The Singapore Opposition: "Credibility" – The Primary Impediment to Coalition Building

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The Singapore Opposition:
"Credibility" – The Primary Impediment to Coalition Building

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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May 2014

Honors Capstone Project in Political Science

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Date: 5/1/2014

Abstract

This thesis studies opposition party behavior in competitive authoritarian regimes using the Singapore 2011 general election as a case study. The study asks, what is the primary reason Worker's Party, the strongest opposition party in Singapore, did not pursue the formation of a pre-electoral coalition? I analyzed the pre-existing theories and conducted fieldwork, interviewing opposition party leaders, academics and activists, to ascertain a direct impediment and not just a background condition to coalition building. Many of the pre-existing theories contained insights relevant in Singapore, but the operationalization of the variable limited their significance. I demonstrate that Worker's Party did not pursue building a coalition, firstly, because they perceived the other potential partner as possessing less credibility with the electorate, and was thus unable to provide unique value to the partnership. Secondly, because when the three leading all opposition parties are weak, and do not possess a level of credibility in the eyes of the electorate, then they are less likely to coalesce. As a result, Worker's Party does not trust the effectiveness and longevity of a coalition.

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Executive Summary

This study analyzes opposition party behavior in competitive authoritarian regimes using the 2011 Singapore general election as a case study. Prevailing wisdom assumes that opposition parties that share a common enemy, in the case of Singapore it's the authoritarian government – the People's Action Party (PAP), would work closely together to accomplish a shared goal of unseating the incumbent. This paper asks, what is the primary reason the Worker's Party, the most credible opposition party, did not pursue a pre-electoral coalition with other opposition parties? I aimed to determine a direct impediment to coalition building. This assumed that there is a "potential cost" for coalescing with the wrong partner and that a potential partner must provide unique value to the partnership.

Singapore remains an appropriate case study due to its small size and underdeveloped opposition. To truly attribute a casual factor to the absence of a pre-electoral coalition, an agreement among of shared parliamentary support between leading opposition party and the second and/or third largest party, I needed to understand the motivations, the strategies, and the perspective of the different opposition parties and their leaders. Singapore's size made it manageable to interview a variety of opposition party members, civic activists and academics in a two-week time frame. Since the opposition party system is underdeveloped, those I interviewed either knew each other or were separated by very few "degrees".

The PAP has ruled Singapore since its founding in 1963. The government disregards freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press.

Nevertheless, the government ushered in historic economic success and modernization over the last six decades. In the 2011 general election, the PAP won the smallest share of the popular vote (60.1%) since 1961. The Worker's Party garnered six seats in the government, including a group representation constituency (GRC), a fate assumed unfeasible by the electorate. Even with the PAP's moderate success in the popular vote they still took 81/87 of the votes due to gerrymandering and electoral manipulations. Nevertheless, academics and opposition party leaders view this election as a watershed event.

Due to the levels of liberalization and contestation during the 2011 general election, Singapore is considered by academics as a competitive authoritarian regime. In this government typology, the incumbent manipulates the democratic system to produce an "uneven playing field." However, there is enough competition that elections remain a political even that legitimizes the governance of the ruling regime.

In the 2011 election, Singapore opposition parties coordinated in which electoral wards each opposition party would compete in. This is a win-win situation since opposition parties do not have enough viable candidates to compete in more than 30% of the wards. Furthermore, in a 2013 by-election, the Singapore Democratic Party, the most civic activist party, requested to coalesce with Worker's Party the leading opposition party. Worker's party did not even answer the coalition offer. In Singapore, while opposition parties recognize a shared enemy, they are more fragmented than united.

I analyzed the pre-existing theories in the literature using the information gained from the interviews, to determine the primary reason Worker's Party did not pursue a pre-electoral coalition. The pre-existing theories in the literature were analyzed by asking three questions: (1) Is the explanation valid with Singapore's electoral dynamics? (2) Is the explanation relevant to the realities of Singaporean society? and (3) Does the explanation identify a direct impediment to a pre-electoral coalition? The pre-existing factors reveal insights applicable in Singapore, such as a power imbalance between two opposition parties can impede coalition building, but their operationalization is limiting and is mostly inapplicable to Singapore.

H1: I hypothesize that the likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when one potential partner perceives the other as possessing less credibility with the electorate, and thus is unable to provide unique value to the partnership and **H2:** If the largest three opposition parties are weak and do not possess a level of credibility in the eyes of the electorate, then they are less likely to coalesce**.** The underlying insights of H1 are, first, that a leading opposition party can lose credibility by coalescing with the wrong partner – a direct impediment to pre-electoral coalition formation. Second, the leading party needs to significantly benefit from a pre-electoral coalition. If not, it would prefer to compete alone to avoid sharing the spoils of electoral success. The underlying assumption for H2 is that because opposition parties tend to be fragile and volatile in competitive authoritarian regimes, weaker opposition parties in these regimes will not trust the longevity of the coalition. The parties will presume that they will be able to

compete against other opposition parties in the long run; however, there is no concrete threshold for this measurement.

In competitive authoritarian regimes, like Singapore, the incumbent government manipulates the electoral system to hinder opposition parties from gaining power. Oppressive acts in the country's history frighten strong candidates away from joining opposition parties. Activists with programmatic aspirations not aligned with the median voter are the ones who typically build the party (Greene, 2006). Basic freedoms in a democracy, such as freedom of speech and assembly, may be controlled by the incumbent's bureaucratic system, hindering the ability of opposition parties to campaign. The past legacies of incompetent opposition parties, often based on a leader's self-interest, reduce the political commitment of the electorate. Because of factors like these, opposition parties find it difficult to gain credibility.

Interviewees from Worker's Party provide the evidence that credibility is the primary impediment to pre-electoral coalition formation. Gerald Giam, WP parliamentary candidate, said, "There needs to be a coalition of equals to coordinate" (personal communication, December 16, 2013). Furthermore, other experts, such as Professor Bliver Singh, corroborate his remark. He says, that if WP joined a coalition "it [would be] a liability and not an asset" (personal communication, December 17, 2013). Furthermore, when asking those in the Worker's Party their aim for the next election and future aspirations they emphasize developing their credibility with the electorate. WP parliamentary candidate Yee said, "It's clear [that we must] build up party brand. We are not

ready to take over right now. We need to offer [the electorate] a party brand they can trust [with] credible candidates" (personal communication, December 18, 2013).

The second hypothesis is also demonstrated through the interviews. Giam and Yee indicate that they view Worker's Party as weak and that unseating the PAP is a long-term goal. Thus, there is less incentive to coalesce. Giam says, "In the long term [we wish to] be the ruling party. But we shouldn't have too lofty goals [in the next election] … it is wishful thinking" (personal communication, December 16, 2014). The credibility theory has considerable conceptual overlap with the pre-existing theories. Nevertheless, the credibility theory provides an abstract framework to better understand opposition party behavior and revealing a direct impediment to coalition building.

A pre-electoral coalition theory has gained prominence in the academic literature due its debated effect on spurring democratization, liberalization and electoral turnover. This analysis builds on the aforementioned literature, but is also the first effort to explain the absence of pre-electoral coalitions in competitive authoritarian regimes.

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1

Introduction

I. Introduction:

Before the 21st century, scholars perceived regimes through the paradigm of a democratic spectrum: regimes are either democracies or are transitioning from authoritarianism to a more democratic form. Levitsky and Way refer to this tendency as a democratizing bias (Levitsky & Way, 2002). In the 1990's, some authoritarian governments transitioned to democracies (Taiwan), others became more authoritative (Belarus), and yet others remained stable (Malaysia). This led to new terminology differentiating authoritarian regimes based on levels of liberalization and competition.

In their seminal article, Levitsky and Way (2002) introduced the term "competitive authoritarian regime" to define multi-party authoritarian regimes in which elections tend to be free from massive fraud, but the electoral playing field is swayed in the incumbents' favor. In these regimes, incumbents manipulate democratic norms indirectly through such means as an abusive tax authority, a compliant judiciary, control of the media and gerrymandering. These elections however, remain a point of contestation between the incumbent and opposition parties, and thus are a factor in the legitimacy of the governing party. In competitive authoritarian regimes, incumbents manipulate the system more intensely than in authoritarian systems, such as hegemonic authoritarian regimes, even though elections are fairer and more competitive (Dunno, 2013).

Since the reversal of the democratizing bias, scholars have studied whether specific structural and strategic conditions increase the likelihood of electoral turnover, short-term liberalization and long-term democratization. Prevailing wisdom assumes that coalition building is one of the available strategies a group of opposition parties may employ to pressure a hegemonic power to democratize. As Roesller and Howard (2006) point out, first, an opposition coalition may take votes away from the margin between the incumbent and the coalesced challenger. Secondly, coalition building also reduces the incumbent's ability to co-opt and divide opposition parties through patronage distribution or other measures. Third, it may signal to the electorate that the opposition is organized and credible. Fourth, police officers and other public servants may be less incline to employ and condone electoral repression. Finally, it mobilizes the electorate to vote for the opposition as they realize the prospect of an electoral change is more likely. However, a scholarly consensus on whether opposition coalition building increases the likelihood of political change remains debated.

Howard and Roessler (2006) build on Larry Diamond's observation that opposition victory in a competitive authoritarian regime requires a level of opposition mobilization, unity and skill, and heroism far beyond what would normally be required for victory in a democracy (Diamond, 2002, p. 28). They demonstrate that the formation of opposition coalitions directly correlates to a liberalizing moment after the elections. In another vein, in an analysis of post-communist Russia, Bunce and Wolchik (2010) determined that a comprehensive

electoral strategy,[1] including an opposition coalition, induced electoral turnover. Michael Wahman (2013) however, determined that opposition coalition building might affect the likelihood of opposition victory, but it does not induce not long-term democratization, as the new winners often maintain the old system. Understanding pre-electoral coalition formation matters because of its potentially direct effect on stimulating political change in authoritarian regimes.

Research on the conditions that spur political transformation in authoritarian regimes has drawn academic attention to the factors that induce pre-electoral coalitions. Some scholars, such as Wahman (2011) and Ghandi and Reuter (2013), have constructed and tested theories on the pre-conditions and incentives for pre-electoral coalition building. However, their focus is primarily on factors affecting the formation of coalition building. Scholars have given little attention to the converse – what deters coalition building. The deterrence of coalition building is a puzzle because a logical assumption is that opposition parties in authoritarian regimes share a common enemy, the incumbent, and thus, would be incentivized to coalesce. Yet, pre-electoral coalitions in such regimes are rare.

Studying the impediments to pre-electoral coalitions reveals attributes a potential cost to merging with the wrong partner, a conception not focused on in the literature. This research study will complement the general literature on the durability of authoritarian regimes and the methods employed by the incumbent to

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[1]This electoral strategy included a unified opposition supporting one candidate linked with a mobilized civic society, to energize citizens to vote, pressure and monitor the government to not manipulate the elections and provide public opinion information to help the electorate frame their ideas

tip the "electoral playing field." Yet it also assigns agency not only to the incumbent government, on which most scholars focus, but also to the interplay among the opposition party elites for choosing their electoral strategy. As the frequency of single-party elections has decreased since the 1980's (Ghandi and Reuter, 2013, 139), understanding the dynamics of opposition parties in authoritarian regimes in multi-party elections is worth pursuing.

Due to the level of contestation in the 2011 General Election, Stephan Ortmann (2011) asserts that Singapore has transformed into a competitive authoritarian regime from a hegemonic authoritarian regime. Since Singapore's founding, the People's Action Party (PAP), the incumbent government, disregards freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the media. However, numerous Singaporean politicians and academics considered the 2011 parliamentary election a watershed event: The PAP won the smallest share of the popular vote (60.1%) since 1960 (Ortmann, 2011), an election before the city-state's independence.[2] Moreover, The WP, the most credible opposition party, for the first time won a group representation constituency (GRC) (Ortmann, 2011), a feat assumed unfeasible for opposition parties (K.M. Siew, personal communication, December 17, 2013). Thus, the Singaporean 2011 general election provides a case for unraveling some of the puzzles regarding opposition party behavior in competitive authoritarian regimes.

This paper will ask the following central question:

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[2] Due to district manipulations, this resulted in the opposition only gaining six out of 87 parliament seats

1. What is the primary reason opposition parties in Singapore did not form a pre-electoral coalition for the 2011 parliamentary election?

I answered the aforementioned questions by analyzing the explanations provided in the literature and conducting fieldwork from December 13-30 in Singapore. Using insights from both fieldwork and the literature enabled my argument to attribute a direct impediment deterring the formation of pre-electoral coalition in Singapore. For this thesis, I interviewed six officials from four different political parties, three civic activists, an academic, a blog editor and a blog writer. Included in this group was a self-identified government "mole." [3] Information from these interviews was not merely considered as face-value truths, but was problematized and contextualized in the framework of Singaporean politics and opposition party dynamics. The explanations from the literature provided the framework for analyzing the background conditions and direct impediments to pre-electoral coalition formation.

Singapore is an enlightening case for studying opposition party behavior in authoritarian regimes because of the practicality of conducting research. I was able to glean the necessary information from fieldwork in a short two-week time frame because of the size of the country and the populace's limited opposition party involvement. Many of those interviewed knew each other on a personal level or were separated by very few degrees. With the reversal of the

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[3] The mole wrote articles criticizing the government in opposition blogs. He told me that people in the government sent him analyses to publish, in order to create problems for the PAP to solve and to show how incompetent the opposition parties were. He received government perks like his own radio show and acted as a messenger of the successes of the PAP - ushered state capitalism for facilitating economic growth.

democratizing bias and the successes of non-democratic forms of government at spurring modernization, such as China and the Gulf countries, the electorate may evaluate the government based on how effectively they responds to their needs and not just on whether they are a democracy. As these countries modernize, alternative voices in society are going to clamor for liberalization. Using Singapore as a case provides insight regarding opposition party behavior in modernized countries that are not yet competitive authoritarian regimes, but in the future may undergo similar dynamics. Lastly, according to modernization theory (Przeworski and Limongi, 1996), Singapore should be liberalized, since it has a post-industrialist regime the country. Analyzing opposition party behavior, a potential indicator for future democratization, may provide answers for why Singapore has not democratized and when it might

The second chapter of the paper is a literature review of all of the theories affecting pre-electoral coalition formation. The analysis of these theories points out their limitations and establishes the foundation for my argument. The third chapter aims to analyze how applicable the explanations from the literature are. I aim to disentangle the strengths and weaknesses of the theories to explain the absence of pre-electoral coalitions in Singapore and other competitive authoritarian regimes by asking: (1) Is the explanation valid with Singapore's electoral dynamics? (2) Is the explanation relevant to the realities of Singaporean society? and (3) Does the explanation identify a direct impediment to a pre-electoral coalition? The chapter also provides background information on the history of Singapore and, more specifically, the 2011 general election. The fourth

chapter uses the interviews to test two hypotheses: **H1**: The likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when one potential partner perceives the other as possessing less credibility with the electorate, and thus is unable to provide unique value to the partnership and **H2:** If the largest three opposition parties are weak and do not possess a level of credibility in the eyes of the electorate, then they are less likely to coalesce**.** Lastly, the fifth chapter discusses the explanation's applicability to other competitive authoritarian regimes and points out avenues for possible further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this section, I have selected and evaluated five explanations from the academic literature that analyzes coalition building in authoritarian regimes: (1) electoral prospects, (2) policy compatibility, (3) external pressure from civic society and/or the international community, (4) the age of the opposition party, and (5) party asymmetry. The limitations of these factors for explaining the primary impediment to coalition building help support my proposal of an alternative factor: credibility. Many insights in the pre-existing theories overlap with credibility; however, I argue that credibility is a better explanation for understanding the absence of pre-electoral coalitions in Singapore. The Credibility Hypotheses state that **H1:** The likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when one potential partner perceives the other as possessing less credibility with the electorate, and is thus unable to provide unique value to the partnership, and **H2:** If the largest three leading opposition parties are weak and do not possess a level of credibility in the eyes of the electorate, then they are less likely to coalesce.

The first section of this chapter will discuss two different types of coalitions and their implications, and will explain the different ramifications of coalition building in competitive authoritarian regimes versus hegemonic authoritarian regimes. The former will specify the type of coalition, a pre-electoral coalition, analyzed in this paper. The latter will describe the implications of coalitions in different authoritarian contexts to illuminate the intrinsic

limitations of using data from only competitive authoritarian regimes to test explanations for pre-electoral coalition formation.

The second section examines the five aforementioned explanations and their limitations in justifying pre-electoral coalitions. The analysis of each of the explanations describes whether the explanation is a background condition – a factor that correlates with the absence of a pre-electoral coalition – or a direct impediment – a factor that **is** the reason for the absence of a pre-electoral coalition. All of the factors except party asymmetry provide reasons for pre-electoral coalition formation; this section assesses the effects of the converse, the absence of pre-electoral coalitions among opposition parties. Furthermore, the operationalization of the explanations, especially for *electoral prospects* and *age of the largest party*, is heavily scrutinized. The third section outlines the Credibility Hypothesis – a premise that is an impediment to a pre-electoral coalition formation.

Section 2.1: Considerations for Coalition Building

I. Marginal Coalitions vs. Pre-Electoral Coalitions

Fortunately for our understanding of coalition building, the academic research distinguishes among different types of coalitions, based on the underlying goals of the opposition parties. Wahman (2011) explicitly points out that the objectives for coalition building by weaker parties, with no realistic prospect of ruling, differ from those of stronger opposition parties, who can viably contend for power. He

refers to the former as *marginal coalitions* and to the latter as *coalitions of contestation* or *pre-electoral coalitions*.

Marginal coalitions, agreements among weaker parties before an election to support a joint party list or executive, aim to win parliamentary seats or pressure the government on a policy issue. Weaker ethnic or ideological parties may join together to promote a specific niche interest (Wahman, 2011, 643). Smaller parties may also coalesce to increase their public profile with the electorate or to represent specific societal cleavages in the electorate.

Wahman defines the second type, a *pre-electoral coalition*, is an agreement before the elections, between the largest oppositional party and the second and/or third oppositional party to combine parliamentary lists or supporting the same list (2011). For the Presidential system, the largest opposition party and the next two largest opposition parties would share a candidate. The key difference "is [that] the first opposition party has declared the will to govern together with at least one of the parties prior to the election" (Wahman, 2011, 643). Since the purposes of the two coalitions are different, the explanations for what spurs or deters pre-electoral coalitions and marginal coalitions are different.

The classification of coalitions in the authoritarian context is more important for examining opposition party dynamics than in the democratic context because there is "greater reward" and "greater consequence" when pre-electoral coalitions are formed. A pact by the leading party, and by either, or both, the second or/and third largest party, if successful, could be a rare moment that spurs electoral turnover. However, the risk is that it may prompt oppressive measures

from the incumbent; the incumbent may perceive the coalition as legitimate competitors and harass them before the election. In democracies, electoral turnover is a prerequisite, and opposition parties are protected from incumbent abuse.

II: The Impact of Pre-Electoral Coalitions on Competitive Authoritarian Regimes and Hegemonic Authoritarian Regimes

The two biggest differences between competitive authoritarian regimes and hegemonic authoritarian regimes are the level of contestation and the level of fraud in the elections. Studies suggest that factors for the formation or absence of pre-electoral coalitions under these regime types are different. This assumption is derived from a study that demonstrated that when there is an opposition coalition regimes (Dunno, 2013), competitive authoritarian regimes have a greater likelihood of electoral democratization in elections than hegemonic authoritarian regimes.[4] In competitive authoritarian regimes, these coalitions increased the likelihood of democratization by 60% (Dunno, 2013, 771). Conversely, they were found to have a negative effect in hegemonic authoritarian regimes (Dunno, 2013, 771). The rationale behind this assumption is that, since the frequency of positive outcomes from pre-electoral coalitions are varied, the background conditions and direct explanations for this phenomenon must also be varied.

Section 2.2: Evaluation of Pre-Electoral Coalition Literature

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[4] The study also demonstrates that international conditionality, in which the international community applies concrete punishments and rewards corresponding to the quality of the election, also explains the different levels of democratization between the regime types.

I. Electoral Prospects

The theory of *electoral prospects* is a prominent theory in pre-electoral coalition formation. This explanation hypothesizes that as the prospects for electoral success increase, the more likely opposition parties will form a pre-electoral coalition. This argument is built on van de Walle's theoretical construction of the "tipping game." In this process, van de Walle asserts that opposition parties would only coalesce if there were a realistic chance of a victory (Wahman, 2011, 705). His assumption is that a pre-electoral coalition will increase the chances of winning, thus incentivizing the parties to coalesce. This follows the logic that an opposition party, if able, would rather defeat the incumbent alone and avoid sharing power in the case of a victory. The theory notes that there are "potential costs" for forming a pre-electoral coalition. One of these costs is that a coalition reduces the possibility of receiving patronage, a tactic often used to co-opt and divide opposition parties: a coalition would signal to the incumbents the presence of a legitimate challenger, thereby prompting the wrath of the regime (Wahman, 2011, 645).

However, the major limitation is that the theory fails to encompass an electoral situation in which electoral prospects are high for only one party. In this circumstance, the leading party is not incentivized to form a pre-electoral coalition. Thus, the theory fails to illuminate that an opposition party seeks a benefit from a pre-electoral coalition. If an opposition party is electorally viable by themselves, and a potential partner does not add value to the coalition, a pre-electoral coalition is less likely to occur. A second limitation is that the concept of

electoral prospects is difficult to measure in society. The value in the theory is that it illuminates a background condition that inhibits/spurs pre-electoral coalitions; the drawback of the theory is that it does not provide a direct explanation for pre-electoral coalition formation.

Wahman's research made a significant contribution to van de Walle's tipping game theory and pre-electoral coalition theory in general (Wahman, 2011). First, he recognized some of the deficiencies of electoral prospects for explaining pre-electoral coalitions and postulated the impact of policy compatibility on pre-electoral formation. Second, he made a valid attempt to operationalize the concept of electoral prospects and demonstrated the factor's impact on pre-electoral coalitions

Wahman (2011) operationalized electoral prospects using independent variables such as *economic performance* and *liberalization,* which studies have demonstrated correlate with authoritarian regime durability and electoral turnover. Poor economic performance has been shown to harm the chances of incumbent re-election (Collier and Hoeffler, 2009). Voters often vote based on their economic situations. Wahman's analysis indicates that the likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition increases when a regime's economic performance is poor.

Are pre-electoral coalitions less likely to form if a regime's economic performance is high? In the western context, economic voting is a primary explanation for incumbent success (Wahman, 2011, 646). As bread and butter issues usually are prioritized, it would seem that economic progress impedes the opposition from gaining support. This inability to gain support in the authoritarian

context increases the fragility and volatility of opposition parties, especially the smaller ones, and reduces their ability to attract viable candidates. Moreover, an environment that is not conducive to building an opposition party, such as strong economic performance, prevents opposition parties from developing value.

The second operationalized theory of electoral prospects maintains that a period of liberalization, when political rights/ civil rights are improved, may make the opposition more optimistic about their electoral prospects. The notion that a regime is reducing its electoral manipulations may compel opposition parties to believe that the incumbent will more likely respect democratic law (Wahman, 2011, 646). Wahman (2011) found that opposition parties are more likely to form pre-electoral coalitions if the election was preceded by a period of liberalization. Besides being a signal of electoral prospects, as Wahman intends the variable to represent, a period of liberalization provides a space for opposition parties to campaign for the electorate. Opposition parties are able to publicize their message to the masses, and possible liberalization of the media would provide more even coverage. As more opposition parties are able to gain strength, there is a more likely chance of a pre-electoral coalition. While Wahman demonstrates the significance of electoral prospects for pre-electoral coalition, other academics still question whether it is a casual factor for democratization (Bunce and Wolchik, 2006, 74).

II. Policy Compatibility

The policy positions of opposition parties in relation to each other and to the incumbent government are another consideration in pre-electoral coalition

theory. In democracies, policy compatibility directly impacts opposition coalitions. If a party coalesces with a party diametrically opposed to them, then their support from the electorate will be reduced (Golder, 2005). Wahman statistically demonstrated that in competitive authoritarian regimes "opposition parties are more likely to coalesce if they a) have a policy position that is more distinct from the incumbent government, provided they are b) ideologically on the same side of the ideological spectrum when compared to the ruling regime, referred as "unipolar."[5] If the authoritarian regime is unipolar, the greater are the policy differences between opposition parties and the incumbent, and the more likely it is that the electorate will support opposition parties. An electorate is less likely to punish ideologically close opposition parties that coalesce.

The ideological stances of two opposition parties are salient in explaining the absence of pre-electoral coalitions. A leading opposition party is less likely to coalesce with an ideologically dissimilar party because they fear alienating their supporters. Furthermore, opposition parties will fear losing ideological members, typically the party-builders in party (Greene, 2006), by joining a coalition of convenience. A pre-electoral coalition between/among ideologically disparate opposition parties, in which the parties stand on opposite sides of the government on an important issue, is an active impediment to a coalition.

The limitations of this theory for explaining the formation and absence of pre-electoral coalitions can be seen in countries where the electorate does not vote based on policies. This is exemplified in the Malaysian electoral system, in which

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[5] Example of *unipolar* using abortion: the incumbent is anti-abortion and the opposition parties are pro-choice

two out of the three opposition parties in the 2013 parliamentary election, were ethnic/religious parties. The former represents the interests of the majority Malay community; whereas, the later represents the Chinese minority.

In competitive authoritarian regimes, the incumbent obstructs party building by manipulating the democratic system. This creates an opposition party system that is weak, unstable and volatile: Gandhi and Reuter found that the average number of effective opposition parties in the authoritarian context in the post-war era was 5.6, while in democracies it was only 3.45% (2013, 138). Opposition parties often have limited programmatic appeal and are institutionally weak. Many parties are personality-based and are not able to build institutional strength and continuity because of the ruling regime. These general characteristics of opposition parties restrict this theory from primarily explaining the formation/absence of coalition building.

The theory of policy compatibility alludes to other orientations that explain the occurrence of pre-electoral coalitions. For example, the strategic orientation among opposition parties affects pre-electoral coalition formation. The degree to which an opposition party incriminates the ruling regime, as well as the manner in which they demand change, impacts the likelihood of pre-electoral coalitions. The closer are two parties' strategies for advocating change, the more likely a pre-electoral coalition will be formed. Extreme strategic differences between coalition partners compel voters to punish the parties for associating with each other.

III. Pressure from Civic Society and/or the International Community

In many authoritarian regimes, opposition parties are too disparate to form a pre-electoral coalition. Bunce and Wolchik learned from opposition leaders in post-communist regimes that "pressures on opposition [parties] from civil society organizations and from the donor community played an extremely important role in determining whether they would decide to cooperate and whether they would continue collaboration for the duration of the electoral campaign" (2006, 74). The theory is that a "push" by external forces, either civic society and/or the international community, allowed opposition parties to overcome the prospect of having to share the spoils from a potential electoral victory, in order to form a pre-electoral coalition (Bunce and Wolchik, 2006).

Bunce and Wolchik studied 11 elections in competitive authoritarian regimes in the post-communist former Soviet Union to determine the factors that induced regime turnover. In all elections, there was some level of opposition unity and varying levels of external pressure. Furthermore, the strategies in some countries were transmitted to others, an element unique in these elections. International pressure may directly incentivize the formation of pre-electoral coalitions in select situations, but the absence of international pressure cannot be considered a direct impediment to pre-electoral coalitions. A direct impediment for pre-electoral coalition assumes a "potential cost" impeding the two parties from working together. Moreover, the absence of international pressure does not explain how one party would lose support from another if they coalesce.

Pressure from civic society for opposition parties to work together is a more common factor in pre-electoral formation, but the lack of such pressure is

not an impediment to pre-electoral coalitions. Perhaps it alludes to correlating explanations, such as that the lack of pressure may signal an underdeveloped civil society, which would provide the space for opposition party members to engage potential candidates and potential supporters. However, the absence of pressure from civil society fails to qualify as the direct impediment for the formation of an opposition party coalition.

IV. Age of the Largest Opposition Party

Gandhi and Reuter determined that the age of the largest opposition party dramatically affects the likelihood of pre-electoral coalition in authoritarian regimes. In 9% of legislative elections in which the largest opposition party had never before run in an election, there was a pre-electoral coalition (Gandhi and Reuter, 2013, 140). This number increased to 25% when the largest opposition party competed in seven or more elections (Gandhi and Reuter, 2013, 140). The authors conclude that this variable implies "that there is at least one significant party that has had the opportunity to build a reputation for cooperative behavior, and hence a coalition is more likely" (Gandhi and Reuter, 2013, 140). I argue that this assumption, that the older an opposition party is, the more likely it is to have a reputation for cooperative behavior is misleading. Evidence is lacking that older opposition parties are more willing to collaborate with others. Perhaps they have a history of challenging the incumbent alone. Moreover, if they have coalesced in the past, then they may believe coalitions are effective.

I assert that this variable indicates that the older the largest opposition party is, the more likely it is to project stability and thus, the more likely it is to be

a viable partner for coalescing. Since most opposition parties are weak, an opposition party system with a strong, stable party increases the likelihood of coalitions. If one party is strong, then there is a greater possibility that two parties possess independent value. Commenting on opposition parties in post-communist competitive authoritarian regimes, Bunce and Wolchik write:

> Opposition parties in the post-communist world--as a result of the absence of a democratic past in most cases, the deeply penetrative character of the communist experiment and its classless legacies, and the costs of partial economic reforms-tend to be very new, fluid formations that are independent of social cleavages and are dominated by leaders who have little understanding of bargaining and compromise. ... As a result, opposition politics in the competitive authoritarian regimes in this region in particular tends to be long on "posturing" and short on policy, and opposition parties are often "self-destructive, because their "leaders are much more interested in keeping people out, rather than brining people in. (60)

The aforementioned characterization is indicative of opposition parties in other competitive authoritarian regimes. The age of the party implies that a party brand is stable and evokes the possibility that another party may provide electoral value and thus incentivizes the leading party to form a pre-electoral coalition.

V. Party Asymmetry

Reuter and Gandhi statistically determined that *party asymmetry*, the ratio of votes or seats between the first and second largest opposition parties in the previous election, has an impact on pre-electoral coalition formation. The rationale behind is that the greater the party asymmetry, the less likely a party would be incentivized to compete with a weaker party, who may not provide additional value (2013, 143). The larger party would perceive running alone as a

viable electoral strategy and presume they could defeat the other directly in future elections.

In certain electoral circumstances, party asymmetry increases the absence of pre-electoral coalitions. This explanation alludes to the notion that there are risks and costs for pre-electoral coalition formation. First, it may signal to the incumbents a legitimate threat and increase electoral manipulations and repression against the leading party. Moreover, opposition parties tend to be weak and not have a strong party brand. A stronger party may dilute the party brand if it coalesces with a weaker party. Nevertheless, the operationalization of the variable limits for measuring degree of party value is limited. For example, in a society where ethnic identities are politically mobilized, a weaker opposition party may add value to a leading party representing a different ethnic identity. The asymmetry between the two parties may be vast, but the likelihood of their forming a pre-electoral coalition may be high. This explanation is demonstrated by using data from all authoritarian regimes and requires further testing, using just data from competitive authoritarian regimes.

Section 2.3: Hypothesis: Theory of Credibility

In competitive authoritarian regimes, the incumbent government manipulates the electoral system to hinder opposition parties from gaining power. Oppressive acts in the country's history frighten strong candidates away from joining opposition parties. Activists with programmatic aspirations not aligned with the median voter are the ones who typically build the party (Greene, 2006).

In these regimes, the mainstream media neglect the positive aspects of opposition parties and are used for degradation. Basic freedoms in a democracy, such as freedom of speech and assembly, may be controlled by the incumbent's bureaucratic system, hindering the ability of opposition parties to campaign. The past legacies of incompetent opposition parties, often based on a leader's self-interest, reduce the political commitment of the electorate. Because of factors like these, opposition parties find it difficult to gain credibility.

Credibility, as Alex Au states, "Is defined as that vague sense of trustworthiness, competence, and professional qualification that has become a touchstone of electability" (Waipang, 2010). There are four groupings of factors that contribute to a party's credibility. The first includes (1) its ability to attract candidates. Since many professional individuals fear inciting the wrath of the ruling regime, many qualified individuals do not join opposition parties.

The next cluster of factors regarding is associated with how unified, stable and strong the party is and may be perceived: (2) the party's ability to maintain parliamentary candidates and leadership over multiple election cycles, (3) the party's discipline in projecting a single message, (4) the party's professionalism while campaigning for votes. This cluster of variables is salient because opposition parties tend to come in and out of existence; they are unstable and unable to maintain a unified party brand over multiple elections.

The next cluster of variables affects the electorate's initial reaction to the party: (5) the degree to which a party does not isolate the electorate by supporting policies that repel the median voter, (6) the degree to which a party does not

alienate the electorate by endorsing strategies that repel the median voter. The last factor is fairly unique: (7) the degree of authenticity a party projects by representing a non-ideological social cleavage, such as a religious or ethnic group. If a party authentically brands itself as meeting the needs of a specific group, then its credibility with that group is high, and its value to other parties' increases.

In an opposition party system that is fragile and volatile, the "potential cost" for a coalition with the wrong partner is extreme. If one party coalesces with a party that is weaker, less stable or too different along ideological or strategic grounds, then the electorate will decide not to vote for them. The variable *party asymmetry* captures this cost, but the operationalization of the variable limits its relevance to Singapore. This is because the power imbalance between the leading party and the second leading party in the prior election is not showcased through popular vote or seat share. Rather it is indicated by how credible both parties are. Measuring the popular vote or seat share in a prior election often does not showcase the power imbalances among opposition parties that deter coalition building. Opposition parties are incentivized to coalesce when each partner perceives the other as being able to provide unique value to the partnership. In this situation, it is a "win-win" for all those involved. Certain background explanations, such as economic performance, fail to explain this underlying insight, as they neglect the exact dynamic between opposition parties and, rather, emphasize a background condition that makes it harder for parties to beat the regime. The variable *age of the largest party,* according to my interpretation, exemplifies the importance of building a stable party brand. While this insight is

important and meaningful in Singapore, this concept does not take into account the stability of the second and/or third largest party.

In competitive authoritarian regimes, opposition parties tend to be fragile and move in and out of existence. Thus, the largest opposition party is conditioned to not trust the longevity or long-term effectiveness of a coalition. This dynamic ensures that if all parties are weak, even if there is an insignificant power imbalance, then opposition parties will still be less likely to coalesce. The largest party will not assume that the other parties will become stronger in the future and would rather compete directly than coalesce. This insight shares similar qualities with the explanation of *electoral prospects:* if all parties are weak, then there is a less likely chance of coalescing. However, the theory of electoral prospects does not directly measure a power imbalance between the parties, which is significant for identifying the "potential costs" of coalescing.

I hypothesize the following:

H1: The likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when one potential partner perceives the other as possessing less credibility with the electorate, and thus is unable to provide unique value to the partnership.

H2: If the largest three leading opposition parties are weak and do not possess a level of credibility in the eyes of the electorate, then they are less likely to coalesce.

The underlying insights of H1 are, first, that a leading opposition party can lose credibility by coalescing with the wrong partner – a direct impediment to pre-electoral coalition formation. Second, the leading party needs to significantly benefit from a pre-electoral coalition. If not, it would prefer to compete alone to avoid sharing the spoils of electoral success. The underlying assumption for H2 is that because opposition parties tend to be fragile and volatile in competitive authoritarian regimes, weaker opposition parties in these regimes will not trust the longevity of the coalition. The parties will presume that they will be able to compete against other opposition parties in the long run; however, there is no concrete threshold for this measurement.

There is a lot of conceptual overlap between the notion of credibility and the terms of existing theories. The Credibility Hypothesis will incorporate many of the insights associated with the pre-existing theories to reveal the direct impediment to coalition building in Singapore. Using credibility as an abstract tool for viewing opposition party dynamics reveals factors that are correlative, otherwise referred to as background conditions, and more important, factors that are direct impediments or causative factors for impeding pre-electoral coalition formation.

Chapter 3: Opposition Party Behavior in Singapore

This chapter takes the case of the opposition party dynamics leading up to the 2011 Singaporean general election to examine the applicability of the five factors from the literature - electoral prospects, policy compatibility, external pressure from civic society and/or the international community, the age of the largest opposition party, and party asymmetr*y* – on preventing the Worker's Party, the leading Singaporean opposition party, from forming a pre-electoral coalition with other opposition parties. Involving a new competitive authoritarian regime, the Singapore case study can be used to disentangle the electoral dynamics that are representative of other competitive authoritarian regimes. Singapore, as a post-modern state, also illuminates the unique electoral dynamics challenging opposition parties in a modernized society. Essentially, this chapter solves the puzzle of why opposition parties that compete in an exceedingly skewed electoral arena do not work more closely together and form a pre-electoral coalition.

The information and insights in this section were gleaned from scholarly articles regarding Singapore and interviews with Singaporean opposition party members and parliamentary candidates, civic activists, and academics, and from fieldwork completed in late December 2013. The following Singaporeans were interviewed: Yee Jenn Jong, WP parliamentary candidate (2011); Gerald Giam, WP Non-Constituency Member of Parliament (NCMP)[6]; John Tan, Vice

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[6] An NCMP is a member of parliament who failed to directly win their electoral ward, but was amount one of the best losers, by virtue of the margin they lost, and provided a seat. They enjoy most of the voting rights of a regular MP, except they

Chairman of the SDP; Goh Meng Seng, ex-parliamentary candidate WP (2006),

ex-parliamentary candidate (2011) and Undersecretary General of NSP; Syrafrin

Sarif, NSP member; Sylvester Sebastian, ex-RP member; Siew Kum Hong, ex-

nominated member of Parliament (NMP[7]), civic activist, VP MAURAH[8];

Roderick Chia, civic activist; Simian Samydorai, civic activist, President of the

Thinke Centre[9]; Terry Xu, Editor of *Online Citizen*; Bliver Singh, Political

Science Professor at the National University of Singapore; and a mole for the

government, a columnist of alternative blogs. For some of the arguments

presented in this section, a number line, derived from the interviewees,[10] locating

each of the opposition parties' positions on a 1-10 scale is presented. Since the

interviewees were opposition party members, civic activists and academics, their

opinions are not representative of the general population, but they are insightful

because they show how leaders perceive themselves.

The distinctions made in the analysis may be of less for explaining the

perspectives of the electorate. This is because many in the electorate are apolitical

and not aware of the differences among opposition parties. I surveyed 100

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cannot vote on motions of no confidence and bills to amend the constitution.
NCMP's are chosen by subtracting 9 from the number of parliamentary seats the
non-government party won (Singapore Constitution, Part IV -The Legislature).
[7] An NMP is a member of parliament appointed by the President, usually a
member from civic society. He can debate and vote on all issues except
amendments to the constitution, motions of no confidence, and appropriations of
public funds and removal of the president. Nine NMP's are appointed. (Singapore
Constitution, Part IV -The Legislature).
[8] Human rights group that serves as Singapore's ASEAN working group.
[9] Conservative human rights organization.
[10] Data compiled from answers from Terry Xu, Gerald Giam, Yee Jenn Jong,
Roderick Chia, Syafrin Sarif, Siew Kum Hong, Bliver Singh, Sylvestor Sebastian
and Jon Tan.

Singaporeans at a mall in Singapore asking them about their civic engagement.

Because discussing politics is sensitive subject in Singapore, at the end of the

civic engagement questions,[11] I asked which party they felt was most credible.

Fifty-two out of 100 people would not identify a specific party. Answers

included: "no idea," "don't follow politics" and "not much there." Fifteen of these

52 people would not even answer the question and just walked away.

Nevertheless, 43 out of the other 48 people mentioned the WP. This illustrates

that the electorate may not know too many specific differences among the parties,

but that they perceive the WP as much more credible and different than the rest.

This is because of the WP's ability to project a unified image and maintain the

same candidates for more than one election cycle.

Singapore is an ideal place for fieldwork, due to its small size as a city-

state and the minute size of the opposition party system. To a degree, all the

opposition leaders, activists and academics either know each other or are

separated by very few degrees. I identified opposition party leaders using the

results from the 2011 Singaporean election. Since the Singaporean opposition

actively uses social media, I contacted most of my interviewees via Facebook. I

came across most of the non-opposition party members through reading

opposition blogs. I contacted around 50 people, and interviewed 11. Fortunately,

while in Singapore, I was able to engage with civic society organizations on

Human Rights Day. Since civic society in Singapore is underdeveloped, most of

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[11] The survey was conducted at HarborFront Mall in Telok Blangah on December 28-29. The mall is an upscale mall, and there are many tourists who use it, and thus, I asked those I approached if they were Singaporean.

the major organizations were represented at Human Rights Day. My exposure to these organizations enabled me to understand the relationship between civic society and opposition parties.

During my interviews, I typically asked the interviewees to locate the position of all six opposition parties along a scale, operationalized by a 1-10 numbered line, on issues such as how mainstream the party is, to what degree it implicates the PAP as immoral, and how much it prioritizes civil liberties. After receiving those answers, I also asked the following questions: (1) What are your aspirations for Singapore? (2) How do you view your party's role in achieving this goal? (3) What was your (if an opposition member) party's goal in the 2011 election? (4) What is the relationship between civic society and the opposition parties? (5) Are opposition parties more fragmented or unified? and (6) Why do you think a coalition did not occur in the 2011 Singaporean election? Most interviews lasted between one and two hours and took place in public environments such as cafes, food courts and public parks.

The first part of this section provides a background history of Singapore and the significance of the 2011 general election. The next section depicts the internal dynamics of the opposition parties in Singapore, reveals how party members view the opposition movement, and lastly, describes the interactions among opposition party members leading up to and after the 2011 general election.

The third section of this chapter assesses the salience of the five aforementioned factors regarding the absence of a pre-electoral coalition in the

2011 Singaporean general election. This was accomplished by evaluating the explanations using the following questions: (1) Is the explanation valid with Singapore's electoral dynamics? (2) Is the explanation relevant to the realities of Singaporean society? and (3) Does the explanation identify a direct impediment to a pre-electoral coalition?

Section 3.1: History of Singapore

Over the last fifty years, Singapore has modernized from a developing pre-industrialist society to one of the "Asian Tigers." Since 1959, the PAP has ruled the small city-state, preventing opposition parties from gaining power. After Malaysia expelled Singapore in 1963, Lee Kuan Yew, the head of the PAP, framed the event as a crisis and championed strong and decisive rule, by which the PAP would be allowed to govern without political or popular opposition (Gordon, 1998). Since that time, Singapore has been considered a hegemonic regime, a state barren of political competition (Ortmann, 2011). Opposition parties exist, but the ruling regime manipulates democratic conduits to oppress any viable political opposition. However, for many, including Stephan Ortmann, an academic based in Hong Kong, political dynamics drastically changed after the 2011 general election.

Due to the PAP's winning only 60% of the popular vote, the lowest percentage since 1960, Ortmann (2011) concluded that Singapore has reached such a level of political contestation that the small-city state should be considered as a new governmental regime type: a competitive authoritarian regime.

Singaporeans such as Siew Kum Hong, a former Nominated Member of Parliament, also viewed the 2011 election as a watershed event. Siew referred to the size of the swing and the fact that an opposition party, the WP, won for the first time a GRC (an electoral district in which four, five and six, parliament candidates are slated together). This was a feat the public considered unfeasible (K.H. Siew, personal communication, December, 17 2013). Nevertheless, even with the opposition's unprecedented success, the PAP still won 81 out of the 87 seats in Parliament (Ortmann 2011).

In Singapore, the PAP disregards freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the media. Leading up to the 2011 general election, though, the ruling regime liberalized use of new media, permitting the opposition parties to campaign and organize online. Online blogs hosted political debates between opposing parties. Facebook groups were created protesting government injustice. Internet news sites allowed the opposition to refute false allegations spread by the ruling party. The first public debate since 1988 was allowed to be aired, albeit the PAP was allowed two representatives versus the one representative granted to each of the four invited opposition parties, and was allotted the same amount of time to argue their case as the other four combined (Ortmann, 2011).

While selective liberalization occurred, the PAP also clamped down in different ways. During the election season, they took away the public's privileges to use Speaker's Corner, an area of Hong Lim Park and the only place designated for public speeches and events (Ortmann 2011). During the 2011 campaign

season, after *The Online Citizen,* an alternative blog, hosted a political forum featuring the leaders of every political party except the PAP, the government forced it to register as a political association, which means the blog is required to publish the names of key officers and reject foreign donations (Ortmann 2011). In 2013, Singapore's media regulators imposed new licensing rules on 10 news sites, including *The Online Citizen* (Wong, 2013)*.* The new law forces each website to pay a $50,000 deposit to the Media Development Agency, indirectly holding the website hostage if the government wants to censor an article. The trade-off between liberalizing authoritarian laws and tightening up control is a hallmark of PAP's recent administration. Figuratively, the PAP and the electorate share an understanding: as long as the PAP does not get too authoritative, such as by use of violent oppression, then most of the electorate appreciates the economic modernization ushered in by the PAP and disregards the lack of freedoms.

Section 3.2: 2011 General Elections: Opposition Party Behavior

I. Opposition Party History and Results from the 2011 General Election

In the 2011 general elections, six opposition parties contested the PAP:

- The Worker's Party (WP), seen as the most credible opposition party (Singapore general, 2011, 11), contested 23 seats and won 6 of them, including a GRC (2011 parliamentary, 2014). Founded in 1957 during British colonial rule, the WP maintains party discipline and possesses the most organizational strength. Professor Singh of the National University of Singapore views the WP as leagues ahead of other parties and the only one

that has an organizational identity instead of a personality-based party (B.
Singh, personal communication, December 17, 2013). A poll in April 2011
showed that 57% of Singaporeans surveyed had a favorable view of the WP
(Singapore general, 2011, 11).

- The Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) is the most vocal party in supporting
social justice and civil liberties. It has the historical baggage and legacy of
employing civil disobedience, as a result attracting the wrath of the PAP
(Waipang, 2010): Chiam See Tong, the undersecretary-general of SDP, was
unable to run in the 2011 general election because of a bankruptcy suit forced
by the PAP (Ortmann, 2011). Party official, Jon Tan, desires a full systematic
reform of government (J. Tan, personal communication, December, 17 2013).
In a survey leading up to the 2011 election, 25% of the population had a
favorable view of the SDP and 25% had an unfavorable view, the most
unfavorable percentage of any opposition party. The SDP contested 11 seats
and did not win a seat (Singapore general, 2011, 11).

- The Singapore Democratic Alliance (SDA) was weakened after the 2006
elections because the National Solidarity Party (NSP) and the Singapore
People's (SPP) withdrew from the partnership (Waipang, 2010). Thus, the
alliance only consisted of the Singapore Malay National Organization
(PKMS) and the Singapore Justice Party (SJP). The SDA alliance was created
following the 1996 election. It was not a pre-electoral coalition because the
two parties that competed in the 1997 general election, the NSP and the SPP,
finished third and fourth. The PKMS is a party for the Malay voice; however,

they are known not to advocate for Malay issues out of fear for the PAP's ire. Syafrin Sarif, an ex-PKMS member and current member of NSP, remarked that *all* opposition parties recruit Malay candidates for GRCs from the PKMS (S. Syafrin, personal communication, December 28, 2013). Goh Meng Seng, ex-Undersecretary General to the NSP (2011) and ex-parliamentary candidate for the WP (2006), mentioned that not many Malays are confident about the PKMS (G. Meng Seng, personal communication, December 17, 2013). Leading up to the 2011 election, this party became a non-player, competing for only seven seats (2011 parliamentary, 2014). The rest of this thesis will barely mention the SDA.

- After leaving the SDA, the National Solidarity Party (NSP), under the new leadership of Goh Meng Seng in 2007, went through a conscious rebranding (James, Chia, Grant & Lee, 2011). The NSP has traditionally been a party that attracts Chinese businessmen (K.H. Siew, personal communication, December 17, 2013). Realizing the importance of attracting strong minority candidates, Goh created a Malay Bureau. Furthermore, in the 2011 election, the NSP ran the most popular opposition candidate, Nicole Seah, a 24-year-old who was able to connect with the younger generation (Ortmann, 2011). After the 2011 election, she publicly left the party for personal reasons. The NSP contested the most seats of any opposition party in the 2011 election, twenty-four, but did not win a seat (2011 parliamentary, 2014). After the 2011 election, many NSP candidates left the party.

- The SPP was formed due to infighting between ex-Undersecretary General of the SDP and the current Undersecretary General of the SPP, Chiam See Tong, and the current SDP undersecretary, Chee Soon Juan (Waipang, 2010). A former part of the SDA, the SPP is perceived as very personality-driven. In the 2011 election, Chiam See Tong decided to run in a GRC and let his wife compete in Potong Pasir, a district he had held for more than 16 years (R. Chia, personal communication, December 26, 2013). The party is perceived as a family party between Chiam and his wife Lina, which according to Siew, limits them from being politically meaningful (K.H. Siew, personal communication, December 17, 2013). The SPP contested seven seats and did not win a single MP seat (2011 parliamentary, 2014).

- Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam (JBJ), the first opposition candidate to be elected to parliament in 1981 as the Secretary General of the WP, recently founded the Reform Party in 2008 (Ortmann, 2011). JBJ has a legacy of accumulating legal problems for strongly opposing the PAP. Three months after he died in 2008, the Reform Party was taken over by his son, Kenneth Jeyaretnam (KJ). KJ squandered his father's legacy and as a leader isolated other members of the party (B. Singh, personal communication, December 17, 2013). In 2011, the party contested for 11 seats and did not win one (2011 parliamentary, 2014). After the election, many members of the Reform Party, including government scholars, left the party due to Kenneth's inept leadership (S. Sebastian, personal communication, December, 27 2013).

This description of the opposition parties in Singapore showcases the overall weakness of the parties: not one party competed in more than 30% of the electoral wards (2011 parliamentary, 2014). Furthermore, it demonstrates the PAP's targeted activities to silence the opposition, as was the case of members of the SDP and JBJ. Lastly, the collapse of the SDA after 2006 election and the RP after 2011 election, and the departures of Goh Meng Seng and Nicole Seah from the NSP highlight the difficulty opposition parties have with membership and candidate continuity from one election to the next.

II. Opposition Parties: Fragmentation and Coordination

Opposition parties in Singapore were unable to field enough viable candidates to run in even 30% of electoral districts in the 2011 elections (2011 parliamentary, 2014). Before the election, after repeated calls by the SDP for a common meeting, all the opposition parties gathered to discuss possible unified strategies for the election (Ortmann, 2011). Because the parties lacked the candidates to run in even a majority of the districts, tensions arose over which party would run candidates in districts with a history of supporting the opposition (J, Tan, personal communication, December 17, 2013). As in the 2006 general election, opposition parties in the 2011 election met and coordinated which electoral districts to contest. The aim was to avoid opposition parties' competing against each other, in order to make it harder for the PAP to win. Since only one district ended up with a three-party race, this strategy was a win-win for all opposition parties, with limited implications. For the first time in history, the

opposition contested in every district but one, Tanjong Pagar, and in that district the opposition party was disqualified for registering late (Ortmann, 2011).

In 2011, the coordination efforts were very challenging. John Tan, Vice Chairman of SDP, stated, "The only reason [coordination effort] works is because everyone seems to agree that if we have a three corner fight then PAP will benefit. …That's why this horse trading thing occurs even though it's not a friendly occasion" (Personal communication, December 27, 2013). In the future, as opposition parties attract more candidates, the coordination meeting, according to WP member Gerald Giam, might not be as clean (G. Giam, personal communication, December 16, 2013).

While opposition parties in Singapore came together in the 2011 general elections to coordinate districts, the parties were seen to be more fragmented than united. Ex-Undersecretary General of NSP and WP parliamentary candidate Goh Meng Sing commented:

> [Opposition parties are] fragmented. Because well in Singapore political parties are not driven by political ideologies. They are driven more by personalities, self-interest and not even policy views. The only unification idea is the PAP…They are not organized around a strong political ideology or key issues that they need to fight for. …There are a lot of historical baggage of rivalries among opposition parties. WP will never work with SDP. For certain reasons. Conflict between the leaders will affect direction of two parties.

Meng Seng also states, "I do not see a possibility for unity for opposition parties at the moment" (Skype, December 19, 2013). For years, SDP has annually held an event called Opposition Unity, but very few opposition leaders ever show up and if one does, it has been in an unofficial capacity. According to SDP member Jon

Tan, WP would not reply to the invitation (Jon Tan, personal communication, December 17, 2013).

Nevertheless, opposition parties recognize the PAP as their common enemy (B. Singh, personal communication, December 17, 2013). After WP won the GRC, they were entrusted to manage the Aljunied-Hougang Town Council.[12] Their responsibilities include the maintenance and conservation of common property, particularly the areas of the public housing units referred to as the HDB[13] flats (Yee, Personal communication, December 18, 2013). In Singapore, more than 85% of the population lives in HDB flats (Waipang, 2010). Over the years, the PAP developed software to manage the process of collecting service and conservancy charges (S&CC) and payments for services provided. A PAP company was created to own the software. After the election, the company licensed the software to PAP town councils, but not the Aljunied-Hougang Town Council. WP had only two months to develop complicated and extremely customized software to manage the town council (Ong, 2011). Even though the opposition perceives itself as fragmented, if another opposition party won a GRC, according to parliamentary candidate Yee Jenn Jong, the WP would lend it the software. Yee says, "We are all fighting an unfair system" (J.J. Yee, personal communication, December 19, 2011).

In the 2011 general election, there was no public announcement of a pre-electoral coalition among opposition parties. However, in a 2013 by-election,

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[12] After the 2013 by-election, in which WP won a MP, the town council became Aljunied-Hougang-Punggol East Town Council
[13] Housing Development Board

caused by the resignation of a PAP member from Parliament's, SDP invited WP

to discuss supporting the same parliamentary candidate (J. Tan, personal

communication, December 17, 2013). In a spirit of compromise and cooperation,

according to SDP's public statement, the terms of the suggested deal were that

SDP would provide the candidate and, in the case of a win, WP would run the

Punggol East Town Council. WP did not even attend the meeting (J. Tan,

Personal communication, December 17, 2013). Giam, a parliamentary candidate

for WP, claimed that the SDP was accepting all the risks and no reward. Giam

also mentioned that WP would be seen as not having a policy position (G. Giam,

Personal communication, December 19, 2013). Conversely, Jon Tan of SDP said

that his party proposed the deal because "[they saw] that as a means to be able to

[unseat] the PAP. The way things are, none of the opposition has the muscle to

move the PAP. … So the only way is for us to unite" (J. Tan, Personal

communication, December 17, 2013). The WP won the by-election by more than

10% of the votes, surprising the PAP by the size of its victory (B. Singh, Personal

communication, December 17, 2013).

Section 3.3: Viability of Literature Theories with the Singapore Case

This section is analyzes the five factors in the literature: electoral

prospects, policy compatibility, external pressure from civic society and/or the

international community, the age of the largest opposition party, and party

asymmetry. The first section explores which explanations are valid, or true, of the

political dynamics of Singapore. This section examines whether the independent

factors associated with a pre-electoral coalition are exhibited in Singapore. For example, one explanation contends that *the likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when economic performance is strong.* Validity is demonstrated if the dependent clause, *that the economic performance is strong,* is manifested in Singapore. The second section assesses whether the dependent clause is realistically relevant to dynamics on the ground in Singapore. For instance, did the economic performance of the country realistically affect pre-electoral coalition formation? The third and last section seeks to demonstrate which factors are a direct impediment to pre-electoral coalition formation.

The theoretical framework assumes that a pre-electoral coalition, at least statistically, increases the chances of the leading opposition party, WP, and a potential coalition partner to contend and pursue electoral success. This assumption is buttressed by the notion that individual party supporters will vote for the opposition party coalition, combining votes and increasing the strength of the challenge. Coalition formations occurred in just 16% of authoritarian legislative elections from 1946-2006 (Gandhi and Reuter, 2013, 140). Thus, it is assumed that there is a direct impediment that creates a potential cost, inhibiting two parties from coalescing.

Although it is productive for determining the direct impediment to pre-electoral coalition, it is necessary to note that the framework has its shortcomings. Inadvertently, it fails to expose the notion (outlined in the section on credibility) that two weaker parties, which are not credible in the eyes of the electorate, are more likely to reject a pre-electoral coalition. The threshold mentioned on page 20

– that if not reached, will result in both the leading party's and its potential

coalition partner's not coalescing because they would rather directly compete in

the future – is not given its due credence. The fact that not one party fielded

candidates in more than 30% of the electoral wards indicates that the credibility

threshold may not have been reached. To deal with this problem, albeit

imperfectly, the analysis also uses the 2013 by-election in Punggol East as a

model. Since WP won the 2013 by-election, it can be assumed that they broke

through the threshold and that another factor contributed to the absence of pre-

electoral formation, especially since SDP publically proposed one.

There are nine explanations that require validity testing in this analysis. The

characteristics that need to be tested for their validity in Singapore are underlined

below:

Electoral Prospects:
- The likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when <u>electoral prospects
  are low.</u>[14]
- The likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when <u>economic
  performance is strong.</u>
- The likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when <u>a period of
  liberalization did not occur.</u>

Policy Compatibility:
- The likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when the opposition
  parties' policies are <u>similar to the regime's policies.</u>
- The likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when the opposition
  parties' policies <u>are ideologically incompatible,</u>[15] <u>that is, they are on opposite
  sides of the incumbent on the most salient issues.</u>[1617]

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[14] I separated electoral prospects from the operationalization of the variables
because there is clear evidence the prospect for electoral turnover is limited.

[15] An example is if the incumbent has no policy position regarding abortion and
one opposition party is pro-choice and the other is anti-abortion.

External Pressure from Civic Society and/or the International Community:
• The likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases in the <u>absence of external pressure from civic society.</u>
• The likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases in the <u>absence of external pressure from the international community.</u>

Age of the Largest Opposition Party
• The likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when the largest opposition party is <u>newly established</u>.

Party Asymmetry:
• The likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when <u>there is asymmetry between the largest and the other opposition parties, calculated as a ratio of the popular vote and seat shares in relation to the other opposition parties in the 2006 (previous) election.</u>

I. Validity of the Explanations with the Dynamics of Singapore

Among the statements above, a statement is considered to be valid when the

underlined clause is true. Table 1 below summarizes the aforementioned theories.

Invalid	Valid
1. Absence of a period of liberalization	A. Strong economic performance
2. Opposition parties' policies Ideologically Incompatible	B. Low electoral prospects
3. Age of the largest opposition Party	C. Similar to incumbent policies
4. party Asymmetry	D. Absence of external pressure from civil society
	E. Absence of external pressure from the international community

1. Prior Period of Liberalization – Invalid

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[16] I added salience because if opposition parties are bi-polar on non-relevant policies, then it is not a deterrent.
[17] In Wahman's theory they are linked. However, to analyze them more easily, I separated them.

The theory posits that the likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when a period of liberalization did not occur. Since there was a prior period of liberalization, this theory is invalid with Singapore's electoral dynamics leading up to the 2011 general election.

Since the 1990's, a trend of limited liberalization in Singapore has been somewhat constant. Ortmann writes,

> In the 1990's, the government decided to pursue a strategy of strategic liberalization. Alarmed by the growing interest of voters in opposition parties and aware of the growing complexities of society, the government changed its approach and initiated a process that involved small, careful steps of opening up that were often counter balanced with new more control mechanisms (2011).

Indicative of this trend, as Ortmann contends, is the way apolitical nongovernment groups are co-opted to work with the government and/or affect policy making (Ortmann, 2012). This trend of limited liberalization manifested in the 2011 election season. From 2011-2012, Freedom House changed its freedom ratings from a 5 to a 4 because the campaign period featured more open media and greater freedom of assembly than in previous years (Singapore 2012, 2013). While the government-controlled traditional media still produced positive coverage of the PAP, they also gave some positive coverage to the opposition (Ortmann, 2012).

The growing role of the Internet had a dramatic impact on opposition parties' campaigns during the 2011 campaign season. The PAP allowed alternative web portals, such as *Online Citizen and Temasek Review* to provide unbiased news reports and critical opinions. The Internet provided a platform for

opposition parties to combat false PAP allegations against their candidates. When a government-linked tabloid smeared Chee Soon Juan, the Undersecretary General of SDP, for planning a protest after a campaign rally, a Facebook page calling for a boycott of the tabloid attracted eight thousand members (Ortmann, 2011). During the campaign season, the PAP alleged that SDP was pursuing a gay agenda. To counter the claim, SDP then produced a video on their website and other Internet links to refute the allegations. Furthermore, the human rights group MARAUH launched a campaign just ahead of the election to remind voters that the ballots were secret (Ortmann, 2011).[18] The Internet also became a space for uncensored debate as events folded on the ground and a space to organize, as well as recruit volunteers, to support opposition parties, especially as polling agents (Ortmann, 2011). Re-imposed limitations by the PAP to restrict use of Speaker's Corner, the area of Hong Lim Park designated for public speeches and events, could not dampen the increased excitement and mobilization for the 2011 election (Ortmann, 2011). Since Singapore liberalized, the notion that a pre-electoral coalition is preceded by a period of liberalization is not applicable.

2. Opposition Parties' Policies Ideologically Incompatible – Invalid

The theory posits that the likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when the opposition parties' policies are ideologically incompatible,[19] that is, when they are on opposite sides of the incumbent on the most salient issue. This theory is

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[18] The idea that ballots are not secret is still a prominent fear among Singaporeans.

[19] An example is if the incumbent has no policy position regarding abortion and one opposition party is pro-choice and the other is anti-abortion.

invalid with the Singapore case because opposition parties were ideologically compatible on the most salient issue leading up to the 2011 general election.

In Singapore society, the most salient issue is the economy and not democratization: poll data indicate that 70.1% of the population agree and strongly agree that it is more important to have good economic growth than freedom of speech (How, Siyoung, & Wieyu, 2011). The PAP's facilitation of modernization and economic growth forces opposition parties to not criticize economic policies too harshly. All opposition parties are center left, in the sense that they advocate a state with more safety nets.

More important, though, opposition parties in Singapore are not ideologically distinctive. Their support, or lack thereof it, stems from their credibility and not distinct policies. This is exemplified by the fact that 66% of Singaporeans support the idea of having a stronger opposition in parliament (Singapore General, 2011), yet less than 40% of the population voted for opposition parties. The appeal is not a party's specific policies, but that opposition parties are alternatives to the PAP and support liberalization. In this sense, the most salient issue for opposition parties is liberalization. Since the government is repressive of democratic values, all parties are unipolar, on the same side of this issue. The number line below, constructed by averaging the scores from

interviewees,[20] and showcases the unipolar nature of the opposition parties in

Singapore.

The Degree a Party Brands Itself as Prioritizing Civil Liberties,
Liberalization and Social Justice
1=Does Not Highly Prioritize – 10=Does Highly Prioritize

WP-6.1
NSP-6.6
SDA-4.6
SPP-6.2
RP-8.2
SDP-9.7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
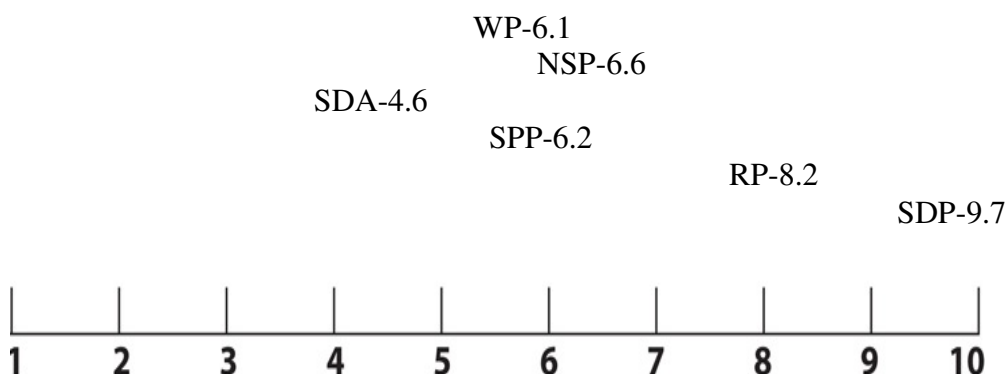
3. Age of Largest Opposition Party – Invalid

The theory posits that the likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when

the largest opposition party is <u>newly established</u>. This theory is invalid with the

Singapore case because WP is an older party.

In the 2006 election, WP garnered 16% of the popular vote and won one

seat in parliament, compared to the SDA (composed of NSP, PKMS, SPP and

SJP), which garnered 12% of the popular vote and one seat in parliament

(Waipang, 2010). However, WP's success in the 2011 election, winning six seats

in parliament and a GRC, whereas other parties did not gain a seat, is also

indicative of the WP's position as the leading party. According to Ghandi and

Reuter, in 25% of elections in which the opposition party has competed in seven

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[20] 5/7 interviewees placed opposition parties on three different number lines
corresponding to the descriptions Civil Liberties, Liberalization, and Social
Justice. Their scores were averaged.

or more elections, a pre-electoral coalition has been formed (2013). WP, a party founded before Singapore's independence in 1959, has competed in 13 elections, and yet a pre-electoral coalition did not occur (Our History, n.d.)

4. Significant Party Asymmetry – Invalid

The theory posits that the likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when the largest opposition party's strength is significantly asymmetrical, calculated as a ratio of popular vote and seat shares in relation to the other opposition parties in the 2006 (previous) election. This theory is invalid with the Singapore case because opposition parties were not significantly asymmetrical.

The explanation that the more significant the party asymmetry, the less likely a pre-electoral coalition will form is invalid with the Singapore case study. WP, SDA were the only parties to win a seat in the 2006 parliamentary election. As written above, WP garnered 16% of the popular vote, and SDA also won one seat, but garnered 12% of the popular vote (2011 parliamentary, 2011). These ratios are respectively 1.33 and 1. Since the ratio is low, party asymmetry, as measured by Gandhi and Reuter, is not consistent with the Singapore 2011 elections. Other measurements of strength imbalances among opposition parties, however, may be consistent with the Singaporean case. This will be further explained in chapter 4, which outlines the case that credibility is the primary reason for pre-electoral coalition formation.

A. Strong Economic Performance – Valid

The theory posits that the likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when <u>economic performance is strong.</u> This theory is valid with the Singapore case.

The relationship between high economic performance and pre-electoral coalition formation is consistent in the 2011 Singaporean case. Singapore has a highly developed market economy. It is the only Asian country with a solid triple-A credit rating. It's GDP per capita as of 2011 is $56,521.731 (Ogg, 2011).

B. Low Electoral Prospects – Valid

The theory posits that the likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when <u>electoral prospects are low</u>. This theory is valid with the Singapore case.

Before the 2011 election, electoral prospects, according to the definition that this means the likelihood of an opposition victory, were low, and thus the explanation is valid with the Singapore case. In the previous 2006 parliamentary election, the opposition won only 33% of the popular vote and two out of 84 parliamentary seats, and they did not win a GRC (2006 parliamentary, 2006). Furthermore, one of the reasons Gerald Giam, WP parliamentary gave in response to the question of whether the WP would likely combine with another party in the future was that "unless [WP has a] clear shot taking over government, there is no real reason to form a coalition" (G. Giam, personal communication, December 16, 2013).

C. Similar to Incumbent Policies – Valid

The theory posits that the likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when the opposition parties' policies are <u>similar to the regime's policies</u>. This theory is valid with the Singapore case.

In Singapore, the PAP government is a technocracy that has no extreme ideological stances (Ortmann, 2012). The government implements policies to spur economic growth and promote societal stability. Thus, the government has no qualms about implementing policy changes introduced by opposition parties. For example, the PAP adopted a smaller student-teacher ratio, decreased ministers' pay, reduced the costs of public transportation through greater government involvement, built HDB flats and lowered the prices to counter the rising housing prices as per WP suggestions (J.J, Yee, personal communication, December 18, 2013).

In authoritarian regimes, opposition parties face a trade-off between voter maximization and party building (Greene, 2006). Due to the limited prospects for electoral success in authoritarian regimes and the risks involved in opposition party involvement, opposition parties must programmatically appeal to activists to recruit leaders and members. However, opposition parties, promoters of liberalization, also must brand their party as being as close to the median voter and incumbent as possible, to attract the largest number of voters (Greene, 2006). In Singapore, the incentive for voter maximization compels opposition parties, especially WP, to project party platforms similar to those of the ruling regime.

In conversation, Goh Meng Seng, former undersecretary of NSP, commented that when he joined NSP after the 2006 parliamentary election, he intentionally rebranded the party to be close to the center, to appeal to the masses and not to disillusion voters (Skype, December 18, 2013).[21] The phenomenon of moving closer to the PAP even occurred in SDP, with the most activist oriented policies. According to party official Jon Tan, young party members in SDP were concerned with promoting Dr.Wijeysingha, the first openly gay politician, to the central committee (personal communication, December 17). Singaporean society still discriminates against the LGBT community. For fear of disillusioning voters, the younger members of SDP, the party that most actively prioritizes promoting gay rights, were concerned with voter maximization (J. Tan, personal communication).

The WP, the party most significant for analyzing pre-electoral coalition formation, introduces policy changes, but projects a policy agenda very similar to that of the PAP. After the 2006 election, WP rebranded itself to be alternatives, but not direct opposition to the government (Ortmann, 2011). WP parliamentary candidate Yee commented, "If there is some implosion in ruling party there is some alternative that should be there" (J. J. Yee, Personal communication, December 18, 2013).

D. Absence of External Pressure from Civil Society – Valid

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[21] The question of rebranding was brought up because of the article The Rejuvenation of the NSP and the Rebranding of the SDP: Conversations with Singapore's opposition politicians

The theory posits that the likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases in the <u>absence of external pressure from civic society.</u> This theory is valid with the Singapore case.

 In Singapore, civic society does not pressure opposition parties to coalesce, let alone often work together. Since Singapore's founding, the PAP has hindered the growth of an active civic society in the political arena. Stephen Ortmann writes, "For a very long time, the government's insistence on technocratic policy making within a closed and extremely hierarchical system has made it impossible for any advocate not directly linked to the political regime to have any impact" (Ortmann, 2012, 4S). This is based on the PAP tenet that there is one solution for all Singaporeans and that the state's interest is not composed of different competing interests (Tan, 2008). As opposition parties started gaining limited success in the electoral arena in the 1980's, the PAP liberalized measures against non-government organizations (NGO's) (Waipang, 2010).

Nevertheless, civil society in Singapore is extremely underdeveloped. In December 2013, fieldwork for this thesis was conducted on Human Rights Day at Speaker's Corner at Hong Lim Park, the only location whose use does not require organizations to register with the police, only online (Ortmann, 2011). From informally conversing with those in attendance, it could be ascertained that there were few formal civic organizations. Some policy advocacy, such as the anti-death penalty campaign, was more informal and maintained an online presence. In this country that does not protect freedom of speech or assembly, the crowd was

extremely small, roughly 40 people. Roderick Chia, a civic activist from the Human Rights Day event, listed only 15 organizations and informal campaigns while describing civic society (R. Chia, personal communication, December 26, 2013).

In Singapore, civic society and political parties do not work together publicly. Siew Kum Hong, Former Nominated Member of Parliament and Vice President of MAURAH, a conservative human rights group, said, "If we work with the opposition we may be branded as political and that has consequences" (K.H. Siew, Personal communication, December 17, 2013). Roderick Chia, a civic activist and independent researcher, commented that there was no direct relationship between civic organizations and political parties: "Generally civic society whether a political association or loose coalition are weary of Singapore's political parties. … Although many activists voted for the opposition and volunteered during the 2011 general elections … activists tend to stay outside the political arena" (Chia, Personal communication, December 26, 2013). Gerald Giam, WP member, mentioned that there is room for collaboration and sharing knowledge, but there is not a high degree of cooperation (G. Giam, Personal communication, December 16, 2013). He asserted that demarcations between opposition parties and civic society are important so groups do not lose their objectivity. The two remain fairly separate. Some activists privately help the opposition during the election season, like interviewee Roderick Chia, who worked as a polling agent, and some opposition party members privately attend NGO events – for example, the head of the WP youth party attended Human

Rights Day (R. Chia, Personal communication, December 26, 2013)[22] – but there is no direct pressure from civil society on opposition parties.

The PAP incentivizes civic society to remain outside of the political arena. The Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) scheme, introduced by the PAP in 1990, is one of the PAP's strategies to co-opt civic activists (Rodan. 2009) NMPs apply and are appointed by the President to parliament and maintain the full powers of a regular MP, except they cannot vote on money bills, bills to alter the constitution, or motions of no confidence in the government. From 1989-2009, appointees often were representatives of ethnic minorities or women, and of those who championed welfare or environmentalism (Rodan, 2009).

All organizations are legally required to register with the Registry of Societies (Chia, 2012). The Registry of Societies is a mechanism for evaluating and controlling organizations in Singapore. The law provides democratic leeway to legally dissolve an organization for undermining the national interests, or in other words, politicizing an issue. There are informal campaigns such as the Anti-Death Penalty campaign and Save Bukit Brown, but the activists are wary of joining the political realm. The former's efforts in raising public awareness has indirectly lowered the number of executions in Singapore from eight in 2004 to 0 in 2010, and the latter stopped the government from building an expressway on top of a cemetery (Ortmann, 2012).

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[22] I met Roderick Chia at Human Rights Day at Speaker's Corner. I recognized his name from an article I read. Offhandedly, he pointed out the head of the WP Youth wing.

Some in the opposition have realized that enacting change is more feasible outside of the political structure. Dr. Vincent Wijeysingha served as SDP's treasurer and stood as a parliamentary candidate in the 2011 general election. Wijeysingha, the first openly gay candidate, decided to leave the political arena to focus on civil liberties and promoting LGBT rights in Singapore. He felt that, while his activist work aligned with SDP values, he would be able to accomplish more as an activist instead of as a politician (J. Tan, personal communication, December 17, 2013).Thus, the absence of civic society pressure is valid in the Singapore case.

E. Absence of External Pressure from International Pressure – Valid

The theory posits that the likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases in the absence of external pressure from the international community. This theory is valid with the Singapore case.

In 2011, there was no unified international campaign for opposition party unity, or even democratization. The Singaporean model of authoritarian state capitalism is extolled as a potential model for developing Asia (Henderson, 2012). The international community neglects Singapore, according to Siew, because it presents a different scale of human rights incidents without any emotive images: Singaporeans live in a post-industrialist and safe state (Personal communication, December 17, 2013).

II. Relevance of the Factors to Singapore's Electoral Dynamics

This section evaluates which factors are influential in pre-electoral coalition formation. At the very least, a factor that is relevant must be considered a background condition or, at best, a direct cause of the absence of pre-electoral coalitions in the 2011 Singaporean election. By looking at the converse of each possible explanation above, I identify the theories that are relevant. Below is a summary of the factors considered relevant and those that are not.

Not Relevant	Relevant
1. Low Electoral Prospects	A. Economic Performance
2. Similar to Incumbent Policies	B. Absence of External Pressure from Civil Society
3. Absence of External Pressure from the International Community	

A. Low Electoral Prospects – Not Relevant

Analyzing the underlying opposition party dynamics in the 2013 by-election helps ascertain the relevance of *low electoral prospects* on pre-electoral coalitions in Singapore. Leading up to the 2013 by-election of East Punggol, WP had a high prospect for electoral success. This is evidenced by the fact that the PAP was even surprised by the sheer margin the WP won by, more than 3,000 votes, which was a margin of more than 10%. As written in an earlier section, SDP wanted to form a pre-electoral coalition with WP. According to SDP's public statement, "in a spirit of compromise and cooperation", the terms of the suggested deal were that SDP would provide the candidate, and if they won, the WP would run the Punggol East Town Council (Waipang, 2013). WP did not even attend the meeting (J. Tan, personal communication, December 17, 2013). Giam, a parliamentary candidate of WP, mentioned that the SDP deal was

accepting "all the risks and no reward" (G. Giam, personal communication, December 16, 2013). There were alternative risks and impediments keeping WP from coalescing with SDP. Because, in a situation in which WP had a high electoral prospect, a pre-electoral coalition did not occur, it can be determined that low electoral prospects during the 2011 election was not a relevant factor.

Similar to Incumbent Policies – Not Relevant

The factor similarity of opposition party's policy to the PAP's is not relevant to, nor even a background condition for, deterring a pre-electoral coalition in Singapore. WP gains it legitimacy by projecting policies similar to those of the PAP. Seventy-three percent of the population believes that Singapore is moving in the right direction because of the stability of the economy, social harmony and peacefulness, and good management by the government (Singapore general, 2011). The WP partially gains its strength and support by maintaining policies similar to the regime's policies. If opposition parties had policies distinct from the government's, the population would be less supportive in voting for them, and there would be less of a chance a pre-electoral coalition would occur. Singapore is a society that prioritizes stability. Extremely distinct policies would oppose the value of stability (B. Singh, Personal communication, December 17, 2013).

B. Absence of External Pressure from the International Community – Not Relevant

The absence of international pressure is also not relevant to the 2011 Singaporean Case. The PAP has brainwashed the Singaporean population to not

be affected by the international community. Foreigners cannot donate money to political parties, use the Speaker's Corner or form partnerships with opposition parties (Waipang, 2010). Furthermore, Singaporeans are upset by the influx of foreign workers as permanent residents and temporary workers in Singapore (B. Singh, Personal communication, December 17, 2013). This sentiment may inoculate opposition parties from a susceptibility to international pressure. Furthermore, because of Singapore's global prominence as a model city-state, at least to countries like China (Henderson, 2008), this explanation falls outside the realm of reasonability.

A. Strong Economic Performance – Relevant

The *strong economic performance* of the PAP is a relevant explanation for the absence of a pre-electoral coalition in the 2011 general election. In Singapore, there is a link between PAP support and economic performance. A poll conducted in July and August in 2010 by the Institute of Policy Studies at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy found that 70.1% agree and strongly agree that "it is more important to have good economic growth than freedom of speech" (How, Siyoung & Wieyu, 2011).[23] The population, especially the older generation, prioritizes economic conditions over civil liberties. Since 73.2% of the population agree and strongly agree that Singapore "should have a powerful leader who can run the government as he thinks fit," it can be postulated that a majority of the population credits the divisive rule of the PAP for the economic

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[23] Only 61% of the younger generation, ages 21-39, agree with the statement.

modernization (How, Siyoung & Wieyu, 2011, 12). Furthermore, 80.2% of those who agree and strongly agree that "it is more important to have good economic growth than freedom of speech" also agree and strongly agree that "Singapore should have a powerful leader who can run the government as he thinks fit" (How, Siyoung & Wieyu, 2011, 22). WP member Yee recognized this fact by acknowledging that "because under PAP's governance the economy improved, most people don't want to rock the boat" (J. J. Yee, personal communication, December 18, 2013). Alex Au writes, "The deep de-politicization of Singaporeans through the last forty years and the sustained government rhetoric about the imperative of stability for economic progress have left many citizens extremely wary of the politics of agitation" (Waipang, 2010, 118).

A strong economy is the foundation of continual popular support on the part of the electorate for the PAP. In this regard, Singapore has mostly[24] resisted the theoretical undercurrents of modernization theory: that as a country progresses through industrialization and becomes a post-industrialist society, values change, as a country becomes more educated, wealthier and more individualized. In turn, a country should liberalize and democratize (Inglehardt and Welzel, 2005).

B. Absence of Civil Society – Relevant

Lastly, the absence of civil society pressure is relevant to affecting the formation of pre-electoral coalitions in Singapore. If civil society were vibrant,

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[24] Poll data indicate that the younger generations possesses stronger democratic values than the older generations; however, the majority of the younger generation still supports the PAP. Fifty-seven percent of those 21-29 perceive the PAP's renewal (re-generation) as a party progressing well.

and if it politically pressured for coalition unification, it would have an impact on pre-electoral coalition formation. Lack thereof is a background condition that realistically hindered the WP from forming a pre-electoral coalition.

III. Direct Impediments to Pre-Electoral Coalition Formation in Singapore

To determine if either the economic performance of the PAP or the absence of civic society pressure was a direct impediment to pre-electoral correlation, it must be ascertained that an explanation reveals a potential cost for the WP if it coalesced with another party. Below is a summary of the analysis.

Not Direct Impediment	Direct Impediment
1. Economic Performance	
2. Absence of External Pressure from Civil Society	

The economic state of Singapore was not the primary reason that there was a cost for WP to coalesce with other opposition parties. The regime uses its wealth to gently buy votes. Professor Singh of National University of Singapore commented, "If I am jobless …you don't pay utility. You don't pay school fees. You don't pay anything during the interim. This is the republic of Singapore … and that's the power of the PAP and it's amazing" (B. Singh, personal communication, December 17, 2013). Moreover, the PAP does not use its wealth directly by paying off WP or other opposition parties, which would constitute a disincentive for pre-electoral coalition formation. Consequently, the economic situation does not impede WP from coalescing.

Similarly, while this theory is consistent with Singapore before the 2011 election, the absence of pressure from civic society is more of a background

condition than a direct impediment. The lack of civic society pressure did not hinder the WP from forming a pre-electoral coalition in the by-election. The lack of civil society pressure would not produce a cost if WP coalesced. Even without civic society pressure, the opposition felt compelled to meet. The determination to coordinate was a win-win situation for the opposition. As a result, an impediment that ensures that pre-electoral correlation is not a win-win situation must have compelled the parties from coalescing further. Lastly, neither of the two WP members interviewed mentioned civic society pressure directly or indirectly as the primary explanation for the cold relations among opposition parties and for why WP did not coalesce with SDP. More research is required to disentangle the relationship between the dynamics of civil society and pre-electoral coalition formation.

Chapter 4: Credibility's Impact on Pre-Electoral Coalitions

This chapter demonstrates that a lack of *credibility* among the five smaller opposition parties in the 2011 Singaporean general election was the primary impediment to pre-electoral correlation formation. Moreover, the chapter illustrates how the theory of credibility relates to the explanations in the literature. The first section demonstrates that the following two hypothesis are evident in the Singapore case study: **H1:** the likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition decreases when one potential partner perceives the other as possessing less credibility with the electorate, and thus is unable to provide unique value to the partnership. **H2:** If the largest three opposition parties are electorally weak in the eyes of the electorate, then they are less likely to coalesce. The underlying insight of H1 is that a leading opposition party may lose credibility by coalescing with the wrong partner. The underlying insight in H2 is that, because opposition parties tend to be fragile and volatile in competitive authoritarian regimes, weaker opposition parties in these regimes will not trust the longevity of a coalition and would rather compete in future elections. Thus, there is an abstract "credibility threshold" that opposition parties in Singapore must meet to be incentivized to coalesce, instead of to directly compete with other opposition parties. The second section shows how the limitations of the explanations in the literature, especially *party asymmetry,* are better demonstrated through the lens of *credibility*. The third section discusses the role personal conflict and ego play in Singapore and how these can be an impediment to coalition in competitive authoritarian regimes.

Section 4.1: The Case for Credibility in Singapore

Interviews with Singaporean opposition politicians, academics and activists revealed that opposition party credibility was the predominant reason why WP did not coalesce with other parties in the 2011 general election. In that election, WP did not pursue coalitions because they perceived all other opposition parties as less credible. When asked why the WP did not form a coalition, Gerald Giam, WP parliamentary candidate, said, "There needs to be a coalition of equals to coordinate" (personal communication, December 16, 2013). Singaporean experts on opposition party behavior corroborated Giam's assessment: Terry Xu, editor of the *Online Citizen*, said, "Other parties are not strong enough for WP to want to coalesce. Why would WP want to join if they can just beat them [in the future]" (personal communication, December 15, 2013). Siew Kum Hong, Vice President of the human rights group MAURAH, commented, "WP has succeeded to a degree at maintaining party discipline showing external unity…WP is so clearly ahead that they wouldn't want to coalesce" (personal communication, December 17, 2013). Voters would punish WP for coalescing with an inferior party. Gerald Giam recognized this when answering why WP did not agree to SDP's conditions in the 2013 by-election: Giam said, "It would be accepting all the risks and no rewards" (personal communication, December 16, 2013). Professor Bliver Singh declared that if WP joined a coalition "it [would be] a liability and not an asset" (Personal communication, December 17, 2013). Singh also explained why WP did not coalesce, stating, "WP is the strongest party. As

long as we have personality-based parties, which are most parties in Singapore -
that will be the issue. They all are prima donnas while WP has finally out grown
that" (personal communication, December 17, 2013).

Answers provided by WP interviewees, Gerald Giam and Yee Jenn Jong,
illustrate the level of importance WP places on gaining credibility. Gerald Giam's
aspiration for Singapore is "to develop a more credible and capable alternative
party" (personal communication, December 16, 2013). Yee's suggestion for what
WP needs to do in the next election to move the popular vote for the opposition
from 40% to 60% is also revealing. He says, "WP needs to build … our branding
and slate of candidates" (personal communication, December 18, 2013). Neither
of the two WP members I interviewed mentioned outright that the other
opposition parties were less credible. Giam said, "I don't like criticizing other
opposition parties," and Yee declared, "I don't look at them as competitors." But
Yee also noted, "It's clear [that we must] build up party brand. We are not ready
to take over right now. We need to offer [the electorate] a party brand can trust
[with] credible candidates" (J.J Yee, personal communication, December 18,
2013). The answer of Jon Tan, the central committee member of SDP, to why WP
did not want to coalesce with his party alludes to one of the implications of a WP
coalition with a weaker party. He says, "Because they fear getting near SDP. They
know big brother is not pleased with SDP and they know that they already
hammered SDP viciously, cruelly, and probably not spare anyone who comes
near us" (J. Tan, personal communication, December 17, 2013).

In Singapore, as in other competitive authoritarian regimes, credibility for

opposition parties is at a premium. Electorally viable individuals fear joining a party, and the incumbents manipulate democratic norms to hinder party building. Before the 2011 election, WP was seen as the most credible party because they maintained party discipline, actively campaigned in the non-election year by engaging their electorate on weekly walks, and preserved viable candidates. Since 2006, WP has made a concerted effort to project external unity. Leading up to the 2006 election, Alex Au observed that speeches held at rallies by WP were focused, and they elaborated on assigned parts of the party manifesto, points covered also by candidates from SDA (Wapaing, 2010). WP members were not allowed to interview with mainstream media to ensure their words would not be twisted. The party was very strict about using social media to ensure that a unified voice was publicized to the public (M.S. Goh, Skype, December 18, 2013). Goh Meng Seng alluded to this, and objected the practice. This was one of the reason he left WP for NSP after the 2006 election (Skype, December 18, 2013). He believed the use of new media was necessary for training leaders in crisis management. As Gerald Giam states in response to what is deemed necessary to increase the popular vote from 40% to 60%, "It is important to keep up the momentum. [We are] going against the trend by having a unified party for more than two election cycles" (personal communication, December 16, 2013). Furthermore, the institutional culture of WP consists of engaging in at least one political engagement a weak. Candidates go on weekly walks to engage their constituents. Walking the streets and talking to constituents face-to-face circumvents the bureaucratic obstacles for campaigning. Ex-WP member and

Undersecretary General of NSP, Goh Meng Seng commented on the habit of

weekly walks.

> I have to give credit that they are quite consistent in that. Because Low
> Thia Kiang (WP Leader) made it a point that every week there should be a
> political engagement on the ground as a party organ … in an Asian
> country you need to engage face to face on the ground. That's how Asians
> think and how the Asian mind works. If they see you on the ground they
> will give you credit. (Skype, December 18, 2013)

WP built on its successes in 2006 by attracting even more viable

candidates (B. Singh, personal communication, December 17, 2013). Popularity

with the electorate and presenting viable candidates is a reinforcing cycle. The

greater the success garnered at the polls, the easier a party can recruit and

maintain candidates. Likewise, the more viable the candidates are, the more

support is garnered from the electorate. WP candidate Yee sent an email to the

two central committee members just two months before the election to join the

party and ask if he could contest in the ward he currently lives in and where he

was born. His significant public profile as an education entrepreneur, his starting

numerous companies leveraging Internet technology in education, made his

membership in WP and candidacy appealing (J. J. Yee, Personal communication,

December 18, 2013).

While WP has consistently projected party stability and discipline since

the 2001 elections, the other opposition parties are still perceived as lacking

organizational strength and cohesion. According to Siew Kum Hong, SPP, which

left the SDA coalition after 2006, is known "as Chum's Party" which limits them

from being "politically meaningful" (personal communication, December 17,

2013). Roderick Chia says that the structure of the SPP, which competes in his

district, "is family based. This was reflected when Chee brought a team to fight in a GRC and let his wife compete in his old district that he won for 27 years. … Bad strategic mistake." Chia also mentioned that after the 2011 election, members, including well-known government scholar Ben Pwee, "left because of lack of human resources" (Personal communication, December 26, 2013).

According to activist Roderick Chia, NSP, the second party that left the SDA alliance, had a rather "decentralized party structure" leading up to the 2011 election. He observed, "Each GRC team that was running was seen as doing their own thing" (personal communication, December 26, 2013). As mentioned earlier, NSP had the most popular candidate, Nicole Seah, who earned more Facebook likes than even the prime minister. However, according to ex-WP parliamentary member (2006) and ex-Undersecretary General for the 2011 election, Goh Meng Seng, "We were one election behind [WP]" (Skype, December 18, 2013). Because he is a key member of both parties, his analysis is salient. Goh Meng Seng positioned NSP to be strong on non-divisive issues, such as housing demand, while not directly criticizing the PAP, in order to rebrand the party between WP and SDP (Skype, December 18). Nevertheless, after the 2011 election, Goh Meng Seng left the leadership of the party and moved to Hong Kong (M.S. Goh, personal communication, December 17, 2013); Nicole Sea had a public meltdown that hurt the party brand (Tan, 2011), and many members of the Reform Party, who had joined NSP less than four months before the 2011 general election, subsequently left NSP (Former RP, 2011). Commenting on the potential of NSP, Professor Bliver Singh said, "People look at NSP as a party that

will go into parliament and make some noise … probably championing some of

my needs … people look at WP as a potential government" (personal

communication, December 17).

Unlike then the aforementioned parties, SDP lost credibility with the

median voter because their identity osculates between a human rights organization

and a political party. According to Jon Tan, a central committee member of SDP,

> People in my party are very vocal, kind of like me. We are willing to take
> risks. We are willing to bear consequences. So [PAP are] very afraid of us.
> In fact we hear from some reporter who interviews us … if you look at the
> newspaper from mainstream media, news about my party only trickles.
> And some of these newspaper reporters confirmed with us under promise
> of anonymity that my party is being identified as the party that [the
> government] will be watching. The big brothers are watching. And they
> should not write things that are overly positive (personal communication,
> December 26, 2013).

SDP views the PAP regime very differently than the average

Singaporeans, which compels them to more actively and directly advocate for

civil liberties. Because of this, the PAP has targeted them: In the 2011 election,

their leader, Chiam See Tong, was unable to run due to a defamation lawsuit (Jay,

2014). According to Roderick Chia, "They are kind of unstable. Many personality

clashes. We don't know if the candidates [voted for] will stay on for two terms…

Few of my friends volunteered [during the election season], but they all left.

[There are} very strong personality clashes [in the party]" (personal

communication, December 26, 2013).

Leading up to the 2011 election, the Reform Party went through many

changes that affected their credibility. Undersecretary General Kenneth

Jeyaretnam isolated key members in his party, leading to a mass exodus before

the election (B. Singh, personal communication, December 17, 2013): at least

nine Reform Party members, including five from their central executive

committee, left (Former RP, 2011). At the time of the interview in December

2013, ex-party member Sylvester Sebastian believed that the party consisted of

less than 10 people, and he was unsure whether they had an active central

committee. He said, "Kenneth is his own party" (personal communication,

December 27, 2013). Leading up to the 2011 election, two out of the four parties

in the SDA alliance left. Professor Bliver Singh mentioned, "SDA is going to be

highly irrelevant in the time to come" (personal communication, December 17,

2013).

The instability of the other opposition parties ensured that WP would be

viewed as the most credible leading up to the 2011 election: 36% of Singaporeans

surveyed in April 2011 thought WP is credible, 7% more than any other party,

and only 24% thought that WP was not credible, 3% better than any other party.

Bliver Singh commented on the difference among the opposition parties but also

on the PAP: "We have got the PAP, which is premier league football. We got

division one, which is WP and all these guys, [the other opposition parties], are

division two and division three" (personal communication, December 17, 2013).

The evidence corroborates the hypothesis that WP did not pursue a pre-electoral

coalition because they were more credible in the eyes of the electorate. A

coalition with any other party would damage their credibility and not provide

significant additional value.

Interviews with WP members also corroborated the second hypothesis in

the credibility theory: If the largest three opposition parties are weak and do not possess a level of credibility in the eyes of the electorate, then they are less likely to coalesce. WP knew that their chance to take over the PAP was not imminent. WP candidate Yee overtly said, "We are not ready to take over right now" (personal communication, December 18, 2013). Moreover, while commenting on PAP's future durability, Yee also said, "we are very practical people. Once [the PAP] had mandate to run government and economy improved, most people don't want to rock the boat. [Because of] past economics people adverse to change" (personal communication, December 18, 2013). Gerald Giam corroborated his statement while answering the question as to the WP's aim in the 2016 election. He remarked, "In the long term be the ruling party. But we shouldn't have too lofty goals … it is wishful thinking" (personal communication, December 16, 2013). The weakness of the three parties is showcased by the fact that no party had enough viable candidates to compete in more than 30% of the wards. Since WP viewed themselves as weak, but more credible than others, they decided to view the goal of taking over the government as a long-term ambition. Realizing that other parties were also weak and they considered a coalition as less strategic than competing alone.

Section 4.2: Credibility and Pre-Existing Theories

The theory of credibility integrates underlying insights that are represented in the pre-existing literature, but are not illustrated through the operationalization of the theories. The theory of *party asymmetry* is the most prominent example.

Both the theories of credibility and party asymmetry measure a difference of strength between opposition parties as the primary impediment to pre-electoral coalition formation. However, party asymmetry's operationalization by counting parliamentary seats or popular votes, as in the case of the 2011 general election in Singapore, may fail to reveal the imbalance.

Second, the theory of the *age of the largest party* also shares an insight being tested. The age of the largest party reveals that the stability of one party increases the likelihood of pre-electoral coalitions. Opposition parties in competitive authoritarian regimes tend to be fragile and go in and out of existence. Thus, the age of a party may be an indicator of stability. Nevertheless, unlike credibility, which encompasses both the leading opposition party and the second and third largest in the operationalization of the theory, the age of the largest party only involves the leading party. Ghandi and Reuter's statistical analysis demonstrating the significance of the age of the largest party in pre-electoral coalition formation highlights the fact that when the leading opposition party is young, the likelihood of pre-electoral coalition decreases, due to mistrust in the longevity and benefits of coalescing with weaker parties. This insight is similar to the theory that when all opposition parties are weak, or young, there is less of a chance of a coalition forming, even if the difference in credibility between parties is low.

The theory of electoral prospects inadvertently assumes a coalition will be beneficial for improving the chance of success of the leading party. However, viewing pre-electoral coalitions through the lens of credibility reveals that the

electorate may punish a party with a high likelihood of electoral success when the

party coalesces with the wrong partner. Moreover, the credibility of both parties is

harmed when they advocate incompatible policies. The advantage of the

credibility theory is that it extends beyond just programmatic appeal to the

strategies employed. As the average score from interviewees shows, the WP

implicated the PAP in their campaign as immoral to a much lesser degree than the

SDP.

The Degree a Party's Campaign Tone and Policy Positions are
Aggressive/Confrontational in Implicating the PAP as Immoral
1=Non-Aggressive and Non-Confrontational - 10=Aggressive and
Confrontational

WP-5
NSP-5.5
SDA-5.8
SPP-5.6
RP-7
SDP-8.6

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
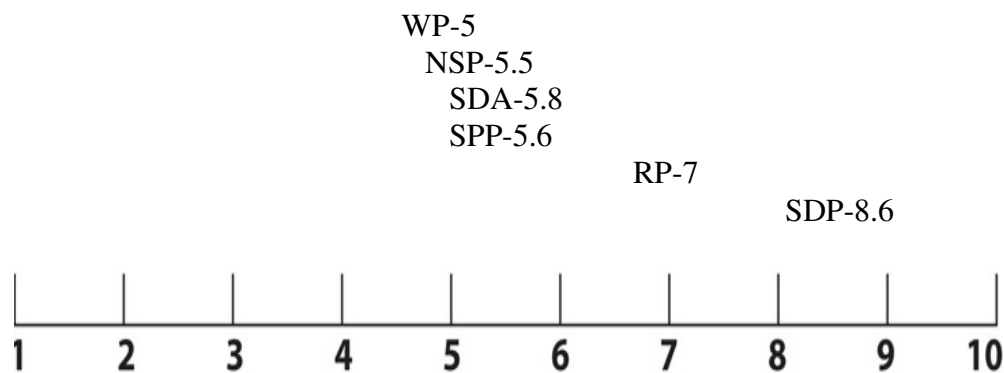
The theory of credibility helps reveal how different strategies can affect

pre-electoral coalitions. In a country that values stability, SDP's confrontational

nature costs them credibility. As indicated by the interview scores below, WP,

with a less confrontational strategy, is more mainstream than SDP. A coalition

among parties with extremely different strategies would punish the leading party

and make it seem less mainstream.

The Degree the Populace perceives a Party as Mainstream:
1=Not Mainstream - 10=Mainstream

WP-9.6

NSP-7.1

SDA-5.5

SPP-7.2

RP-5.2
SDP-5.2

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|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
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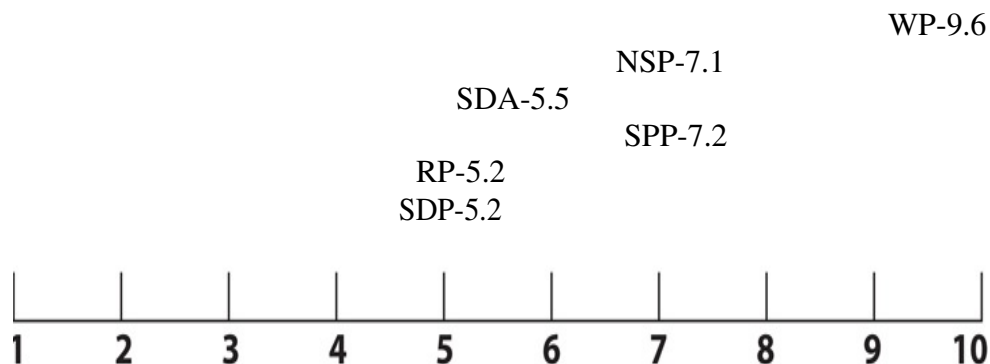
The notion that economic performance affects pre-electoral coalition formation is also related to the notion of garnering credibility. In regimes like Singapore, where the incumbent ushered in modernization, it is more difficult for opposition parties to gain credibility and, as a result, form pre-electoral coalitions. If all opposition parties are challenged at garnering credibility, then they will be less likely to hit the threshold that would incentivize them to coalesce. Instead, because opposition parties in competitive authoritarian regimes are fragile, they will be more likely to directly compete, with the intention of beating the other opposition parties in the long run. In a regime that experiences a prior period of liberalization, opposition parties are able to more effectively campaign to gain credibility. Lastly, the theories of external pressure by civic society and the international community increase the costs to opposition parties for not coalescing. All parties will lose credibility with the electorate if the opposition parties are not susceptible to external pressure. Hence, credibility is a tool for

understanding underlying insights in some theories and for explaining weaknesses

in others.

Section 4.3: Ego: Potential Counter Example?

Interviews with opposition leaders, civic activists and academics

acknowledged that personal conflict and ego play a role in opposition party

interactions. Five of the interviewees mentioned that opposition parties would not

coalesce because of personalities. Syafrin Sarif specifically said, "Everyone wants

to be the man" (personal communication, December 28 2013). In Singapore,

opposition party leaders often know each other on personal level. Personal

disputes may inhibit coalition building. SPP was founded because of a personal

conflict between Chee Soon Juan, current leader of SDP, and Chiam See Tong,

founding Secretary General of SDP and current Secretary General of SPP.

Moreover, Kenneth Jeyaretnam is universally disliked and degraded by opposition

leaders.

Because the electorate does not vote based on ideological positions,

candidates with public profiles are able to easily switch parties with limited

consequences. James Gomez, famed civil activist and ex-politician, stood for WP

in 2006 and ran for SDP in 2011 (James, Chia, Grant & Lee, 2011). One

argument maintains that the historical baggage from contentious interactions

among leaders and significant party flip-flopping are direct impediments to

coalition building. Furthermore, in Singapore, since the opposition party system is

underdeveloped, those with ambition have the chance to lead and nurture a group
and, thus, opposition leaders often do not want to give up power.

While ego and personal conflict may be an explanation independent from
credibility, in select situations, it may also affect the credibility of a party. If the
public is aware that personal conflicts affect party behavior, they may punish the
party by viewing them as unprofessional and not possessing institutional
structure.

Nevertheless, while ego and historical baggage play a role in how
opposition parties relate to each other, they do not prevent leaders from working
together in clear win-win situations in Singapore. The electoral compacts in 2006
and 2011, in which opposition parties coordinated which districts to compete in,
to reduce the number of three-party fights, indicate that leaders can subvert their
egos for political gains. Furthermore, neither WP member mentioned ego as the
main reason for the absence of a pre-electoral coalition. While personal conflict
was not an impediment to coalition building in the 2011 election, it stands as a
possible counter to the theory of credibility.[25] If personal conflict prevents the
judgment of a leader from recognizing win-win situations, then they will not be
able to ascertain when a coalition might be mutually beneficial.

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[25] This is especially true in cases when the public is not exposed to the personal
conflicts between leaders and parties.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter aims to explore the ramifications of *credibility* for the academic literature on competitive authoritarian regimes and discuss possible ways to further test and explore the theory. The first section will argue for the applicability of credibility to describing opposition party interactions in competitive authoritarian regimes. The second section explores unexplored research areas.

Section 5.1: Credibility and Other Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

The notion that pre-electoral coalition formation is affected by how credible opposition parties are with the electorate has significant value for understanding party behavior in competitive authoritarian regimes. The dynamics in Singapore and most competitive authoritarian regimes make it difficult for the opposition to develop a credible party brand in the eyes of the electorate. Incumbents in these regimes manipulate the democratic norms and make it difficult for opposition parties to earn credibility. The risks associated with starting or joining an opposition party ensure that civic activists are that the ones who mostly build parties (Greene, 2006). These activists tend to want to brand parties that do not appeal ideologically to the median voter. Furthermore, opposition parties in these regimes tend to be a group of notables organized for their own self-interest (Lust-Okar, 2006). These three common characteristics of opposition party behavior in competitive authoritarian regimes create an expectation that opposition parties are incompetent, volatile and fragile. Because

of this dominant trend, each opposition party seeks to be viewed as credible with the electorate.

Incumbents in Singapore and other competitive authoritarian regimes manipulate democratic conduits to make it difficult for opposition parties to attract and maintain viable candidates, publicize their message, and create a unified party voice. Fear of reprisal for supporting opposition parties is a dominant factor in many competitive authoritarian regimes. Monopoly of the media, absence of freedom of speech and assembly, and manipulations of the law are all tactics used to repress the opposition. Furthermore, incumbents co-opt and divide the opposition to keep it from unifying. These conditions all inhibit party building and make this theory of credibility significant.

Lastly, the theory of credibility assesses potential costs for coalescing with the wrong partner. Since opposition parties tend to be weak and go in and out of existence, there are greater consequences attached to pre-electoral coalitions. In democracies, most of the time, opposition parties are consolidated and stable, and candidates do not need to fear (that badly) the manipulation of electoral rules. Successful coalitions in competitive authoritarian contexts have a higher reward and a higher risk, due to the level of uncertainty regarding how much the ruling regime will follow democratic norms and to the fragility of the opposition parties. The former is monumental electoral turnover. The latter includes losing one's credibility by coalescing with a weak party or signaling to the regime that one is a serious contender, prompting additional repressiveness. By viewing opposition party interactions as a byproduct of the level of credibility each possesses, one is

giving credence to the notion that coalitions in pre-electoral coalitions are undertaken when there are mutual benefits for all those included.

Section 5.2: Further Research

To further test this theory, research needs to give attention to the theory of party asymmetry. Party asymmetry has only been tested using a data set of legislative authoritarian regimes. Due to Dunno's work explaining the different implications of coalitions in competitive authoritarian regimes and hegemonic authoritarian regimes, this theory needs to be tested with further counter examples involving situations where leading parties coalesce with weaker parties, as measured by popular vote or seat share, which can serve as case studies for analyzing the applicability of credibility to other competitive authoritarian regimes.

The hypothesis "if the largest three opposition parties in competitive authoritarian regimes are weak and do not possess a level of credibility in the eyes of the electorate, then they are less likely to coalesce" is easily testable. Using data from only competitive authoritarian regimes, one can analyze the frequency of pre-electoral coalitions in which the leading opposition party has garnered less than 25% of the popular vote and more than 25% of the popular vote. A researcher can selectively choose the credibility threshold, the minimum amount of credibility one opposition party must have to be incentivized to coalesce rather than merely compete with the opposition, to determine if this concept has a bearing. Besides only using data from competitive authoritarian regimes, a

research study can address the question: If the leading opposition party in a democracy is weak (under 25% popular), is it more or less likely to coalesce, compared to situations where leading opposition parties are weak in competitive authoritarian regimes. The argument tests whether competitive authoritarian regimes innately create an electoral threshold of credibility in which the leading opposition party needs to be not too weak in order to be incentivized to coalesce.

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Appendix

The following Appendix consists of the interview transcripts and notes from the fieldwork conducted in Singapore from December 15 – December 30. Professor Bliver Singh and SDP Vice Chairman were the only interviews recorded and then transcribed. Details notes were taken for the rest of the interviews.

Roderick Chia
Civic Activist and Independent Researcher
Date of Interview: 12/26/2013

Please Breakdown Civil Society in Singapore, including the distinctions between political association and non-active groups? (Political Association-*, Not Active-#

- Human Rights
    - Singapore for Democracy#
    - Think Centre*
        - Oldest Political Association
    - Maurauh *-Siew Kum Hong Vice President of this organization
    - TWC2-Transient Workers Count 2
        - Alex Au is a key member of this party.
    - Home (Migrant Workers)
    - Workfair.sg
    - Singapore Anti-Death Penalty
    - AWARE –Woman's rights
    - We believe in second chances
  - LGBT
    - Sayoni.net-Queer Woman
    - Coming Out Coming Home Coach Campaign
        - I am an ally.
- Environmentalism
    - NSS-Nature Society of Singapore
    - WildSingapore-Animal Rights/Environmental
    - Bukit Brown Highway campaign environmental/heritage
        - This campaign was successful at modifying personality. From a huge highway across ancestor's graves to a smaller project. Gave tours to any Singaporean
- Animal Rights
    - Cat Welfare Society

What is the Relationship between civic organization and political parties?
- No direct relationship…generally civil society weather a political association or loose coalition are weary of Singapore's political parties. Although many activists vote for the opposition and volunteered during 2011 general election. I helped in Singapore 2006 election as a polling agent. Activists tend to stay outside the political arena,

If all opposition parties would on the ballot in your district who would you vote for?
- The opposition party with the most credible chance to come into government, like WP.

What is WP's organizational structure?

- Strong, structured…Impression I get is that they dare not speak during non-election time. In speaking with public, they won't say something too radical-getting to the heart of the matter
- They maintain very strong party discipline as a way to appeal to the mainstream and swing voters, and to build up a certain credible team. They have told activists that they can't take on many of the issues.

What is SDP's organizational structure?
- Many people have left after 2011 election
- Oscillates between human rights and political organization. In the past, it tried to mobilize a civil disobedience movement. SDP looks at issues of civil, political, liberties. Minimum wage. They are closest thing to a human rights party. They are kind of unstable. Many personality clashes. We don't know if the candidate I vote for will stay on for 2 terms. Very individualistic. Few of my friends volunteered, but they all left. Very strong personality clashes.

NSP
- Party structure is rather decentralized. Each GRC team that was running is seen as doing their own thing. No coherent message. Reliance on personality as the case of Nicole Seah. People have left.

SPP
- My district. Chee See Tong is a very solid character. Stood up to LKY about GRC system.
- Structure is family base. This was reflected when Chee brought a team to fight in GRC and let his wife compete in his old district that he won for 27 years. Wife close to winning. Bad strategic mistake. They have open houses and talks. And the occasional walk about. People left because of lack of human resources.

RP
- Personality base
- Just Kenneth and Kenneth

Which parties are personality base?
RP, SDP are personality based. NSP is relatively personality base. SPP maintains a family structure. The problem Singapore is that they are all somewhat personality based. WP breaks the trend.

Why are parties personality driven?
Malaysia and Singapore developed differently. All parties are multi-racial, according to PAP, we can't take stability and harmony for granted. Even though social policy is radicalized.

How does the history Opposition affect current party structure?

- History of Singapore dictates how opposition were destroyed in operation Coldstone in 63' and how they decapitated the opposition for a generation. And also in 1987' the Marxist theory-Operation spectrum, in which catholic Singaporeans were campaigning for worker's rights and they were arrested. This increased the political costs for opposing.
- Today there is no real ideological enemy any more. Closest thing is Islamic terrorists, but they can't link that with opposition. Unlikely there will be a similar mass arrest. There would be a popular uproar.
- WP quite impressive given the context.

What are the most Contentious issue that park awareness of the electorate towards the opposition?
- Immigration vs. integration.
- Development linked infrastructure.
- Economic. If the country go into a downspin
- Civil liberties

Why wouldn't the opposition parties coalesce?
- There are too many egos and what they perceived as self-interest.
- They wouldn't unless it is very loose sense. We have seen SDA break apart. No mew formal alliances. Just broad agreements to limit three party fights.

Why is there not future greater coordination among political parties and human rights groups?
- Civil activists are too independent. Not Serbia and Montenegro. Human rights activists have a hesitance with working with political parties. No political parties can push the broad range of civil society groups. If have a chance to win an elections they will have to make compromises with other parts of the electorate, who are more focused on bread and butter issues.

Is Singapore a post-race society?
- We are very rationalized society. Disagreed that state is post racial. There is a racial civic society. Welfare based on race. Each race pays a certain amount for their own welfare fun. PAP has done a good job making race groups apolitical.

Gerald Giam
Non-Constituency Member of Parliament for Worker's Party
Date of Interview: 12/16/2013

What are your aspirations for Singapore?
- To develop a more credible and capable alternative party.
- For a plural polity.
- On a philosophical level, a society more gracious and cares for society.

What compelled you to be involved in politics?
I studied overseas in a setting that had different views. When I returned, I got involved in volunteer work, joined the civil service and foreign ministry. Idealistically, I want to change the country for the better. I realized that change needed to not be within the system, but induced. It would be more useful to join opposition politics. The WP was up and coming and building a credible opposition.

Why join WP?
WP was most established. I had the good fortune to meet WP members through contacts. I was blogging at the time. They share my political leaning-left center. There were not extreme and more progressive.

What is considered Right-Left in Singapore?
- Right: Authoritarian, Left: Freedom
- Right: Pro-business and wealth trickles down, Left removing barriers.
- No party in Singapore is pro-labor unions, but the left is concerned with worker's rights.

How do you react to criticism that WP does not take a position on major issues?
They are unfounded claims. We may not be as extreme.
What were WP Goals in the 2011 election?
After 2006 election, our goal was to capture a GRC and be presented as a credible party people can trust.

Is there a screening process?
- There is not a not huge applicant pool.
- We couldn't even field 87 wards
- There is an education criteria.
- More importantly though, candidates need political acumen.

What is your party's aim for 2016?
- Capture another GRC
- More fronts as possible
- For the Long term, we want to be the Ruling Party.
- But we shouldn't have too lofty goals. It is wishful thinking.

Which opposition party is your biggest competitor?
- Not that much competition in our wards.
  - Regarding party organization, until recently SDP has no clear succession
  - We are quite ahead in the general population.
  - Don't like criticizing other opposition parties.

Why did WP not accept SDP's proposal in Punggol East?
Accept all the risks and no reward. It was not well thought. We would be seen as not having a position especially in light of PAP criticism.

Why was there a joint coordination effort among opposition parties?
We did it in 2006. A common interest is not fighting together so we can try to avoid opposition party fights.

Is it likely opposition parties will coordinate again?
We need to find the people. It might not be as clean.

Is it likely WP will combine with another party?
- Unless there is a clear shot of taking over the government there is no reason to form coalition.
- There are more seats to contest in than the number of candidates.
- Unless we really feel we can takeover government there is no incentive.

What is WP's campaign strategy?
- We use online and social media. We need more volunteers and more supporters now that there is a younger demographic.
- Ground out reach; face-face interaction.
- All parties survive on meager resources.
- Politics are low cost. We do not purchase TV advertisements. The last election was less than $15,000.

Is sharing resources a possibility for Opposition parties?
- There is not much thought to coordinate with other parties. More important to be seen as a credible and consistent party. Maintain certain image then see as huge party. No matter size want the party to reflect hopes and aspirations.

What is necessary for opposition parties to go from 40.1-50?
- WP won 46% of the vote in wards contested.
- Needs be seen as credible in the eyes of the voter.
- Singaporeans are very rational. They do not vote on single issues. They are not attracted as charismatic personalities. Want to be seen as stable and not lot loud.
- How PAP performing affects opposition party performance.
- Important to keep up momentum. We are going against trend having a unified party for more than two election cycles.

Why did Gomez and Goh Meng Seng leave?
- They shared different policies.

What is the most Contentious Issue?
- Jobs. Anything that affects the pocket book.

What is the difference WP vs. PAP?
- WP advocates for a redistributive plan.
- WP wants to close up the income gap.
- WP supports greater social safety nets.

Why is the PAP so durable?
They focused a lot on economic issues. A whole generation is focused on economic issues. Early decades they did a good job at building infrastructure. People appreciate economic development. Up for grabs if economic issues remain PAP's source of dominance. Minority issues are now taking center stage. People gradually want more plurality.

What policies would WP modify?
- Pushing certain issues to make PAP go more left.
- Push for a more universal healthcare coverage.
- A Less private model for transportation.

Has the PAP responded to some issues?
- Housing
- Transport
- Health care

What is you view on the relationship between civic society and opposition parties?
- Room for collaboration.
- Sharing knowledge.
- Made speech on unemployment act and collaborated with migrant workers' group to enhance policy debates.
- Not high degree cooperation.
- Need certain demarcation. Feel group lose objectivity if align with party.
- Civic society is politically neutral and there is no need for loyalty unless interest aligned
- Most organizations are left leaning.

Is it hard to gain political resources?
- Not easy raise party resources for political reasons

Is the Opposition more fragmented than unified?

Opposition is more fragmented than unified.

Is it Bad or Good?
• Bad for people who want to see PAP out of government, but good for voters because gives them choices.

Why did a Coalition not occur?
• Need coalition of equals to coordinate.
• Focused building on our party.
• Agree a lot more philosophically than tactics
• Money is an issue, attracting credible electable candidates is.

Are you Optimistic?
• There has been some progress. It is a long uphill battle. There is no timeline to take over government
• There is less fear of Lee Kuan Yew. Not as towering a figure. He is not in the spotlight.

Goh Meng Seng
Ex-Worker's Party Parliamentary Candidate 2006, Ex-Undersecretary General
National Solidarity Party 2011
Date of Interview: 12/18/2013

"Not moving more to more liberal society"

"WP curbs growth on important voices on the Internet. Need time to grow and groom politician. Not just about scholarship.

Why have opposition parties not been successful in the past?
Opposition parties primarily Chinese. When the electorate votes in the GRC they think should I vote for the opposition's weakest link or the minority minister. Unfortunately, they look at the weakest link. Opposition parties do not groom or grow minority leaders. That is the reason there has been no progress. Part of the reason I left, when I was at WP I wanted to start Malay Bureau. Party leadership is conservative. On the "A" candidate team, Malay candidate still weakest link. All parties that grow racial balance will be more successful. WP did win because Malay candidate weak in '97. PAP can take care of all races; Malay and Indians should not feel marginalized. They want more aggressive stand; WP can't give confidence and stability with all races.

- WP not producing different views from PAP.

Who are the key opinion makers in society?
- Key opinion makers are Alex Ah, Alex Loh, The Online Citizen, Temasek Review Temasek Review Helped Worker's Party win. WP success comes from new media

What do you see for Opposition Parties in the future?
- A lot more 3 corner fights
- WP not key party in long run"- "Not seeing any"

Can you describe the other opposition parties?
SDP: Strong belief in certain things. See world different than electorate. Dr. Chee personally controversial because of behavior like the shouting incident. No foot soldiers like WP.

Can you describe NSA?
NSP: Strong exceptional personalities. Party needs to be inclusive to be successful. We attract young voters not older voters. Use to be part of SDA. Part of precondition for me to join the party was to leave alliance. It was a marriage of convenience. We should have started Indian Bureau. We were 1 election behind. NSP positioned ourselves to be strong on a non-divisive issue, Housing, but not as implicating. This would differentiate us from WP. NSP shares the decision-making process.

Can you tell me about yourself?
- PR consultant starting your own company.
- In 2006, Worker's Party leadership did not want to engage in new media on political issues. More risks new media but as a politician need to learn to manage crisis. Won't have strong candidates if groom in the greenhouse.

Describe your time at Worker's Party?
New candidates could not integrate with the old guard. Goh Meng Seng and other candidates struggled with leadership.

- Leader about managing resources and capital.
- NSP don't have a MP-No full time.
- Running a party not a part time job.

Recorded Skype Interview:

B: There are a couple points I wanted go over more detail. Can you talk about the underutilization or the role of racial communities or the non-Chinese oriented communities in rallying them up or mobilizing them up for opposition parties?

Are the racial NGO's for Malay or Indians underutilized?
I am not very sure what you are referring to by underutilized, but the situation in Singapore is like this in the past in the beginning of the year 2000 there was a SDA, Singapore Democratic Alliance, and this alliance form by four component parties, One of them is a Malay base party called PKMS. Basically a Malay party and historically a byproduct of Singapore's merger with Malaysia like Amno (Malay Party) with a branch in Singapore. So this branch was cut up from the Malay Amno. But not many Malays have confidence in this party so the SDA was a Chinese based party, like the PAP and NSP as well and one Indian party called the Singapore Justice Party and PKMS and they come together and relay on each other for candidates in GRC and this how they utilized this Indians and Malays during elections but apparently that does not work out very well. Because the quality of candidates provided by PKMS was not up to standard to even win or get to close to 40% of the general votes in the GRC. So if you are talking about the utilization of the Malays and Indians. I think in terms of the Malays the opposition has a problem in grooming these candidates and traditionally for Indians we have JBJ, who was an Indian himself and James Gomez, the Indians are more politically conscious. They actually on the own accord join WP or SDP to participate in general elections, but not Malays. Somehow the Malays are more conservative politically. So that is why when I went over to NSP, first thing I had to do was groom my Malay candidates. And that is how the Malay bureau came out. And people ask me why did I not have an Indian Bureau because generally speaking the Indians are more politically active, but in the ruling party and the opposition parties. That is how I actually maneuver the structure of the NSP to the structure of multiracial system instead of relying on PKMS for a Malay candidate.

So I do hope with the win in Alljurnied GRC more qualified Malays professionals will come forward.

How does the PAP hinder the opposition parties from gaining credibility and what are strategies for the opposition parties to gain credibility with the electorate? When JBJ started to win the seat the PAP used the factor of fear to prevent more people from participating in Opposition politics. I would say JBJ was practically crucified for his role in Anson. He was put in jail for something ridiculous. He was not reinstated as MP in Singapore. And after 1989 with the use of ISA against the Marxist bloc it backfired on the PAP so they changed their strategy and used bankruptcy in the 90's as a tool of deterrence to showcase fear to scare professionals like Dr. Chee's to whole the tie of these so called elites from entering opposition politics. That's what they are doing in the 80's and 90's. So the Malays, which are more, contented with their lives and of course and the elites of the Malay community would not want to join the Opposition. That is why the Opposition parties we are very lacking in Malay good candidates. But after 20001, I think things took a big change of direction because WP started to work up their system and branding and give confidence to the public. That's a way of gaining confidence and presenting a front that tells all aces especially the Malays that it is okay to participate in opposition politics. It is not a matter of credibility actually. It is a vicious cycle created by the PAP first to deter the talents of the those who are well educated form coming into Opposition politics and for ensuring no candidates join in the 80's and 90's. In fact, that did not actually prevent people from voting Opposition. In 1991, we have four opposition parties being elected as MP-3 from SDP and 1 from WP. The SDP side made a mistake they mismanaged the town council and had part infighting and that is on their own doing and undermine the political capital that they have gained in 1991 and up to now they have not been able to gain that level of confidence from the voters. Other parties are working quite hard to regroup and rebrand like WP and NSP and we are quite successful for the moment. We are staging a bridge-gate for winning the next election. However, the recent happenings in NSP and WP might actually consume some of the confidence built up in the last election they are not doing right well in managing their constituencies in the town council and WP MP's are not really performing up to expectations of the most high quality voters so I am not very sure what would be like in the next election. Hopefully we can continue the momentum built up in 2011. But I suspect that at most we are going to win just to GRC's in the next election instead of 1/3 of the seats.

How does a party regroup and rebrand?
There are two factors when a party regroups and rebrands. One is the human resources. You have to try to recruit electable people, at least have a degree, because in the Asian country like Singapore they are quite particular of having a degree as a basic entry for a politician. Managing the human resources in terms of having a core value. You go to us going with same mindset of doing groundwork- Timing, weekly walkabouts, selling our newspaper, and knocking doors of course. There are part of the human base of managing the human resource. To do

rebranding one must also redesign the paper that we have and the website and the content that we have. We actually have to beef up the contact that we have. These are our party organs for our party outreach. Must of the efforts come from our manifesto. Our manifesto has to be reviewed and our policies have to be reviewed as well. We took about four years since I joined NSP to do all this. Of course the job is not complete. But, more or less we were successful in bringing up the party profile from relatively unknown party to a national level. I think that helps in the last election. I was expecting the scholars Hazel to continue the work but apparently she doesn't have the time and quite disappointingly and all the past hard work has been left, but I hope Janet will increase all these respects especially recruitment and public engagement, in terms of press releases and policy stances. So this is very important things to be done in order to rebrand the party to somehow position the party in between the WP and SDP. The position initially with the reset was somewhere in between SDP and WP. We are not as aggressive in the human rights movement as SDP, but we do mention it and we took initiative to bring up policy matters to bring in various forms and participate in the national engagement for every budget and for every national day event. That is a strategy I put over in NSP before I left. So, I hope the new leadership in NSP will do that.

From your knowledge which parties do weekly walks?
WP. I have to give credit that they are quite consistent in that. Because Low Thia Kiang made it a point that every week there should be a political engagement on the ground as a party organ and that is actually very good. NSP use to do that under my time, but after I left they don't see it. But I think they will pick it up as the election is coming. But SDP did not have a consistency of political engagement on the ground. It depends on new media and new forms of policy papers and all of that which is fine though but in an Asian country you need to engage face to face on the ground. That's how Asians think and how the Asian mind works. If they see you on the ground they will give you credit. Although you may have not done much on the ground they will say you have put an effort in your political engagement. That is why SDP was not able to capitalize on the voting stream in the last election due to these types of activities.

Are there any external pressures from international organizations to coordinate campaigns, bolster the opposition as a whole, and support individual parties?
Well there is always been a rumor that SDP has help from NGO's in Europe or the US do their website designs and all of that but in Singapore perspective especially for Singaporeans they are very concern with external international help for political parties. And they formed a perception of distrust if a party is deemed to be influenced by external government like US or Europe. SO I don't think that is a way move. Unless you are a NGO that is taking over a movement of international human rights. People say that is fine because you're a human rights activist. But for a political party to engage in an international connection we have to be very careful here because Singapore voters might see foreign influence in

foreign politics. And PAP has rightfully capitalized on that accusing SDP of foreign influence.

Is the PAP strong and unified or fragmented?
I have just receive info that something is not very right in PAP. It is quite fragmented at this stage. Because when PAP starts losing votes anybody will accuse anybody for losing that votes. Many people have different views on how to gain trust of the voters. I mean all parties are factions even opposition parties no matter how small they are. But for the ruling party like the PAP to have a fraction that will be devastating not only for its own position but for the ruling position. Historically Singaporeans do not like seeing parties having infighting. That applies to SDP in the 1990s when they have an internal struggle and Chu See Juan left the party the PAP took seats. So that is quite a clear single that voters like to see a strong party. No matter its opposition party or ruling party to engage in Singapore politics and not a fragment one. That's why I have been very careful when I leave a party to not portray an image that the part is fragmented. We just leave quietly and amicably in good will instead of saying bad things about the party just left. That is what happened to SDP and we have learned our lesson, but PAP what have heard that the internal struggle us quite devastating at this stage. Different camps have been ostracizing each other in the GE 2011. Different camps have been ostracized by the main faction. We are actually anticipating a breakaway fragment leaving the PAP and maybe joining a new party or join WP or any other party to challenge the status quo. A smaller faction a marginal faction to leave PAP to join WP and join any other party to challenge the main faction controlled by the Lee family in the next election.

Are people telling you that from the PAP?
From all sources within PAP as well as on the grassroots. All are pointing to that direction. We might see something happen next year. WE might see an earthquake next year. I don't think any MP's from PAP will quit rather the second liners. Those factions with future leaders who don't see the prospect of being promoted or minister MP in the next election to challenge status quo.

Is the difficulty for Opposition Parties to gain credibility once they win a district or GRC?
Not really. Gaining confidence is not the problem, but to sustain it. To win a GRC is not hard, but what happens if you win. If you can provide the necessary management in the town council, play a good role in parliament as an opposition member. The problem is sustaining. In 1991, SDP won 3 seats while the WP won just 1. The problem is not winning but sustaining and from the historical fact of what you seen if you won and failed to perform as expected you might lose over the next two decades. So it might happen to the party but to the opposition platform as a whole if the present WP MP's they do not perform as expected. This is our fear that we have. What happens to them affects us. In Singapore, people are binary. It is either PAP or not PAP. They do not differentiate between the Opposition parties. So WP will affect the perception of all other parties.

Is the Opposition movement fragmented or unified?
It is fragmented. Because well in Singapore political parties are not driven by political ideologies. They are driven more by personalities, self-interest and not even policy views. The only unification idea is the PAP. But the question is if PAP falls, what next. They will be fragmented. They are not organized around a strong political ideology or key issues that they need to fight for. And that is the problem Singaporeans face when they want a united opposition to fight the PAP, which I do not think will work because if you are going to base on only PAP sentiment. Opposition parties will not go far. Because there will be no clear direction on how to manage the economy, the social workings of the nation. SO in this movement I do not think it is possible for Opposition parties to be united in that sense. There are a lot of historical bag gages of rivalries among opposition parties. WP will never work with SDP. For certain reasons. Conflict between the leaders will affect direction of two parties. But for NSP I think they have less political baggage. They tried to be in the alliance with SDA. They are open to work with other parties like WP and SDP. But what they lack is a strong political ideology to conceptualize to bring a strong leadership for the movement. So I do not see a possibility for a united from for opposition parties at the moment.

The Mole
Opposition Blog Writer
Date of Interview: 12/18/2013

Once the interviewee told he was a mole I stopped writing in my notebook. As soon as he left I wrote from memory.

Background:
- Financial Services
- Past President Financial Services Society
- Monthly column in mainstream media
- Alumnus of Raffles Institution
- American educated

Malaysia:
- Malayscankari has 3-4 million views a day.

Issues with the PAP:
- Biggest problem economic and social system.
- Government cash flow. They do not spend a cent on healthcare, housing and pensions
- No transparency where money is going.

Pensions –
- Highest Contribution rate 36%
- Lowest pension (social security) interest rate when the government's investments arms have done well.

There are investment arms of the government:
- Sovereign wealth (Temasek) fund grew annually 16% over the last 39 years.
- GRC (Another investment arm) grew annually 6% over the last 10 years.
- Monetary Authority Singapore (MAS).
- For two of the investment funds the public knows where the money is getting invested. In the GRC investment arm the public does not know.

Temasek Fund:
- No obligation or mandate
- No idea staff salaries

Singapore's Transparency
- Must rankings based on government data
- Government rigs it

Mole:

- "I am a mole… people send me files…whistleblowers send me files and say look at this."
- "How else can I analyze everything?"
- "1 year I was mentioned over 200 times in the media, radio station, newspapers… They gave me a radio station and a column.
- I travel all around the world and give lectures lauding Singapore's economic development and social politics for the government.
- "I became a rich and famous."
- "Government gave me side benefits."
- "PAP's incentivize to show how incompetent the opposition were. With me that show that one person smarter than all the opposition parties."

- Acquired government contacts through his relationship at raffles.
- Things will change when Lee Kwan Yew dies; ½ people in government upset, but nervous. For many their children are government employees.

- "I could never join the opposition. I would be dead."
- Opposition in shambles.
- Thought I would be able to help Singaporeans
- Many moles in society.

PAP has been Clamming down
- Breakfast club
- Blogger Alex AU held for contempt of court for his writings.
- Online Act

Sinipan Samydorai
President Think Centre
Date of Interview: 12/15/2013

I met him at Human Right's Day at Speaker's Corner.

Think Centre is registered as a society and examines political development, democracy, rule of law, human rights and civil society.

Partnership Civil Liberties
Samydorai comments that his organization promotes civil liberties in a non-political way. While those who identify with parties are on their email list serve and participate, Think Centre advocates and lobbies the government. The interests of political parties align in varying degrees with the NGO, but the NGO would be less effective if it partnered. Moreover, the NGO would not want their agenda dictated by political parties.

View on Worker's Party:
Understands why WP is not as aggressive promoting civil liberties and social justice. Publically prioritizing civil liberties and social justice will threaten their growing legitimacy. Samydorai believes they are doing similar things from different angles.

Syafrin Sarif
Member of National Solidarity Party, Malay Bureau
Date of Interview: 12/26/2013

What in life compelled you join alternative parties?

- The lack of Malay rights

"These parts of the world Malays are very mobile. Malay immigrants are all over the world. Very heterogeneous. Look like India, Chinese Pilipino. Malay is not a race but somehow history has pushed us together as one common entity called Malay. Malay-Pan Asia is America of the east. Malay is one of the lost tribes of Israel. Singapore is s protected. There are no volcanos, no national problems-its paradise. People don't die of starvation. Singapore and Malaysia are two different political entities, but two centuries ago they were all the same. My entry into politics was because as a teenager I always wondered about my identity in a Chinese dominated country. As a teenager I tried to find who am I. Stereotypes of Malay is stupid, lazy and inept. I don't fit into a stereotype. Your own race systematically sidelined and repressed. When I was younger I joined the SMNO-now PKMS (Malay arm) for 1 day. I decided to get out of it. I decided to join Malay youth literacy association and was there 10 years. Moved up and up of the organization. The government funded the organization. I was a good boy and helped develop my skills and contacts. In 2004 when PAP announced ministers I saw the 1 Malay thrown back to Environmental Minister-Rubbish. Regressed from previous ministry. I met the president and deputy president of PKMS and they asked for help. So I agreed. During 2006 election any Malay opposition figure that dares advocate for Malay rights would be silenced. My strategy is that I don't want to get killed so oppose normal issues (Not Malay Issues). The PAP's strategy was to go after Indian James Gomez… I was in wilderness because I said PKMS was infiltrated by PAP. Leaks from meetings-as with any other opposition party. GMS met up with me in 2010 for 4 months I ignored him until he presented to me that NSP wanted to start up a Malay bureau. Not about me getting a MP seat but how can I be a tool to help my race. Its suicide for any party to play the race card. PAP will come down hard on you. PAP have Malay Affairs Bureau so I don't see why any other party will need a Malay Bureau. Every other party used PKMS party for Malay candidates. Some PKMS defected to WP. I was prepared to get smeared.

In the NSP Malay Bureau there are six in the counsel. Three are Malays.

Aspiration for Singapore
"I want this place to be a wonderful place for people around the world to live together. This is the place where multitudes will congregate. When we were 3.5 million people Malays were happy. We were taken care of. LKY was good in early stages. PAP gone wayward. In 1979, public schools were for all 3 races. Now there are specially assisted schools just for Chinese-elite-. This and for everybody to share".

Please Describe NSP's Organizational Strength:
We are strengthening the party. We are cleaning out and keeping scholars. Old RP gone except Jeanette.

-Party is not just quite homogenous. You have factions: Old guards, young punk, Malay Bureau, Reform Party. Jeanette is given the trust.

What does Goh Meng Seng leaving indicate?
NSP is an Organic party.

Is NSP a personality base opposition party?
NSP is not that personality base until Nicole Seah. Political party needs leader. Any party that does not have strong personalities will die. Party brand needs personality. GMS built brand and he was willing for others to develop that brand.

Doing non-electorate season is NSP active?
Never before has opposition party been active in non-elections. We went to markets to appeal to electorate every Sunday morning. House visits. No geographic location. Once per month there was an open house. There was also periodic discussion on political reform with the public.

GRC's and Wards contest in the next election?
4 GRC's and 4 wards. Around the same as last election.

Why was there not an opposition bloc in 2011?
Personalities and egos. Everyone wants to be the man.

Necessary for Opposition coalesce to take over the government?
No coalition of convenience. Must maintain conviction.

Competitor?
Worker's Party in a way.

More Fragmented or Unified
Why should we be united? In Malaysia they are all going to kill each other. I don't think it will work out. Hitler was part of an uncomfortable coalition.

What are your thoughts on the Hijab Issue?
At first I wanted to not get involved with this nonsense. But when Worker's Party published a non-statement I had to lobby. We published 4 drafts. We should give Muslims freedom to where the scarf.

Is there a typical NSP parliament candidate?
Is there such a thing. One who is willing to engage PAP on policies? Not to oppose for sake of opposing.

Was there a vetting process leading up to the 2011 general election?
There wasn't. There should be. WP is very strict and it is a strength.

What can opposition parties do to get from 40.1 to 50%?
How we address the fear. People scared. Still scared of human voting.

What is the most contentious issue?
Cost of living.

There are some PAP members feeling out NSP.

As Singaporean we gave up our comfort to make this country work. We didn't divide to become a national identity. Until recently with the influx of foreigners, the social fabric disrupted.

Siew Kum Hong
Ex-Nominated Member of Parliament, Vice President of MAURAH
Date of Interview: 12/26/2013

What prompted you speak against PAP?
- Inequity I see in society.
- Compared to other NMP's I was more open and more candid.
- Most NMPS come from establishment background. I didn't come from that background.
- I was a Public consciousness, writing commentary for the newspaper. 1 or 2 letters to the editor a week. When I write in Singapore press have to write in a certain way.
- I wasn't afraid to burn bridges.
- Spoke to Bramea Mathi and her advice was that her biggest regret was not doing anything during the first term.

Can you describe the political climate?
- The party that values strong civil liberties is SDP.
- Don't agree with their tactics.
- They don't stand for anything ideologically.
- I seek to occupy middle ground.

Describe the 2011 Election Strategies
WP
- Position in the center and not PAP.
- Positioned middle ground-any policy proposed was very centrist.
- Failed comment on Minister's strategies.
- Not meaningfully different.
- Appeal to most Singaporeans.
SDP:
- Leading up to 2011 election they moved closer to the center and was presented as less threatening.
- Could have done better with less historical baggage.
- Centrist Candidates failed.

SPP
- Personality driven.
- Known as Chum's party.
- Limited them from being politically meaningful.

RP
- Leadership problem.
- Kenneth was very active but squandered JBJ's name.
- Not credible option seen as Anti-PAP vote.

NSP

- Historically "Business owners."
- Very ethnic Chinese. Rich Chinese businessman meaningfully fund parties.
- Moved away from Strong Ethnic Chinese.
- Brought Hazel Poa when Goh Meng Seng stepped down.
- Have many government scholars that are talented candidates.
- Nicole Seah's very public meltdown harmed the party.
- She worked at digital advertising firm.
- First social media star.
- Speaks clearly
- Connect emotionally with voters.
- Very effectively deflect hard questions. Has EQ.
- Knows her limitations.
- Demonstrating maturity.
- Policy Base Campaign

Do you have a political future?

- Electoral politics requires more compromises that I want.

Please describe the funding capacity and organizational strength for each party?

NSP

- Great funding.

SDP

- Surprisingly good funding. Allegedly collect wealthy donations from businessman. Party with best merchandise.

WP

- Great organization.
- Some % from elected allowance (MP earn 15,000 a month-PAP's allowance 50% of payment)
- More MP's in parliament.
- Lots of donations.

SPP

- Poorly organized-Chiams
- No institutional leadership
- Does not campaign too much
- Ben Pwee left, an ex-government scholar

RP

- Kenneth has a lot of money-
- Use to work at a hedge fund in London

What explains the durability PAP in the present climate?

- Control of the press

- Good job improving people's lives
- Opportunities existed for the opposition to gain supporters because PAP did not get ahead of anticipating problems
- Unhappiness in transportation, housing-True bread and better issues
- Bread and butter is the core of political success

Was 2011 a watershed event?
- Size of the swing is meaningful
- Told everyone that PAP can lose a GRC
- Lost sitting Minister and possible Prime Minister

Why has the Opposition parties not coalesced?
- Personality" based besides WP and SDP.
- A lot of it is ego.
- WP has succeeded to a degree at maintaining party discipline showing external unity. LTK is the clear leader. WP is so clearly ahead that they wouldn't want to coalesce.
- SDP, which is pretty disciplined and there is alignment in their views is generally open for coalescing but no one wants to work with them

How can the opposition parties move from 40% - 50%?
- Need a lot of structural factors in favor. PAP has a significant supporter base. PAP needs to fail at improving things.

What can the Opposition can do if opportunity arises?
- Improve candidates
- Sustain momentum
- Opposition parties are usually invisible between elections. Only SDP does stuff. Hardly hear about much of the rest.

What is the town council jurisdiction?
- Provide basic services to HDB flats.
- Have no responsibility towards those who live in private houses.
- Must provide cleaning service and garbage services.
- There is a community fund, which is controlled by an advisor selected from within PAP. Way in which PAP hurts Opposition parties
- HDP upgrading is at the precinct level each party has a voting agent at the district to oversee the counting of the ballots. The order in which HDP flats are upgraded seemed to be affected by if the district voted for the PAP.

WP is clear # 2.

What is the biggest wedge issue?
- General immigration.
- No articulation.

- More than white collar.

What is your perspective of civil society and NGO's working with opposition parties?
- Careful working with parties.
- If work with Opposition. May be branded as political and that has consequences.
- Opposition parties are keen publically collaborating.

Is greater collaboration important?
- Malaysia Civil Society worked very close together more aligned.
- Singapore not like that.
- NSP secretary general open to working with Civil Society.
- Difference in Malaysia there is clear opposition parties based on 3 groups.

Has SDP's aggressive tactics not forced government to respond?
- Civil liberties don't get much response.
- There has been no huge progress on bread and butter issues.
- Safety nets increasing.

Why does International Community neglect Singapore government situation?
- Different scale of human rights incidents.
- Tough galvanize in a meaningful way.
- No emotive images.

Bliver Singh
Professor Political Science, National University of Singapore
Date of Interview: 12/17/2013

- Teaching 35 years

Comments while Ranking:

In regards to the degree the WP is implicating the PAP as immoral:
- "WP… is much more decent"

Definition of social justice while commenting on WP -"Looking in terms of poverty uplifttment, basic needs for citizens, income inequalities. Greater access to all types of facilities for all types of citizens. Democracy and liberties may have to be sacrificed [by WP] for justice.

- Even SDA and SPA and RP talk about unity in order to become electorally effective, which is different than what each represent.
- "SDA is going to be highly irrelevant in the time to come. In the next elections they will disappear. Chum (SPP) lost deposit in last by election'"

Commenting on NSP's prioritization of Civil Liberties, Liberalization and Social Justice:
- "This is the important party."
- "NSP party of the young, seen as credible. People think they're sincere. People view them as honest brokers. They are going to get something in the next election."

What is the most important factor that the electorate needs to see in a party?
- "How bad is the other side? How bad is the PAP? How credible are the opposition candidates."
-
How do you measure credible
- Very subjective. You can say opposition team A. We are going to see a lot of team A's in the next election because the PAP is shaken and made a strategic error not getting good people in. They are getting all the stupid scholars and guys that are generals. They can't connect with citizens. They are looking for something new. The younger generation - They are not going to stand for that type of stuff like my family did.
-
What do you see as the difference between the WP and NSP?
- "People look at NSP as a party that will go into parliament and make some noise, probably championing some of my needs. People look at WP as a potential government. If the PAP continue to bungle the next alternative we are looking at is WP led alone or by coalition.

Straight Interview:

Which parties have the organizational structure to be the government?
Only 1 WP. No one else
How do you see NSP's organizational structure?
Coming up at the moment they are a personality base party. Few individuals are able to connect. Nicole Seah moving backwards I think they lost one. She's retiring and has personal problems. This is the problem with opposition they are personality base. WP use to be that but they transformed themselves as a mass party. They have a lot of individuals, counting the number of individuals in the party it is just amazing. You just met with Gerald Giam, honest, sincere. Have you seen his book? People can say he's just like me. I trust him. Even if you may not know him. This is the younger generation which has it good. Singaporeans have it too good, which is affecting their judgment. I think they are going to cry very soon. I think the opposition doesn't have it. They don't have it yet. They are very good at throwing stones at glass houses. The houses will crack and collapse. The PAP is still the best party. I hope when the old man goes that they really revamp themselves. I see them revamping. Is it fast enough is it good enough that is one dimension. If they don't change than they are in trouble because the people will reject them, but not reject them like overthrow them now. Not yet. They are going to lose big in the next election. They are going to still have total majority and lose 20-30 seats.

Has the PAP responded to the needs people recently and how have they done that?
Yes. First the social media. They have come to the stage where they realize like two things. They have been in power over 50 years that the leader is important, trying to show their golden leaders connected with the crowd. And they have some very good leaders. I'll give you an example. I teach a module on government politics of Singapore. I organized a full day affair and two ministers came. One was the education minister and one was the minister of law. And two civil servants came. One member of parliament came. A month ago, the minister of law and foreign affairs came and lectured the students. This is the new PAP. It was never like that in the past. To get a bloody member of parliament it was like I was talking to god. They are reaching out. There outreach is very, very good.

This place (NUS) is a barometer and I was surprised when I talked to my young people. They were very, very positive

What about freedom and liberalization?
"It is very Western. It is not beating [important] here. There is a small category of 10, maximum 20 % who wish we had a bloody democracy. But for the majority of the citizens this is not the issue. The issue is basic need, housing, transportation. They are looking for the smaller man. Life has become very tough for Singaporeans. Singapore has become very unaffordable. Life is tough for us. I

have two kids. I spent ½ million dollars on his education abroad, but it's an investment.

Is there a pact between the PAP and the population in which the population does not prioritize civil liberties as long as the PAP does not surprise them with repressive acts and allows them to focus on basic needs? Is this a common understanding?

This is one aspect of the psychological compact, but there is another thing. Over the last 10/15 years, for ordinary Singaporeans right up to the middle class, whatever they take back home we use to have a comfort zone. That has disappeared. My son has been married for 3 years and he does not even have a house yet. He's camped out with me. Two issues are scarcity and affordability. This is where the PAP has bungled and this is where WP has been able to pick on them. All the private estate went for the opposition.

Would you ever be a candidate?

Partly because I am a scholar. I am able to talk the way I am. They are dying for me. I speak seven languages. I'm serious public critic. I can stand up and shake hands with the opposition and shake hands with the other side. I don't want to lose that goal in my life. The moment I join one or the other I lose it. You lose something very precious in the country. I have achieved everything.

In terms of the six parties which ones are more personality base the ability to actually campaign and becoming stronger?

All of them were weak and personality driven. In general, starting something in 2006, they found that the ground was sour. Parties were coming together, starting to set up alliances. Something happened in Singapore by 2011. A lot of youngsters actually were so sick and tired of the government. People no longer fearful of anything. People were asking how much worse can things get. People were having trouble economically, so we something shift. The single factor in this shift was the sense that feeling betrayed by the government in regards to where the foreigners are concerned. Not just white collar. We don't see them, but when they started to employ hoards of lower, middle lower, and middle level foreign workers. They are in hawkers, our theaters, our busses, our taxies, our hospitals. What the hell. Brought together everyone together.

Why did we see in 2006 and 2011 the opposition parties coordinating where they are contesting seats?

Most of them are week. The strongest is the WP. People also felt that the WP is the front of the train. Engine of the train starting to pull by the fact they brought so many good people in the WP and not anywhere else. WP able to keep the integrity of who we are and what we stand for everyone asking why don't you idiots get together. The notion comes together and it was just one guy Soon Chee, which created a lot of credibility problems for him. Some people think he is sick in the mind and some people think he is a spoiler for the government.

Do you see in 2016 any opposition coalescing?
I see an electoral pact and we share where we are going to fight. The common enemy is the PAP.

Party contested more wards?
I think the WP is going to contest in most seats because they have so many candidates in the party. A lot many but they are not revealing it. They have the numbers. They will have more than 100 seats contested. The electoral boundaries will be expanded, big electoral boundary change, partly because the dynamics of housing, Punggol will become its own GRC. 10,000 units are being built there, so that's 30-40 thousand people and the PAP is going to gerrymander. The WP is going to focus on the both East. This is where they are dominant.
Why won't the WP coalesce with the other parties?
The WP is the strongest party. It already coalesced with other parties and the last labor party to join it was the last communist party of Singapore.

As long as we have personality base personalities which are most parties in Singapore that will be the issue because they are all created on that basis. They are all prim Donnas while the WP has finally outgrown that. If Chee Juan finally loses his position and join the WP, but I see something else happening. The old mode of political contestation in Singapore. It's going to be an electoral pact of a broad coalition of each maintaining their own identity, each agreeing on a common enemy…and agree not to contest each other. That's the furthest I see at the moment.

Who do you see as WP biggest competition?
Nobody. Nobody has the same organizational strength.

Is resource sharing a non-incentive?
Part of the reason is sharing resources, but most importantly is why we want to resource share. To achieve the big objective and not to kill each other at the other guy.

What mechanisms government implemented to hurt and make it difficult for opposition parties to attract candidates?
Since 2006 and especially in 2010 the cabinet has been very liberal in allowing the opposition to use all sorts of things to and this is where the opposition has made strides. The PAP controls the mainstream and nobody reads the mainstream media. Everyone goes to the blogs. The liberalization advantaged the opposition and disadvantaged the PAP. Same thing happening in Malaysia.

What happened in Malaysia?
Liberalization and nobody reads the mainstream media and everybody focuses on what's going on the opposition.

Can you turn back the clocks I know of the new blog policy?

That's the most they can tighten and I think they went more at all these sights because they were becoming very effective. But to me, the most important in regards to candidates, many are going to the PAP. The PAP is still getting the best and the brightest. Party because of the network. Party in the way they get the scholars the business connections. At the end of the day, look at parliamentary power the opposition has only 7% .the moment you join the opposition if you are the mainstream guy…other than looking for the private sector this place can hurt you. The risks are still there. They are becoming less. My main concern is not the opposition I am watching if the PAP is going to split within. The biggest opposition is not the opposition but the PAP itself. Since 1955 when the PAP first started its biggest opponent is its own shadow.

You saw what happened in the Presidential election. I am watching those things. I give them respect, but I don't think the PAP is going to be a failed party in which these parties can displace them. I think it's going to be something else, which is much more significant until that significant moment takes place. You'll see these guys operating. They are not going to be able to crack unless something happens. The PAP is very, very smart. They are a survivalist party. They can be bastards. They can be godly. The old man is going to go the son is hanging on. The changes that take place immediately after that the next election is the watershed election because that's the election there will be no Lee Kuan Yew it will be the last one of Lee Hsein Yang. You won't see Goh Chok Tong. The next election will produce the next prime minister.

"The scenario I see 2016 there is an election and by 2018 he will resign and a new prime minister will be selected…"

Is it safe to say WP is in a class of its own?
Definitely…

Has the WP strategy changed before the 2011 election and after?
In 2006, I could already see them operating, but there was a quantum leap in their strategy. One was the tsunami of foreigners. Two, there was this awesome recruit of great leaders. I think they recruited some people knock on the door and others they recruit and many guys they join the party serve the ground. They don't mind helping because it's a calling and over time after a while people are like why not? This was the case for the case in Hougang. Do you see?

The new WP youth wing as important?
Hard to tell. SDP youth wing is interesting. NSP is quite active. The recruitment level is a higher level than that. In the PAP the youth wing is not critical. The key recruitment is the middle class and the older guys above who don't qualify.

As long as they are able to get credible candidates, as long as they are able to preserve this wonderful campaign strategy which no one has in Singapore. I don't

know what the strategy but they are a roller coaster on the ground. The only thing which reminds me of that is what the communist use to do.

IS WP's soft stance on controversial issues a strength?
Not true. Just on the Malay issue they did not have a strong position. The PAP picked the issue on the Hijab and they said you decide on foreigners they have a policy. They were the first on to come out with a paper countering the white paper. How can you say they have no policies? I don't buy whatever the PAP says…

Is their softer alternative approach a strength?
If you understand Singapore's political culture, they (WP) have benefited materially from the PAP. Singaporeans have done well, beautiful country and safe even with the riot. Very peaceful compared to India. Land problem too. Someone takes my land and I have to defend it. What the heck. Here you don't dare too very legal very clear. Because of that Singaporeans do not like someone who says let me overthrow the government. They want incremental change. That's why Chee Soon Juan is a madman so WP different. They call them soft to me it is very sophisticated. They understand the psyche

Do you see the Opposition as unified or fragmented?
Very fragmented. The key difference is Chee and others. Look they are all united in bringing the PAP down, but beyond that there strategies the way they work. You shouldn't be comparing apples to oranges. Why? Here you got a mass party like the WP. It's a phenomenon in Singapore politics today. How many MP's in parliament, in the past the opposition guy not even smile and walk away. Today you'll see them say "how are you sir?" And we sit down and have a chat. There was just a book out on operation Coldstone and Low Thia Khiang was there. There were 500 cameras or more. Everyone is looking at everyone sitting there. I had my son there and said, "How are you sir"? The guy in the back asked me if I was standing as a WP candidate. I was like, "Oh my god. There has been a change. I would not do that to the SDP guys. If I see Chee Soon Juan we don't even talk because we were colleagues here.

Is that a personal thing?
Not personal. He wanted me to destroy the PAP. I am an academic dammit. I am a scholar. If something is good I say its good and if something is bad I say it's bad. Why should I destroy anything? Because it started like that. So I and he have a very personal war going on, but the rest of them are wonderful

What do you view Opposition Party's relationship with civic society?
Hard to say exact relationship because there are two levels for relationship. One is formal. What you see in public. You see a lot of it, but the more significant one is the personal level relationships and that's what we don't see and I think that is the key. What is Braemor's relationship with Chee Soon Juan?

Do you see the civic activists pushing from a different direction?
I see them as pushing for bigger space which is the same as parties as of now the parties are fighting for power which the civic groups are not I don't know if we are going to see what happened in Malaysia.

What happened in Malaysia?
I don't know anything about what happened in Malaysia? Then you are in a very difficult situation accessing what happened in Singapore. What happens there occurs here. They started here this is our space our territory and started fighting for issues for bigger space, like democracy, like corruption. Eventually many of them joined the opposition because they were running blogs, very effective blogs. People stopped reading the mainstream media and started going for social media. All the social media chieftains are now today in the opposition.

Do you see Singapore opposition movements as an anomaly? Do they fit any theory?
If it can happen in Malaysia it can happen here…if it can go on there it can go on here…that's why in the 2008 election when the governing party lost its 2/3 majority and 3 years later the government here got hit…the last election this year in may…the Malaysia ruling party got 60% of the parliamentary vote but only got 46% of the popular vote…the public through their support to the opposition but because of gerrymandering and the Malaysia system the ruling party remained in power. I think you're going to see the wards for the opposition increase, but how much this increase translates into seats that's another question.

Are there underlying factors that have pushed Malays to have more significant blocs?
They are much more fearer. I mean Malaysia is a much more democratic party than Singapore, always been, more space

Is their more political risk in Singapore?
I think they are opening up except lately over the last 6 months. They have tried to tighten things up, but it's not working. The moment you tighten the space here. I go somewhere else and you can't stop me. Some of the nastiest sites are not based in Singapore. They are all over seas. So, how can you stop it? This is a way you cannot win. As soon as you tighten it there is a backlash.

So Malaysia opened up earlier?
Absolutely. I think in regards to Malaysia they are way ahead of us. They started so much earlier. They got their independence much earlier in the case of Malaysia. They had a vibrant democracy all the while. In our case, we started having some sense of democracy. Only in the 90's.

Were there parties less personality base earlier?
Definitely. There parties are actually more communal base, race oriented. So, it didn't matter who was the leader. If it was a great leader it would increase a lot

but the Malay for the Malay parties and the Chinese for the Chinese parties, so the motes operando is different. But Singapore that came from Malaysia and had most of our relatives there. It's okay this can go on Malaysia and be okay. So why not here? The argument is that it will destabilize us and lose power is crap and zoom. So, people find it's doable. There is a knockdown factor. How big remains to be seen. But one for the reasons the government became so open after 2001 was partly because on the knock they got. But they got even more open now.

Was it gradual or was it pushed from some exogenous factor?
I think it was the bungling of the government and greater organization by the opposition. In Malaysia, we have an opposition which one represents the Chinese group, one which represents the Islamist group and one midway and they all form pack. The unthinkable of the unthinkable occurred in Malaysia. A pack to fight the government.

Why hasn't that happened in Singapore?
If everything is equal, the chances of a pack are stronger here then there. There they have a communal base structure here. We don't have one. Ideology religious base there. Despite the fact that they have differences there.

Is that because the parties are so different it is easy for them to come together compared to hear where the parties are closer?
Partly nearer, but I think they realized that the only way to get rid of them was to get to a pact. And stop fighting each other. They fought each other in some places, but on the whole people thought it was time. It is also a coalition government…

Remarking on your quote that SDP's proposal to partner up with a candidate in the by election:
They were trying to talk let's get together. It was all types of personal bargaining and then they said go to hell with you. The WP told them to go to hell and then the SDP came back and the WP says we don't need you.

Why do you think the WP was not interested initially?
Because the WP is in a much stronger position. Because that place is WP territory. This is where we were operating all the while. Who are you to tell me to put this condition and you have no say here. So, we were working here for so long and not surprisingly she won and it is not surprising that she won and did so well. That constituency is surrounded by WP and you from outside who never ever competed from there and offer.

Offline: "and this is why some believe Chee Soon Juan is a Mole."

"Kiss of death for SDP"

B: The difficulty of attracting candidates.

But it is changing for some parties. It is getting easier. I mean my colleague downstairs just joined the WP. An academic. They are trying to get me. They succeeded with him downstairs. He is already on the central executive committee. He campaigned for the girl who won in Punggol and he won for her and there are a couple more academics.

"The more you coalesce the more you share. The more bang for the buck."
B: No reason to coalesce unless there is an equal.
Exactly. Exactly.

"We have got the PAP, which is premier league football. We got division 1, which is WP and all these guys are division 2 and division 3. We are talking about the coalition here and we are talking about the difficulties. I also see now a lot of difficulties in all these parties in SDP Vincent just left. In NSP Nicole is probably going to leave. In RP a mass resignation. SPP Chum SDA. They are all having problems. I got the feeling that some of the young are going to join the WP if they are credible. I would be the last man surprise if Nicole Seah joined the WP, She's just 26 year old and she is brilliant."

Is she brilliant?
She's brilliant. If she stands and Nicole Seah joins WP and WP contests in Marine Parade, you bet my last dollar that GRC belongs to WP. This is the former Prime Minister's GRC. As long as she is not too ambitious. She did not want to be Undersecretary General because of personal problems.

Do you see Goh Meng Seng coming back to politics?
Hard to tell? Does he have weight with the electorate? Not really. He has to be part of a team and WP won't take him. They don't trust him.

Do you see Singapore as a very different model regarding democratization?
I very much think so. I think our model at the moment I don't see a model. I don't see us fit any model that exists, part of the government is that we have a government that is so rich.

So it's not just the people it is the government?
This is one of the richest governments in the world, which uses its resources to buy its way in a very gentle way.

Does that affect the opposition?
Why should I vote for opposition if I get whatever I want. I mean Singaporeans are every pragmatic people. Don't you forget we are all form immigrant beast. We all came from somewhere, that dimension and because we are so small, the sense of vulnerability remains very intense. And I think the government creates this vulnerability look we are so overcrowded now. Was it deliberately done? I think so.

You think the PAP has deliberately created that issues, like overcrowded?
Everything. Overcrowded. Price of living because then they are in position to solve it. So right now we have a cost of living problem. Okay, I'll give you more welfare. Wow hoorah. You got not houses. I'll rush to my housing program in two years' time every Singaporean person who is eligible will get a house.

Militarily is really strong for the size and foreign relations is very important for a government. How can they build credibility in dealing with that side of issues? Difficult.

Is that something they think about?
Yes. Whenever we have a crisis with our neighbors, which is non-stop, the opposition does not exist at all.

So what was the latest international issue?
The only time I heard the opposition doing something was when the Myanmar leader get arrested and this guy was criticized in Singapore.

What issues affect Singapore?
South China Sea. The government is in such a strong position and credible position. You hardly hear of foreign policy positions coming from the opposition. It is coming in now. I think the WP now talks about non-alignment and this is one of the problems. It is good to bring them in to make some noise, but not to run the country, but they are not ready yet to run the country. Even the WP is not ready. I think WP is going to increase their numbers, but it's going to take its time. It requires a bungling of the PAP. You come back to me 10 years from today we will still be talking about things like this. The PAP are cautious people. After the last election I think the population will get more conservative. What if the 40% of the vote turned into 40% of the seats? I think there will be a push back, but WP will do better. PAP are going to lose where WP is credible and the other parties are going to be wiped out besides the NSP.

Why don't you think NSP will be wiped out?
Because it is the next most credible party. People are like it's okay. I dare to trust my future with these guys because they are ok, but the rest well, I suppose the rest is gut feeling. Again, Singaporeans are very conservative politically and generally. When you see those in Clarke Quay and all that. That's the yuppie for the youngsters that's not Singapore.

But is that where Singapore's moving with increase wealth and increase international exposure?
Somewhat. Somewhat. It's a game changer 10 years down the road who knows, but today not yet. They are not the majority of voters. The Clarke Quay generation is here and when they are here fine and once they graduate and work they are not what you think they are anymore. Things change. You see the pink collar hair and that is the Singapore system with more and more Chinese and

Indians imported into the culture. The conservatism more stronger than ever. Indians become more in-looking. The Chinese more in looking. The Muslims more in looking. There are more festivals today being celebrated than ever before. Unbelievably. I never knew of so many Indian festivals and the government promotes religiosity and spirituality.

What were the main obstacles in forming an opposition bloc and going forward? First off there are very clear differences between the two parties. Personalities will never jell. The number 3, WP says why should I join you? By joining you it's a liability and not an asset.

The most similar countries or more different in terms of how Opposition parties behave?
It's a question that's difficult to answer. We only look at Malaysia. No other country. We don't look at Indonesia. We don't look at Thailand. To me even though Malaysia so different, they have a king and Muslim majority, Chinese massive numbers, we still believe anything happen there can happen here. It's hard to find a comparison, partly because we never compare ourselves to anyone.

Is there one socio-economically?
We always look at Switzerland and Israel. These are the only two countries. We look at Israel for defense. We look at Switzerland for economic development. We never look at them for similar political similarities. That's why I said it is so difficult to answer. Countries for selective reasons not for general antics. That's why we always play this game that we are exceptional. The ideology of exceptionalism drives us beyond meritocracy. That we are different and because we are different we have to be super; but meritocracy is that you use a system that best and the brightest going up. But today we are changing that notion. It's not just EQ and IQ. It's everything, SQ Survival Quotient. Meritocracy today. At the end of the day, what do you want to achieve? At the end of the day, we have to be very different. We cannot be like them. The Israelis can still fall back. If they fall. America will be there to pick their pieces. The Swiss can still fall back there will be someone to pick the pieces. We have no one. This is what drives us and is very deeply ingrained and strong and we all believe. All Singaporeans believe it. That's why we behave in a particular faction. The bloody Indians rioting what the hell. We all collect and say no more. Hit them hard. When the Chinese bus drivers went on strike. Hammer them bastards. That was the thing-wack them. That's our country and you'll say hey democracy human rights right to protest but we will say no you go back home to strike. Don't come here and disturb our livelihood! We have that. Maybe we have been too comfortable, but maybe things are still relatively okay for all of us and at the moment if I am jobless tomorrow I can take my identity card and go to my MP and go to them. I have a home. I have to pay my utilities. I have to pay for my mother and four kids. I am jobless. "Can you help?" "Okay. Go to the CDC, the council for development. Go there. I think he deserves $1,500 for first three months and in the meantime get a bloody job." They hunt for you. You don't pay utility. You don't pay school fees. You don't

pay anything during the interim. This is the republic of Singapore and you don't know that but that's the power of the PAP and it's amazing. I don't know how it works.

Jon Tan
Vice Chairman of Singapore Democratic Party
Date of Interview: 12/17/2013

What are you aspirations from Singapore?
This age and time I would be pretty happy with Singapore becoming a true democracy. The rest will have to fall in place. And people will have to find their own way after that.

What's your definition of a True Democracy?
Pretty much what we see in Europe and Scandinavian countries the form of democracy that I respect the most. Even if we couldn't reach that stage something like the UK or US will be good too. Even though I see a lot more flaws there. Checks and Balance is the most important thing.

What do you see as your Party's role in achieving that?
We are working towards that. We are taking every little approach and taking any little democratic space we might have. Albeit, it may be extremely small and little here. To do our best to get a foothold into parliament and of course and we hope to n replace the ruling party currently. It is only when we take over will we be able to reform our system. I think in Singapore contrary to what a lot of people think and see me and my party we believe that Singapore need a systematic reform and not just changing a policy and tweaking. Kind of like writing an entire bill of rights all over again and then making sure that there machineries will ensure the longevity and enforcement of that constitution.

What type of systematic reform?
The entire system. Where do I start? Perhaps the constitution the bill of rights in the American lingo. See the British do not have a constitution themselves but they have a long tradition of going by certain conventions which is accepted and when a party violates them there is real implicating. Like they can lose the next election. And on a different level they have a fiercely independent judiciary. Again, the judiciary government by lots of common laws and more and more are being codified. Problem with that they have had colonized Singapore in the past and before they gave us independence they wrote for us a constitution which is very good and fairly democratic honoring freedom of the individual, rights to vote, right to free speech, assembly right to association all the good stuff like US and bill of rights. But problem is Singapore being taken over by LKY whose party then wanted to be the sole party of Singapore so they put in place a lot of oppressive and suppressive clauses controlling clauses into the constitution. For example Article 14.1 in the constitution guarantees the right of every Singapore citizen the right to freedom of expression, speech assembly, a fundamental right. You can see in US bill of rights and UN declaration human rights. But here in Singapore they inserted a second close notwithstanding the first clause parliament will have the power to modify that when it comes to internal security. So now,

with that they use that a lot. And they use that to suppress the Opposition-political opposition. By putting political opposition in prison without a trial just in the name of internal security. What type of threat are we to the country during the days of communist trap. They will label opposition communist. With that label they can run wild with that. So any organization that is labeled communist or procommunist can be questioned without a trial. Let me ask you-who is the longest serving political prisoner in the world. Well? Must people say Nelson Mandela historically? Even Singaporeans give me the same answer. It's a Singaporean named Dr. Chia Thye Poh who served 32 years, five years more than Mandela. Yet no one knows about that. And nobody cares about that. Because people are playing there are very well. Ex-pats come here and say this is an economically viable country and it is great. In psychology, we have something called a hallowing affect. When someone is good at something you think that they are good at many things and you can become a fan of that. If you see this country doing well economically and you think everything's well. But it's not. America, personally I think, they love Singapore because of two main reason I guess 2. Because of Security in the region. Because America has been etched out of a lot of traditional allies like the Philippines, with Japan is also making some noise about the military bases and Singapore has welcomed Americans with open arms. We have even built two piers to repair the American ships, not just commercial ships but military ships. There are rumors that America has some of the missiles built here. But that cannot be verified and no one can tell. Usually this government is very quick to deny things. But if they are silence about it, you can usually read between the lines.

In the 2011 election what was your party's goal?
To get into parliament because without that there is not much one can do. And the government of the day makes sure you can't do anything and that you can't get into parliament.

How many wards were contested? We had 11 out of 89 or 87.

What do you think the affect would be if you are in parliament?
People in my party are very vocal. Kind of like me. We willing to take risks. We are willing to bear consequences. So they're very afraid of us. In fact we hear form some reporter, who interviews us and stuff like that and reporter usually active during elections time. If you look at the newspaper from mainstream media news about my party only trickles. And some of these newspaper reporters confided with us under promise of anonymity that my party is being identified as the party that they will be watching. The big brothers are watching. And they should not write things that are overly positive.

Commenting on Political Map:
"WP was not led by that before"

- In jail many times

- Speaker's Corner exists because of my colleagues SDP
- Party moved away from civil disobedience (90's) shifting tactic because a lot of parties are coming up.
- Before no space for civil liberties,

Relationship SDP Civic Groups
- Prior to this wave of activism there were no lines. No other civic group in 2011.
- Now, TWI@-Trans worker Immigrant Works
- Pinkdot gay rights
- Transnational workers
- Friends said that civil disobedience not for SDP-we recognized that, but couldn't take the advice, now we can.

Is activism a feasible strategy get into politics?
 No, Need take that risk
If not, no political space

Not same goal different strategy WP –SDP
- Under JBJ different when LTK kicked JBJ out WP timid
Low Thia Khiang happy co-driver
Wants to play second fiddle
Believes just need checks and balance.

SDP sees PAP as the source of lack of democracy, political freedom, civil liberty, and Gini index.

Why did SDP coordinate with other parties?
If you been to one our meetings you would call it horse-trading and not coordinating. Everyone wants this amount of space in these amount of constituencies. So, there is a lot of trading and hard negotiating. The only reason why it works because everyone seems to agree that if we have a 3 corner fight then the PAP will benefit from that and we don't want that to happen. That's why this horse trading thing occurs even though it's not a friendly occasion works to an extent.

Why didn't you coalesce with other parties during the 2011 election?
We desired too actually. The SDP has initiated many times with all the parties in the opposition for years. At least once a year we would have a forum and name it Opposition unity, but nobody showed. Well usually one or two other parties showed. PKMS-they are still around but they do not contest on their own. And sometimes we would see people from NSP showing up and that is pretty much it. And the NSP is very rare and it is not officially. People come on the unofficial capacity. And for years we were doing that, but not body showed.

Why do you think no one showed?

Because they fear getting near SDP. They know big a brother is not pleased with SDP and they know that they already hammered SDP viciously cruelly and probably not spare anyone who comes near us. And I think that is why people are afraid.

Do you foresee it likely that the opposition parties would unite? Or SDP coalescing with other parties?
We tried.

You say you and the worker's party have very different goals are you surprised they did not want to coalesce in the by election in 2013?
Not surprised. For a long time we have written to them to come to our forum and they would not even reply us.

Why did SDP try to propose that deal?
We see that as a mean to be able to unseat the PAP. The way things are none of, none of the Opposition, has the muscle to move the PAP in a way. So, the only way is for us to unite. But a lot of them would say the same thing….But they would not come to SDP's meeting. They would not want a meeting initiated by SDP.

Do you see the 2011 elections as a historical elections?
I think it's a watershed. Not so much that we made inroads politically but to me I think the greatest achievement is the shedding of some of the fears people have. Fear is the reason people are not uniting. Sure, you can point the finger at other factors, but fear is the greatest one.

Can you talk about your campaigning strategies in the wards you contested in and how have they changed?
Over the last 5 years, it's pretty much the same thing most political parties do we go out on ground campaigns, talk to the residents, shake their hands, give out pamphlets and pins, we give out a newspaper we produce and publish, and we sell that for 2 bucks as a means for gaining funds and our website and now we have YouTube and Facebook and those things.

Do you guys only campaign only in your district or do you campaign throughout the country?
Both. When you have something on YouTube and our website you obviously want everyone to see it. But when you go out physically you have to focus more on the constituency that you are more likely to challenge and last election we 11 contests out of 87 seats so we focused.

Is it tough to attract candidates? Reason why there is only 11?
I told a reporter in one of my interviews. We have enough people who are capable of taking over the entire cabinet at the drop of the hat. But, most of those people are just so afraid to run as a candidate.

So are they volunteers or are they just don't want to run?
We have a mixed bag. Some are volunteers but just don't want to run for elections. Others are voter. And again, because of fear. I'll tell you my story and can tell you 20 other story but I'll just say mine. When I was starting to run as a candidate my mother in low came to me and she told her daughter and wife that she must divorce him. My own mother in-law. My mother in law has been a supporter and voter for the opposition. She hates the PAP. But aren't you happy now that I am running in opposition of the PAP. No Divorce him. Why? Because, and she's 90, she has lived long life and seen what the PAP has done to Opposition candidates. People lost their jobs. People get bankrupt. People go to jail. And up to today in 2011, one of our candidates submitted his name everything was done and everything ready to go. He got his photographs and publications at 12 o clock that night our party leader, my colleague said he got a call from the guy. I'm out. My daughter is begging me and is working as a civil servant, She's afraid she's going to lose her job. You know that this is very unlikely. Yea, I know it's unlikely. But in her mind she's all stressed out and all freaked out and she's crying and I am thinking what do I do as a father. Pull out? I can tell you twenty more stories like that.

There was one case a colleague of mine. We got sued by the government and we were ready to fight our case in court. But, of course, they gave us a chance to apologize publically and withdraw. And we said no we are going to fight it. But some of us talked and that shows our position. Well, people have various reason and someone told us their story that that night his own mother kneeled down to him. And you know in the Chinese tradition and old person like a mom would never lean down to a younger one. The younger one would kneel down to the mom. So my own mom kneeled down so what you do.

LKY philosophy said is to slaughter the rooster and scale the monkey. So you pull a person of the public square and hang them there and everyone be afraid.

Are people unsatisfied with the PAP?
You can break that up in a few categories. There are people who are fearful. In Singapore one of the favorite phrases in the colloquial is "Can't help it now". There is helplessness. Nothing you do will change anything-helplessness".

Issue make people move their position and join a party?
Just anything really. Education you go to the US and learn about the Bill of Rights when you're in grade 5, there is nothing like that here in Singapore. A lot of people here do not know their rights. When we fought for rights many of them asked us so what's the point of having human rights. Can it out rice in my bowl? Can it put butter on my bread? What's the point of having civil liberties? We are so conditioned in this country to think only in economic terms.

Is that changing?

That is changing, partly because of the lack of policy. Because a lot of the wealth is stolen from the people. America is a poor country in fiscal form you guys are in debt. But the average America is pretty wealth off. Here it is reverse. The average Singaporean is pretty poor but Singapore as a nation is one of the richest in the world. Because the government raided our funds and they do it in such a subtle way that no one really knows. And if you dig into it it's kind of crazy. The only ones who know about these things when they speak about it they get in trouble. Like my colleagues and I. So very few people speak about it. Many people who are qualified, who have insider stories they won't dare too. Of course there are a few whistle blowers. Whistle blowers is not a good thing here in Singapore. It is very dangerous. Now, what really change things now is the internet.

How so?
In the past when JBJ was torn apart literally in the center politically, financially and hurt his reputation by the government especially LKY no one knows his side of the story. You can write to the press and have a press conference whatever you say you not going to see in the daylight newspaper. But when LKY whispers something it gets all over the place. And sometimes does not have to whistle. And he braggingly says and this is in public records. "I don't have to tell the newspaper or the court what to do, they know that to do". See he is arrogant to a fault, but we do and say it never gets into the press and sometimes it gets twisted. I have told you that my party leader Dr. Chee Soon Juan, have you met him, he got sued and got bankrupt for many years. Many suits against him. One of them in a campaign he was going around in a pick-up truck with a loud speaker and telling them to go out to vote for our party, which is totally legal in a campaigning. Then he sees the PM at the time passing by even though he was far away. So he used the loudspeaker and shouted Hey mister Goh where is our Money. He became a bankrupt. Dictators have connections. At that time we did not realize that Singapore gave Suharto 10 million dollars. Isn't that the people's money. Shouldn't he tell us about that? Even if it's legit shouldn't they know? So he got sued innuendo because he was implying that the there is some wrongdoing and that the money was given to Suharto. But Singapore's government claims there is not. So, Dr. Chee is stating a lie and he is instigating that the government is involved in some kind of wrongdoing. So he was sued 600, 040 dollar.

How do you view NSP as a party?
Traditionally NSP does not exist between the elections. You never hear them unless they run. You don't know who they are until two months and 3 months before elections. Suddenly they start campaigning. Suddenly they arrive in the horse trading room and suddenly they want so many constituencies. Otherwise you never see them. So you never really know their policies and whatever. And just now you were asking me about policy and I want to let you know that it is very hard for me to answer so many of the questions because SDP is the only party that spells their policy. See people who join us know who we stand for. All people who refuse to join us knows what we stand for. Perhaps they don't agree, perhaps they are afraid and similarly people who join us know what we stand for.

The other parties have no real direction or value or principle to stand off they are just opposing. And they gain a lot. And a lot of people vote for them not because they like them but because they hate the PAP.

What does opposition parties winning 40% of the popular vote tell you?
40% hate the PAP. Including our voters. A lot of people vote SDP because they hate PAP.

What do you think opposition parties to increase the 40%?
How do we capture the other 11%? That's the difficult part. I can only speak for ourselves. For what SDP is concerned we have taken a couple for steps like we mention just now that we are moving away from civil disobedience and the more traditionally belonging to the domain of NGO's but that does not mean we don't care anymore or that we are not in touched with them. Many of our supporters are in those NGO's we touch base with them. We do not half as month of time to get into those because now the space is beginning to open up and I like to think that is because of our efforts. People are beginning to fill those gaps so we took a step back. So that we can do what we should and ought to do. Then we didn't see an alternative. Now we have an alternative. We draw back and concentrate on campaigning, on getting connected with the people, so we organize events to attract events to learn about certain issues. We are the only party that produces alternative policies to that of PAP. No other party does that. For instance healthcare, we came out with Healthcare a very comprehensive program. And we say look if you elect us we will put this program in place.

DO you view that because you lack so much fear compared to everyone else that it is tougher for other Singaporeans to connect?
It is. But, then again if you don't where do we get this space from? You put all these efforts and now the people who benefit are the other opposition parties, the NGO's.

Is it tough to attract candidates?
Candidates are those who want to get into the parliament. I think a lot of people see SDP as a harder party to get into cabinet because when people vote in Singapore it is usually along party lines and not the person who runs and if you analyze our results you will see that too. People vote for the party and not the candidates.

Do younger people who join to SDP after going to Europe and seeing other parties want a greater say in the exact policies?
They in fact have all the say they want. Just, some of the percentage of what goes in our party does not seem democratic in their view. And sometimes they are very unhappy with that. One example is that our constitution has separate members. Two different layers. The person who started SDP Chum See Juan took a leaf from the PAP constitution. They just pretty much coped the PAP and changed the name from SDP to PAP. Don't know why. For the PAP party LKY did it because

the Vatican did it and eh was looking for a way to solidify power. Two types of membership are the cadre and ordinary membership.

How do you become a cadre?
The existing leadership appoints a cadre and only the cadre have voting rights. More than 4 people, but I don't want to go into specific numbers. So looking at the SEC that alone is 12 people so we have a whole layer of Cadre of ordinary membership. So if they join us they get into ordinary membership first, and do not have voting rights. And to a lot of European people they will say that this is night democratic. Which I totally agree with. If we would change that right now, in my personal opinion, we have so many things to focus on we are the midst of the battle and we should not get distracted and the other reason the historic environment politics is not what it is in the US with more competing parties to govern the country according to their values here we are have the PAP will use whatever tactics. If we would have a party with voting rights for everyone how we can stop the PAP from coming in and influencing the vote. Like moles. We have a core of people with similar values and are willing to pay the price so to speak. To bring this country to a state of real democracy. LKY has done that before.

When LKY passes will things change?
-I don't think so. I don't see the PAP as having so many brilliant people.

Alex Au-in contempt of court
Yawning Bread.

"I'll never say passable if I see someone bullying another."
"Evil man triumphs if good man do nothing."
"Voting is secondary."

Terry Xu
Editor of *Online Citizen*
Date of Interview: 12/15/2013

"Other parties aren't strong enough for WP to want to coalesce. Why would I want to join if I can just beat them up…No such thing as sharing resources…It's not like Malaysia where they just want a fair election."

"WP, SDP and PAP are the three parties with viable policies. The rest are just proposing to be PAP Opposition. They are something different, but not that different."

"2011 election proved that there is more of an incentive to be an opposition party? Public opinion supports you. An opposition party candidate said his private business profits actually improved after he contested in the election. The greater publicity will help if you do well".

Notes:
Background on ToC:
Online citizen was started in 2006 by four brothers to be a platform for alternative commentary. During the election, there were a greater number of staff members, but the blog has shrunk because people had to get back to their professional lives. There is a great risk at putting your name publically on this.

Media Laws:
Singapore's new media licensing rules in 2013 forces websites with over 50,000 unique visitors a month and reports on Singapore on average at least once a week over a two-month span to register with the Media Development Agency (MDA). Once registered, a website needs to pay a $50,000 dollar deposit to the MDA. The MDA can give you 24 hours to take down an article. Some consequences for registering are that foreigners cannot fund the website.

Other blog websites
TR Emeritus-successfully supplied evidence implicating government officials in scandals. For example WP Yao Lieng affair and Michael Palmer Affair
Real Singaporean-can be characterized as more of a tabloid.

Effect on TOC:
Before the 2011 campaign election the TOC was asked to register. Since they have only taken down 10 articles. 9 times a private citizen informed the MDA that the article was offensive. The last article the MDA asked. According the Xu, the regime is scared for censoring a website like TOC too much because that will arouse greater interest by the populace.

Party's effectiveness on pressuring for reforms:

No matter the party's strategy and position, political parties have not been successful at pressuring the government for reforms.

PAP's engagement with Opposition Parties:
The PAP will discredit opposition parties and propagandize that they are not fit to run the country, but then they will copy the policy platforms of the oppositions.

Economic policies of opposition parties:
Opposition parties discuss that money should be invested in local businesses instead of providing tax incentives to bring multinational companies to the city-state. It is very difficult for local businesses to compete with multinational firms and the government businesses. Opposition parties want the ruling regime to stop being obsessed with GDP growth. The model of recruiting non-Singaporean companies to increase the GDP is not good for the country.

The likelihood of an Opposition Bloc:
According to Terry, the WP is in a league of its own. They would not want to unite with the other parties because they rather have the option of contesting them in their regions. If the other parties get stronger then the WP will be incentivized to coalesce.

Xu's Characterization of the Worker's Party:
Compared to other parties the WP is perceived by the populace as mainstream. Thus, it is not proposing extreme changes. This is so that it does propose policies too radical for the mainstream voter.

Optimism for the Future:
Xu is optimistic for the future. He quotes the change in the Punggol East 2013 by election as an indicator that there is a growing support for the Opposition party. He views the 2011 election as a "watershed election" because public opinion no longer demonizes opposition parties.

Yee Jenn Jong
Worker's Party Parliamentary Candidate 2011
Date of Interview: 12/18/2013

What in your life made you want to be in opposition?

- More competition needed in the scene.
- Dominated by one party for so long.
- If there is some implosion in ruling party there is some alternative that should be there.

What are you aspirations for Singapore?
- Mature democracy.
- Political: Respect for all people for all type of affiliations.
- Economic: continue to progress, want be able to grow as fast. Need to be able to grow at a manageable place.

What is Worker's Party's role?
- Alternative is very important. Take over government.
- Alternative policy ideas.

Yee joined politics 2011. Joined two months before election.

Why did you join WP?
Serious platform. Party view is what I believe in. Agree with most things they say. If join policy just for opposing then they would need to split up. Best bet to be alternative to government. Newest member in WP. Contested in this area. Home ground since I was born. Speed cross check on one another. Quick romance.

How did you reach out to them?
Just sent an email to top two members in candidates. Two weeks of evaluation. I have quite a public profile running a business for 10 years. Company one of largest players in education.

Who makes the decision?
From what I know of the party functioning there is a lot of consensus. The Central executive committee makes decisions. If there are strong objections people have to hold back.

What do you think about the Hiijab issue?
Societal acceptance. It's about what liberty given plus what society should accept. No problem accepting what the majority of Singaporean. We need a serious study of attitudes. We ourselves would accept. In a multiracial society, don't want to push too much. So, we want certain balance. It should not affect the well-being of

other races. Allowed in certain confines location. In uniform services. Teachers are okay. If you are a nurse or policewoman. Outside work okay.

What were WP goal in 2011?
- Make in roads
- Invention of GRC

What do opposition parties need to do go from 40.1-50.1?
- What party and candidates stand for
- Party serious ideals and people electability.

-What is the goal leading up to 2016 election?

- Level we can control
- Building our branding and the slate of candidates
- Build up pool credible people

How do you campaign?
We do not have any facility to do ground activities. We are not allowed to apply for a venue. Reelected outright. Because we have control in certain spaces. We go there it is very active. I am doing weekly walks. Sometimes twice a week. Gerrymandering even more drastic. Only 9 days of elections. From the nomination day to the polling 9 days. Time to walk the ground seriously none days.

Restricted by elections committee, which is a function of ruling party. Strategy to be heavy concentrated in the east. LTK sets a high standard. You don't want to disappoint.

Central committee 14 people they decide but they are voted on. Main party stance. Must of funding on your own. Party group logistics and group expenses. The biggest cost is rally size.

Is funding a challenge?
There is a limits: $3.50 X constituents.

What is the typical WP candidate?
Share party beliefs. If they have a different opinion party they are just borrowing party brand. Stick with party long enough. The by-election is clear signal of what type candidate we want. Young lady. Pretty ordinary. Executive-level professional. We do have more qualified candidates. She worked the election from ground up. Rewarded for working from the ground up. Met minimum standard. The way they behave. Work experience. No matrix.

How is your experience with policy?

-get on some govt. committees before. In policy groups mostly from the professional level.

-As a businessman best way to make changes is as a business man. Changes are a lot faster than 2011.

Which party is your biggest opposition competitor?
-Don't look at them as a competitor. Clear build up party brand. Bit by bit build up brand. We are not ready to take over right now. We need to offer them trust and credible candidates. If they select us we would be happy to be the government.

How many wards do you see WP competing in next election?
My Personal opinion is that we will not compete in more than ½ of the wards. Certain things better to build it up so you can see a growth. Difficult to change from 7 seats to 46 seats. People are adverse to sudden change. Next round more serious challenge.

Candidates come and go in the past. They show in the election and then they don't stay. In the past it was extremely difficult to get candidates that are suitably qualified. Many politicians bankrupt and there are political detainees. Sometimes I have friends who are very qualified, but there is too much risk for their career.

Our competitor is not our fellow opposition. The target is the PAP. Enough room for us to maneuver. Going forward more 3 party races.

Do you consider coalescing or absorbing other parties?
It is always better build up own capabilities before a dirty marry. In the past things like that have happened. People jumping parties forming coalitions and after that they disband. Because a lot in politics it's about philosophy. If we win then we are parliament and then we disagree we set the whole opposition back. If need merge we would merge more orderly fashion with a more serious long-term plan and then disband ourselves and then be taken as a fly by night as not a serious party.

Is there a scenario where opposition coalesces as one bloc?
-Not right now. In Malaysia there the former PM kicked out ruling party and coalesced other 3 ruling party.

Relationship civic organizations and WP?
Sometime in agreement. Sometime more opinion and then they can champion. Generally, organizations best to do own research. Keep independent. WP against mandatory death penalty certain things pushed in parliament that are also in civil society. When there is an offer meet us we typically meet them. We don't have some serious coordination. But we feel generally that we have the parliament

platform and that we should be using the parliament platform. They do their work lobbying public and we lobby parliament.

What explains the PAP's durability?
We are very practical people. Once they had mandate to run government and economy improved, most people don't want to rock the boat. Past economics people adverse to change. By-election we do better than main election. Puggol East we competed against four person election. By-election there no change in government. Must people believe we should run constituency. On national level don't want to make that change.

Political landscape people are very afraid to contest ruling party. Many of this imaginary fear. Hold record longest detainee in the world. Now he is out. These are the legacies in the past.

What are the responsibilities for running a GRC?
That government flats are maintained and taken care of. Certain level of comfort with MP. We go to many funerals. WP tend to be more on the ground.

Have opposition party been successful at modifying policy?
We don't propose bills. We propose changes. Many ideas we proposed the government adopted. For ex. The number of student teacher ratio was made smaller. Ministers pay reduced. Public building more aggressive to make flats less expensive. More last year than last 10 years. Public transport, greater government involvement and intervention in public transport market. Can't leave to private market. Govt. popped investment. Give free busses company to run. Keep public more affordable.

Every party needs to decide long-term viability. People come and go succession in the past. Our rate in the last decade or so has been improving. People stick around long enough. Getting about good candidates.

What is the most contentious issue?
Crowding out affect, the proportion of foreigners. Cost of living

More managed rate of flow foreigners. 20 years ago it was an 80/20. Now it is 60/40.

People like more transparency. Tend to be a lot of contentious about this. But the civil service is a little guarded. Licensing websites. The whole process invents new rules.

Opposition more fragmented or unified:
Too many parties. There is a natural attrition. When people see necessity they merge. Rather not merge for the sake of another competitor. Eventually happen because cost is high.

Political view always various parties, people different political views some.

Make headway but saying PAP doesn't know how to run town council. Ruling party constituency came together and constructed company to create a system. Created many millions over period of time. In 2010, before election it was sold to a company called aims. So it was sold for 100,000 dollars. This company licenses back the software and has the sole right to license it. Fortunately because we had run one council we could upgrade it.

If another opposition party won another town council we would loan them the software. We are all fighting an unfair system. The company could service it. Totally unfair system. It is so customized that you cannot find.

Support level by people. Very race base. Party along racial lines.

Can't be elite. We don't have political pushy jobs. A lot of sons of ministers and decedents of former MP's have those. For us, it just we need to take the struggle of the common people because there is a huge income disparity. There are people who don't blink an eye spending a lot of money in a night-club and then they are people who are spending 800 dollars. Many people feel the ruling party has lost touched with the common ground. Don't feel public transportation problem. They don't take it. They don't buy government flats.