Resisting Regime Change in Singapore: Governmentality and the Impact of the Internet

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Thesis Summary

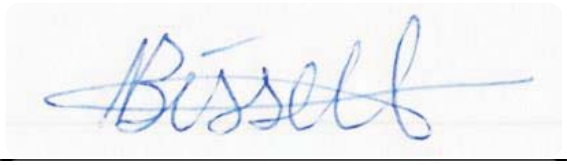
The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the nuances of the Singapore Government that have kept the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) in government continuously since 1959. I argue continued sophisticated governance perpetuates into the conceivable future. Whereas other scholars have focused on singular specific elements of Singaporean society, I analyse the Government's control of the media, civil activism, and elections, and the impact of the internet within each sector. Furthermore, I argue that these three sectors are intertwined in their involvement with each other and the Government.

Within this thesis, I apply to Singapore's governance the theory of governmentality, developed by Michel Foucault. Governmentality is the manner in which authority influences the conduct of others, by methods including heavy-handed punishment, discipline in specifically created and managed microcosms, and the encouragement of self-regulation by actors. The ultimate goal of governmentality is for the population to fulfill the desired ends of the sovereign authority. Governmentality also contains a significant degree of flexibility to modify the methods of government as appropriate. In Singapore, this realignment of governmentality has seen decrease in heavy-handedness in favour of greater use of discipline and self-government. This is a unique use of Foucault's theories within the body of scholarship on Singapore's politics and society.

Within Singaporean society there is a growing impetus to make use of the limited spaces for civil activism, alternative media and pluralism; and a brazenness to stand in opposition to the Government which did not exist even a decade ago. This is the result of a generational shift in part brought forth by the ubiquitous use of the internet by younger people. Therefore, the ability for the PAP to adapt to the uses of the internet by the citizenry and the increasing boldness of the Singaporean youth will be a test of its perpetual governmentality revision.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.



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Date

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List of Important Acronyms

AHPETC	Aljunied-Hougang-Punggol East Town Council
EBRC	Electoral Boundaries Review Committee
GIC	Government of Singapore Investment Corporation
GLC	Government-Linked Corporation/Company
GRC	Group Representation Constituency
HDB	Housing Development Board
IPI	International Press Institute
ISA	Internal Security Act
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
MCI	Ministry of Communication and Information
MDA	Media Development Authority
NCMP	Non-Constituency Member of Parliament
NMP	Nominated Member of Parliament
NPPA	Newspaper and Printing Presses Act
NS	National Service
NSP	National Solidarity Party
NTUC	National Trade Union Congress
PA	People's Association
PAP	People's Action Party
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
RP	Reform Party
SAF	Singapore Armed Forces
SDA	Singapore Democratic Alliance
SDP	Singapore Democratic Party
SMC	Single Member Constituency
SPH	Singapore Press Holdings

SPP	Singapore People's Party
TOC	The Online Citizen
TWC2	Transient Workers Count Too
WP	Workers' Party of Singapore (Workers' Party)

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