, “disciplined”, or “reliable” (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 60-64). For instance, the creation of a financial centre out of nothing is tied by LKY to “rule of law, an independent judiciary, and a stable, competent and honest government that pursued sound macroeconomic policies” (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 73). Acknowledgedly, the self-glorification of Singapore’s rulers in the book is usually played low-key, instead focusing the appraisal on Singapore itself as a collective national project. For instance, LKY reports that Singapore’s four biggest banks are considerably ranked amongst the world’s best capitalised, but remains silent over who in particular should be credited for this specific achievement (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 73-76). This self-accolade finds another useful resource in the exaltation of novelty, typical of a political advertising lexicon that presents the Government under a consistently favourable light (Moore, 2018). For example, LKY affirms that “We needed new attitudes, the most important of which was that pay must accord performance, not time spent on the job.” when explaining how his Government changed the approach to labour relations (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 84).

Even more, LKY presents himself as a politically incorrect leader, a sharp tongue that does not care about mincing his words so long as his message gets understood and his ends, met. As an example, LKY elaborates on the “bombshell” he “dropped” by saying graduate men should not marry less educated women. He acknowledged that such declarations “stirred a hornet’s nest” and led the PAP to lose considerable vote margins (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 135). The controversy even forced the Government to push back in some of their marriage policies, but LKY remained unyielding of the validity and truthfulness of his declarations. Because he decided to destroy the damaging and backward prejudices of young men, he succeed in his social-engineering endeavours of “nurturing talent” by promoting “the procreation of more intelligent offspring” (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 143). Again, the most crucial objective of cultivating talent warrants difficult decisions that can (and in fact did) spark controversy and opposition. In addition, the stress on novelty evolves here into a radical reshaping of society, an overhaul of deeply-rooted cultural biases. In this way, the fight against past obscurantism reinforces

the legitimacy of the PAP as the enlightened rulers who guide their brethren towards modernity.

Indeed, if on the one hand *From Third World to First* is grounded on a low-key but constant positive self-portrayal, on the other the description of opponents in different but equally negative terms undermines their credibility. The chapter titled "Straddling the Middle Ground" is explanatory in this regard. Such title suggests that LKY's Government strove to maintain a balance or a moderation in tackling dissent with their decisions, already a positive self-description in itself. To that is added the long list of electoral victories for the PAP that LKY discloses, specifying in numeric detail how many seats they won in each election and how they exploited the structural weaknesses of opposition candidates who nevertheless won certain constituencies, which is even showcased as proof of the openness and fairness of the system (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 122-125). The gradual relaxation of electoral requirements that enabled opposition forces to gain more seats is exalted as evidence of both the openness of the system and the Government's responsiveness to popular demands. Thus, the constitutional change that introduced a number of NMPs or Nominated MPs in 1990 to reflect independent and nonpartisan views is presented as a highly effective measure in satisfying the public's demand for a more comprehensive airing of alternative views. Policy quality has improved significantly thanks to "carefully considered criticism" from initiatives like this or the creation of Feedback Units, which the Government is reported to take very seriously (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 130-134).

Thus, LKY rebuts any criticism of crushing opposition voices by pointing at their incompetence (ignoring whether or not that may stem from a PAP-induced disadvantage) and the incorporation of critical inputs into Parliament and executive policies. Furthermore, the low-key self-appraisal and belittlement of adversaries reinforce a preferential access to discourse for the PAP and the exclusion of their enemies, due to the first' superior capital and prestige. The clout of LKY's Government is therefore legitimised, in line with the idea that power is tantamount to preferential access to discourse and domination, its exclusion from it (Fairclough, 2001) (Van Dijk T., 2001). In particular, power exerts control over discourse through the three exclusionary mechanisms of taboo, rituals, and the privileged right (Foucault, 1992, pp. 5-10).

Consequently, the removal of LKY's biggest adversaries, the Communists, from the media, the legal and constitutional game, and the fight for social popularity, whether self-inflicted or propelled by the ruses of the PAP, destroyed their political momentum and legitimacy to challenge the PAP. In this sense, LKY's discourse mirrors not only the static nature of relatively stable power relations, but also the dynamic and ferocious battle for power that the PAP waged in Singapore's early days, as Foucault already recognised (1992, pp. 5-8, 22-33).

Unsurprisingly, Foucault's third exclusionary mechanism rules what is "truthful" and what is "false", tallying with the ubiquity of LKY's clarifications of what was and what was not true throughout his memoirs. As the linchpin of discursive power, the quest for "truth" legitimises domination (Foucault, 1992, pp. 9-11). An illustrative example in this regard can be found in the libel suits won by LKY against accusations of corruption or misuse of power, amplified in the book as LKY develops on how slanderers were forced to retract and pay damages (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 121-129). LKY justifies his relentless quest for the truth, and with it the equally relentless pursuit of his slanderers, on the grounds of both shedding light on the "truth" and preventing those allegations from gaining credence. Whereas Western liberal critics claimed he needn't sue for libel because of so unassailable a reputation that nobody would believe such outrageous statements, LKY was firm that he had to meet Singaporeans' expectations that he "would challenge any defamatory untruth" because the unblemished excellence of the PAP had to be protected (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 130). *From Third World to First* also insists on the impartiality of the Judiciary and the transparency and openness of LKY. As he explains, "I have put my private and public life under close scrutiny whenever I appeared as a plaintiff in court" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 131). Even so, the assertion that "wrong ideas have to be challenged before they influence public opinion and make for problems" leaves the door open to unbridled crackdown on criticism.

However, it must be noted that *From Third World to First* is far from an apologetic self-vindication. In fact, LKY openly recognises his mistakes in several passages, including his flawed support of aggressive trade union policies in the times of the Malay federation that drove out of the labour market many outsiders (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 84), or his acceptance that they did not entirely foresee the wide-ranging Asian financial crisis

when the Thai baht plummeted in 1997 (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 343-345). Ditto for housing policies, were LKY and his team made grave management mistakes resulting in long queues to enter the new apartments, flaws inside the facilities, a real estate bubble, etc. Nonetheless, LKY makes sure to right below detail the solutions that were provided to all those blunders, so there is indeed a thread of error-induced problem – policy solution throughout the entire book. For example, LKY confesses that they wrestled with a swelling health budget, to then solve this by curbing costs through a personal savings scheme and small healthcare fees (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 100-102). Moreover, the author also recognises the change of direction that sometimes became necessary. An example might be found in this passage: "We believed in socialism, in fair shares for all. Later we learned that personal motivation and personal rewards were essential for a productive economy." (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 95). This also highlights the flexible and realist pragmatism that has consistently featured PAP actions, focusing on what works rather than on what a specific theory posits.

The contrast drawn between Singapore and the rest of the world is another crucial discursive strategy in legitimising the PAP Administration. In particular, the chapter titled "A Fair, Not Welfare, Society". describes "the downward spiral" of Western Welfare states where "the handout become a way of life", an execrable decay that LKY was persuaded to avoid because "welfare undermined self-reliance" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 104). Instead, LKY chose to underscore the Confucian ethics of responsibility over the family and the self. Fascinatingly, LKY admits that the "failure" of the West's Welfare States was not "evident" until the 1990s, but because their decision to rule welfarism out came much earlier, they had to face virulent criticism for their allegedly hard-hearted policies. Again the long-run trade-off is reported positive and vindicates the struggles of the past: "because we made the difficult decisions early, we have established a virtuous cycle (…)" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 107). The contrast with the rest of the world also relies on the exaltation of novelty that has proven so useful in other instances of discursive power. For instance, in the first chapter LKY underlines how they "had to be different" and "had to create a new kind of economy, try new methods and schemes never tried before anywhere else in the world, because there was no other country like Singapore." (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 8-9).

The stress on Singapore's uniqueness and superiority became also a source of strength for LKY in refuting most of his critics. LKY's penchant for micromanaging every inch of human life in order to make Singapore excel has driven many criticism, as in his endeavours to "green up" the city. Some claim this tendency to overregulation has turned Singaporeans into rules-obsessive failure-fearing subservient individuals, thereby hampering constructive critiques of governmental policies (Martin-Jones, 1997, pp. 138-140). Some went on to ridicule the draconian prohibitions that LKY enforced, such as the bans on Chinese firecrackers or chewing gum. To that LKY responded that the lack of corruption scandals or grave wrongdoings to report left foreign correspondents with little to vituperate besides Singapore's nanny state. More crucially, he sentences in his classic politically incorrect style that "if this is a "nanny state", I am proud to have fostered one" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 184), leaving little doubt as to what is preferable: Singapore's unique overregulated policy or the rest of the world in disarray and decadence. As customary, the immense benefits that this (supposed) excess of regulations and prohibitions produce are highlighted, and LKY himself praises the "green revolution" of Singapore as the most cost-effective project that he has launch" and the one that "makes my spirit rise" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 178)

The acclamation of an unsullied Singapore surrounded by decadence both close and afar is vital in legitimising the superiority of its national culture. For instance, the fight against corruption in Singapore is compared to regional peers. LKY cites the examples of Communist China and Vietnam to underscore how great initial intentions fell way short and degenerated into rampant looting (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 162-164). He even dives into the eye of the storm by rebutting the argument of Western democracies that a completely unfettered press would expose corruption and enhance a clean and honest government. He points at the examples of the Taiwanese, Indian, or Korean democracies, where freewheeling press and television did not impede a pervasive culture of corruption; and even the case of Italy with media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 165-166). In fact, the PAP's practice of benchmarking public sector wages to those of the private sector is justified to ensure talented, upright, and appropriately-rewarded public officials, versus the mediocre civil servants of other Asian countries that engage in corruption to supplement their meagre incomes. Instead of

ostentatious egalitarianism, the PAP enforced a "good, honest, clean government that produced results", one which the people wanted and which even investigated upon LKY's own conduct, and thereby an impersonal and effective system where nobody was above the law (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 169-171).

In this regard, Singapore's efficient, corruption-free, and capable leadership renders democracy unnecessary through what Subramaniam calls a "good governance" discourse, which in Malaysia is monopolised by the opposition but in Singapore, by the Government (2001, pp. 74-76). Consequently, this discourse delegitimises any alternatives to the PAP Administration (including democracy), materialises in the lack of corruption and rests on Singapore's unique blend of cosmopolitan and Asian values as exemplified by LKY's full-fledged diagnosis of the roots and repercussions of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Predictably, he does not waste yet another chance to showcase Singapore's superior societal culture that made it overcome the crisis earlier and faster than any other Asian country. Against Western criticism of cronyism and corruption as "Asian values" that triggered the crisis, LKY points that Asian values had nothing to do with the crisis, and in fact the frugality, self-sacrifice, and endeavour to excel that Confucianism teaches helped overcome the crisis. The material example is of course Singapore itself, champion of such Asian values and able to surmount the crisis relatively unharmed (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 344-348).

The appeal to "values" that comprises this second legitimacy driver of the PAP's rule becomes even more powerful through emotionalisation which, typically for political discourse and its persuasiveness, translates into a heavy reliance on semantics, in accordance with Moore (2018). This author also identifies persuasive-argumentative tactics in the use of an advertising lexicon based on aggressive advocacy or the recurrent use of figures of speech, both of which are widespread in LKY's memoirs. For instance, there are the metaphors of the federation years "under the Malaysian yoke" or the "traumatic experience of race riots", or the "doom" and "tremendous odds" forecasted for Singapore's independence (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. xiv, 4). The preface is particularly enlightening, like when LKY recounts the dreadful experience of "communal bullying" that "made our people willing to endure the hardships of going it alone" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. xiv). Of course, rhetorical figures are also positive, as in "the growth was

stupendous" or the omnipresent word "success" (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 67, 73). The importance of emotions in strengthening a particular discourse by affecting its reception is indeed widely recognised, as they shape cognitive models and the different types of knowledge (Van Dijk T. A., 2009, p. 267).

Finally, all this discourse on cosmopolitanism and leveraging globalisation, on Asian values, Confucianism, social order, meritocracy, technocratic excellence, and responsibility, would have had limited impact save for the PAP's tight grip on Singapore media and the education system. Both encompass Van Dijk's symbolic elites as the enforcers of symbolic power (2009, pp. 30-36, 63-67), crucial because it determines the genesis and evolution of discursive phenomena, it shores up the construction of an ideology that represents reality in accordance with specific interests. In consequence, symbolic power manufactures consent and legitimises domination, be it through the teaching of specific ideas to nurture a particular nationhood or the reliance on mass media as first-resort knowledge (Van Dijk, 2009, pp. 95-106). Thus, on the one hand, the oscillation between English-speaking cosmopolitanism and Mandarin-speaking Confucianism explained earlier profits from LKY's leverage on the symbolic power of education. An example can be found in the creation of the National University of Singapore to disseminate Confucian values and prevent the deculturalisation of English education and secular globalisation (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 150-155).

On the other, LKY legitimises his tight grip on the media on the grounds of foreign-owned newspapers not serving the purpose of the Singaporean nation, but those of specific communities instead. He fails to tie his attack to their hostility towards the PAP, especially with regard to the Straits Times, turned into the most subservient news agency of all Singapore. Sometimes he is also frank about his intentions: "I needed the media to reinforce, not to undermine, the cultural values and social attitudes being inculcated in our schools and universities" and "I did not accept that newspaper owners had the right to print whatever they liked" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 190). This evidences Van Dijk's thesis about symbolic power shaping societal beliefs and ideologies, which LKY demonstrates to bend to his convenience very appropriately. His "management of the press", a euphemism used to mask an outright clampdown on any critical news agency, effectively subordinated the freedom of the press to Singapore's goals and needs. LKY

even details how he won several defamation suits against newspapers (allegedly) faking information. Amid Western attempts of meddling and smearing the flawless reputation of the country, "Singapore (…) reserved the right to reply" because its "domestic debate is a matter for Singaporeans" (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 192, 196). Finally, LKY justifies his Government's tough stance against their critics on the grounds that otherwise, ordinary Singaporeans would believe such wrongdoing and "lose respect for us" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 196). Therefore, LKY is implicitly accepting that their legitimacy will be severely harmed if those accusations turn out to be true, acknowledging their technocratic and wise rule for Singapore as a crucial legitimacy driver for the party.

All in all, *From Third World to First* provides compelling evidence of the use of Singapore's national culture, in its twin strands of globalised cosmopolitanism and Confucian-Asian values, to legitimise the PAP's autocratic rule. Both sets of values profit from discursive strategies like TINA rhetoric, the description of personal experiences, or the use of "we" rather than "I", squaring well with Van Dijk's model of the properties of discursive power. Likewise, the contrast between the ingroup "Us" and the outgroups "Them" legitimises LKY's paternalistic wisdom and exalts Singapore's uniqueness through a positive self-portrayal and a belittlement of adversaries nuanced by an acknowledgement of mistakes. Preferential access to discourse exemplified by the "good governance discourse", the quest for the "truth", or the monopoly over symbolic power are other instances of discursive power resonating in *From Third World to First* that strengthen cosmopolitan-Asian values.

6.3. The Ethnic Balance in *From Third World to First*

Of the three legitimacy drivers identified in this dissertation, the "ethnic balance" is arguably the most straightforward and narrow, and therefore analysis will be correspondingly brief. The idea behind an "ethnic balance" is that all of the three main races comprising Singapore (Chinese, Malay, and Indian) can share in the cake of Singapore's prosperity and participate in its politics on a level playing field. The ethnic balance is embedded in the legitimacy apparatus of the Singaporean State by providing a basis for the other two legitimacy drivers to cling to, hence its cruciality. To be precise,

Singapore's technocracy and policy excellence are oriented towards an ideal of social justice that builds on Asian values like communitarianism, and the major materialisation of such social justice is the ethnic balance (Subramaniam, 2001, pp. 69-72).

LKY makes the case for an ethnic balance in several parts of the book. For instance, it is understood as a necessity to ensure Singapore's stability and social peace. He insists on the idea that Singapore's different races could live peacefully together only if a "fair and even-handed policy" guaranteed that "such hardships as employment were shared equally and not carried mainly by the minority groups. It was crucial to keep Singapore multilingual, multicultural, multireligious society, and make it rugged and dynamic enough to compete in world markets." (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 13). More acutely, the bitter experience of race riots in Singapore's early years is argued to justify LKY's fixation with ethnic parity, so the balance between the three races has consistently been, above all, a security issue. Interestingly, uncomfortable military cooperation with Israel in a Singapore with a significant Malay (and thus Muslim) minority was kept out of the public eye, a lack of transparency duly justified by LKY on grounds of the potential for unrest and the fear of Malaysian meddling through Singapore's Malays (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 17-19). The ethnic balance is also defended on the grounds of justice and equality. Namely, LKY exalts the army as an example of how a more united community was built "through equal treatment of recruits regardless of their social background or race" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 19). Again when diplomatic tensions heated up with Malaysia in 1969, LKY was adamant that the law would be enforced impartially regardless of religion or ethnicity. Emotionalisation and the appeal to values as discursive resources discussed earlier also serve well LKY in vindicating the ethnic balance and more generally his rule.

Nevertheless, the ethnic balance generates a paradox with regard to the other legitimacy drivers. Positive discrimination to ensure equal participation of the most disadvantaged and underperforming identity groups conflicts with the Confucian social order where the worthiest come atop. In particular, technocratic meritocracy seemingly opposes this "uplifting" of Malays. The danger towards legitimacy is acute because meritocracy underscores a system of social organisation based on academic and professional success rather than class, racial, or gender lines, underpinning the uniqueness and superiority of The Lion City (Chen, 2015). Order understood as a natural

and fair hierarchy forms with meritocracy the twin pillars of an ideal Confucian society. Combining the two yields a highly efficient form of authoritarianism that is palatable to the population for its “fairness”. Meritocracy also reinforces acceptance of a strong government and minimal free speech in a highly affluent, educated, and wired society by means of its excellent functioning (Chen, 2015). For instance, LKY recognises that the composition of the ethnically-mixed army was undeniably the product of discriminatory policies, because there was no other way to entice more Chinese into military activities that they tended to disparage (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 19-28).

Of course meritocracy has also conflicted with other instances of LKY’s tenure, and in particular the suspicion of nepotism looms large (Han, 2017). For a country where political malfeasance is strictly suppressed, accusations of abuse of power by the PM from within his family, if they turn out to be true, would showcase a failure to live up to the standards of superiority, deservedness, and honesty that distinguish the Singaporean leadership. Neither would the PAP be an “A-team” made up of the best and brightest, nor would Singapore’s society be a porous meritocracy, but rather a tangle of closed circles (Han, 2017). The suspicion of undeserving, well-connected elites hoarding on the country’s wealth can wreak considerable havoc on the meritocratic impulse that drives Singapore’s excellent performance and the PAP’s legitimacy to rule. This allegations are challenged in the book in a subtle way. The last chapter of the first part of the book, titled “Conductor of an Orchestra”, is partly devoted to a description of LKY’s friendship with his ministers. LKY elaborates on his limited involvement in policies that nonetheless spared some catastrophes. Furthermore, he details how the judicial system investigated upon his conduct when allegations emerged, only to find that there was no wrongdoing whatsoever (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 171).

Still, *From Third World to First* provides no explicit clarification as of how to reconcile meritocracy and the ethnic balance. As a result, whereas in the two other legitimacy drivers we can rely on LKY’s blunt frankness to analyse discourse, in this case we need to focus on what is implied rather than what is explicitly stated. LKY’s silence on this matter gives little clues besides evidencing that he does not seem to see a conflict between meritocracy and the ethnic balance. In fact, rule of law vindicates the ethnic balance on the grounds of equality before the law: “law and order provide the

framework for stability and development. Trained in the law, I had imbibed the principle of equality of all before the law for the proper functioning of a society" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 212). The very expression "ethnic balance" shines for its absence in the book, given its creation as an analytical concept with which to understand the Singaporean polity and society (Kuan Yew, 2000). In this regard, LKY's implicit stress on other dimensions of his tenure can solve this enigma. The thorough description of social policy in Singapore, supported by a well-thought and adequately resourced system with a swarm of efficient institutions, serves the goal of exalting the social justice embedded in Singapore's apparently unbridled meritocracy. An example includes the following passage:

> "A competitive, winner-takes-all society, like colonial Hong-Kong in the 1960s, would not be acceptable in Singapore. (…) To even out the extreme results of free-market competition, we had to redistribute the national income through subsidies on things that improved the earning power of citizens, such as education. Housing and public health were also obviously desirable." (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 95)

Thus, Singapore's social safety net to uplift the worst-off and ensure that they compete equally comprise a system that some authors call "compassionate meritocracy", a term not mentioned either in *From Third World to First*. Compassionate meritocracy emerges as the conciliation of meritocratic justice for the most competent and support to the worst-off in line with Confucian compassion (Chen, 2015). The conjunction of meritocracy and the ethnic balance through this scheme is exemplified when LKY sentences that "my primary preoccupation was to give every citizen a stake in the country and its future" (Kuan Yew, 2000, p. 95). Even if he does not mention it explicitly, the combination of an ethnic balance coupled with meritocracy is understood to flow naturally from this requirement.

Moreover, the ethnic balance becomes a matter of such importance that it seems beyond discussion. Namely, LKY affirms that "some sensitive matters, however, could not be publicly debated. One of them was the poor conditions of the Malay community" (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 206-207). It also evidences how the Government keeps its promises and delivers the best policies, in for instance LKY's thorough description of how

affirmative action upgraded the depressed Malay ghettoes. Besides the listing of the benefits, the stress on deliberative proceduralism again reinforces the legitimacy of the PAP, by elaborating on the "process that went smoothly with the help of Malay MPs, the press, and the radio (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 207-210). LKY recognises the existence of some opposition to this "non-colour blind policy", although once again the benefits are reported to outweigh the costs. Indeed, LKY and his team were reassured that only Malay leaders could best reach the Malay people, and the quadruplication of Malay university enrolment figures testifies to the success of the ethnic balance policy. If there are still doubts, LKY answers them by detailing how those displaced and harmed in any way by the shake-up of Malay neighbourhoods were offered another house and financially compensated (Kuan Yew, 2000, pp. 207-212).

Thus, the ethnic balance becomes a security requirement for the PAP's legitimacy toward ensuring a multicultural and rugged but equal and balanced society. *From Third World to First* evidences the use of similar discursive mechanisms as in the other two legitimacy drivers to vindicate the PAP's power. The ethnic balance is asserted on the grounds of justice and equality, on its future benefits traded for the current costs, and on its procedural legitimacy. The underlying conflict with meritocracy is overcame in the book by reinforcing the idea of a "compassionate meritocracy" that mollifies unchecked competition by uplifting the worst-off through a comprehensive social policy, besides tying the ethnic balance to rule of law. Further, the accusation of nepotism is overcome by detailing how LKY subjected his life to public scrutiny and kept his family away from office, stepping down before his son would assume office. This strengthens the complementing effect between meritocracy and the ethnic balance in a cohesive system that underscores the PAP's power. Thus, discursive strategies of deliberate omission of some aspects and exaltation of others suit the purpose of armouring the legitimacy of the PAP to rule through an ethnic balance that evens out the different races of Singapore so as to guarantee their prosperity.

7. Conclusions

All in all, this dissertation has striven to shed light on the legitimacy mechanisms of the Singaporean Government. The structure of the analysis is grounded on three different but interrelated elements: political legitimacy, critical discourse analysis, and the reality of Singapore. The three have been interwoven together for the purpose of understanding why and how the Singaporean Government legitimises its clout over an affluent and educated society. The textual basis for the discourse analysis has been LKY's second volume of memoirs, so that through it, this dissertation can ascertain the discourses of legitimacy by the PAP Government as articulated by three specific legitimacy drivers. Such drivers of the PAP's legitimacy to rule Singapore comprise: socio-economic development and the delivery of excellent policies and high living standards, a national culture of neo-Confucianism and cosmopolitanism that exalts Singapore's exceptionality, and an ethnic balance that reconciles meritocracy and social justice. The three form an inextricable web that shapes the policies, politics, and polity of Singapore and has so far protected the PAP's hegemony in governing the city-state.

Thus, as this research reaches its twilight, the only thing that seems conclusive is that, with its story of success and mixed blessings, Singapore remains the elephant of the tale, which one endeavours to understand but will never be able to grasp in its entirety. The Little Red Dot is, because of its exceptionality, devilishly complex to fathom, and hence the necessity of alternative approaches. With its focus on discourse analysis to understand the reality of Singapore, this dissertation will hopefully promote this (arguably) much needed change in the study of the Lion City. Indeed, *From Third World to First* can teach many lessons, but the one this dissertation extracts is the cruciality of discursive power as the linchpin of political legitimacy, and the cruciality of political legitimacy as the linchpin of a successful authoritarian state. Yet, such chain of interdependent factors, with its clarity and plainness, cannot overcome the conundrum that Singapore will continue to be.

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9. Appendix I: Singapore's Foreign Policy

The Confucian ethos, political restrictions, and economic development that feature Singapore determine a specific brand of foreign policy that also buttresses the PAP's legitimacy to rule. Namely, the Government enforces a garrison mentality whereby Singaporeans are constantly reminded that "their country is small and its future fragile" (Martin-Jones, 1997, pp. 136-138). A paranoid sense of vulnerability begets compulsory military service. In the Government's logic, survival is always at stake and conditional upon a tight political climate and draconian rule of law (The Economist, 2015). Further, Singapore's "tininess" and vulnerability are exploited to strengthen patriotic linkages to the fatherland and contrast it with the welfarist decadence of Western democracies. However, there are flagrant contradictions between a culture of self-serving meritocracy and one of communitarian Asian values, between an advocacy of free trade and the denial of transparent information, between a widely-heralded Third-World fragility and a pressure to keep up with First-World standards. By sheaving its aggressive investments in emerging economies like Vietnam and South Africa in a discourse of South-South and Third World Cooperation, Singapore has partially succeeded in bypassing criticism for punching well above its weigh (Martin-Jones, 1997, p. 132). Despite so, these contradictions hamper the PAP's resort to foreign policy as another driver of its legitimacy. Indeed, newer generations of more-demanding, better-off, global-minded Singaporeans no longer place a blind trust on the paternalistic Government, as the rhetoric of permanent vigilance over looming threats where every day was a battle for survival runs out of steam (Martin-Jones, 1997, pp. 140-141).

Singapore's adoption of the "Red Little Dot" nickname, intended as a scorn by Indonesian President Habibie, exemplifies this tale of miraculous survival as both a tenet of nationhood and a success to the credit of the PAP. Thus, the Lion City's foreign policy rests on the twin pillars of protecting the independence and sovereignty of such vulnerable yet rugged nation while expanding opportunities to overcome seemingly unsurmountable geographical constraints, in line with incumbent foreign minister Vivian Balakrishnan (The Straits Times, 2017). The Little Red Dot harnessed an awareness of its vulnerability to foster unyielding pragmatism and cool-eyed realism as the only governance philosophy that could spare the country dangerous errors (Dobson, 2015). This also translates into a Periclean rejection of appeasement because the country "cannot afford to ever be intimidated into acquiescence" (The Straits Times, 2017). Despite striving to become a friend to all and foe to none, Singapore is adamant about its red lines and ready to defend its sovereignty whenever and wherever it may be vulnerated. Hence the emergence of a cautious foreign policy that wisely balances the American and Chinese

juggernauts. Close defence ties with Washington have consolidated in the 2005 Strategic Framework Agreement, whereas trade and investment links with Beijing are rising year after year (Rodan, 2006, pp. 185-186). Singapore's position in the middle between Sino-American askance looks yields strategic gains, but the spillover of any deterioration would also hit the Lion City very hard (Reeves, 2015).

Furthermore, the understanding of foreign policy as a tool to craft an economic and political space for the Singaporean people lies on several core principles, like (1) a vibrant economy that requires stable politics and a united society, (2) the rejection of a vassal status for Singapore that renders constant military preparation critical, or (3) the promotion of a multilateral world order governed by rule of law and international norms (The Straits Times, 2017). Thence a founding role in ASEAN, intense engagement in the UN, commitment to the development of the Law of the Sea via UNCLOS, or an outsized role in WTO. Sparking world admiration for its dexterity in bending international factors to its advantage, Singapore has made of globalisation an ally and opened its economy to international integration to ensure its viability, as the incumbent PM acknowledges (Loong, 2014). The Lion City preaches and practices adaptation to change, thereby strengthening the triangle between nationhood, courage-driven patriotism, and an independent meddling-freed foreign policy, as Balakrishnan acknowledges (The Straits Times, 2017). An example of this ability to harness the favourable winds of international developments hinges on Singapore's vigorous trade diplomacy. Among its recorded accomplishments are: less likelihood of nationalist outbursts in neighbouring countries, expanded coverage of Singaporean goods and services, and a strengthened official discourse on capitalist development (Chong, 2007, pp. 974-976).

The Little Red Dot relies heavily on public diplomacy as well, by for instance exploiting contemporary art to shore up its country-image abroad. Singapore's vigorous soft power has been adequately resourced by a Government permanently concerned with nation-building and education on "Singaporean values" (Walsh, 2011). The country also strives to project the image of a reliable and honest broker, leveraging its small size as shown by its leading role in AOSIS or the 3G (Rodan, 2006, p. 186). In addition, it has effectively positioned itself as a "brand state", exploiting its discourse on Asian values and the Confucian ethos to engage with Chinese communities overseas and enhance its transnational influence (Tan, 2003, pp. 768-769). As a Chinese knowledge arbitrage hub, Singapore advocates its role as the most suitable platform for business penetration in Asia. In addition, its soft authoritarianism and successful export-led development have been contemplated as a blueprint for China since the times of Deng Xiaoping

(Tan, 2003, pp. 768-769). As the only Chinese-world success story (save for Taiwan, which China refuses to recognise), Singapore is revered as an idyllic paradise of permanent opulence fuelled by constant reinvention and social order (Duchâtel & Jayaram, 2008). Other dimensions of the Singaporean polity exploited in branding itself as the exemplary Asian state encompass: (1) a one-party system that relies on elections and a satellite-like opposition to channel dissent and provide counterweights, (2) enviable political stability thanks to a Platonian "government of elites", (3) a successful fight against corruption with a strong state and a tamed press, and (4) an assurance that the majoritarian drive of "common good" politics will spare harm to minorities' interests. The external "Asian branding" of Singapore also underpins the internal legitimacy of the PAP and its moralising discourse (Duchâtel & Jayaram, 2008).

10. Appendix II:GLCs and Social Policy in Singapore

After being thrown into independence, the Singaporean state found itself alone at the helm of the development ship due to the lack of an appropriate local bourgeoisie. Hence the lingering dominance of SOEs (State-Owned Enterprises) over the Singaporean economy typical of a 1960s' developmental state albeit intermittent privatisations (Chong, 2007, p. 961). Tasked with expediting the country's journey from poverty to prosperity, the Singaporean Government still relies on a swarm of agencies, SOEs, trade unions, and other proxies to navigate the economy. In other words, the twin impulses of adaptation to market trends and preservation of certain tenets of Singapore's political paradigm have shaped an open, globalised economy where paradoxically most native companies remain Government-Linked (GLCs). Among them stand out Temasek Holdings and the Government Investment Corporation (GIC), the country's two main SWFs and some of the world's biggest, SingTel for telecommunications, DBS as the largest domestic bank, and most famously, Singapore Airlines (The Economist, 2015, pp. 7-8). Under the powerful umbrella of Temasek, Singaporean SMEs have undertook laudable diversification. Financial returns of 33% in 2003-2004 for Temasek alone testify to a highly successful investment strategy (Chong, 2007, pp. 961-965). Admittedly, the expansion of Singaporean firms has encountered some political blocks usually tied to nationalist tinges, like Singaporean Airlines in Australia and New Zealand or SingTel in Thailand. Nonetheless, the retention of the structure of a developmental state serves well Singapore in delivering cohesion amid globalisation's competitive pressures with the support of GLCs (Chong, 2007, pp. 975-976).

Moreover, to strike a balance between economic prudence and political expediency, the Singaporean Government has forged a highly successful social policy that boasts one of the highest life expectancies in the world at a minimum health expenditure of just 5% of the GDP (The Economist, 2017). LKY's fixation with home ownership gave birth to the HDB or Housing Development Board, crucial in controlling soaring real estate prices and transforming a backwater colony into a clean, ordered, and well-maintained metropolis. As of 2017, the HDB has enabled 90% of Singaporeans to own their homes through the Central Providence Fund (CPF), a compulsory savings scheme that uses a small proportion of salaries to subsidise flats (Ming & Sing, 2016). The HDB's government-built, controlled, and financed flats become valuable policy tools in enforcing racial quotas and monitoring the population through decentralised town councils. Housing policy has also served well the PAP in protecting the worst-off without slipping into the "effete welfarism" of Western societies, despised as counterproductive to meritocracy and financially crippling (Ming & Sing, 2016). The emphasis

on personal responsibility avoids incurring in “unfair and weak” wealth handouts, so disadvantaged groups are equalised by other means like the CPF that enable self-financing of homes, education, and healthcare (The Economist, 2017). Still, in an affluent society like Singapore’s, the Government continues to grapple with the realisation that a small part of the population remains sunken in extreme poverty. The danger is acute because social policy incarnates the still valid trade-off provided by LKY: illiberal politics in exchange for permanent excellent living standards (The Economist, 2017).