



Paul Linnarz is head of the Media Programme Asia of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung based in Singapore.

## HARMONY AS A NATIONAL MISSION

### SINGAPORE'S WAY OF DEALING WITH IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

*Paul Linnarz*

The "Year of the Tiger", according to the Chinese calendar, ended beginning of February. What a relief for superstitious Asians, who have now one problem less to worry about with their offspring. Children born in the "Year of the Tiger" are expected to have serious partnership problems later on as this particular zodiac allegedly forms rather taxing and dominating characters. These attributes are not necessarily welcome, especially for girls. Subsequently many Asian couples postpone having children during the tiger years. In Singapore, where three quarters of the population have Chinese roots, the birth rate dropped to a historical low.

In 2010 the women in the city state gave birth to 1.16 children on average. Among the Chinese population the birth rate was 1.02 children and therefore considerably below average, beating now even Japan (1.3) and South Korea (1.2). In order to keep the inhabitants' number and age constant, each woman in Singapore should have at least 2.1 children. Following the experience of previous tiger-years in 1974, 1986 and 1998, where the birth rate in the "Tiger City" dropped by up to ten per cent, 2011, the "Year of the Rabbit", should again produce more babies. However, nobody expects a significant trend reversal as the birth rate has fallen for years, independent of the zodiac. The main problems for young couples in Singapore could well be the costs for care and education of their children as well as combining family and careers. The required birth rate of 2.1 children per woman was last recorded in

Singapore in 1976. After that the birth rate fell more or less continuously. In the eighties, the government thus founded the "Social Development Unit" (SDU) and the "Social Development Services" (SDS). They were established to motivate the singles to marry and, of course, have children. A few years ago both institutions merged to form the "Social Development Network" (SDN), falling under the control of the Ministry for Sports and Youth. Singapore may well be one of the few countries worldwide, where "Dating Parties", and internet dating agencies ("lovebyte") are under the responsibility of a state department.

The idea for this marriage policy was initiated by the then prime minister Lee Kuan Yew in 1983. He engaged himself vehemently to make marriage and motherhood really attractive for the well educated women. Today the state's founder, by now 87 years old, is emphatically promoting to welcome young immigrants now and in future. They are the remedy for an ageing society. "Otherwise, our economy will slow down, like the Japanese economy. We will have a less dynamic and less thriving Singapore. This is not the future for our children and grandchildren."<sup>1</sup> In his speech in January, in front of more than 1,000 members of the "Chinese Clan Associations", Lee emphasised that the first generation of new immigrants will need some time for the integration, however, their children would already be "completely Singaporean".

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## **EXPENSIVE "TOP DESTINATION" FOR IMMIGRANTS**

The old state founder's appeal touches a sensitive subject: Despite its falling birth rate, Singapore more than doubled its population during the past thirty years. However, not the dating agencies and the organised flirting were the decisive factors, but the immigration from abroad. If every adult, who wants to emigrate to and who is longing for a life in Singapore, would then find somewhere to live in the city, the population would increase by 219 per cent. This makes the small island state at the Malacca Strait world wide the "top destination" for migrants, according to an analysis by the American Gallup Institute, presented in

August 2010.<sup>2</sup> Distinctly behind, on second place lies New Zealand (+184 per cent).

However, many Singaporeans also watch the immigration situation with worries. According to a recent telephone survey by REACH, being a mixture of a governmental opinion research institute and a discussion forum in the internet, only 56 per cent of the questioned people were convinced that the present restrictions for immigration at the local job market really protects against applicants from abroad. 18 per cent of those questioned, were against Singapore recruiting foreign talents. It is only a minority with an attitude like that, but in a press release about the survey results, REACH had to admit that "a sizeable number of respondents remain anxious about competition from foreigners or are not convinced that such a policy will expand the pie for all despite repeated assurances from the Government."<sup>3</sup>

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Apart from worries about an increase in competition on the job market, the keyword "immigration" is also mentioned in connection with the development on the housing market. The prices there rose by 3.8 per cent in the second half of 2010. The Department of Statistics of the City State registered an increase of 5,3 percent for private households with low income. The higher increase affects 20 percent of the total number of private households. This is a development with far reaching consequences, says Davin Chor, Economist at the Singapore Management University, "as a high cost of housing can certainly affect when young couples decide to marry and have children".<sup>4</sup>

However, it is the inflation and not the demands on the housing market or the immigration of foreigners that pushes prices up. In December 2010 inflation reached a

2 | Cf. Neli Esipova, Julie Ray, "Migration Could Triple populations in Some Wealthy Nations", *gallup.com*, August 20, 2010, <http://gallup.com/poll/142364/Migration-Triple-Populations-Wealthy-Nations.aspx> (accessed February 16, 2011).

3 | REACH, "Reactions to PM's National Day Rally 2010," Media Release, September 13, 2010, [http://www.reach.gov.sg/portals/0/MediaRelease/Reactions\\_to\\_NDR\\_2010.pdf](http://www.reach.gov.sg/portals/0/MediaRelease/Reactions_to_NDR_2010.pdf) (accessed March 11, 2011).

4 | *The Straits Times*, February 8, 2011.

two-year peak. Immigrants and local people are equally affected. According to a survey by ECA International, Singapore is on eighth place amongst the most expensive cities in Asia, nearly at the same level as Hong Kong and Shanghai.<sup>5</sup> Seen from abroad, however, this does not seem to compromise Singapore's attraction for migrants.

The Singapore government has chosen two strategies in order to manage the influx and utilise it for its own development purposes at the same time: Immigration is controlled not only with regard to demographics but also depending on the situation of the economy and above all, where integration is concerned, Singapore leaves nothing to chance. Freedom of religion, the housing market, education policy and the media are the cornerstones of a system that reaches out into all cracks and crevices of life.

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### THE "RIGHT MIXTURE"

Since 2010 more than five million people are living in Singapore. That is a million people more than in 2000. 3.2 million people are Singapore citizens, eight per cent more than at the beginning of this millennium. There are 541,000 "permanent residents" (PR) with a foreign passport. Their percentage increased significantly by 88 per cent during the last decade. Roughly 1.3 million foreigners work and live in Singapore for a limited period. The number of these "non-residents" increased by 73 per cent. Thus every third (36 per cent) of Singapore's inhabitants is a foreigner.

According to the published information of the department for statistics, in January 2011, the number of residents (with and without citizenship) comprises of 74.1 per cent Chinese, 13.4 per cent Malaysians, 9.2 per cent Indians and 3.3 per cent people of other nationalities.<sup>6</sup> The group of

5 | Cf. ECA International, "Singapore climbs to 8<sup>th</sup> most expensive Asian city," Media Release, December 2, 2010, [http://www.eca-international.com/news/press\\_releases/7278](http://www.eca-international.com/news/press_releases/7278) (accessed February 16, 2011).

6 | Cf. Department of Statistics, "Demographic Characteristics, Education, Language and Religion," *Census of Population 2010 – Statistical Release 1* (Singapur 2010), <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/pubn/popn/C2010sr1/cop2010sr1.pdf> (accessed February 16, 2011).

"permanent residents" comprises of 61.4 per cent Chinese, three per cent Malaysians, 20.4 per cent Indians and 15.2 per cent migrants from other world religions.

The terms "Chinese", "Malaysian" or "Indian" in statistics as well as in ordinary language refer not only to the country of origin but also to the affiliation with a certain "ethnic group". Cultural, linguistic and religious criteria are the factors for grouping people as well as the nationality. Each of Singapore's citizens ("resident"), independent from whether immigrant or local, belongs to one of the different ethnic groups in the register of residents. Therefore there are 2.2 million citizens called "Chinese", although they were born in Singapore. From the nearly 590,000 Chinese of foreign origin, 340,000 come from Malaysia and only 175,000 from China, Hong Kong and Macao. 2,278 Chinese living in Singapore were born in Europe. About 470,000 of the nearly half a million "Malaysians", or better "Malays", were born in Singapore. Nearly 11,000 citizens of Indonesian origin also belong to this group. The "Indians" include also Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

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For several decades Singapore has already been a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. It is for that reason that the Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, hold his speech in three different languages at the occasion of the national holiday in August: Malayan, Mandarin and English. A decisive factor for the immigration policy of his government is not to shift the "mixing ratio" in the population in favour of or at the expense of an ethnic group. This does not only apply to a percentage of the overall population but for example also to the affiliation with the different religions. The anxiety especially amongst the "minority communities" for a "foreign infiltration" was picked up in a reassuring remark in Lee's speech at the occasion of the national holiday last year: "The current mix is stable, and contributes to our racial and religious harmony."<sup>7</sup>

7 | Text and video on <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/nd2010> (accessed March 11, 2011).

## “MUSCULAR SECULARISM”

Due to a controlled residence and working permit strategy, the percentages of the various ethnic groups in relation to the total population has only changed insignificantly over the past decade. More significant are the results of the last census in 2010, which show deviations concerning religious affiliations: over the past decade the percentage of Buddhists fell from 42.5 to now 33.3 per cent. Taoism has risen to a percentage of now 10.9 compared to 2000, where the percentage was 8.5.

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The percentage of Christians rose considerably from 14.6 to 18.3. It has overtaken the Islam in Singapore today with 14.7 per cent (2000: 14.9 per cent). Hinduism has also risen from 4 per cent 10 years ago to 5.1 per cent at present.<sup>8</sup>

Freedom of religion is guaranteed in the Constitution of the city state. That means that the religions with the largest number of followers in Singapore have a right to a certain number of statutory holidays. Christmas is therefore celebrated as well as the Buddhist Vesak celebrations, the Chinese New Year or the Hari Raya for Muslims. The holidays affect the whole population. Schools, offices and authorities for example stay closed on those days. At the same time the government is, however, watching very closely that no fundamentalist influences are spread. Also authorities react very sensitively to public criticism of other religions and missionary activities and publications that could disturb the “religious harmony” are legally prohibited.<sup>9</sup>

Muslim women are not allowed to wear a head scarf (“tudung” in Singapore) at state schools. Each breach of this regulation for obligatory school uniform can have consequences going as far as being excluded from lessons. However, male Sikhs are allowed to wear their turban in school. At the end of the eighties the religious education (“Religious Knowledge Curriculum”) at schools was replaced

8 | Cf. *The Straits Times*, January 13, 2011.

9 | Cf. inter alia “Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act,” [http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/non\\_version/cgi-bin/cgi\\_retrieve.pl?actno=REVED-167A](http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/non_version/cgi-bin/cgi_retrieve.pl?actno=REVED-167A) (accessed February 16, 2011).

by a "Civic and Moral Education Programme". In 2009 Singapore's Vice President, Wong Kan Seng reasoned the principle of "muscular secularism" with the words: "We are not a Christian Singapore, or a Muslim Singapore, or a Buddhist or Hindu Singapore. We are a secular Singapore, in which Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and others all have to live in peace with one another."<sup>10</sup>

### **TOWER WITHOUT BABEL**

There is hardly another country in the world, where "communication" plays a larger role than in Singapore, where more than every third inhabitant is of foreign origin. For that reason English became the first teaching language back in the sixties. The reason behind this was to ensure that the different population groups in Singapore are able to communicate with each other "neutrally". On the other hand the *lingua franca* dominates every day life even today, because it promotes the international competition for Singapore, which depends on export and international financial service providers.

With its declared aim "to integrate new arrivals into our society, so that over time they will become Singaporean in their outlook and identity",<sup>11</sup> the government promotes not only the mutual English language but also the mother tongues of other ethnical groups. The so-called "mother tongue" policy dictates a school education with at least two languages. Originally this was implemented with a view to

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the young state and its economic development. Promoting and maintaining the knowledge of Mandarin for example meant that trading with China became easier. Apart from that, teaching in the mother-tongue of various different ethnic groups today is also supposed to encourage cultural roots and traditions.

English is already taught in Kindergarten to about half of the three to six year olds, alongside with the three main languages Chinese (Mandarin), Tamil and Malay (Bahasa).

10 | Kumar Ramakrishna, "'Muscular' versus 'Liberal'. Secularism and the Religious Fundamentalist Challenge in Singapore," *RSIS Working Paper*, No. 202 (Singapore, 2010), 9 et seq.

11 | Cf. n. 7.

Starting with primary school, most subjects are taught in English. During the first to fourth school year ("foundation stage") Tamil is offered together with non-Tamil languages such as Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi and Urdu. The "orientation stage" during the fifth and sixth school year divides the mother-tongue lessons into basic, standard and raised levels. Primary school ends after the sixth year with an exam. The result decides, whether the child prepares for a "special", "express", "normal (academic)" or "normal (technical)" career during the following years.

"Special" and "express" have been designed for four years until year 10. Both categories finish with an exam, the so-called "O-Level". The difference mainly consists of the teaching of languages. Besides English, Chinese, Tamil and Malay are taught; however "special" means that the teaching is based on a higher level. Students who do not fulfil the minimum requirements (defined by the State) for the mother-tongue at "O-Level" have to stay on for another year.

Instead of or in addition to the above three most important languages, many schools have a choice – apart from the obligatory English – of French, German, Arabic and Japanese. Some international schools also offer Spanish or Korean. They are sometimes preferred as substitute mother-tongue (even by Chinese, Malaysians and Indians, respectively the ethnic groups described as such), when children and youths who lived in these countries for several years and come or return to Singapore with the start of their school education. Students who are neither Chinese nor Malaysian are allowed to choose Chinese or Malay respectively as third language. This is taught outside regular school hours.

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Both "normal" branches are more directed towards technical or business management (book-keeping, administration) teaching. They finish after five years with an "O-Level" exam. On a higher level, the school career ends altogether twelve years either with an "International Baccalaureate IB Diploma" resp. "IB Certificate" or with the so-called "A-Level".



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“Language” as a means for integration in Singapore is not an “either, or”, but an “as well as” of English (plus third foreign language) and mother-tongue. As from next year, the teaching and learning methods for mother-tongue lessons is going to be improved, due to an analysis by the “language review committee”, presented in January, according to which more and more primary school pupils speak English either exclusively or most of the time at home with their parents, siblings and relatives.

Amongst the school starters of Chinese origin, the percentage increased from 28 per cent twenty years ago to 59 per cent today. Amongst school starters of Indian origin English dominates now with 58 per cent (1991: 49 per cent). 37 per cent of the Malaysian class mates mainly communicate in English with their parents. Twenty years ago it was only 13 per cent. “If you want to keep the language, (...) you have to teach them (the pupils) to use it”, Education Minister Ng Eng Hen urged, when presenting the report to the teachers. He continued with regard to homes and society; “homes will have to support that kind of environment, and the community will have to support that kind of environment.”<sup>12</sup> Hence, the government explicitly intents a lively manifold of languages.

There are two measures, which are supposed to stop the decrease: By 2015 there are going to be another 500 teachers for mother-tongue lessons, in addition to the already existing 6,666 teachers. More important however is the news, that teaching methods are changing. With reference to examples from the U.S., China, India, Malaysia and Australia, exams will in future test the ability of “active and interactive” communication, and students will no longer have to put up with materials of “archaic scenarios”, old-fashioned subjects and content.

**PERCENTAGES AGAINST ENCLAVES**

The greater part of Singapore’s population lives in blocks of flats, which normally consist of several hundred apartments. Since the late sixties the houses are part of the public housing construction. The “Housing and Development

12 | *The Straits Times*, January 19, 2011.

Board" (HDB), part of the Ministry for National Development, is in charge. The flats are of different sizes and interior and are generally not rented but bought and sold again when moving. Only people who have a monthly income of not more than 8,000 Singapore Dollars (at present about 4,600 Euro) are entitled to purchase a HDB flat. The upper limit refers to the family income of each household.

Even on the housing market the government of this immigration country does not leave anything to chance. With the aim to promote the "racial integration and harmony", to avoid "racial enclaves", and to ensure a "balanced ethnic mix among the various ethnic communities", Singapore has subscribed to the so-called "Ethnic Integration Policy" EIP.<sup>13</sup> It dictates who is entitled to purchase and sell HDB flats and in which building they are allowed to live.

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Singapore citizens and the groups of Malaysian origin "permanent residents", are partly excluded from these regulations. The common culture and history between Singapore and Malaysia are given as reason. "Permanent residents", who belong to another ethnic group, are only allowed to occupy eight per cent of all flats in a block and only five per cent of all flats in the immediate neighbourhood. Is this quota fulfilled, potential purchasers of a flat can be refused to buy in this particular building and they have to try another block of flats. Sellers also have to submit to this quota. The question, whom to sell the flat to, is therefore not only depending on the offer but also on the ethnic origin of the interested people.

Despite their common history and culture, care is taken that with respect to the Singapore citizens and the "permanent residents" of Malaysian origin, one ethnic group does not occupy all flats in one block of flats. The upper limit for citizens of Chinese origin with or without passport, is 84 per cent of all flats in the immediate neighbourhood and not

13 | Housing and Development Board, "Ethnic Integration Policy & SPR Quota," [http://www.hdb.gov.sg/fi10/fi10321p.nsf/w/BuyResaleFlatEthnicIntegrationPolicy\\_EIP?OpenDocument](http://www.hdb.gov.sg/fi10/fi10321p.nsf/w/BuyResaleFlatEthnicIntegrationPolicy_EIP?OpenDocument) (accessed February 16, 2011).

more than 87 per cent of all apartments in one building. The quota for Malaysians is 22 respectively 25 per cent, for "Indians and Others" 12 respectively 15 per cent.<sup>14</sup> The remaining flats are to be occupied by citizens with other ethnic origin. The EIP quota for each block of flats corresponds roughly to the percentage of the different ethnic groups in the total population.

"Permanent residents" as well as Singapore citizens receive financial support when buying a HDB-flat. It is a maximum of 30000 Singapore Dollars. This is another incentive to promote integration, because since last year, prospective flat owners who have citizenship receive 10,000 Singapore Dollars more than a "permanent resident". Since couples who are younger than 35 are only allowed to buy HDB-flats if they are married, the regulation "citizens come first" refers to both partners. Even in a mixed marriage between a citizen and a "permanent resident", the State cuts the allowance to a maximum of 20,000 Singapore Dollars. The remaining 10,000 Singapore Dollars are paid retrospectively to those who decide to apply for a Singapore passport after having bought the flat or who have at least a child with Singapore citizenship.

### **JOBS ARRANGED BY QUOTAS**

The present benchmark figures for the immigration policy were fixed in the "Manpower 21 Plan" by the Singapore Government in 1999, thus strengthening its position internationally as "city of talents", powered by the knowledge and innovation of the "New Economy". Biomedicine, chemistry, electronics and environmental technology as well as financial service providers and health care were identified as being the most promising growing markets. Well trained foreign specialists, scientists and engineers with special knowledge in these areas were and still are welcome to the country. Apart from that Singapore heavily relies on less or even hardly qualified people from

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14 | Housing and Development Board, "Policy changes to support an inclusive and cohesive home," Media Release, March 5, 2011 [http://www.news.gov.sg/public/sgpc/en/media\\_releases/agencies/hdb/press\\_release/P-20100305-4/AttachmentPar/0/file/Press\\_Release-SC\\_SPR-EIP-SPR\\_Q.pdf](http://www.news.gov.sg/public/sgpc/en/media_releases/agencies/hdb/press_release/P-20100305-4/AttachmentPar/0/file/Press_Release-SC_SPR-EIP-SPR_Q.pdf) (accessed March 28, 2011).

abroad. Since the late sixties, the city state has repeatedly eased the regulations for an influx of foreign workers, especially for the construction sector, transport industry, shipbuilding as well as nurses for hospitals and old peoples' homes. Many less qualified female foreigners are employed as domestic workers.

Residence and work permits are granted in a staggered manner, depending on the monthly income, qualifications and the area of employment respectively the area of activity (type of business). The question how many low skilled foreign workers with a so-called "R" pass are allowed to work for which economy sector in Singapore is organised according to fixed quotas. The country of origin is an important deciding factor.<sup>15</sup> All enterprises, depending on the kind of business, are dictated to how many foreign workers they are allowed to have altogether and how many from certain countries, in relation to the total number of employees. For every "R" pass owner, employers have to make a contribution to the state. The monthly income of a "R" pass owner must not exceed 1,800 Singapore Dollars (about 1,000 Euro at present).

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Employees who earn at least 7,000 Singapore Dollars a month (about 4,000 Euro at present) qualify for a "P1" work permit. Work permit owners are allowed to bring their next of kin into the country (partner and children under 21). Partners and children, however, fall under a special status "Dependant's Pass", which must be applied for separately. Foreigners with a "P1"-work permit are also entitled to apply for a "Personalised Employment Pass". This pass increases the residence permit to five years maximum. People who lose their job within this period are allowed to stay in Singapore up to six months without income, in order to find a new job. "P1" work permit or "PEP" permit give foreigners the chance to apply for the status of "permanent resident" and citizenship.

15 | For the building industry e.g. workers from Malaysia, China, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Philippines, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Macao, South Korea and Taiwan can be recruited at present. For the manufacturing industry only workers from Malaysia, China, Hong Kong, Macao, South Korea and Taiwan are permitted.

A "P2"-work permit requires a monthly salary of at least 3,500 Singapore Dollars (at present 2,000 Euro). A "P2" owner can also become a "permanent resident", should however wait at least about two years. The rest of the regulations correspond to the "P1" status.

The "Q1" work permit is issued with a monthly salary of at least 2,500 Singapore Dollars (approx. 1,450 Euro). Only when reaching this salary level, foreign workers are allowed to bring their next of kin into the country. Below this level, starting with a salary from 1,800 Singapore Dollars, the so-called "S" pass is issued. For this group the employers have to make a monthly contribution. Occupation quota also apply. The foreign owner of an "S" pass is also entitled to the status of "permanent resident" and citizenship. As a rule, however, applying for this will only be successful after a residence of four to five years.

Work permits of a P, Q or S status are normally issued for one to two years. A repeated extension can be applied for, as long as the applicant has a regular income. The status of "permanent resident", however, will be granted for five years initially, followed by an extension of a further five years and more. Losing a job and regular income does not e.g. force a "permanent resident", to leave the country, contrary to the "non-residents". "PRs" can already apply for citizenship after two years. They pay a monthly contribution to the "Central Provident Fund" (CPF), just the same as Singapore citizens. This saving will provide security for old age. The money from the CPF may also be used, under certain conditions, to purchase a HDB-flat. They are considered a provision for old age in Singapore.

The "Employment Pass", in its different stages, controls immigration not only under demographic but also under economic aspects. If some sectors in the economy are not performing well, then fewer foreigners are allowed into the country and *vice versa*, work permits for migrants are sectorally increased during booming phases.

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The proportion of "non-residents", compared to the growth in population in 2008, was 4.2 per cent, while only 0.6 per cent respectively 0.7 per cent of the growth was "permanent residents" and new citizens. When in 2009

the global economy and financial crisis reached Singapore, the percentage of new “non-residents” compared to the population growth sank to one per cent last year. The percentage of new “permanent residents” sank to 0.2 per cent.

On the whole especially the number of low earners was reduced. In June the number of fully employed workers with a monthly income of 1,200 Singapore Dollars (at present about 690 Euro) and less was 262,000, about five per cent below the level of the previous year. Last year 77.1 per cent of all citizens between 25 and 64 were employed. The employment rate in Singapore is as high as it used to be in 1991.<sup>16</sup>

Successes like these are picked up and reported in length by the media in the South-East Asian city state. They, too, are part of the integration policy. Press and radio produce in various languages of the largest ethnic groups (English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil). According to the “Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act”, publications creating “feelings of enmity, hatred, ill-will, or hostility between different religious groups” are prohibited for press and radio.<sup>17</sup>

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Despite an impressive economic development and immense efforts with regard to integration, the subject remains sensitive: “I do not deceive myself for one moment that our differences of race, culture, language, religion, have disappeared”, Singapore’s state founder warned in January at the presentation of the book *Lee Kuan Yew: Hard Truths to Keep Singapore Going*,<sup>18</sup> published by the “Singapore Press Holdings”. According to the state founder, the present and future generations have to take responsibility “to understand the vulnerability, the fragility of our society and keep it in cohesion, keep it united and keep it

16 | *The Straits Times*, December 1, 2010.

17 | Cf. “Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act,” [http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/non\\_version/cgi-bin/cgi\\_retrieve.pl?actno=REVED-167A](http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/non_version/cgi-bin/cgi_retrieve.pl?actno=REVED-167A) (accessed February 16, 2011).

18 | AFP, “Preserve racial, religious unity: Lee Kuan Yew,” *asiaone news*, January 21, 2011, <http://news.asiaone.com/News/AsiaOne%2BNews/Singapore/Story/A1Story20110121-259611.html> (accessed February 16, 2011).

as it is today, tolerant of each other, accommodating each other".<sup>19</sup> Muslims as well as non-Muslims did not want to let some remarks in the book pass uncommented. Lee, who today carries the title "Minister Mentor", and to whom the press sometimes only refers to as "MM", is quoted in an online contribution of "Today" with the text: "I think we were progressing very nicely until the surge of Islam came, and if you asked me for my observations, the other communities have easier integration – friends, intermarriages and so on, Indians with Chinese, Chinese with Indians – than Muslims. That's the result of the surge from the Arab states." It continues: "I would say, today, we can integrate all religions and races except Islam. I think the Muslims socially do not cause any trouble, but they are distinct and separate."<sup>20</sup> Lee Hsien Loong, the son of the state founder and present Prime Minister, reassures the public end of January: "But my own perspectives on how things are in Singapore based on my interaction with the Malay community, the mosque and religious leaders and the grassroots leaders, is not quite the same as MM's." The opinions mentioned in his father's book are, so the Prime Minister, of personal nature.<sup>21</sup>

19 | Ibid.

20 | S. Ramesh, "It's a matter of perspective," *todayonline.com*, January 31, 2011, <http://todayonline.com/Singapore/EDC110131-0000092> (accessed February 16, 2011).

21 | S. Ramesh, "Muslims have done much to strengthen integration, says PM Lee," *channelnewsasia.com*, January 30, 2011, <http://channelnewsasia.com/stories/singaporelocalnews/view/1107843/1/.html> (accessed February 16, 2011).