

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHINESE PRESS REPORTS ON MALAY AND ISLAMIC ISSUES IN SINGAPORE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and it has been written by me in its entirety. I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information which have been used in the thesis.

This thesis has also not been submitted for any degree in any university previously.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized cursive letters, positioned above a horizontal line.

Chung Kwang Tong

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ABSTRACT

State discourse has identified race and religion as a ‘fault line’ and catalyst for disharmony in Singaporean society, and race and religion has often been blamed for the turbulent times sparked by race riots before independence in 1965. The government has been very understanding of religious and racial sensitivities, and has therefore imposed strict measures to moderate and control the press, especially after the chaotic times in the 1950’s and the 1960’s. Due to the sensitivity of the topics, race and religion have rarely been discussed in the public sphere, and, as the media has been largely state controlled *and* extremely self-regulating, race and religious issues have rarely made the news headlines. Spanning the decades and analyzing race and religious relations within the context of print media, this thesis will examine the ways in which perceptions of the Chinese towards Malays has been shaped in Singapore post 9-11. This research is significant as it investigates how ethnic relations may be positively or negatively influenced by print media. This thesis may be seen as a contribution to the understanding of the role and impact of mainstream media on race and religious relations in Singapore today. It will help to identify contemporary fault lines which may cause potential misunderstandings between the ethnic communities in Singapore, and will suggest considerations for future policy-making with the aim of promoting positive policy changes. In relation to the field of Malay Studies, this thesis provides a non-Malay perspective on Malay issues and the media in Singapore, with a special focus on how the Malays are portrayed and reported in Chinese newspapers in Singapore.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Singapore is a multi-cultural, multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic and multi-religious (Ackermann, 1997) immigrant society. In the 1891 Population Census of the Straits Settlements, the population was categorised into ‘Europeans’, ‘Eurasians’, ‘Chinese’, ‘Malays and other natives of the Archipelago’, ‘Other nationalities’, and ‘Tamils and other natives of India’. This is the root of the Chinese, Malays, Indians, and Others categorisation of race, also known in short as the ‘C-M-I-O’ categorisation, a system maintained by the Singapore government after independence in 1965 to guide public policy, most notably in housing¹.

The nation recognises four official languages – English, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil to foster interaction among the citizens. To reduce the complexities of multiple dialects spoken among each individual community, each “race” has been ascribed a “mother tongue” for communication among themselves. Mandarin has been prescribed as the “mother tongue” for the Chinese, Malay for Malays, and Tamil for Indians. English is the main working language and the principal language of instruction in national schools. It is also the lingua franca for inter-ethnic communications and a medium for international communications (Ackermann, 1997, p. 50). As a result of this official categorisation of “races” and “languages”, the media market in Singapore is also divided along ethnic and linguistic lines (George, Freedom from the press: journalism and state power in Singapore, 2012). Newspapers in English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil are easily available in Singapore².

¹ Public housing in Singapore

² Examples of the various language based newspapers available in newsstands in Singapore are The Straits Times (English), Lianhe Zaobao (Chinese), Berita Harian (Malay) and Tamil Murasu (Tamil).

The Singaporean government and Singaporeans are still convinced that the stability of its multi-ethnic and religious population – consisting of mainly Chinese with a minority of Malays, Indians and Eurasians – is fragile. Memories of several bloody race and religious clashes in the 1950s and 1960s continues to be brought up in official statements and media reports, especially when there are current incidents that may potentially create tension between the different communities. These historical incidents have led to policies that actively shape the role of the media³ in Singapore to be non-adversarial⁴. Mainstream media claims to report on sensitive issues dispassionately and impartially, a role the media believes will contribute to the understanding of national issues, help ensure racial and religious harmony and promote shared values (Open Society Foundations, 2014).

The Singaporean media is cautious about the boundaries set by the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act of 1974, the Internal Security Act of 1963⁵, Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act of 1990, and the Sedition Act of 1948. These legislative tools ensure journalism in Singapore is strictly regulated. Race and religion are especially sensitive topics, thus when approaching related news topics, news coverage will avoid overplaying race or religion. Instead, attempts are made to present balanced views. However, I posit that this balanced style of reporting – manifest in the choice of words and phrases, tone among other writing mechanics that influence readers' interpretations of the latent and manifest messages – may

³ Often referred to condescendingly as 'state media'.

⁴ Official mainstream media is co-opted by the state

⁵ The Malaysian Internal Security Act 1960 (no. 18/60) was extended to Singapore on 16 September 1963 when Singapore became a component part of Malaysia. The Internal Security Act serves to provide for the internal security of Singapore, preventive detention, the prevention of subversion, the suppression of organised violence against persons and property in specified areas of Singapore, and for matters incidental thereto. – (statutes.agc.gov.sg)

unintentionally reinforce ethnic and religious stereotyping, and cause inter-ethnic and inter-religious friction.

While it has been suggested by the Singaporean government that a neutral journalistic approach supports the status quo and ethnic and religious harmony, this thesis will argue that such a presumably neutral approach by mainstream media may shape social consciousness in regard to Malay and Muslim communities. This will be shown through an examination of selected topics covering the treatment of the Malay and Muslim communities in the Chinese and English press. I shall present case studies from the mainstream Chinese and English newspapers reporting on the September 11th attacks over New York, the arrest and detention of the Jemaah Islamiya (JI) members in Singapore, the Tudung Incident in 2002, and more recent cases such as the comments on noisy Malay weddings by the NTUC⁶ director Amy Chong, and the labeling of madrasah students as terrorists by a Chinese. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, I discuss the effects of the aforementioned reporting on public opinion.

I would suggest that the September 11, 2001 attacks were one of the most significant incidents that not only shocked the world but also greatly affected racial and religious policies in Singapore. The Singaporean government formed the Inter-Racial Confidence Circles (IRCC) in every electoral constituency, and had more frequent and closer engagements with the religious communities. The arrest and detention of terrorist network JI members in Singapore deepened the fear of religious extremism and reminded Singaporeans that terrorism is not only thousands of miles away, but that religious extremism is happening right at the door step. There are individuals with extremist religious views and also self-radicalised individuals living in the midst of Singaporean society. As various terrorists and terror groups claimed affiliation to the Islamic religion, the world focused on issues pertaining to Islam. As much as there is heighten

⁶ National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) is the sole national trade union centre in Singapore.

fear and suspicion of Muslims due to the association of religion with terrorism, many Islamic scholars and academics took the opportunity to share with the world their interpretation of the correct values and teachings of Islam. The tudung incident in 2002 is significant as it happened mere months after the September 11 attacks, during the period where there were supposedly heightened suspicions and doubts towards the Malay Muslim community in Singapore. Due to their significance, I will therefore analyse press reports for the three abovementioned incidents to examine if the print media negatively portray the Malay Muslim community in Singapore, stoked any negative feelings, or reproduced any negative stereotypes or portrayals of the Malays in Singapore.

1.2 The Mass Media in Singapore

The term ‘media’ has been used for almost a century to collectively refer to the mass media, consisting of newspapers, radio and television (Tan, Mahizhnan, & Ang, 2016). In Singapore, the media provides the citizens with reliable and abundant information, and such information is crucial for a healthy society. The emergence of the internet has brought new channels for communication, thus the term ‘new media’ was coined to refer to information and knowledge that can be communicated by a person or organization to others, and such information is available through the internet.

In recent decades, the internet has eased communications between individuals to individuals, individuals to many people, many people to an individual, and groups to groups, through words, sounds and visuals inexpensive with almost no central control over such information. On the internet, any individual can be an instant newspaper journalist, radio broadcaster, or a television producer, without the need to set up a newspaper office or a broadcast station (Tan, Mahizhnan,

& Ang, 2016). This technological advancement has implications for transforming media's impact on social relations, especially with the development of what is termed as new media.

The new media defies almost all rules and norms set down for the traditional media. Traditional media platforms such as newspapers and broadcasters facilitated vertical communication between the controllers of the media and consumers of the media. New media⁷ provides a platform for horizontal communication where people may communicate with people, and allowed the public to discuss events and issues in a manner which was impossible with traditional media.

It is important to analyse traditional media to study state and public discourses. It is suggested that the traditional mass media in Singapore has been subjected to strict government control, which is one of the most important concerns in the analysis and study of media in Singapore. Many studies were published slamming the Singapore government for their strict control over the media, saying that there is no freedom of media in the Republic. This is also a crucial factor for this study as we can examine if such state control of the media has influenced portrayals of the different ethnic communities in Singapore.

Organisations such as “Reporters Without Borders (for Freedom of Information)”, or “Reporters Sans Frontieres” (RSF)⁸, and Freedom House⁹ reported that media in Singapore is “not free”., Gallup Incorporation¹⁰, however, Gallup concluded that 69 percent of Singaporeans

⁷ New media include blogs, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.

⁸ “Reporters Without Borders (for Freedom of Information)”, or “Reporters Sans Frontieres” (RSF), was founded in 1985 and registered as a non-profit organisation in France in 2005. The RSF aims to continuously monitor attacks on freedom of information worldwide, to denounce any such attacks in the media, and to act in cooperation with governments to fight censorship and laws aimed at restricting freedom of information, among other objectives.

⁹ Freedom House is a United States-based non-governmental organisation that conducts research and advocacy on democracy, political freedom, and human rights, and it styled itself as an independent watchdog organisation dedicated to the expansion of freedom around the world (Freedom House, n.d.)

¹⁰ Gallup, Inc. is an American research-based, global performance-management consulting company

interviewed expressed confidence in the quality and integrity of the media through public opinion polls in 2005 and 2006. It is important to note that surveys conducted by the BBC in 2007 and Singaporean Media Scholar Cherian George in 2012 found out that almost half of all Singaporean respondents ranked stability and social harmony higher than press freedom (T. Kenyon, Majoribanks, & Whiting, 2014, p. 19). It is suggested that while press freedom may be deemed as important in Western democracies, Singapore is still cautious of having unregulated media and views national stability and harmony as more critical issues. The strict control by the Singaporean government may be viewed as state biased information and thus regarded by Reporters without Borders and Freedom House as not reliable news, as “reliable” reporting suggests un-biased reporting. However, the news in Singapore remains relevant to this thesis as despite arguments on what constitutes ‘reliable reporting’, the views of local citizens are still influenced by Singapore’s local media. The Singaporean government regulates the media in Singapore through specific statutes and regulations directed at the media, and also through the ownership or control of key media organisations (T. Kenyon, Majoribanks, & Whiting, 2014, p. 16). The intentions behind policies managing the media in Singapore has been consistently reiterated. The mass media has been used by the Singaporean government to maintain a sense of national unity, social stability, and to forge a national identity. Kenneth Tan suggested that it has been possible as the Singaporean government, through the media, has had the power to shape what can be said in the public sphere, to determine how and when it is said, and to decide who gets to present information to the public according to the parameters laid out by the state (Tan K. P., 2008, p. 413). I would suggest that it is a conscious effort by the Singaporean government to maintain race and religious relations in Singapore by disallowing any materials or any information seditious in nature to be published and circulated to the populace.

This thesis argues that it is crucial to understand the actual role of the media in Singapore – both as intended and unintended results of media policy in Singapore – and how it may influence the way in which people understand and interact with one another.

It may also be asked whether Singapore's media practices “watchdog journalism” (Jebril, 2013) where statements of public officials are fact-checked by the “free” and independent journalists, and where the journalists carry out their investigative and watchdog role on behalf of the public. By understanding the actual role of the media in Singapore, we can begin to understand how news and information is disseminated to the masses, and how it may influence the way in which the public perceive and understand contemporary issues. Such influences will definitely have an impact on how people see ‘the other’, especially between people with different ethnic or religious backgrounds.

The conventional view of the Singaporean media is that it is state controlled and it plays a supporting role in reaffirming social values and promoting racial and religious harmony. As such, the media consciously attempts not create or fuel ethnic or religious divides through insensitive reporting. However, there may be some discrepancy between this idealized view of the media and the role of the media in actuality.

Colonialism categorized Singaporean community according to a hierarchy which placed some higher than others. We can see clichéd stereotypes which have continued to be reproduced until today, and often people unconsciously fall back on such stereotypes and view themselves in the way which colonialists portrayed them. Stereotypes of the Chinese, Malays and Indians were produced by the British colonial administrators and the images of the greedy Chinese,

lazy Malays and dishonest Indians¹¹ are still reproduced till this day¹². Syed Hussein Alatas studied the British colonial policies and discussed the many racial stereotypes that were produced by the colonial administrators and the Europeans. In September 2014, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia Dr. Mahathir Mohamad¹³ commented that the Malays were ‘lazy’ which caused a stir among the Malays in Malaysia. However, this is an example of how such racial stereotyping has continued to be reproduced till today.

The media may reproduce such racial stereotypes through reports, or may even raise suspicions within the community by downplaying news stories, not forgetting that readers are also able to access news online on alternative media sites where information is shared openly without any censorship.

It is therefore crucial to examine the media, particularly the print media, to find out if negative stereotyping is still evident in existing reporting. If stereotyping persists in news reports, it is crucial to understand why such stereotyping is still being reproduced. It may be questioned whether the stereotyping of different racial groups in Singapore is a form of colonial baggage left behind by the British administrators? Whether contemporary demand for sensational reporting has caused such stereotyping to persist? Or could it be the unintended consequences of media-related policies or racial policy?

It may be argued that the fact that the print media in Singapore remains divided along racial lines is an indication that news and information varies amongst the racial groups in Singapore.

¹¹ Syed Hussein Alatas. ‘The Myth of the Lazy Native’.

¹² James Gomez suggested that everyday racism still exist in Singapore, and internet commentaries showed that “the Singaporean government which controls the media can no longer frame and control the discussion of race related issues, and the government’s ‘racial harmony is a myth’ was created by government controlled media.” (Gomez, *Politics and Ethnicity: Framing Racial Discrimination in Singapore*, 2015)

¹³ The Star Online. September 17, 2014. <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2014/09/17/The-familiar-lamentations-of-Dr-M/>.

Conversely, such divisions along racial lines may be a sign that people prefer to read in their native language. However, as news contents and angles in these papers differ, this may further lead to racial or religious stereotyping. Therefore, in this thesis, the contents of various news articles will be analyzed and cross examined to identify any major differences in news angles and reporting.

This study of the role of the media in uniting or dividing the diverse ethnic communities in Singapore is both timely and expedient. My approach will therefore focus on identifying dominant state and public discourses on race and religion, and how the Chinese papers report Malay and Islamic related issues and how the Chinese community perceives such news and how it reacts to it.

It is important to understand the relationship between the Chinese and the Malays today, since both races clashed during the turbulent years just before and after independence. Singapore has a majority Chinese population, and Malaysia's population is predominantly Malay. Research by James T. Richardson reported that 'virtually all Malays are Muslims', Buddhism and Taoism are almost 'exclusively Chinese' (Richardson, 2012, p. 345). It is therefore important to study the Chinese community to examine if such stereotypes or any negative feelings towards the Malay community still persist, and if the media plays any role in shaping their perceptions of the Malays in Singapore.

This thesis may be seen as a contribution to understanding the role and impact of mainstream media on race and religious relations in Singapore today with the aim of promoting positive policy changes. In relation to the field of Malay Studies, this thesis provides a non-Malay perspective on Malay issues and the media in Singapore, with a special focus on how the Malays are portrayed and reported in the Chinese newspapers in Singapore.

1.3 State Discourses on Race and Religion

A discourse is similar to what sociologists call an “ideology”, which is a set of statements or beliefs which produce knowledge that serves the interests of a particular group or class (Hall, 1992, p. 202). Foucault suggested that ““ideology” is based on a distinction between true statements about the world (science) and false statements (ideology), and the belief in the presented “facts” about the world help us decide between true and false statements’. Foucault also argued that statements about the social, political, or moral world are rarely ever simply true or false. “Facts” may be constructed in many different ways, and these “facts” do not enable us to decide definitively about their truth or falsehood. It is thus important to consider the strategies concerned with constructing statements that induce and reinforce belief in presented facts to be true.

The language that is used to describe the so-called “facts” interferes in the process of finally deciding what is true, and what is false. One example cited by Hall was of Palestinians fighting to regain land on the West Bank from Israel who may be described either as “freedom fighters”, or as “terrorists”. The language used to describe Palestinians will clearly influence others, even if the descriptions appear untrue to us. If the media described the Palestinians as terrorists, it will influence the readers to assume that such depictions of the Palestinians as terrorists are “true”. The choice of words have real consequences. Whether the Palestinians are terrorists or not, if we think they are terrorists, and act upon the “knowledge” that they are terrorists, they in effect become the terrorists because we perceive and treat them as such (Hall, 1992, p. 203). The Palestinian problem is produced by competing discourses of them as “freedom fighters” and “terrorists”, and each is linked to a contestation over power, and the outcome of the struggle for power will decide the “truth” of the situation.

The language (discourse) has real effects in practice, and the descriptions become “true”. Understanding discourses side-steps the issue of truth or falsehood in ideology, however, it does not evade the issue of power. Power has the ability to make things “true”, and is an “invisible hand” that can influence behavior, attitudes and beliefs. Foucault’s works centered on the ways power over individuals operates through the production, distribution and access to knowledge. ‘Power produced knowledge’ and that ‘power and knowledge directly imply one another’ (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 1980). Bălan suggested that the state is not something that directly possesses power, but the state is an institution that builds a system of relations between individuals so that the political system works (Bălan, 2010).

The Singaporean government has been conservative since gaining independence from the British, and economic growth has been one of the key concerns of the government, while maintaining social order and encouraging support for (the local) traditionalist values (Tamney, 1992). The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Inche Rahim Ishak commented that ‘secularism could help in the national development of Singapore’ and it ‘placed no obstacles in the way of development’¹⁴. Rahim further mentioned that Singapore had found ‘secular solutions to some of the Republic’s political, social and economic problems’, and the ‘predominant ethnic group in Singapore did not insist that its religious beliefs play the role of the dominant faith in the state’, thus Singapore can ‘concentrate on mobilizing its resources for economic and social development’¹⁵. The belief in maintaining social cohesion through managing racial and religious relations is at the core of providing the stability deemed necessary for economic development.

¹⁴ The Straits Times, Secular state has its benefits says Rahim, June 28th, 1970, page 9

¹⁵ The Straits Times, Secular state has its benefits says Rahim, June 28th, 1970, page 9

A compulsory two-year “Religious Knowledge” programme was introduced and implemented in 1984 for every student in the third year of secondary school. However, the programme was scrapped in 1989 as the government felt that it had not been neutral in the matter of religion as the “Religious Knowledge” programme included only a few religions to be taught in schools, many other religions not being included in the syllabus. Tamney argued that the Singaporean government ‘has never been neutral regarding religion and shows no sign of becoming so’ (Tamney, 1992, p. 205) because the government has banned religious groups like Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Divine Light Mission, and the Unification Church. These groups are considered cult groups by the government. It is also suggested that the government has not been neutral in the matter of religion by designating specific religions to be taught in school curriculum.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong delivered a speech themed “Singapore – Progressing Together”¹⁶ at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Ministerial Forum on January 28th, 2014. He mentioned that Singaporeans are more cohesive, more integrated, and feel more at one than in 1965 when Singapore gained independence, however, Singapore “continues to be vulnerable along fault lines”, and the Prime Minister mentioned three – race and religion, the wealth divide, and between the locals and the new arrivals. And the factor which complicates all of these issues, all of the fault lines, is the social media. The Prime Minister highlighted that race and religion will “always be a sensitive issue in Singapore” (Prime Minister's Office, Singapore, 2014). The *tudung* issue which concerns the Muslim community and the overuse of the Chinese language at the 2014 countdown event were mentioned during the speech.

¹⁶<http://www.pmo.gov.sg/content/pmosite/mediacentre/speechesinterviews/primeminister/2014/January/transcript-of-pm-lee-hsien-loong-s-speech-at-the-ntu-ministerial.html#.U6FOjUCZhEM>

At the speech at the International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Resilience on the 26th of March 2013, the Prime Minister also stressed that trust between ethnic groups in Singapore must be strengthened. “Trust is the foundation for any society, especially a multi-religious, multi-racial one like ours. It underpins our social interactions, and helps build resilience so that people will come together and help one another should attacks occur. Terrorism is regarded as a national threat that endangers all Singapore, not just specific communities. Terrorist attacks not only damage physical infrastructure; they can also destroy the social fabric that binds societies together. We have seen this happen in many countries, where attacks have heightened suspicion between communities, or caused outright hostility against minorities or new arrivals”.¹⁷

Prime Minister Lee also mentioned that “Singapore has experienced first-hand damaging racial conflicts, more than once. We have therefore worked hard to build communal trust by enshrining racial harmony as one of our key values, and ensuring all races progress with the nation. But trust must be continually sustained and nurtured. That is why our first priority after uncovering the JI network¹⁸ was to explain the facts of the case to community leaders and the public, so as to dispel misapprehensions and fears, and make sure that our communities would stand with one another. We established the *Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles* and launched the *Community Engagement Programme*, to build trust and resilience should crises occur.”

At Teck Ghee IRCC Racial Harmony Day Celebrations on July 21st, 2012, Prime Minister Lee reminded the residents that “we should not forget why we are celebrating Racial Harmony Day.

¹⁷http://www.pmo.gov.sg/content/pmosite/mediacentre/speechesinterviews/primeminister/2013/March/speech_by_prime_ministerleehsienloongattheinternationalconferenc.html#.U6FgS0CZhEM.

¹⁸ The Jemaah Islamiah (JI) was a terrorist organisation which aimed to achieve and establish a Daulah Islamiyah, or an Islamic caliphate, in Southeast Asia.

And it is because almost 50 years ago in 1964, we had two race riots happen here and more than 30 people were killed and 500 injured. You can't imagine it today, but it happened." "Now we are a harmonious multi-racial and multi-religious society. But how did we go from riots and people getting killed and injured to where we are, happily mingling and enjoying ourselves, being friends with one another? Not by chance, but because of the way we developed our politics, so that we chose integration and harmony. Because we gave equal opportunities to all Singaporeans, and because we set up institutions like the Presidential Council for Minority Rights, in order to protect the minority communities here. And in our housing board estates, we make sure in our schools, our homes, our HDB blocks, everybody mingles with one another, and we get comfortable with one another." The possibility of terrorist attacks and crisis was highlighted, and race and religion was regarded as a fault line which may cause social frictions and problems.¹⁹

In an interview with Minister Mentor (MM) Lee Kuan Yew, the first Prime Minister of Singapore, with Seth Mydans of the New York Times and International Herald Tribune (IHT) on September 1st, 2010²⁰, he said that segregation of the racial groups cannot be allowed. MM Lee said that "We have crafted a set of very intricate rules, no housing blocks shall have more than a percentage of so many Chinese, so many percent Malays, Indians. All are thoroughly mixed. Willy-nilly, your neighbours are Indians, Malays, you go to the same shopping malls, you go to the same schools, the same playing fields, and you go up and down the same lifts. We cannot allow segregation. (Prime Minister's Office, Singapore, 2010)"

¹⁹http://www.pmo.gov.sg/content/pmosite/mediacentre/speechesinterviews/primeminister/2012/July/speech_by_prime_ministerleehsienloongatteckgheirccracialharmony.html

²⁰http://www.pmo.gov.sg/content/pmosite/mediacentre/speechesinterviews/ministermentor/2010/September/transcript_of_ministermentorleekuannewsinterviewwithsethmydansof.html#.U6JWe0CZhEM

The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) was established in 1988 to promote a greater awareness of policy issues and good governance. IPS is a think-tank within the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP) at the National University of Singapore, and seeks to cultivate clarity of thought, forward thinking and a big-picture perspective on issues of critical national interest through strategic deliberation and research. The Institute studies the attitudes and aspirations of Singaporeans which have an impact on policy development and the relevant areas of diplomacy and international affairs.

A paper titled ‘Religiosity and the Management of Religious Harmony: Responses from the IPS Survey on Race, Religion and Language’²¹ was released on 17 June 2014 by the Institute of Policy Studies, and the key findings were that:

1. Singapore has done well in promoting religious harmony. There is widespread tolerance and acceptance of diversity in the public sphere.
2. The state is still trusted to play a role in managing the peaceful coexistence of different faiths.
3. Religion is important to many – especially those from monotheistic religious traditions. Interactions of a religious nature are likely to contribute to the building of a stronger religious identity.
4. There is substantial diversity in the personal beliefs of religious adherents, and religious labels may not necessarily reflect the religious beliefs that people have.
5. Personal preferences and customary traditions and practices prescribed by various religions continue to shape relationships in the private sphere.

²¹ Paper was accessed at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) at http://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/06/WorkingPapers21_180614_v3.pdf on 18 June 2014.

The state discourse on race and religion has frequently been portrayed as a fault line in the Singapore society, mainly blamed for the turbulent times sparked by race riots before independence. The government has been very careful of religious and racial sensitivities, and continued to ensure race and religious issues are well managed.

Race and religion has always been a sensitive topic not discussed in the public sphere. The media has been self-regulating, and race and religious issues rarely hit to the newsstands. However, after September 11, government initiatives such as the Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles, and the Inter-Religious Harmony Circle have fostered greater understanding between the communities and promoted goodwill, and issues pertaining to race and religion were discussed at a much greater scale in public domains. The popularity of the internet and social media changed the entire social landscape and issues regarding race and religion are much more freely discussed or even condemned online. The state saw this as a problem threatening social cohesion and legislation was eventually passed to regulate contents even in the cyber domain. Individuals who post sensitive comments on social media and any internet forum will be dealt with severely by the authorities.

1.4 Ideology of race in Singapore

Once Singapore broke away from the Federation of Malaysia and gained independence, the new Constitution clearly stated that it is the responsibility of the Government “constantly to care for the interests of the racial and religious minorities in Singapore”, and the Government shall “exercise its functions in such manner as to recognise the special position of the Malays, who are the indigenous people of Singapore, and accordingly it shall be the responsibility of

the Government to protect, safeguard, support, foster and promote their political, educational, religious, economic, social and cultural interests and the Malay language”²².

The founding Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew proclaimed on August 9th, 1965, that Singapore is “not a Malay nation, not a Chinese nation; not an Indian nation” (Lee Kuan Yew, 1965), and “everybody will have his place: equal; language, culture, religion” (ibid). Mr Lee also stressed that the Government “believed in multi-racialism and brought Singapore away from chauvinism into multi-racialism” (ibid).

Singapore became numerically dominated by immigrant ethnic groups soon after the British annexed the island in 1819, and the residents on the island were mainly Malays. The three communities with the largest population were the Chinese, Malays and Indians, and other smaller communities included the Eurasians, Arabs, and Peranakans. The C-M-I-O (Chinese-Malay-Indian-Others) categorization of races in Singapore reflected how race was perceived and managed in Singapore, from Chinese as the largest community, the Malay community, followed by the smaller Indian Community. All other smaller communities were regarded as “Others”.

Singapore styles itself as a multiracial country, and the Government adopted a very careful approach in crafting national policies, including the policy of multiracialism. Geoffrey Benjamin defined ‘multiracialism’ as the “ideology that accords equal status to the cultures and identities of the various ‘races’ comprising a plural society”. (Benjamin, 1976)

Ali Rattansi explained that it is common to use ‘multiracial’ and ‘multicultural’ as interchangeable description (Rattansi, 2011, p. 9). In a multicultural society, immigrants were encouraged to ‘integrate’ rather than required to assimilate. Immigrants were able to retain

²² Article 152 of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore, Part XIII, General Provisions (<http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/>)

elements of their 'home culture' and ethnic community associations were regarded as important vehicles of integration (Rattansi, 2011, p. 8). According to Rattansi (2011), the issue of multiculturalism was racialized from its inception, with multiculturalism having origins in the colonial era when indigenous populations were regarded as innately inferior races (ibid).

Singapore adopted a new multiracialism policy to manage and govern the multiethnic immigrant populations by redressing the inequalities between majority and minority ethnic communities in Singapore, and also by celebrating cultural and racial diversity and pluralism.

The pioneer generation of leaders in Singapore were mindful of the heightened interracial tensions after Singapore separated from Malaysia in 1965. The experiences of past racial riots was of grave concern to the Singapore political leaders and the policy of multiracialism was introduced to ease any tensions between the races in Singapore, and to accord equal status and treatment to every race in Singapore. By treating every citizen regardless of their race fairly and giving them equal opportunities, it minimized the chance for any individual to sow discord by claiming unfair treatment between the different racial communities. Thus an important function of the policy of multiracialism may be regarded as a form of formal social control to prevent the establishment of chaos or anomie in Singaporean society. Multiracialism recognized the differences between people of different racial backgrounds, and the Singaporean government made it a point to maintain the cultural identities unique to each race. It also attempted to strengthen identity by promoting cultural festivals such as Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival for the Chinese, Hari Raya celebrations for the Malays, and Thaipusam and Deepavali for the Indians. The streets of Chinatown will be lighted up with colourful lights and decorations during Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn festivals, similiarly, Geylang Serai (traditional Malay enclave) will be beautifully decorated during Hari Raya Aidifiltri, and the streets of Little India will be lighted up colourfully during Deepavali. Although these street light-ups were promoted and featured by the Singapore Tourism Board

to showcase Singapore's cultural diversity, it is also an important attempt by the Government to recognize the cultural identities of the different races, and for the individuals to increase their sense of identity within their respective racial communities. Before independence, Singapore had a largely immigrant population, where the pioneer generation of Singaporeans came from different places of origin and did not associate closely with one another. The policy of multiracialism thus become the gelling agent to bring the culturally and racially diverse communities together with a common national identity.

All Singaporeans are thus classified according to their race in the C-M-I-O categorization, they are either a 'Chinese', 'Malay', 'Indian' or 'Others'. The National Registration Identity Card (NRIC) is the identity document for all Singaporeans and Permanent Residents. Important information such as the holder's name, race, date of birth, gender, and country of birth are clearly indicated on the front side of the NRIC. The 'race' of the holder is reflected immediately after the name, and this is important as 'race' is an important consideration for many areas, including the purchase of a subsidized flat by the Housing and Development Board (HDB). The HDB is Singapore's public housing authority and the Government had implemented the Ethnic Integration Policy (EIP) to "maintain a good ethnic mix in HDB estates, thereby helping to promote racial integration and harmony." (Housing and Development Board, 2006)

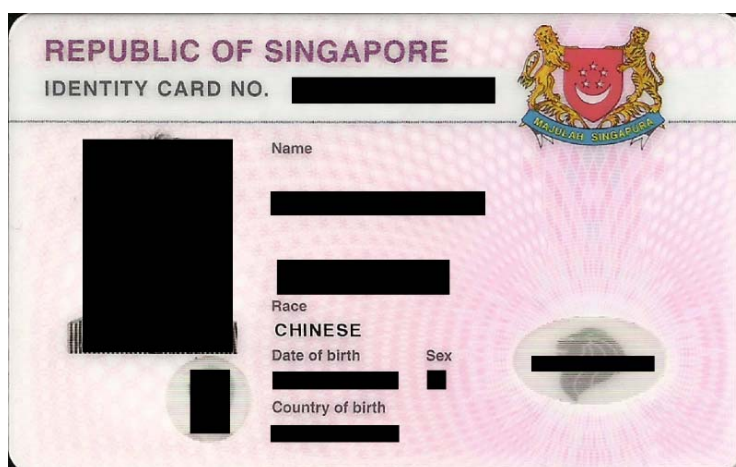


Figure 1: The front side of the Singapore NRIC

While multiracialism and the C-M-I-O policy promotes meritocracy and equality, it unintentionally highlighted the differences each of the C-M-I-O constituent races and their respective cultural identities. Singapore adopted the bilingual policy where every student must understand English and their mother tongue language so that Singaporeans are aware of their 'cultural roots', further emphasising the importance of retaining their cultural and racial identity. The mother tongue language is the language associated with their racial identity, and the state presumed that ethnic Chinese speak Mandarin, Malays speak Malay, Indians speak Tamil, and 'Others' speak English. This simplification of race – language is problematic. The over simplistic categorization of Indians learning and speaking the Tamil language simply ignored the fact that there were many socio-cultural and linguistic differences within the larger Indian community. No given 'race' in Singapore is a homogeneous community, but formed up of different dialect speaking groups. The Chinese immigrants came from different geographical locations in China, and they spoke an array of dialects such as Cantonese, Hokkien, Hainanese, Teochew, and Hakka. To assume all Chinese speak Mandarin is an oversimplification of the issue. Similarly the Malay community was formed by numerous communities such as the Javanese, Baweanese (Boyanes), Bugis, and Mingangkabaus, and they spoke many dialects including the Bangkanese, Bruneian, Jambian, Kalantanese, Kedahan dialects. The reduction of all the diverse communities in Singapore into four categories of 'race' may thus be problematic, especially in cases such as interracial marriages. The identity of the child from such interracial relationships is ambiguous, and they are assigned to the father's race by legislation (Beng Huat, 2003). Sharon Siddique highlighted that children of interracial marriages might have problems fitting in a society where everyone has a clearly defined race, and must select a mother tongue language in the Singapore educational system, the selection process being potential source of conflict and disagreements between the parents (Siddique,

1997). This confusion in identity of race may also contribute to how the different communities understand and perceive one another.

The simplification of 'race' in Singapore to C-M-I-O suggested that the state perceived race, language, and religion as co-related. The C-M-I-O model also generalized that Chinese are Taoists or Buddhists, Malays are Muslims, and Indians are Hindus.

The C-M-I-O categorization of 'race' had been carried over from Singapore's colonial past, where the British administrators planning and administering the city on the basis of the various ethnic enclaves assigned to the Chinese, Indians, Malays and European communities. Between the 1850s to 1950s, the colonial government largely left the responsibilities to the leaders of the respective ethnic communities to manage their affairs and develop their communities with their own methods and resources. Communities also managed their own welfare and religious needs, and they built temples, mosques, and set up vernacular schools and other institutions. Businessmen and wealthy individuals became important source of funds for sponsoring the above activities.

The Federation of Malaya, formed of 11 states which included nine Malay states, and two from the (British) Straits Settlements (Penang and Malacca), had contrasting demographic profiles with Singapore. The Malays formed the majority population in the Federation of Malaya, while the Chinese formed the majority population in Singapore. The Federation of Malaya guarantees the rights and special position of the Malay people as well as rights, powers, and sovereignty of the Malay rulers in their respective states. The Federation of Malaya was established on February 1, 1948, and Singapore was excluded from the federation despite its links to Malaya. The political landscape in the Malayan peninsular in the 1950s caused racial polarization between the Chinese and the Malays, and the racial conflicts during the period added fuel to the fire. In 1963, the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, British North Borneo (Sabah) and

Sarawak merged to form Malaysia, however, discriminate racial politics and other race issues eventually lead to the separation of Singapore from Malaysia. Political parties in Singapore at that time did not advocated racial politics, but rather pressed for political independence to allow the unions to improve the positions of workers, and they regarded their movement as anti-colonial and anti-racist. These political activists played an important role in shaping the People's Action Party (PAP)'s stand on anti-racism and maintaining multiculturalism in Singapore (Kheng Yen, 2016).

Geoffrey Benjamin suggested that in official discourse, the PAP government regarded the relationship between society, culture, race, ethnicity and the individual as “unequivocally interchangeable” (Benjamin, 1976, p. 118). Benjamin noted that ethno-racialization is “well institutionalized at the official level and it is effectively internalized at the private level (ibid). A Singaporean must fit into one of the four major ‘races’ in the C-M-I-O model, and thus multiculturalism in Singapore puts pressure on the Chinese to become more ‘Chinese’, the Malays to be more ‘Malay’, and the Indians to be more ‘Indian’ (Benjamin, 1976, p. 124).

The ideology of ‘race’ is carefully managed by the Singaporean government, and the government implemented measures to manage racial issues which have the potential to divide the society and disrupt public order. Multiracialism is regarded as an important element for social and political stability in Singapore, and any attempt to racialize contentious issues will be quickly suppressed and even criminalized in order to maintain ‘racial harmony’ in Singapore (Kwen Fee, 2016, p. 19).

For example, in 2016, the case of the 17-year-old youth Amos Yee who was sentenced to imprisonment for ‘intending to wound religious feelings’ and for ‘wounding Muslim and/or Christian feelings’ is an example of how the State managed insensitive actions which may potentially stir negative emotions and hatred within the community. The Principal District

Judge said that Yee's "contemptuous and irreverent remarks have the tendency to generate social unrest and undermine the religious harmony in our society²³." The harsh punishment for even a youth sent a strong deterrent message to all Singaporeans that any attempt to hurt the feelings of any racial or religious community in Singapore is a very severe criminal offence.

1.5 Background to the Legislations and statutes governing race and religion in Singapore

The then Home Affairs and Law Minister K. Shanmugam spoke at the inaugural forum "A Free Press for a Global Society" at Columbia University in 2010, and he emphasized that the political context is important when considering the role of the media. He highlighted that the media should be a neutral medium for conveying news, with commentary clearly separate. The media should also report fully and fairly what goes on. The media should probe and ask inconvenient questions, and expose wrong-doings. But the media should not join the political fray and become a political actor. The media should not campaign for or against a policy position, but it can and should convey the views of opposing political actors, so people can judge for themselves the validity of any particular point of view. The minister also emphasized that if any journalist or newspaper owner wants to take part in the political process, then they should join a political party and not use the privileged access to the media to push a political perspective. Fault lines in the Singapore society, along racial and religious lines, can easily be exploited and may cause much harm (Ministry of Law, 2010).

²³ The Straits Times. September 29, 2016. Teen blogger Amos Yee gets 6 weeks' jail and \$2,000 fine for wounding religious feelings < <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-crime/teen-blogger-amos-yee-gets-six-weeks-jail-and-2000-fine-for-wounding> >

Minister K. Shanmugam noted that the above views of the Singapore Government are not very popular, particularly with the media. He cited “negative attention” from the international media, and cited the worldwide press freedom index of countries according to their respect for press freedom published by the Reporters Sans Frontieres (Reporters Without Borders), which ranked Singapore 136th in 2010, below Iraq (130th), Zimbabwe (123rd), and Guinea (113th). He slammed the methodology adopted by RSF and highlighted that the organisation “go to each country and choose some people to ask questions on what they think about press freedom in that country. The scores thus seem to depend entirely on who is chosen to be asked, and how subjective that person is. So it is not the same group of people who assess each country by a defined set of criteria. It is also not clear what weights RSF gives to different criteria.” (Ministry of Law, 2010) He contrasted the poor ranking by RSF against the Gallup poll conducted in 2005 and 2006. Gallup asked the citizens in 128 countries if they had confidence in the quality and integrity of their media, and the minister highlighted that Singaporeans generally still trust the media in Singapore. The minister further explained that the uncompromising attitude Singapore took on libel might have affected the ranking. Minister K. Shanmugam argued that the Singaporean government would not want Singapore to follow the footsteps of many developing countries which adopted the United States model of press freedom, where journalistic values may be sacrificed for profit, and media companies and journalists may influence the political process and cause further divides in the society.

Robin Chan, the Assistant Political Editor of The Straits Times, discussed his views on mainstream media and credibility in the article “Role of the media in need of rethink – Trust must be strengthened for meaningful work to continue”, published on page D5 on the Saturday issue of The Straits Times on July 12th, 2014. The article said that the rapport between the Government and the citizens is important and it is crucial that the citizen have trust in the media to receive truthful news stories and also fair views of government policies. The public should

also have the confidence that the mainstream media is unbiased and credible in the reporting of stories. The Government defended its stand against criticisms of suppressing press freedom, and defined what the local media should be: It should not be an adversary to the Government, as is in more liberal media models, but one that is a partner with the Government in nation building (Chan R. , 2014, p. D5).

Singapore did not have the free-wheeling style of journalism found in some democracies which adopted the United States model, and it led to the perceptions of the mainstream media as being government-controlled and unfair. As a journalist and assistant editor at The Straits Times' political desk, Chan found that some of the criticisms of mainstream media to be unfair. He pointed out that The Straits Times journalists do write critical and insightful articles that helped deepen discussion on national issues or expose weaknesses in the policy (Chan R. , 2014).

The press, in the “Western” model, is seen as a watchdog of the government. However, Wendy Bokhorst-Heng suggested that the “centrality of the national agenda to the role of the press in Singapore is unambiguous in the many speeches government leaders have given on the topic, and it is made clear both by framing the role of the press against what it is not and by defining what it is (Heng, 2002). Singapore strongly rejected the “Western” model of the press where it is seen as a watchdog of the government, preferring instead a “responsible press” that works together with the government for “national good” (Heng, 2002, p. 560) and that the media has an important role in nation building.

Then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said at Lianhe Zaobao's 75th anniversary gala dinner that “the newspapers are important vehicles for transmitting cultural values. Moral values and ethical standards are vital for a sound and stable society. The Asian tradition of respect for authority, attachment to family, deference to societal interests, thrift, conservatism in social mores and emphasis on education are values that Zaobao must help to uphold. We have added

on to these meritocracy, tolerance, and consensus. Together with the traditional values, these form our Singapore values.” (Singapore Government Press Release, 1998)

The government set rather strict and harsh policies which govern the media landscape in Singapore, and some people perceived that the media was controlled by the government and that the press was biased. Yet the Ministers and Members of Parliaments urged better communication of policies to assist the public in understanding why certain things are being done the way they are, and they²⁴ felt that the media was not helping to help strengthen the trust of the public in the government. It was argued that the media would not be able to strengthen public trust in the Government if the Government was not already not worthy of that trust. Therefore it is a very interesting situation in Singapore where people felt that the government is controlling the media, but yet 69 percent (Gallup, 2007) still trusted the local media for the quality and integrity. On the other hand, the government felt that the media was not fulfilling their role as “a supporter”.

Of course, while legislative tools are one of the main factors influencing self-censorship in reporting of race and religion in the local newspapers, there are numerous other factors which to a lesser extent influence and condition how news is reported in Singapore. These include the reproduction of dominant ideas paddled by influential groups within Singapore on specific issues which can strongly impact upon perspectives not only in journalistic writings but even scholarship. Influential media institutions outside Singapore may also influence how news is presented in Singapore, especially when local media obtain news leads and articles from these foreign media actors. It is uncommon that strong influence of dominant discourse may have

²⁴ Based on work-related meeting with a Minister and several senior civil servants in July 2014.

the effect of legitimizing views that are prejudicial to specific groups or communities. I shall analyse dominant public discourses which may influence news writing in this thesis.

1.6 Protecting the integrity of religious institutions

Foucault examined how discipline was enforced by institutions for self-regulation. Such self-regulation became a norm in modern societies and allowed the individual as an instrument to change the reality and self. Power not only excludes, represses, censors, abstracts, masks, or conceals, power produces; and it produces reality and domains of objects and rituals of truth (Foucault, 1977, p. 194).

Institutions use different types of power enforcement with specific mechanisms and techniques, and discipline is a concern for control internalized by individuals.

Legislations are passed by the state so the society knows what is acceptable and what is not, and it also adds pressure for disciplinary actions to individuals, which further leads to self-discipline and the production of the individual as a subject. Discipline is a set of strategies, procedures and behaviors associated with certain institutional contexts which then pervades the individual's general thinking and behavior.

In Singapore, offences relating to religion or race were clearly indicated in the Penal Code (Cap 224). With reference to the Indian Penal Code of 1860, Chapter XV (15) clearly spelt out the offences relating to religion or race. The Indian Penal Code was adopted by the British colonial authorities in the Straits Settlements and it was the basis of the criminal codes in Singapore, even after independence.

Section 295 states the penalty for injuring or defiling a place of worship with intent to insult the religion of any class, that 'whoever destroys, damages or defiles any place of worship, or

any object held sacred by any class of persons, with the intention of thereby insulting the religion of any class of persons, or with the knowledge that any class of persons is likely to consider such destruction, damage or defilement as an insult to their religion, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 5 years, or with fine, or with both.’

Section 296 states the penalty for disturbing a religious assembly. ‘Whoever voluntarily causes disturbance to any assembly lawfully engaged in the performance of religious worship or religious ceremonies, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 3 years, or with fine, or with both.’

Section 297 states the penalty for the trespassing on burial places, etc., that ‘whoever, with the intention of wounding the feelings of any person, or of insulting the religion of any person, or with the knowledge that the feelings of any person are likely to be wounded, or that the religion of any person is likely to be insulted thereby, commits any trespass in any place of worship or on any place of sepulture or any place set apart for the performance of funeral rites, or as a depository for the remains of the dead, or offers any indignity to any human corpse, or causes disturbance to any persons assembled for the performance of funeral ceremonies, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 3 years, or with fine, or with both.’

Section 298 states that ‘whoever, with deliberate intention of wounding the religious or racial feelings of any person, utters any word or makes any sound in the hearing of that person, or makes any gesture in the sight of that person, or places any object in the sight of that person, or causes any matter however represented to be seen or heard by that person, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 3 years, or with fine, or with both.’

Section 298 was expanded to Section 298A to cover offences related to the promotion of enmity between different groups on grounds of religion or race and doing acts prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony. ‘Whoever – (a) by words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by

visible representations or otherwise, knowingly promotes or attempts to promote, on grounds of religion or race, disharmony or feelings of enmity, hatred or ill-will between different religious or racial groups; or (b)

commits any act which he knows is prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony between different religious or racial groups and which disturbs or is likely to disturb the public tranquility, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 3 years, or with fine, or with both.’

Offences relating to race or religion may be punished by imprisonment, which was what Foucault referred to as the ‘spatial disposition’ of individuals, attained usually through imprisonment. Individuals will ‘know their place’ in the context of the general economy of space associated with the disciplinary power when imprisoned and their activities and movements restricted.

With such strict legislations governing issues on race and religion, it is suggested that the media in Singapore has become very conscious of publishing any articles which may flout any regulations. Key positions of the media actors, the Singapore Press Holdings and Mediacorp, have close relations to the government, or were former government officials or senior officers of the public service. For example, the Chairman of the Board of Directors for Singapore Press Holdings since October 1, 2011 is Lee Boon Yang, the previously Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts before retiring from politics in March 2009²⁵. Senior civil service officer, such as the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social and Family Development, also sits on the board of directors in Mediacorp²⁶. With the presence of senior government officials on the board of the two media actors, together with strict media laws, it is suggested

²⁵ <http://sph.com.sg/about-sph/board-of-directors/>

²⁶ <http://www.mediacorp.sg/en/about/boardofdirectors>

that there is a form of self-regulation consciously or unconsciously by the media actors, as they are obliged to behave as if the government is constantly watching them, even if it is not the case.

It is also suggested that the presence of retired or incumbent senior government officials on the board of directors also allows for the creation and reproduction of ideologies to shape the behavior of others, and the masses, according to Foucault's analysis of *gouvernementalité* (governmentality) to decide who can and should govern and who to be governed.

The Minister for Communications and Information is responsible for departments and subjects set out in the Schedule (Attorney-General's Chambers, 2012), and is responsible for the regulation of newspapers and printing presses; contentment regulation for film, sound recordings, broadcast, publications and other media; film, television production and other media industry development; media industry regulation and competitions development; public service broadcast; and Singapore film commission.

I would suggest that legislation, such as the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act of 1974, the Sedition Act, the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act, the Internal Security Act, and the Penal Code instill an overwhelming sense of discipline and that the local media has internalized such discipline. A primary reason for this may be the extent to which foreign media have been sued for defamation. Publications such as *The Economists*, *International Herald Tribune*, the *Bloomberg* business news wire, the Hong Kong-based *Yazhou Zhoukan*, and the *Far Eastern Economic Review* have all been sued for defamation and made to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in damages or make out-of-court settlements.

The New York Times Co. apologized to Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew in 2010 and paid S\$160,000 in damages for an article about Asian political dynasties and that Lee Hsien Loong “did not achieve his position through

merit” in an article entitled “All in the Family” published in the International Herald Tribune (global edition of The New York Times) on February 15th, 2010. The article’s author, who was also the editor of the global editions of the International Herald Tribune, also agreed to pay damages of S\$60,000 to Lee Hsien Loong, S\$50,000 each to former prime ministers Goh Chok Tong and Lee Kuan Yew, and also paid for their legal costs (Reuters, 2010).

The Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER) was banned in Singapore by the government in 2006 after it failed to comply with media regulations²⁷. The FEER released a statement in response to the ban and highlighted that the ‘lawsuits also make reference to the section of the article that notes “Singaporean officials have a remarkable record of success in winning libel suits against their critics. The question then is, how many other libel suits have Singapore’s great and good wrongly won, resulting in the cover-up of real misdeeds? And are libel suits deliberately used as a tool to suppress questioning voices?” The lawyer claims that this means that Mr. Lee Sr. “has set out to sue and suppress those who would question him as he fears such questions would expose his corruption.”’²⁸

The High Court of Singapore ruled that the FEER and its editor Hugo Restall had defamed Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew on September 24th, 2008. In the judgment of the case²⁹, the Court of Appeal stated that ‘unless there are special facts, there is no general media privilege’. It highlighted that under Section 12 of the Defamation Act (Chapter 75, 1985 Revised Edition), it provides for qualified privilege for a newspaper in Singapore, that ‘the publication in a newspaper of any such report or other matter

²⁷ The New Paper, Sep 29, 2006. Page 24.

²⁸ <http://udhr19.blogspot.sg/2006/09/pap-govt-bans-feer-feer-responds.html>. FEER

²⁹ [2009] 1 SLR(R). Lee Hsien Loong v Review Publishing Co Ltd and another and another suit. [2008] SGHC 162.

as is mentioned in the Schedule shall be privileged unless the publication is proved to be made with malice’.

FEER appealed against the judgment but lost the case again in October 2009 when the Court of Appeal ruled that the FEER had defamed Lee Kuan Yew and his son, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. The judge rebutted the appeal, and cited that ‘if the defendants’ contention were valid, it would mean that in Singapore, a person could continue to make defamatory remarks about a person who enjoys the highest of reputations without being liable under the law of defamation. I reject such as contention’³⁰.

The defamation suits were often seen by the oppositions as a method utilized by the government to curb freedom of expression, especially political opposition and criticism of the government. However, the stand of the government is clear that ‘freedom of speech does not come free from the need to be responsible for what one says, either online or offline’³¹.

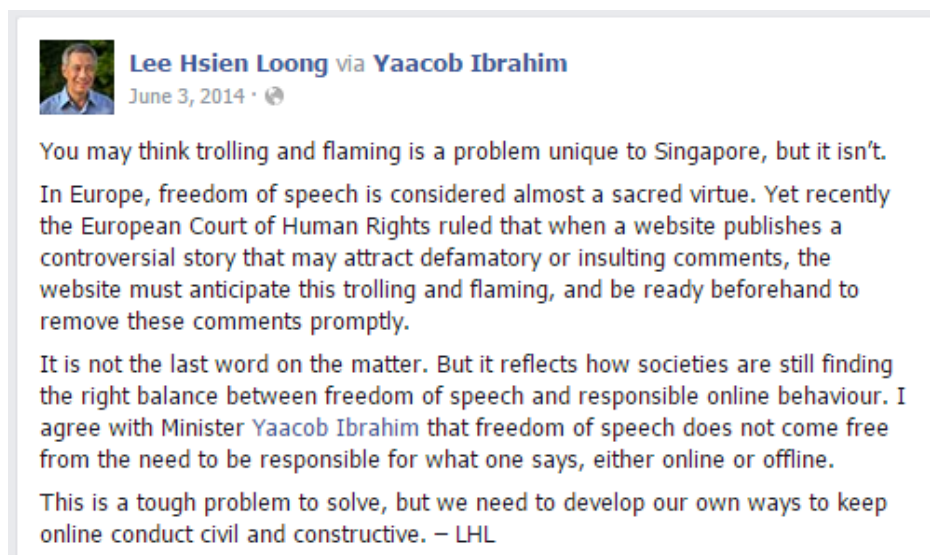


Figure 2: A comment by Lee Hsien Loong on social media site Facebook

³⁰ [2009] 1 SLR(R). Lee Hsien Loong v Review Publishing Co Ltd and another and another suit. [2008] SGHC 162.

³¹ Post by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on his official Facebook account. June 3, 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/leehsienloong/posts/719842881411754>

The Singaporean government takes a firm stance to ensure the freedom of speech, yet also the need to be responsible for one's action discouraged reporters from baseless or malicious reporting, and sent a clear message to the journalists that they are liable for their reporting. The editors and journalists internalized this form of discipline and created a culture of self-censorship and the censorship of others. An informal set of rules of engagement for journalists, also known as "out of bounds" (OB) markers in Singapore, is observed, and the media actors are cautious in reporting news relating to race or religion.

As self-censorship by journalists result in articles not being written, it is impossible to find concrete examples of them. However, self-censorship is relevant to this thesis because some topics not specifically covered under the Sedition act are still not reported on in case they infringe on the borders covered by government censorship.

As large amounts of such news were not comprehensively reported, data collection becomes an issue. This thesis shall analyze several prominent incidents post-9/11 which may have stoked up emotions between the ethnic communities, especially the Chinese and the Malays.

1.7 The discourse of ethnic minorities in Singapore

A *Presidential Council for Minority Rights* was formed in 1970 to examine all legislation to ensure that they are not disadvantageous to any racial or religious community as compared to other such communities, and reports any such legislation to the Parliament of Singapore. The Council also considers matters that affect any racial or religious community that are referred to it by the Parliament or the Government of Singapore. The *Presidential Council for Minority Rights* also advises the President of the Republic of Singapore on nominations of appointees to the *Presidential Council for Religious Harmony* (under the Maintenance of Religious Harmony

Act), the *Malay Community Committee*, and *The Indian and Other Minorities Communities Committee* (under the Parliamentary Elections Act)³².

The Chairman and members of the *Presidential Council for Religious Harmony* are appointed by the President of the Republic of Singapore, and the Council gives its advice to the Minister for Home Affairs on matters affecting the maintenance of religious harmony in Singapore which are referred to it by the Minister for Home Affairs or by the Parliament of Singapore. The Council also considers and makes recommendations to the President on restraining orders issued under the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act.

It is interesting to note that the *Malay Community Committee* and *The Indian and Other Minorities Communities Committee* verifies and certifies a candidate standing for Parliamentary election in a group representation constituency belonging to the Malay or the Indian or other minority communities. This is to ensure that the minorities, including the Malays, Indians and others, are fairly represented in the Parliament of Singapore.

Studies on race in earlier approaches focused on the ideological role of the mainstream media in securing social consent. The focus was shifted to the text as a 'site of hegemonic struggle, differentiation within and between cultural products in the expression of racial discourse' (Poole, 2002, p. 49) was developed along with semiotic and structural analysis in the 1980s. The history of race reporting is rooted in a specific colonial past in the United Kingdom according to Stuart Hall.

The work by Edward Said on Orientalism and Foucault's idea regarding discourse may be applied to understand how the West perceived the others, how one perceives others, and also how the majority perceives the minority. In this thesis, it is crucial to understand how the

³² Official website of the Istana, the office of the President of the Republic of Singapore.
<http://www.istana.gov.sg/roles-and-responsibilities/presidents-office/other-presidential-councils>

Chinese majority in Singapore perceives the minorities, especially the Malay community. Hall suggested that the persistence of such orientalist ideas continues to influence and affect many contemporary scholars including those who attempted to deconstruct the “West”.

The “West” is a historical construct, and not a geographical one. The “Western” refers to a society that is developed, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular, and modern (Hall, 1992). According to Hall, the concept of the “West” may function in the following ways: First, it is used to characterize and classify societies into different categories so there is a certain structure of thought and knowledge in motion. Secondly, it depicted an image or a set of images, where a number of different characteristics may be condensed into a single picture, and influence our mind to interpret what different societies, cultures, peoples, and places are like. Thirdly, it allowed a standard or model of comparison to compare to what extent different societies resemble, or differ from, one another. It is used to explain difference. Fourthly, the “West” provided the criteria of evaluation against which other societies are ranked and around ‘powerful positive and negative feelings cluster’. It produces an ideology that explains the knowledge about a subject and certain attitudes towards it (Hall, 1992, p. 186). The idea of the “West” enabled people to know or speak of certain things in certain ways. It produced knowledge.

The “West” is not an homogeneous entity. The “West” contained many internal differences such different nations in Europe, and also different attitudes towards other cultures. The “West” not only treats non-European cultures as different and inferior, but they also had its own ‘internal others’. One example would be the Jews who were often excluded and ostracized despite its close Abrahamic roots to the western religious traditions. West Europeans also regarded Eastern Europeans as “barbaric” and thought the “West”, western women were also represented as inferior to western men. The discourse of the “West” as a “system of

representation” represents the world as divided according to simple dichotomy – the West or the Rest.

This discourse may be applied to understand how the Chinese and the Malays in Singapore perceive one another despite sharing a common nationality, and live together in the same geographical location.

1.8 The historical development of the print media in Singapore

Print media remains one of the most reliable mediums of broadcasting information, to reach out and shape public opinion in Singapore. Despite advances in technologies and the availability of new media, readership of mainstream newspapers in Singapore remains significant. Printed media is widely circulated and the public can access the newspapers easily, not only from community centres, and convenience stores, but also online as Singapore Press Holdings also offers digital subscriptions. Many Singaporeans today prefer to read news articles online either on tablets or computers, or on smart phones. However, this has not always been the case. .

Defined in the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act (Attorney-General's Chambers, 2011), a “newspaper” means any publication containing news, intelligence, reports of occurrences, or any remarks, observations or comments, in relation to such news, intelligence, reports of occurrences, or to any other matter of public interest, printed in any language and published for sale or free distribution at regular intervals or otherwise, but does not include any publication published by or for the Government.

In the Defamation Act (Attorney-General's Chambers, 2014), a ‘newspaper’ is defined as ‘any paper containing public news or observations thereon or consisting wholly or mainly of

advertisements which is printed for sale and is published in Singapore either periodically or in parts or numbers at intervals not exceeding 36 days’.

Looking at the media in previous eras, Ang Peng Hwa (2007) concluded that religious, economic and political motives were originally behind the establishment of newspapers in Singapore. For example, Christian and Muslim groups had a religious agenda when starting their early newspapers, and used the papers as a platform to evangelize or promote religious ideologies. English newspapers were established for commercial and economic gain, and the Chinese papers were primarily used as tools to spread political ideologies by those who were engaged in China’s political arena (Ang, 2007, p. 2).

The colonial administration did not have much control over the newspapers in the early days as news agencies were started by private businessmen in Singapore. The media fell into the control of the Japanese during the period of Japanese Occupation from 1942 to 1945. After the Japanese surrendered, control over the newspapers was returned to the private sector (Ang, 2007).

The post-WWII period saw a large number of countries attaining independence from colonial rule. Singapore - a British colony founded in 1819 - achieved self-governance in 1959, and it eventually separated from the Federation under acrimonious circumstances and declared full independence on August 9th, 1965. Many former colonies such as Burma and the Philippines, started with extremely well-written constitutions and noble ideals on the separations of power, parliaments, courts, and political parties, but these processes and institutions frequently became debased and corrupted fairly quickly.

The Maria Hertogh case left a mark in Singapore’s history as it reflected the sensitivity of racial relations in Singapore and highlighted the potential of the media to fuel tensions. This is one

of the key incidents that led to stricter government regulation of newspapers in Singapore that gradually transformed into today's environment of government and self-censorship.

1.8.1 The Maria Hertogh riots

A document titled 'When the Press Misinforms' was presented by Brigadier General Lee Hsien Loong, then the Minister for Trade and Industry and 2nd Minister for Defence (Services) at the 40th World Congress of Newspaper Publishers at Helsinki, Finland in 1987. The paper highlighted "the dangers of the media" and cited that the "most straightforward way to destabilize Singapore is to foment racial and religious discord"³³.

The document also highlighted how a Malay language newspaper mounted a "sustained campaign" falsely alleging that the Chinese majority were suppressing the rights of the Muslim Malay minority. The reports influenced social developments which ended in riots sparked off by a procession to mark the Prophet Mohammed's birthday at the Padang on July 21st, 1964. The 1969 race riots were also mentioned in the speech 'When the Press Misinforms' by Lee, and this reinforced the fear of and vulnerability within racial and religious tensions which threatened social stability in Singapore. The campaign by the Malay newspaper which stoked the emotions of the public demonstrated the influence and power of the media. This was an important lesson which led to the government's conviction that the media has to be regulated.

The then Chief Justice of Singapore, an Englishman, decided that Maria Hertogh, a Dutch girl brought up by a Malay Muslim foster mother during the war, should be returned to her

³³ Singapore Government Press Release, Release Number 40/MAY (15-1/87/05/26) on 26 May 1987, available on the website of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, at <http://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2013/02/Singapore-Government-press-release_When-the-press-misinforms_26051987.pdf>, accessed 01 May 2014

biological parents and to the Catholic faith. The Malay press published inflammatory articles to present the case as one of religious conflict between Islam and Christianity, and photographs depicting Maria kneeling before the Virgin Mary in the convent were published in the newspapers. Race riots broke out within a week which left 18 killed and 173 injured.

In 1951, a Commission of Inquiry was tasked to identify the factors that led to the outbreak of the riots, and a total of 126 police officers, government servants, Muslim elites and members of the public were interviewed (Ajlunied, 2009). Professor Jon Quah analysed the public administration and policies introduced by the British colonial government and the People's Action Party government in Singapore in his book *Public Administration Singapore-Style* (Quah, Public Administration Singapore-style, 2010), and studied how the media is managed in Singapore.

The Commission of Inquiry found that the police were unable to quell the riots because the junior police sent to restore order were mostly Malays and Muslims, and they sympathized with the rioters (Quah, Public Administration Singapore-Style, 2010, p. 215). The Singapore Police Force was blamed as it 'failed to anticipate the possibility of an outbreak of mass violence and to employ necessary force at an early stage, which revealed the vulnerability of the security agencies to the rioters, which resulted in the spread of mass violence from the area just outside the Supreme Court to other parts of the city' (Ajlunied, 2009, p. 128). It is suggested that the blaming of the police force, in particularly the Malay police officers, caused further mistrust among other communities of the Malay police officers, and their ability to maintain peace and order in Singapore.

The Report of the Commission of Inquiry, also known as the 'Leach Report' was published on August 7th, 1951. It was featured in every major newspaper in Singapore, Malaya and England,

in order to ‘impress critics, opposition parties and anticolonial activists in Malaya and England that improvements would be made in the management of the colony (Ajlunied, 2009, p. 126)’.

The report blamed the Malay and English newspapers for their sensational coverage of the court proceedings which evoked strong emotions among the Muslim community in Singapore (Quah, Public Administration Singapore-Style, 2010, p. 215). The commission stated that the verdict and Maria’s stay at the Roman Catholic convent had escalated the incident, fueled by sensational press coverage by the newspapers. Maria Hertogh’s stay at the convent was publicized by the English and Malay newspapers, and the photographs of Maria surrounded by symbols of the Christian religion heightened suspicions there were plans to convert her to Christianity (Quah, Public Administration Singapore-Style, 2010, p. 215). The publicity given by the press to the legal proceedings and Maria Hertogh’s life at the convent stoked emotions amongst the Malay Muslim community. The public statements and speeches of the ‘*Nadra Action Committee*’, an organisation led by a Muslim political activist from Rangoon named Karim Ghani³⁴, further intensified the emotions towards the Malay Muslim community, and deepened the hatred felt by Muslims towards the Europeans and Eurasians in the colony. They solicited support among the local Muslim community by distributing free copies of its newspaper, the Dawn.

The commission’s report was critiqued as it ‘seemed more didactic than investigatory and it may be seen as a lesson for colonial governments rather than an attempt to establish the causes of the riots’ (Ajlunied, 2009, p. 127) British newspapers also noted that the report had highlighted failures in almost every relevant branch of the colonial administration (Ajlunied, 2009). The colonial administrators failed to understand that while back in the United Kingdom,

³⁴ This incident also reminded the government of the dangers of foreign elements interfering with local or domestic affairs and cause mischief or other malicious acts.

people are primarily of the same ethnicity and generally speak English, while in the colonies, the natives and the immigrants do not speak a common language and there are diverse ethnicities and religiosities.

The Singaporean government imposed strict measures to moderate and control the press, especially after the turbulent times in the 1950's and the 1960's. The government put the blame for all the turbulence squarely on the shoulders of irresponsible journalists (Subramaniam, 1987, p. 29).

Originally 'press control in Singapore was introduced by the British colonial government with the enactment of the *Printing Presses Ordinance* which required all printing presses to apply for an annual license to operate' (Quah, Public Administration Singapore-Style, 2010, p. 215). The *Printing Presses Ordinance* was inherited from the 1948 Emergency Regulations. The *Newspaper and Printing Presses Act* was passed in 1974 by the Singaporean government to replace the *Printing Presses Ordinance* implemented by the British colonial administrators. Ownership and control of domestic newspapers is explicitly regulated by the *Newspaper and Printing Presses Act* (T. Kenyon, Majoribanks, & Whiting, 2014, p. 16).

The Singapore government's argument for continuing colonial practices was regarded as a form of bureaucratic rationalization, and also deemed as ethnic discrimination in governance against the Malay Muslims (Law, 2003, p. 52). The retention of the *Printing Presses Ordinance* by the Singaporean government has resulted in the criticism that the government has curbed the freedom of the press in Singapore, an accusation which will be examined in chapter 5. It is also suggested that newspaper editors have had to exercise self-censorship in order to ensure the renewal of their annual licenses to publish their newspapers (Quah, Public Administration Singapore-Style, 2010).

1.9 Developments in the mass media in Singapore since independence

A report in the Straits Times on July 14th, 1985 reported that the government accused the Singapore Herald and the Eastern Sun for mounting “black operations” initiated by foreign interests against Singapore in the 1970s. Both were forced to close under government pressure. Four directors and journalists of the Chinese newspaper, Nanyang Siang Pau, were placed under detention under the Internal Security Act in May 1971 (Quah, Public Administration Singapore-Style, 2010). Fear and suspicion of foreign influence in Singapore’s race and religious relations remains till date, especially against the backdrop of present day acts of terrorism.

A press release issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs on January 21st, 1979 following the release of former Editor-in-Chief of *Nanyang Siang Pau*, Shamsuddin Tung Tao Chang explained that, Tung was ‘first detained under the Internal Security Act in May ’71 for stirring up communal and chauvinistic emotions over Chinese language and culture in his capacity as Editor-in-Chief of Nanyang Siang Pau. He was released in January ’73 after issuing a public statement, in which he confessed that he and others in the Nanyang Siang Pau had published news, articles and editorials which deliberately exploited issues over Chinese language and Chinese education to incite the people against the Government’³⁵

At least eight other English dailies – The Syonan Shimbun, Malaya Tribune, Singapore Tiger Standard, Malayan Times, Free Press, Malaya Mail, New Nation, and the Singapore Monitor

³⁵Viewing permitted. Use and reproduction only with permission. --- National Archives Singapore

Covering Date: 21/01/1979 ; Document Number: 792-1979-01-21

<http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/speeches/record-details/7c0af420-115d-11e3-83d5-0050568939ad>

– were closed down before 1990 (Subramaniyan, 1987, p. 33) because of controversial articles published by them.

The *Newspaper and Printing Presses Act* was amended on September 1st, 1986, to restrict the sale and distribution of any foreign publication which interfered in Singapore's politics by 'publishing material intended to generate political, ethnic, and religious unrest; indulging in slanted, distorted, or partisan reporting; or persistently refusing to publish [the] Government's replies to refute misreporting and baseless allegations' (Quah, Public Administration Singapore-Style, 2010, p. 216).

On October 15th, 1986, the government enforced the *Newspaper and Printing Presses Act* and reduced the circulation of *Time* magazine from 18,000 copies to 2,000 copies per issue, and on February 9th, 1987, the circulation of *Asian Wall Street Journal* was reduced from 5,000 copies to 400 copies per issue. These two periodicals had interfered in Singapore's domestic affairs because they had 'persistently refused to publish corrections to erroneous and baseless allegations made in articles they had published' (Quah, Public Administration Singapore-Style, 2010, p. 216).

In 1982, the Prime Minister's Office stated the "need to restructure the ownership of the English and Chinese newspapers"³⁶. In this restructuring, two Chinese rival newspapers, the Nanyang Siang Pau and the Sin Chew Jit Poh, were merged to form the Singapore News and Publications Limited (SNPL), and then ceased publications until forming the Lianhe Zaobao and the Lianhe Wanbao on March 16th, 1983³⁷. Then, in 1984, the government merged The Straits Times group

³⁶ The Straits Times, 21 April 1982

³⁷ Seow, F. (1998). *The Media Enthralled: Singapore revisited* / with a foreword by Henry J. Steiner. Colorado, USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers. Straits Times, 1982, April 21, as cited in Seow, op. cit., p. 119

with the SNPL to form the Singapore Press Holdings (SPH). With these moves, the government established almost full control over media outlets in Singapore.

In 2000, the media market in Singapore was opened up and the SPH and MediaCorp Private Limited, better known as MediaCorp, both launched English newspapers. The internet was seen as revolutionary by the Minister for Communications and Information Technology³⁸, and people started to read news online and receive information from the internet.

The opening up of the media market in Singapore was perhaps an attempt by the Singaporean government to create more mainstream avenues for Singaporeans to receive news and information, and reduce the influence of information available through the World Wide Web.

It is crucial to note that a new dedicated Malay television channel, Suria, was launched in January 2000³⁹, and a new Chinese weekly tabloid “Thumbs-Up” aimed for primary school pupils was introduced on January 15th, 2000. SPH launched Singapore’s first free English tabloid *Streets* in September 2000, while MediaCorp launched their free English tabloid *Today* two months later in November.

However, the profits of both SPH and MediaCorp fell and to prevent further losses, the two media giants announced a deal in September 2004 where SPH agreed to give up its television channels to MediaCorp in return for a 20 percent stake in a new television joint venture. SPH also agreed to cease the publication of *Streets*, which incurred loss to the company, in exchange for a 40 percent stake in MediaCorp Press, the publisher of *Today* (Ang, 2007, p. 3). The

³⁸ Singapore Government Media Release. Speech by Mr Yeo Cheow Tong, Minister for Communications and Information Technology, at the launch of Mediagroup’s internet strategy on 18 April 2000 at 2pm at the Sheraton Towers. <http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/data/pdffdoc/yc20000418c.pdf>.

³⁹ Singapore Government Press Release. English translation of speech by DPM Lee Hsien Loong at the launch of Suria on Sunday, 30 Jan 2000, at TCS TV Theatre. <http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/data/pdffdoc/lh20000130b.pdf>

agreement between SPH and MediaCorp eliminated competition in Singapore's print and broadcast media market, and the media market became monopolistic. The Straits Times has remained the most widely read newspaper in Singapore.

Both the SPH and MediaCorp are sound and profitable commercial enterprises, with robust revenue from advertising in the newspapers (Open Society Foundations, 2014, p. 9). These papers usually reproduce official discourses which will influence the perspectives of the readers.

The SPH's corporate profile published in their 2013 Annual Report stated that it has 19 titles licensed under the Newspaper Printing and Presses Act, of which nine were daily newspapers covering four language groups. Every day, 3.05 million individuals or 76 per cent of people above the age of 15, read one of their publications. They also cited that their "success is built on the long history and rich heritage" of their two flagship newspapers – the English-language daily *The Straits Times*, and the Chinese-language daily *Lianhe Zaobao*. The other two dailies, *Berita Harian* and the Tamil *Murasu*, remain the staple for the Malay-speaking and Tamil-speaking communities respectively (Singapore Press Holdings, 2013).

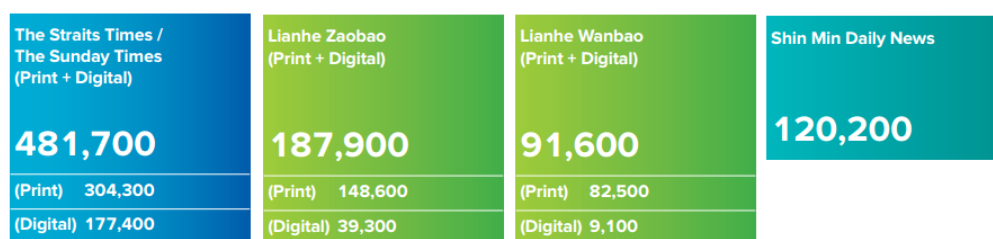


Figure 3: Daily Average Newspapers Circulation in 2015 (Source: Singapore Press Holdings)

THE STRAITS TIMES/ THE SUNDAY TIMES (PRINT + DIGITAL^{1,2,3}) The Straits Times/ The Sunday Times (Print): 309,700 The Straits Times/ The Sunday Times (Digital): 149,600	459,300
LIANHE ZAOBAO (PRINT + DIGITAL^{1,2}) Lianhe Zaobao (Print): 150,000 Lianhe Zaobao (Digital): 33,300	183,300
LIANHE WANBAO (PRINT + DIGITAL^{1,2}) Lianhe Wanbao (Print): 89,100 Lianhe Wanbao (Digital): 2,400	91,500
SHIN MIN DAILY NEWS	129,800

Figure 4: Daily Average Newspapers Circulation in 2014 (Source: Singapore Press Holdings)

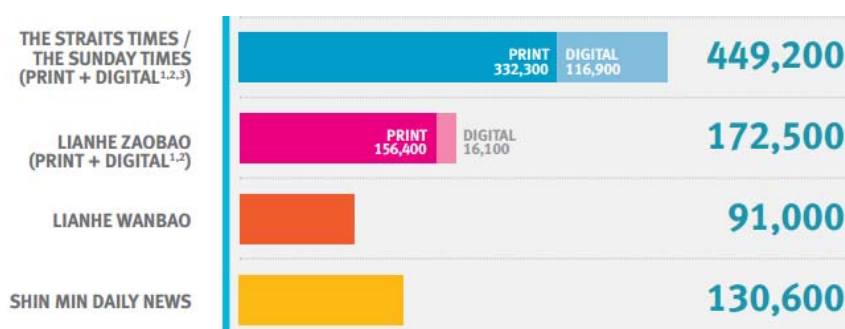
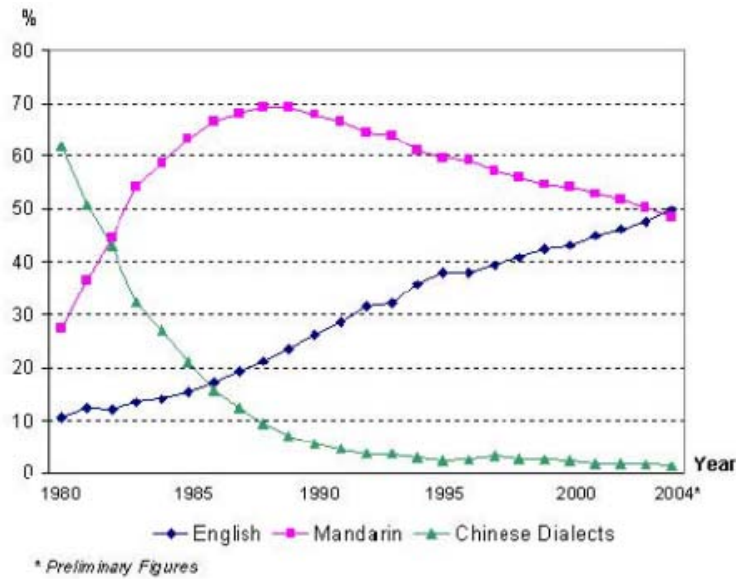


Figure 5: Daily Average Newspapers Circulation in 2013 (Source: Singapore Press Holdings)

The daily average circulation for The Straits Times/The Sunday Times is 481,700, and increase from 459,300 in 2014, and 449,200 in 2013. The daily average circulation for Lianhe Zaobao also increased from 172,500 in 2013, 183,300 in 2014, and 187,900 in 2015. However, it is crucial to note that the print version of The Straits Times and Lianhe Zaobao decreased steadily over the years, however, there is an increase in digital versions of the newspapers. It is also important to note that more younger Chinese Singaporeans prefer to use English than Chinese, and younger Chinese families do not read the Chinese newspapers⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ The Straits Times. July 11, 2016. 'S'pore kids 'using more English but strong in Chinese'
<<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/spore-kids-using-more-english-but-strong-in-chinese>>



Source: MOE Survey at Primary 1 registration

¹Statistics are obtained from information provided by parents at Primary 1 registration. Figure for 2004 is based on preliminary returns.

Figure 6: Dominant Home Language of Chinese PI Students: 1980 to 2004 (Lee K. Y., 2004)

In a speech by Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew in December 2004, he said that 10.2% of Chinese families conversed in English at home in 1980. By 1990, the number of Chinese families who spoke English at home rose to 20.6%, and by 2000, it has risen to 23.8%. In 2004, the number of Primary 1 Chinese students from English speaking homes had rose to 49.8% (Lee K. Y., 2004). The Chinese newspapers still cater to the interests of the Chinese community, regardless of whether more Chinese families prefer reading English newspapers than the Chinese newspapers. This study will examine the Chinese newspapers to understand how they report Malay issues.

With such a wide readership and outreach, the print media has a significant impact in shaping public discourses and the population's perceptions. These publications have become the "mainstream" print media, especially so those published by the dominant media giant SPH, namely *The Straits Times* and the *Lianhe Zaobao*. Due to their primary role in the media industry, these papers will be discussed in more detail in this thesis.

In the 1980s to 1990s, there was a clear degree of consensus that discussion of race and religion were “taboo” topics which could cause offence and were seldom discussed openly in public or in the press. There were numerous “out of bounds” (OB) markers in Singapore’s journalism, and these “OB markers” were and still are informal rules of engagement for the journalists in Singapore. The most eminent OB markers are those to do with racial and religious sensitivities (George, *Freedom from the press: journalism and state power in Singapore*, 2012, p. 65). These OB markers also discouraged the media from initiating debates on matters which could stir ethnic or religious passions. Issues with racial or religious tones are often hushed and will not reach the newsstands.

Internalization of OB markers by journalists and the general public, as well as policies passed by the government, can be traced to incidents in the past, such as the Maria Hertogh riots and the racial riots in the 1960s. The Singapore Government put the blame for the turbulent times on irresponsible journalism (Subramaniam, 1987, p. 29).

The Sedition Act was passed by the parliament to regulate extreme and inflammatory speeches and comments by any individual or organisation in Singapore in order to moderate and control the print media in Singapore. The Sedition Act goes beyond dictionary definition of “sedition”⁴¹ outlawing behavior that seeks to bring down the government of the day, expanding it to include racist comments or views with the tendency to produce feelings of ill-will and enmity between different races or socio-economic classes among the population of Singapore (Open Society Foundations, 2014, p. 7).

⁴¹ The Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition of ‘Sedition’ is ‘the crime of saying, writing, or doing something that encourages people to disobey their government.’

These OB markers, the Sedition Act and other legislation such as the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act and Internal Security Act⁴² sparked a culture of self-censorship. According to James Gomez, the self-censorship and the censorship of others by local media are "well known and acknowledged" by local journalists (Gomez, 2000, p. 50). Gomez also cited Francis Seow's argument in *The Media Enthralled: Singapore Revisited* which claimed that the restructuring of the media in Singapore resulted in severe self-censorship, and that the legislation and punitive actions extended this culture of self-censorship to local and also foreign media based in Singapore (Gomez, Self-Censorship: Singapore's Shame, 2000, p. 51).

A study on the state of racial and religious relations over the years in Singapore was recently released on July 18th, 2013. The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), together with the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy of the National University of Singapore and OnePeople Singapore (OnePeople.Sg) created a set of indicators to gauge the state of racial and religious relations in Singapore (Institute of Policy Studies, 2013). The indicator on inter-racial and religious social trust measured Singaporean sentiments on how much they trust fellow Singaporeans from different racial and religious groups in the face of a national crisis. The study found out that trust for minority races was slightly lower, and that discrimination was more often perceived by minorities, those who were less educated, from lower socio-economic status backgrounds and by those who were younger.

Later on June 17th, 2014, the IPS released another Working Paper on Religiosity and the Management of Religious Harmony and indicated that most feel that Singapore has a high level of religious harmony, and the people are confident that they will not be affected by a trend of rising religiosity (The Straits Times, 2014).

⁴² The Internal Security Act (CHAPTER 143) Chapter III provides Special powers relating to subversive publications and prohibition of printing, sale, etc. of documents and publications.

From the times of the Maria Hertogh riots to more recent controversies emerging on new media platforms, these incidents are constantly revisited as a lesson for the government of the dangers of an unregulated liberal media industry allowed to develop along ethnic and religious lines. It strengthens and justifies their resolve to actively control and use the media as a tool for ensuring social cohesion. The choice of words used in covering events on various forms of media are thus given close attention to avoid inciting racial and religious conflicts.

Taking into account the aforementioned historical background, this thesis will examine the ways in which perceptions of the Chinese towards the Malays have been shaped by the print media in Singapore post 9-11. This research is significant as it investigates how ethnic relations may be positively or negatively influenced by the print media. This study will also make recommendations and considerations for policy-making and help to identify fault lines which may cause potential misunderstanding between the ethnic communities in Singapore.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Methodology

This thesis examines the print media in Singapore, and explores how its contents may influence or affect the readers. This chapter reviews existing studies of racial and religious (mis)representations by the media. There have been various research studies examining portrayals of Islam and Muslims in Malay and English mainstream newspapers in Malaysia and Singapore. However, there exists a gap in the research with regards to Malay issues in Chinese newspapers in the Malay Archipelago – especially so in the Malaysian peninsular, and Singapore.

2.1 Contemporary literature on the perception of the Malays

Race and ethnicity was not a significant issue in the Malay Archipelago until the British and other European travellers, merchants, and missionaries came. The British colonial officials later began to categorise the indigenous people living along the coastal estuaries and surrounding islands of peninsular Malaysia as the ‘Malays’ (Tham, 1992, p. 1). The term “Malayu” was never used as a term of ethnic identity before the Europeans came to the Malay Archipelago, however it was mentioned with reference to a location in the Chinese chronicles in AD 644, when it was recorded that an emissary from “Malayu” in the vicinity of the Jambi or Batang Hari River in Central Sumatra was present in the Chinese imperial court. The “Malay identity” emerged with the passage of time.

The Malays do not represent a pure race, but an on-going melting pot phenomenon which involved peoples of Malayo-Austronesian background located in the area known as Hesperonesia – an area spanning the Southern part of Taiwan through the Philipines, Borneo, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and westwards to Madagascar. The Malays may also

encompass peoples not indigenous to Southeast Asia. People of mixed ethnic backgrounds such as Malay and Arab, Malay and Indian, Malay and Chinese may also be subjective in defining themselves as Malay or not. Although Islam has a powerful and pervasive influence on the Malay sense of identity, the cultural life-style of the Malays is not necessary synonymous with the cultural lifestyle of the other Muslims. For example, there is the race differential that draws the Chinese Muslim and Indian Muslim away from being categorised as “Malay”. Chinese Muslims retained the norms of Chinese family life which emphasise patrilineal descent, which is the kinship structure of the Malays (Tham, 1992, p. 6).

The riches of Southeast Asia brought many foreign traders and workers to the region. While many of them returned to their homelands, some remained behind and married the native women. The Malay term “peranakan” means “locally born”, and it also refers to other communities that developed in Southeast Asia, such as the Chitty Melaka and Jawi Peranakans. The Peranakan Chinese are the descendants of Chinese traders who settled in Malacca and around the coastal areas of Java and Sumatra as early as the 14th century. The Peranakan Chinese began to migrate to bustling ports of Penang and Singapore in the 19th century. The Chitty Melaka, or Peranakan Indians, were descendants of South Indian Hindu merchants and local women from the time of the Malacca Sultanate in the 15th century. The Peranakan Indians speak a type of vernacular Malay which incorporates some Tamil words. The Jawi Peranakans, or Jawi Pekan, are the descendants of South Indian-Muslim traders and the women of the local community. The Jawi Peranakans settled around the urban centres, particularly in the trading port of Penang (Peranakan Museum, 2014). We can see that marriages are common between the people from outside the Malay Archipelago and the native communities, and there are rarely issues between the “Malays” and the “Chinese”.

Tham argued that the awareness of being Malay is inherent to the process of nationalism that engulfed the various peoples who came under Western imperial rule up to the mid-twentieth

century Malays (Tham, 1992). The Malay struggle to outline the Malay identity was based on three parameters – race, language, and religion. A cultural definition was adopted in Malaysia where “Malay” was defined as “anyone who speaks the Malay language, dresses as a Malay and practices the Islamic faith” In Singapore, the Report of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Bill of 1988 stated that ‘a person belonging to the Malay community’ means any person, whether of the Malay race or otherwise, who considers himself to be a member of the Malay community and who is generally accepted as a member of the Malay community by that community (Tham, 1992, p. 11). The term “accepted” implies that the person concerned should be seen as an active and visible participant of Malay culture, in particular in Malay-based organisations, or “acceptance” through marriage or biological inheritance.

The religion, Islam, is a criterion formally stated in Malaysia and may not be detached from language (Malay) and dressing (Malay life-style), and it requires that a Malay who has forsaken Islam be stripped off his racial origin (Tham, 1992, p. 12). However, Chinese Muslims are not recognised as being “Malay” even if they speak the Malay language or adopt the Malay life-style.

The multi-religious approach in nation building adopted by Singapore did not specifically emphasise Islam as being a governing criterion to be “Malay”, despite the importance of the religion as perceived by the Malays in Singapore (Tham, 1992, p. 13). However, there are also Muslim Singaporeans who, through self-declaration, do not regard themselves as “Malays” whether it is in terms of race or culture. Therefore the definition of “Malay” as stipulated in the Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Bill passed in 1988 reflected the actual situation in Singapore where not all Muslims are Malays (Tham, 1992, p. 14).

Although Singapore and Malaysia share many historical connections, the definitions of who is a “Malay” differ between both countries. Although Tham’s study highlighted that the Singaporean government do not specifically stress that the religion (Islam) is a governing criterion to be a “Malay” in Singapore, the Malays in Singapore still regard the religion as important.

Professor of Malay Studies of the University of Singapore, Syed Hussein Alatas, exposed the roots of the image of the lazy native to demonstrate that it was an important element in the ideology of colonial capitalism. The colonial ideologists recurrently stressed the inability of native governments to exploit the natural wealth of the country, and thus the natives’ abilities were questioned and the image of the natives was degraded to justify colonialism (Alatas S. H., 1977, pp. 215-216). Professor Syed Hussein Alatas cited a supposedly scholar commissioned by the University of Chicago to study the administration of tropical dependencies in 1901. The scholar, a colonial ideologist, wrote the following of the Malays after his visit to Southeast Asia: ‘As far as my own observation extends, I should say that the Malay of the Peninsula is the most steadfast loafer on the face of the earth. His characteristics in this respect have been recognized by every-one who has come in contact with him. He will work neither for himself, for the Government, nor for private employers. He builds himself a house of bamboo and attaps, plants enough rice to fill out the menu which stream and forest afford him, and for nine tenths of his waking hours, year in and year out, he sits on a wooden bench in the shade and watches the Chinaman and the Tamil build roads and railways, work the mines, cultivate the soil, raise cattle, and pay the taxes. (Alatas S. H., 1977, p. 214)’ The colonial administrators passed much stereotyping of the natives who were deemed incapable.

The image of the lazy and backward Malays is prevalent even after Singapore gained independence. On December 9th, 1984, *The Straits Times* published an article where then Social Affairs Minister Dr. Ahmad Mattar mentioned that the Malays need the help of the government

and the understanding of the other races to climb the economic ladder⁴³. Dr. Mattar commented that the Malays in Singapore want opportunities, not privileges, and it is in the interest of all to have Malay Singaporeans better educated and better qualified to increase their contribution to Singapore's development. He added that "to expect Malays to be achievement-oriented without adequate and systematic assistance in the initial stages would only paralyse them further".

Dr. Mattar also stated that the Malays must get a better education to have a fighting chance of getting well-paid jobs, as about 82 percent of those working in 1980 had only primary education and most were in occupations paying relatively low salaries. The low-income problem was attributed to the relatively large size of the Malay families. Nearly 20 percent of Malay households in 1980 had eight persons or more. He also highlighted that Chinese and Indian companies could help by recruiting more Malays and by allowing the deserving ones to gain experience in business. He also concluded that "unless there is an overall national and social approach in finding the answers to Malay problems, their adjustment to the quickening pace of development in this highly competitive society of ours will always remain difficult"⁴⁴. The report stated that modern Malay women shed their traditional role as full-time housewives to compete with Malay men for jobs. The article read "The kampung maid of yesteryear has also established herself firmly in the mainstream of Singapore's education system"⁴⁵.

We can see that almost two decades after independence, in the 1980s, the Malays in Singapore were perceived as still lagging behind the Chinese and Indian communities, and the then Social Affairs Minister, who was a Malay, had to appeal to the Chinese and Indian communities to

⁴³ The Straits Times. 9 December 1984. Page 14. "Help Malays to help themselves": Dr Mattar on how they can move up economic ladder".

⁴⁴ The Straits Times. 9 December 1984. Page 14. "Help Malays to help themselves": Dr Mattar on how they can move up economic ladder".

⁴⁵ The Straits Times. 9 December 1984. Page 14. "Modern women shed their traditional role: They are better educated and more of them hold jobs".

recruit more Malays in their companies. This further reproduced the image of the lazy and backward Malays.

2.2 Perceptions of the Malays from the Malay point of view

The perspective of the Malays from the ‘Malay point of view’ (Mahathir, 2011, p. 7) is important to this study. The portrayals of the Malays by Mahathir is a reflection of how the former Prime Minister of Malaysia made sense of the Malay community, which influenced the manner in which policies were crafted in the Malaysia. Singapore was once part of Malaysia, and it is suggested that such discourses will influence the relationship between the Malays and the non-Malays.

Mahathir argued that the ‘Malays are the rightful owners of Malaya’ (Mahathir, 2011, p. 7) and that immigrants are guests until properly absorbed – pointing out that the immigrants are not truly absorbed until they have abandoned the language and culture of their past. Mahathir held the post of Prime Minister of Malaysia from 1981 to 2003, and he regarded language as one of the most important national characteristics. He argued that the language of the nationals of any country normally distinguishes them from others. He suggested that Malay is the language of the original people who set up the first effective government in Malaya, thus Malay shall logically be the national language. It is therefore suggested that the media in Malaysia is clearly categorized along linguistic lines, and that Malaysians regardless of ethnicities must be able to read Malay.

In the preface of the 2011 reprint edition of his book ‘The Malay Dilemma’ (first published in 1970), Mahathir suggested that hereditary factors which he believed to have contributed to the poor performance of the Malays became less relevant due to the rapid urbanization of the

Malays and because the Malays no longer ‘in-breed’ or insist that the mentally or physically unfit be married and reproduce. He suggested that poor education and poor health led to the poor performance by the Malays, but these issues no longer ‘negatively affect’ the Malays in 2008 (when he wrote the preface to the reprint edition in July 2008). However, Mahathir still believed that Malays have not been able to keep up despite making noticeable progress.

The British publisher for Mahathir’s book in 1970 raised doubts on the veracity and accuracy of Mahathir’s assumptions and facts, but the book was published because it was regarded as the thinking and beliefs of an educated, modern, and progressive Malay (M. Bakri, 1999). In M. Bakri Musa’s book, *The Malay dilemma revisited: race dynamics in modern Malaysia*, he suggested that Mahathir’s book may not have been published if it was written by an Englishman, and he viewed Mahathir’s attitude towards “natives” akin to the mind-set of ‘early White American editors and critics to the works of Blacks and other ethnic writers’ (M. Bakri, 1999, p. 12). M. Bakri also suggested that critical editorial judgements were suspended for Mahathir’s book for fear of suppressing the voice of the “oppressed”, and that vigorous editing could be misinterpreted as suppressing the viewpoint of an authentic “Malay”.

Mahathir lamented at the laziness of the Malays and that “Malays do not feel ashamed of failures anymore” on September 11th, 2014 (The Star Online, 2014). Mahathir also claimed that Malaysia’s majority race lacks good values, ethics and was not hardworking enough, causing them to trail other races economically (The Malay Mail Online, 2014). Although this incident happened across the causeway, what is significant is the image of the lazy Malay was still being reproduced decades after independence from the colonial administrators.

The Malay Mail Online ran a commentary which rebutted Mahathir’s statement that Malays are lazy and lacking in honesty, and reported that “*I know many non-Malays would have privately applauded Dr Mahathir because it reinforces their own deep-seated bias about the*

traits of Malays. 'You see, even Dr Mahathir thinks the Malays are lazy and dishonest,' they would have thought to themselves or told their friends. I know of many of my Malay friends who would also think the same as Dr Mahathir. It is very easy, thinking in racial stereotypes. Of course, if any non-Malay were to say the same thing as Dr Mahathir, then there would probably be a queue outside the nearest police station of right wing groups baying for blood (The Malay Mail Online, 2014)''. This reflected that the image of the lazy Malay still exists, and was also internalised by the Malays themselves.

It is crucial to study the Chinese news reports to examine if the Chinese newspapers promoted such stereotyping of the Malays, or promoted a positive understanding of the Malays, or if they practiced self-censorship on race and religious issues, and chose not to even report on such incidents.

It is suggest that Mahathir's claims in *The Malay Dilemma* may be constructed based on his personal observations, and there is insufficient empirical data to support his assertions. However, his view of the lazy and dishonest Malay (native) is a testament of Syed Hussein Alatas' work on the myth of the lazy native.

The Malays were the dominant numerical community in Singapore until the mid-1830s when the Chinese population began to supersede them in numerical terms (Rahim, 1998, p. 26). Lily Rahim's thesis suggested that the perceived "cultural deficit" of the Malays had led to the poor socio-economic performance in the society. Such "cultural deficit" refers to the lack of cultural norms and behavioural traits (Mutalib, 2012, p. 37) such as the purported claims of 'inertia, complacency, unstable family units, prone towards seeking immediate gratification, and a failure to seize available opportunities' (Rahim, 1998). She noted that the first Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew was a believer of the 'cultural deficit thesis' (Mutalib, 2012, p. 37).

Lily Rahim was also critical of the meritocracy system adopted by the Singaporean government. She argued that the policy of meritocracy failed to ensure fair opportunities for all ethnic communities in Singapore, and that the Malays were marginalised by ethnic quotas at residential estates, educational schemes such as the Special Assistance Programme (SAP), exclusion of Malays from sensitive units in the Singapore Armed Forces, and because the Singaporean government carried out an explicit programme of political engineering in order to diminish the political power of the Malays in Singapore. She suggested that the ethnic quotas in residential areas ensured Malays and the other minorities constituted no more than 20 percent of any electoral constituency, and that Malays would always remain the minority in all electoral constituencies and no Malay political party could win elections.

The study by Lily Rahim suggested the perceived state discourse of the “culturally deficit” Malays. If that is the preeminent state discourse, then it will be crucial to examine the Chinese newspapers and analyse if such discourses are being reproduced.

2.3 Literature on the representations of Islam in the Media

Tania Li suggested that the ‘difference in the cultural framework within which the Malays and the Chinese organise their economic lives, especially with regards to entrepreneurship, has put the Malays at an economic disadvantage in Singapore since 1959, and this has reinforced the idea that the Malays are culturally inferior, which in turn, has been a source of discrimination’ (Li, 1989, p. 82). She argued that the difference in cultural framework and life ethos between the Malays and the Chinese placed the Malays at an economic disadvantage, which damaged their image.

The misperceptions of culture by the Malays and non-Malays alike have culminated in a self-reproducing ideology in Singaporean Society. She attributed the poor performances of the Malay entrepreneurship to the individualistic character of Malay kinship when compared to the greater sense of loyalty and obligation in the Chinese family. After presenting the different world-views between the Singaporean Malays and Singaporean Chinese in terms of their educational and economic aspirations, she narrated how misperceptions and stereotypes have worked against the Malays (Musalib, 2012, p. 35), and the image of the backward Malays had become 'part of the cultural fabric' of many non-Malays in Singapore (Li, 1989, p. 167).

In her studies, Li highlighted the prejudiced stereotyping of the Malays by the majority Chinese population in Singapore. She attributed such discrimination by the Chinese against the Malays as being based upon the Chinese opinion that Malays are culturally inferior and incapable of hard work, and this view has probably been reinforced and confirmed by the persuasive orthodoxy about Malay cultural inadequacies that Chinese read in the press (Li, 1989, p. 179).

This observation of the 'cultural inadequacies' the Chinese read in the press suggested that there are prejudices against the Malays amongst the Chinese.

Elizabeth Poole studied the media representations of British Muslims in her book *Reporting Islam*. The media played a significant role in the reproduction of political power as it ensured that it was a key factor in the considerations of actors on all sides of the war⁴⁶. The initial coverage by the media stressed on the build up to military action rather than exploring alternative solutions. The newspapers supported and facilitated a context in which armed intervention was both expected and accepted (Poole, *Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims*, 2009).

⁴⁶ The 'war' refers to the War on Terror and the invading of Afghanistan by the United States of America to depose the Taliban, which had harboured the al-Qaeda blamed for the September 11 attacks.

Muslims worldwide are concerned about the media coverage of Islam, and there has been a great academic interest among scholars attempting to explain Islam's negative image in the Western media. Poole argued that as a result of contemporary political, economic and social processes, Islam became an increasingly salient issue, and suddenly became "recognizable" but the form in which Islam was introduced to the readers was a concern. Poole highlighted that a heightened interest in Islam could be a positive development, but it would be negative if the knowledge that was produced only reinforced Islamism perspectives.

The collapse of communism in Russia caused shifts in the global power equation, and it led to anxieties and attempts by the "West" to maintain its hegemony. The Iranian Revolution in 1979 was significant as Political Islam emerged out of different experiences of colonialism and oppression. This episode allowed the "West" to construct Islam as the new enemy, a global force that represented an ideological and physical threat, a threat based on a historically polarized relationship. (Poole, *Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims*, 2009, p. 18) This was necessary for the West to reassert its influence over an economically rich area to defend its supreme Western identity, and also to protect its own economic interest in securing access to raw materials and oil rich areas. The media, an instrument of public ideology, demonizes Islam and portrayed Islam as a threat to Western interests, hence reproducing, producing and sustaining the ideology necessary to subjugate Muslims.

Poole argued that the concept of *Orientalism* by Edward Said is crucial to why Islam was portrayed as a threat, as the Eastern cultures were historically constructed by the West as "alien" and "the Other". The ideological assumptions were held and perpetuated by the Western writers who saw the terms "them" and "us" were constructed as naturalized, binary oppositions that allowed the "West" to dominate Oriental cultures. Muslims were represented negatively, and stereotyped as a homogenized group who are backward, irrational, unchanging,

fundamentalist, misogynist, threatening, manipulative in the use of their faith for political and personal gain, and yet with politically unstable governments and movements.

In *Reporting Islam*, Elizabeth Poole used three methodologies – Quantitative content analysis of articles, qualitative data collection through focus groups, and also interpreting the focus group transcripts using discourse analysis. She conducted a quantitative content analysis over three years, 1994-1996, of daily coverage in two broadsheet newspapers. The “frequencies” of coverage was measured as it provided an indication of the importance newspapers accord to a subject area. Content analysis identified both the quantity and prominence of the material. Particular attention was given in the analysis and interpretation of results. Local coverage was also compared with global coverage. She studied all articles from January 1994 to December 1996 in the papers were chosen to ensure the sample was representative. Her hypothesis was related to the current newspaper representation, thus the study required annual monitoring to examine any shifts in the framework of the reporting. From the sample, the ‘typical’ nature of coverage regarding Muslims and Islam (that is patterns and core themes) was established. Only contents that explicitly mentioned Muslims or Islam (the religion or its people), or depicting Muslims, were selected and coded. The three methodologies applied by Poole provides a detailed understanding and analysis of how Islam was reported by the press.

She also conducted a detailed analysis from the sample which included a year of coverage (1997) in four newspapers, two broadsheets, and two tabloids. The aim of examining a wider range of positions was to identify and competing discourses in the coverage. She also chose stories for their prominence and development, and continuing stories were prioritized for analysis because they illustrated how issues are conceptualized and then problematized, and what solutions each paper preferred, along with how they resolved and closed in around an issue, given that all these decisions had an ideological basis.

In analyzing the construction of British Muslims in British newspaper texts, and readings of these by differentially situated audience groups, Poole incorporated two ‘moments’ of the communication process essential in examining ‘meanings’. The study provided current and dominant meanings circulating in British society around one of its minority communities, and the analysis techniques applied is relevant to my thesis.

2.4 Power and influence of the media

There has been a continuous debate about the powerful effects of the media on the public in the study of mass communications. Teun Adrianus van Dijk analyzed the properties of the social power of the news in printed media in “Power and the News Media” printed by the University of Amsterdam in 1992. Teun A. Van Dijk adopted discourse analysis for the inquiry, which systematically examined the structures and functions of text and talk in their social, political, and cultural contexts. The approach using discourse analysis requires the researcher to pay detailed attention to the structures and strategies of the discourses to understand the role of the news media and their “messages”. Topics or quotation patterns in news reports may reflect modes of access of various news actors or sources to the news media. The content and form of a headline in the press may subtly influence the interpretation and hence the persuasive effects of news reports among the readers. The researcher has to understand the precise conditions, including the structural properties of news reports, if it is assumed that the media manipulates the readers (van Dijk, Power and the News Media, 1996).

Teun A. Van Dijk used a theoretical framework that identifies the power of news media, examining those who have access to the media, and studying its influence and social cognition. He also argued that the readers of news report must have adequate amounts of properly organised knowledge of the world besides grammatical and textual knowledge to understand

the news report, and readers also need to know the specific organisations and functions of news reports in the newspapers, including the functions of headlines, leads, background information, or quotations. He explained that news reports are able to construct a model, or a mental representation of an experience, of an event people witness, participate in, or read about in the minds of the readers. These models may include the opinions of the media producers and may be manipulated by the structures and contents of the news reports.

Journalists have a model of each news event and they will usually craft their reports in such a manner that readers will form a similar model in their minds. The discourses reproduced by the media may not be consistent with the best interests of the readers, but are consistent with the interests of the political elites to influence the public. Teun A. Van Dijk highlighted that the media may manipulate the structure of a model and influence what information is important by displaying it more or less prominently in the news report, headlines, leads, or photographs (van Dijk, *Power and the News Media*, 1996, p. 14). The prominence or absence of information in a news report is indicative of what model the elites or the media would like to public to perceive. The political or other elites that have access to the media also have the ability to control knowledge and also the ability to control understanding. It may be in the best interests of those in positions of power to control such knowledge so that public understanding of certain knowledge is minimal, and the media may use effective credibility strategies such as the use of authoritative sources, statistics, credible eyewitnesses, photographs, and other means that persuasively suggests the “truth”.

Van Dijk concluded that the “strategic control of knowledge is a crucial element in the control of discourse understanding and, therefore, of discourse access and the critical counter-power of oppositional reading and understanding. Beyond knowledge, however, there are other crucial forms of what is now generally called social cognition, such as the schemata of socially shared opinions traditionally known as attitudes. Whereas control of knowledge influences

understanding, control of attitudes influences evaluation.” (van Dijk, *Power and the News Media*, 1996, p. 16) Thus the ability to control knowledge and attitudes may be a result of controlling the discourses of mass communications. Repeated news reporting and other forms of public discourses will shape and influence how the people evaluate the news events. Once the carefully selected facts were presented to the readers, the readers may internalize the preferred models of the elites and may even act accordingly, thus reproducing dominant discourses and ideologies within the society.

Van Dijk examined the Western (European) media and the analyses of ethnic affairs coverage in print media which revealed a remarkable alignment of the press with the dominant white power elites, as well as with the ideologies of the white population at large.

El-Sayed’s report traced changes in the images of the Muslim in the Orient, a product of Orientalism, to the contemporary images of the Muslims post 9/11, This marked a transition from the classical Orientalism to a new Orientalism, or Islamism. Islamism refers to a prejudiced view of Islam, and resembles ‘orientalism’, an approach that previously, based on the Western scientific and naturalist paradigms, represented Eastern cultures as inferior. While orientalism is now outdated in academia, it has been argued (el-Sayed, 2013) that Islamism, better referred to as ‘new orientalism’⁴⁷ (ibid) is prevalent in modern discourse and print media.

The study by el-Sayed el-Aswad demonstrated how most Western scholarship and media, through the construction of so-called Islamophobia, have portrayed Muslims in terms of global terrorism, Islamic jihadism, fanatic Islamism, fundamentalism, fascism, and Islamic authoritarianism.

⁴⁷ I will employ the term ‘new orientalism’ in the thesis to refer to negatively prejudiced anti-Islamic perspectives.

The study suggested that many of the Western scholarship and media, particularly in the United States, that have dealt with Islam or Muslims in the Middle East as well as worldwide, have manipulated the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and have defined such events within contexts of religious extremism, global violence, and the war on terror resulting in negative, fear-inducing, and stereotypical images of Muslims. The individual's ethnicity or religious identity, and the possession of a "Muslim name" were believed to be the primary causes of discrimination.

El-Sayed also highlighted that the image of the Muslim as a threatening "Other" that emerged in the West was basically fabricated. He traced the change in the image of the Muslim of the Orient, criticized by Anouar Abdel-Malek (1963) and Edward Said (1978) as a product of Orientalism, to contemporary images of Muslims generated after the September 11 attacks. This marked the transition from classical Orientalism to Islamism or new Orientalism. He also noted that while Said's 1978 work, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* dealt with the biases of Western scholarship, his 1981 work *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, discussed and criticized the Western media that distorted and misrepresented the Muslim world (el-Sayed, 2013).

Another study by Ahmad suggested that many Muslims living in Muslim majority countries and as minorities in Western countries have had first-hand experience of the harmful impact of the global media and its ability to negatively influence public opinion. The global media may be defined as any means of mass communication which play a critical role in influencing and shaping human perceptions of other people, places and things. He proposed that Muslims have replaced the communists as the new enemy and threat to world peace ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980's. Muslims are often portrayed by the media as fundamentalists, radicals, militants, barbaric, and anti-Western (Ahmad, 2004, p. 75). The attacks on September 11, 2001, further reaffirm the stereotype of Islam as a religion of

terrorism, extremism, fanaticism and violence, instead of being referred to as a religion of peace (Ahmad, 2004, p. 76).

Ahmad attributed the biases of the Western media to historical and political reasons, and that stereotyping and prejudices also stoked the misunderstanding of Islam in the Western media. He highlighted the weaknesses of academic institutions which specialises in Islam or various parts of the Muslim world to dispel myths or misunderstandings about Islam and Muslims to their students, policy makers, and the public. Such negative stereotyping of the Muslims in the media led to low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence particularly among Muslim youths living in minority situations. Religious viewpoints were also marginalized and Ahmad suggested that states and large corporations may monopolize and shape the media to deliver information in the ways that serve their own interests, rather than objectively reporting events (Ahmad, 2004, p. 82). The West advocates freedom of the press, but such freedom is only for those who have the means and abilities to access.

He not only analyses how the West portray Islam in the Western media, but also how Islam was portrayed in Muslim media. In many Muslim societies, there is a lack of “freedom of press” as governments in many Muslim countries are controlled by secular oriented elites who generally lack legitimacy and popular support. These governments usually use the media to push their political agendas and to strengthen their own images. The government censorships in many Muslim countries left the media in a state of confusion as to what its role in society should be. Influence by foreign media also plays a significant role for the negative portrayals of the Muslims. Many news and information on Muslim media are reproduced from the Western news agencies. Many of the journalists in Muslim media lack Islamic knowledge, and many Islamic scholars are not capable of writing in journalistic styles (Ahmad, 2004, pp. 85-86).

In conclusion, Ahmad proposed several strategies for the better understanding of Islam in the Media, such as educating media personnel, expanding contacts in the Muslim world to increase objectivity, creating alternative media, promoting greater self-reliance, liberalising the press, call for increased involvement of Muslim scholars, monitoring the portrayal and reporting of Islam and Muslims in the domestic and international media by the creation of “media watchdogs”.

2.5 Different theories that can be used to study media perceptions

Media and communication studies are broad, diverse and interdisciplinary. They encompasses the humanities, social sciences as well as portions of natural sciences, which, once again, are also diverse and interdisciplinary (Brügger, 2003). Brügger further explained that the theories applied in media and communication studies should be scientific and scholarly, and it must be ‘possible to test it, to discuss it, it must be self-reflexive, and it must be possible to correct it’ (Brügger, 2003, p. 13). There are at least two types of scientific/scholarly theories, namely those concerning methodologies and those concerning analysis. Those concerning methodologies relate to theories ‘of how one can interpret, or how an interview should be done, how focus groups can be used, how field observations should be carried out, etc.’ (Brügger, 2003, p. 14). Analytical theories examine ‘how one should understand society, the individual, modernity, texts, audiences, reading, etc., and it can aim at describing, classifying, interpreting, examining a hypothesis, predicting developments, changing things, pointing out possible actions to take, etc.’ (Brügger, 2003, p. 14).

Brügger highlighted three independent yet inter-posing stratas – inter-theory, inter-disciplinarity, and inter-institutionality. ‘Inter-theory’ is the phenomenon that theories borrow and integrate concepts from each other, for instance, a given theory can be both a media theory

and also a social theory.'Inter-disciplinarity' is the phenomenon that scientific or scholarly disciplines overlap and transverse each other, for instance, the discipline 'media studies' can integrate elements and scholarly praxis from the disciplines 'social sciences' and 'comparative literature'. The third stratum of 'inter-institutionality' explained the phenomenon that research institutions such as universities, faculties, or departments, may transverse each other. A 'Department of Media Studies' can be part of the Faculty of Arts, of the Faculty of Social Sciences, of a Centre for Communication, etc.

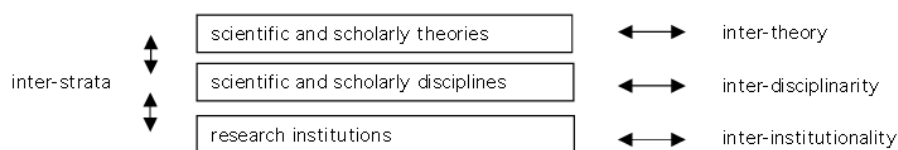


Figure 7: Brügger's theory of the understanding a society

Scientific and scholarly disciplines can use many different theories (Brügger, 2003, p. 19). A discipline such as 'media studies' may use theories which to a great extent different from 'media theory', for example 'textual theory', 'social theory', etc. Sociology can also use elements of 'media theory', etc. Theories, disciplines and institutions may be combined in all directions, on their own level, as well as between levels.

I shall be analysing the articles relating to Malay or Muslim issues in English and Chinese newspapers in order to study the perceptions and reactions of the Chinese towards the Malays, thus, I shall apply relevant theories to interpret the data from the news articles and also to analyse the perceptions and reactions the community. Methodologically, I feel that it is crucial to analyse the context in which race and religion are reported and represented with specific reference to news reporting in Singapore

2.5.1 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is derived from “Discourse Theory,” which concerns itself with the production, distribution and consumption of human knowledge being represented and generally accepted as “Truth” in and by society. “Truth” is manifest through human expressions usually but not limited to language. The generally accepted “Truth” as facts shape society and members’ behaviour, decisions, attitudes, values etc. while also being shaped by society in a reflexive process of (re)producing shared knowledge and meanings. Discourse analysis can literally mean the tools developed for examining and interpreting the discourse “hidden” (can be manifest or latent) in various source material. For the purposes of this thesis, we focus on the most common form of political communication through print newspapers as a text that embodies the knowledge and facts shaping society and being shaped by society (comprising of its various actors, both individuals and institutions).

Discourse Analysis is concerned with analyzing the uses of language and to understand how meanings, subjects, and subjectivities are formed. However, it should be noted that Discourse Analysis is not limited to the spoken discourse, and it may deal with written data, data from sign language, textual graphics, as well as images (Daniel, 2011). Discourse Analysis may also be applied on interviews, focus group discussions and ethnographic studies using participant observation, which all involve verbal interaction between the researcher and the research subjects themselves. The conversations may be transcribed and researchers may reflect on the meaning and significance.

Discourse Analysis may be argued to be neither a qualitative or quantitative research method, but rather a manner of questioning the basic assumptions of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Discourse Analysis does not provide a tangible answer to the problems based

on scientific research, but it enables access to the ontological and epistemological assumptions behind a statement, project, or a method of research.

In short, Discourse Analysis allows us to understand the hidden motivations behind a text or behind the choice of a particular method of research to interpret that text (Daniel, 2011). It also enable us to analyse the consequences, both intended and unintended, anticipated or unanticipated, of the ways these texts may be construed by readers.

Discourse analysis does not seek to explain literal meanings, but to investigate what language does or what individuals or cultures accomplish through language. Discourse analysis attempts to study how meaning is constructed, and how power functions in the society (Harvard University, n.d.). Therefore, a wide-range of possible data sources including transcripts of recorded interviews, movie scripts, and advertisements, shall be studied. Insofar that discourse is concerned with the production of knowledge, and understanding how it can affect people's life chances and actions, it is commonly related to the problem of power – including issues of where power lies in, and the power relations it is embedded in. Discourse Analysis can be useful in helping social scientists understand the way power operates in society, the existence of forms of domination and resistance, and issues of social inequalities or injustice. The study of discourse may be divided into three main domains: the study of social interaction, the study of minds, selves, and sense-making, and the study of culture and social relations.

The above three domains was further divided into six different traditions within the field of discourse studies, namely: (1) Conversation Analysis, (2) Critical Linguistics, (3) Foucauldian research, (4) Discursive psychology, (5) Interactional sociolinguistics and the ethnography of communication, and (6) Bakhtinian research. The study of discourse spans diverse disciplines within the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences, and it can be qualitative, quantitative, or mixed. This thesis will focus on a CDA approach.

2.5.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political contexts. Critical analysts take an explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality (van Dijk, Critical Discourse Analysis, 2001, p. 352). Discourse analysts conduct research in solidarity and cooperation with dominated groups.

CDA traced its roots in critical linguistics⁴⁸, which is a branch of Discourse Analysis that goes beyond the description of discourse to an explanation of *how* and *why* particular discourses are produced (Teo, 2000, p. 11). Discourse does not only reflect social processes and structures, but it affirms, consolidates, and reproduces existing social structures (ibid). CDA is a deconstructive interpretation of a problem, or text. This method will not provide absolute answers to any specific problem, but it allows us to understand the conditions behind a specific “problem” and makes us realize that the essence of the “problem” and its resolution, lie in its assumptions; the very assumptions that enable the existence of the “problem” (Daniel, 2011). Discourse Analysis allows the researcher to have a comprehensive view of the “problem” and ourselves in relation to that “problem”. We will have a higher awareness of the hidden motivations in others and ourselves, and therefore, enabling us to solve concrete problems not by providing unequivocal answers, but by allowing us to ask ontological and epistemological questions.

According to van Dijk (van Dijk, 2001), critical research on discourse needs to satisfy a number of requirements in order to effectively realize its aims: 1. As it is often the case for more marginal research traditions, CDA research has to be "better" than other research in order to be

⁴⁸ The term ‘critical linguistics’ was first introduced by Fowler (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 1979)

accepted; 2. It focuses primarily on social problems and political issues rather than on current paradigms and fashions; 3. Empirically adequate critical analysis of social problems is usually multidisciplinary; 4. Rather than merely describe discourse structures, it tries to explain them in terms of properties of social interaction and especially social structure; 5. More specifically, CDA focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power and dominance in society (van Dijk, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 2001, p. 353).

Peter Teo (2000) applied Critical Discourse Analysis to examine racism in the news reporting in two Australian newspapers – *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph*. His analysis of the news reports adhere to the analytic paradigm of CDA, and newspaper reporting becomes a political critique of those responsible for the perpetuation of dominance and hence social inequality (Teo, 2000). Elizabeth Poole also adopted CDA to analyze media representations of British Muslims.

The primary methodological emphasis of this research is to analyze key words employed by journalists, their linguistic selections, in relation to how these selections may influence reader's perceptions of Malay and Islamic issues. Featuring both in news headlines and leads, linguistic selections, as will be shown, may also reveal journalist's underlying motives as well as the sanctioned views of the authorities. Janks (1997) for example, who uses CDA as a research tool notes that texts in newspapers "are instantiations of socially regulated discourses, and that the processes of production and reception are socially constrained" (Janks, 1997, p. 329). While discourse analysis allows one to analyze the effects of specific elements of the text, and is, to a point, useful in this discourse, CDA allows a further reaching level of analysis that includes evaluating journalist's intentions and socio-political motivations, and links everyday 'text' to the larger discourse of the construction of ethics and values in Singaporean society. As such, CDA provides the most appropriate methodological approach for the analysis of

Chinese newspapers in relation to ethnic relations between the Chinese and other races in Singapore. Therefore, focusing specifically on the linguistic selections in newspaper headlines and leads to examine the journalistic motives and discourses, CDA will allow me to illustrate how these headlines and leads actually contribute to greater ethnic and religious stereotyping. Essentially, Fairclough's framework allows me to examine the news headlines through text analysis, and to link it with discursive and socio-cultural practices to link the text to the wider discourse of inter-racial harmony.

2.5.3 Studying the choice of words in print media using CDA

The choice of words used in print media can be studied to explain the influence and power of the media in constructing varied realities for the reader and nationals of different countries. Hafriza Burhanudeen studied the construction of group identities between the discourses of the Singaporean and Malaysian media (Burhanudeen, 2006) using Ruth Wodak's chapter in the book entitled *The genesis of racist discourse in Austria since 1989* which discussed the "discourses of difference in the media". She adopted the CDA framework to study the effectiveness of the media through deliberate choices of words and phrases in instilling the normative expectations of the Singapore and Malaysia governments into the consciousness of the Singaporean and Malaysian public. The media in both countries through lexicalization created positive images of self and negative images of the other.

Burhanudeen investigated and examined selected news articles that were printed in Singapore and Malaysian media from March to July 2003. That was the period when the price of raw water supplied to Singapore from Johor was revised. The news articles contained various forms of discourses, and she focused on what she termed as the "economic justification discourse"

and the “sovereignty justification discourse”, under which other smaller forms of discourses such as rationalization, self-justification, rancor, and disbelief may exist.

She suggested that the discourses of “economics” and “sovereignty” in Malaysian news articles generally indicate three basic premises from the Malaysian viewpoint – Malaysia’s given right by international law to revise the price of raw water it supplies to Singapore, the perception that Singapore was not honoring the right aforementioned, and the negative representation of the “rich” Singapore in their refusal to pay a rate that can bring some economic benefit to Malaysia. Facts and figures to support that Singapore can afford a higher price were the staple of Malaysian news articles.

In Singapore’s news articles, the form of “sovereignty justification discourse” prevalent relates to Malaysia’s perceived failure to honour the sanctity of international agreements between countries that threatened Singapore’s existence as a sovereign nation. She concluded that the presence of the “sovereignty justification discourse” in the selected news articles in the Singapore and Malaysian media, and the stark development and presentation of the two types of discourses left an indelible mark on the relationship between the two countries (Burhanudeen, 2006, p. 9).

Therefore the choice of words used in news articles are suggestive of what the journalist intends to narrate, and how the journalist would want to tell his or her story. For example, China executed six Muslim Uighur Rebels for terrorist activities connected to the separatist movement in 1999. The conflicts between the separatist movements against the Chinese government were labeled as “terrorist activities” and the separatists became “rebels”. The term “separatist” suggested that the people wanted to separate from a larger group to seek greater autonomy. But the terms “rebels” and “terrorists” stoked the portrayals of violence and bloodshed.

If an individual committed a crime, it is up to the journalist to identify the subject by his traits, such as the incident when a 23-year-old Singaporean was sentenced to jail in 2013.

Date	Source	Headlines	Article
12 Nov 2013	British Broadcast Corporation (BBC)	Trending: Batman bin Suparman jailed in Singapore ⁴⁹	<p>A man with the eye-catching name Batman bin Suparman has been jailed on theft and drugs charges. Well before this case, his double-barrelled superhero name had given him something of cult following on social media.</p> <p>The jokes on social media are aplenty following the news that a 23-year-old man, Batman bin Suparman, has been given a prison sentence of 33 months by a court in Singapore.</p>
11 Nov 2013	The Straits Times	Batman jailed for theft, housebreaking and abusing heroin ⁵⁰	<p>A man with the unusual name of Batman Suparman was jailed on Monday for two years and nine months for theft,</p>

⁴⁹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-24911186>

⁵⁰ <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/batman-jailed-for-theft-housebreaking-and-abusing-heroin>

			housebreaking and consuming heroin. District Judge Wong Choon Ning could not suppress a smile when she heard his name.
11 Nov 2013	Lianhe Zaobao	“Batman” committed a crime, sentenced to two years and nine months in prison ⁵¹	“Batman” did not uphold righteousness, but went around committing crime. A man with a special name (23-years-old, Batman Bin Superman) was sentenced to prison for housebreaking, theft and drug offences. The accused is a Singaporean Javanese, and he faced 10 charges.

We can see that the local newspapers The Straits Times did not mention about Batman’s ethnicity, whereas Lianhe Zaobao mentioned that he is a Javanese. This may suggest that the local papers did not explicitly stoke up the ethnic card in this particular story. This story was regarded as insignificant on local papers, with only a short article reporting his sentencing.

⁵¹ <http://www.zaobao.com.sg/realtime/singapore/story20131111-275167>

2.4 Conclusion

A methodological framework will be adopted to understand how the print media in Singapore covers issues on race and religion, and how the dominant Chinese population perceive the “Other” – the Malays. Poole’s application of the study of *Orientalist* perspectives of the media will also be applied to understand how the Malays are portrayed by the print media in Singapore, and also van Dijk’s theory of discourse and power through Critical Discourse Analysis.

Islamism is a mode of discourse for representing the “Other”, and the news reports from the Straits Times and Lianhe Zaobao may be studied to analyze how the two mainstream newspapers present information and events of the Malay community to the dominant Chinese community in Singapore, and how the media contents shape the perspectives of the Chinese of the Malays. The approach in *Islamism* analyzed the exteriority of the media content, while analyzing discourse theories through Discourse Analysis will allow a researcher to study the hidden motivations behind the text.

There is an increased interest in the study of Islam and also the portrayal of Islam in the media especially after the September 11 attacks. There are also many researches done in the field of Malay Studies to examine the development and problems in the Malay world of Southeast Asia and beyond, and also to better understand Malay history, economy, politics, society and culture. I browsed through the extensive collection of books and journals in the libraries and online databases but there are no academic research on Malay issues through analyzing the Chinese newspapers. This topic may be presumed as sensitive as it touch on race and religious issues. However, it is crucial to understand how the Chinese media portrays the Malay population, if not there will be a gap in understanding how both the Chinese and Malays perceive one another.

There are, however, there are limitations to this research which made collection of empirical data difficult. Almost all studies on the mass media in Singapore highlighted the strict

regulations set by the Singaporean government and also self-censorship by the journalists, as what James Gomez ridiculed in his book *Self-Censorship: Singapore's Shame* that it is a joke to ask a Singaporean what was his or her opinion with regard to a particular issue (Gomez, 2000, p. 67). Gomez also argued that the Singapore social system does not reward and recognize outspoken critics (Gomez, 2000, p. 67).

I shall analyze Chinese news reports on three significant incidents, namely the September 11 attacks in 2001, the arrests of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members in 2001, and the “tudung incident” in 2002. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, I will attempt to examine and find out if the Chinese media is biased towards the Malay Muslim population. I shall apply Critical Discourse Analysis to specifically study the choice of words (terminologies) used, especially in the headlines. My research shall examine if the words or terminologies chose for publication by the Chinese press are suggestive of any stereotyping or discrimination against the Malays.

I shall adopt the theory of Islamism to examine the Chinese news articles if the Chinese media discourse on Malays is orientalist or influenced by Islamism, through Critical Discourse Analysis to study the relations of power and inequality in language. The theories of Islamism and Orientalism are not mutually exclusive, and it is suggested that Islamism is a specific instance of Orientalism.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) attempts to include social-theoretical insights into Discourse Analysis and it may be applied to analyze structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. CDA studies real instances of social interaction which take (partially) linguistic form (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000) which may be applied in my research to explain how the print media may influence the perceptions and social interactions of the communities. Using CDA, I am able to study how discourse is being represented and how it attempts to control and influence others.

Chapter 3: Findings

3.1 Examining the English and Chinese mainstream newspapers

The print media in Singapore is dominated by the local newspaper monopoly, the SPH. SPH positions its newspapers to minimize competition within the company, and the only two exceptions are the two Chinese-language evening newspapers, *Shin Min Daily News* and *Lianhe Wanbao*. These two tabloids do not compete for news and the readers often appeal to sensationalism, generally reporting insignificant events and matters that don't influence the majority of the society, and the stories are usually over-hyped to increase readership numbers (Ang, 2007, p. 12).

The Straits Times (ST) is the oldest and longest newspaper in publication. It was started in 1845 as a weekly, and became a daily in 1858. The publication was interrupted when Singapore fell to the Japanese in 1942 during the Japanese Occupation, but publications resumed when the war ended in 1945. The company turned public in 1950, and it was circulated in Singapore and Malaya by the Straits Times Press. After Singapore was separated from the Federation of Malaysia in 1965, *The Straits Times Malaysia* was established and published in Malaysia whilst *The Straits Times* continued publication in Singapore. The two newspapers agreed not to compete with each other, and both the newspapers are not available on newsstands on the other side of the Johor Straits (Ang, 2007, p. 12). *The Straits Times Malaysia* was reestablished as *New Straits Times* in 1974, and remains in circulation today. *The Straits Times* is a local paper, a national paper, and a regional and internal paper – all in one (Ang, 2007, p. 13).

The *Lianhe Zaobao* is the leading Chinese-language newspaper in Singapore, and it focuses on issues of interest to the Chinese community, particularly the Chinese language and culture. The editorial style is much conservative and its online edition is the most-read Chinese-language newspaper website in the world, with more than 30 million page-views a month. More than 90

percent of the online visits came from outside of Singapore, mainly from China and North America. It is popular because the readers perceive it as a neutral voice on Chinese politics – beholden neither to China or Taiwan (Ang, 2007, p. 14).

The *Berita Harian* was established on July 1st, 1957 as a newspaper for the local Malay community. The paper presents news and issues from Singapore, the region, and the world, featuring topics from sports, to politics and religion. Malay culture and tradition, arts and heritage, family, hobbies and leisure are some of the topics highlighted by the newspaper. The *Berita Harian* also provides a platform for the Malay community to voice their views on issues which concern them. The Singapore Press Holdings claimed that the *Berita Harian* is “a paper that speaks with authority and understands the needs of the Malay community” (Singapore Press Holdings, n.d.). The *Berita Minggu* is the Sunday edition of the *Berita Harian*, and it was first published on 10 July 1960 to focus on leisure and family-oriented stories related to the Malay community.

As much as the state puts in place policies and frameworks which do not allow segregation of the people regardless of their racial profile, the print media is still divided along racial lines. Singapore is an immigration society and early immigrants came from many lands. The British colonial administrators segregated the main ethnic groups and allocated them different enclaves – The Chinese towards the western banks of the Singapore river (today Chinatown area), the Bugis and Arab traders to the east of the Singapore river (today Kampong Glam), the Malays to east of the Kallang River (today Geylang Serai), and the Indians in Serangoon. The early immigrants only speak their native languages and there are little communications between the different ethnic groups, and the British ensured that all the communities take care of their own affairs and there were hardly any policies to integrate the different communities. Newspapers therefore cater to the linguistic abilities of the different communities.

Early Malay newspapers were printed in Javanese and other languages used in the Malay Archipelago, as majority of them can only read in these languages. The Chinese newspapers cater to the Chinese communities as most were only able to read and understand Chinese. Since the newspapers were printed along linguistic lines, and of course racial lines since each particular racial groups only read and communicated in a specific language, the articles published on the Chinese and Malay papers mainly reports on stories that are of interest and concern to the respective communities – The Chinese newspapers for the Chinese community, Malay newspapers for the Malay community, and Tamil for the Indian community. The English newspapers catered to the colonial administrators and Europeans, and also those local who were more “educated”.

The segregation of the media along racial lines is a product of Singapore’s colonial experience. Despite rapid development, Singapore’s pioneer generation (defined by the government as living Singapore citizens aged 16 and above in 1965 when Singapore gained independence, and immigrants who obtained citizenship before 31 December 1986) still living as life expectancy increased. Despite the implementation of compulsory education, there are still significant citizens who were not formally educated, and there is a sizable population of citizens above the age of 50 who cannot read or converse in the English language. It is argued that it is inevitable that media have to still continue to be published along racial and linguistic lines; however, it is important to understand how sensitive topics such as race and religion are featured in the papers.

As a nation (nation building), there should be common experience among all people of Singapore regardless of race, language or religion. News and happenings reported as communal issues or national issues? If national issues, how were the stories covered and featured? The categorization of race was “inherited” from the colonial administrators, and Singapore government adopted the C-M-I-O categorization of race in Singapore till today.

Majority of the Chinese read both the English papers and also the Chinese papers. A sizable population of the Chinese community prefers to read tabloid papers such as the *Lianhe Wanbao* and the *Shin Min Daily News*, primarily because these papers cover human interest stories and community happenings (Singapore Press Holdings, n.d.), and the use of simpler Chinese in these newspapers makes it easy for most people to read and understand.

This research studies the perspectives of the Chinese views and reactions to Muslim and Islamic issues reported on the print media in Singapore. I would define the mainstream English newspaper to be examined in this thesis as the *Straits Times*, and the Chinese mainstream newspapers as *Lianhe Zaobao*, *Lianhe Wanbao* and *Shin Min Daily News*.

Much research has been done to study cases of allegedly “Malay issues” which were highlighted on *The Straits Times* and the *Berita Harian* and also the *Berita Minggu*. However, one apparent gap in these studies is the Chinese papers were not studied to understand how the Chinese papers report on these “Malay issues”.

The Chinese papers focus on issues of interest to the Chinese community, thus reports on “Malay issues” published on the papers may suggest these issues are also of concern to the Chinese community, as the Chinese community ought to know what is happening around them. If the matter was reported in the English papers but was omitted from publication in the Chinese papers, it will also be an interesting topic to study. It is crucial to study the headlines and also the placement of the article in the newspaper to understand how the Chinese papers want the readers to comprehend the stories. The tabloid papers tend to sensationalize stories and it is critical to understand how it may shape the perception of the Chinese community.

One of the “Malay issues” which got much media coverage was the *tudung* incident in 2002 which happened concurrently when the government announced that the minorities in Singapore

are assured of protection⁵² after the wake of the Internal Security Act (ISA) arrest on race relations, specifically the Jemaah Islamiah (JI) members. It is particularly interesting as this incident was also reported in Malaysian papers and eventually Malaysian political leaders also expressed their views, much to the dismay of the Singapore government. It is crucial to study how the English and Chinese papers, namely the *Straits Times*, *Lianhe Zaobao*, *Lianhe Wanbao* and *Shin Min Daily News* cover these issues, as a significant Chinese population received information from these broadsheets.

It is apparent that there are much stereotyping of the various races in Singapore since colonial times, and I shall examine the newspapers to understand how the local newspapers report on such incidents and also analyze the choice of words for the headlines and the contents.

Almost all Malays aged 15 years and above in Singapore profess Islam as their religion⁵³, with 382,017 out of a total of 386,968 Malays professes Islam as their religion, 4079 of the Malay population profess other religions, and 872 declared they as not practicing any religion. It is suggested that issues which negatively portray the Islamic religion or Muslims may significantly cause a direct impact on the perceptions of the Malays in Singapore.

⁵² The Straits Times. February 1, 2002. Front Page headlines “Minorities assured of protection”.

⁵³ Department of Statistics, Census of Population 2010 Statistical Release 1: Demographic Characteristics, Education, Language and Religion. Singapore.http://www.singstat.gov.sg/publications/publications-and-papers/cop2010/census10_stat_release1

CENSUS OF POPULATION 2010

Table 59 Resident Population Aged 15 Years and Over by Religion, Ethnic Group and Sex

Religion	Total			Chinese			Malays			Indians			Others		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
Total	3,105,748	1,517,428	1,588,321	2,349,505	1,141,990	1,207,514	386,968	188,345	198,623	265,223	137,238	127,985	104,053	49,855	54,198
No Religion	527,553	278,683	248,870	512,717	270,299	242,418	872	364	508	2,940	1,928	1,011	11,024	6,092	4,932
With Religion	2,578,196	1,238,745	1,339,451	1,836,788	871,691	965,096	386,096	187,981	198,115	262,284	135,309	126,974	93,028	43,763	49,266
Buddhism	1,032,879	500,579	532,300	1,009,158	491,163	517,996	628	159	469	2,022	1,057	965	21,070	8,200	12,870
Taoism*	339,149	166,927	172,222	338,406	166,871	171,535	120	34	86	31	6	25	593	16	576
Islam	457,435	225,956	231,478	8,332	4,305	4,027	382,017	186,565	195,452	57,546	30,174	27,372	9,540	4,913	4,626
Hinduism	157,854	81,634	76,220	312	73	238	401	170	231	156,339	80,917	75,421	803	473	330
Sikhism	10,744	5,283	5,461	56	32	25	53	19	34	10,591	5,218	5,374	43	15	29
Christianity	569,244	253,334	315,910	472,636	205,774	266,862	2,680	946	1,734	34,024	17,061	16,963	59,904	29,553	30,351
Catholic	219,133	100,083	119,050	155,515	68,876	86,639	1,389	524	866	19,460	9,942	9,519	42,769	20,743	22,027
Other Christians	350,111	153,251	196,860	317,121	136,898	180,223	1,291	422	869	14,564	7,120	7,444	17,135	8,810	8,325
Other Religions	10,891	5,031	5,860	7,888	3,474	4,413	197	88	108	1,731	876	855	1,075	592	483

* 'Taoism' includes Chinese Traditional Beliefs.

Figure 8: Census of population 2010 data of resident population aged 15 years and over by religion, ethnic group and sex

I shall analyse three significant incidents which involve the reporting of Islam, and how these incidents may potentially influence and affect the way how others perceive the Malays in Singapore. I shall adopt CDA to analyze newspaper discourse by examining particular discursive strategies that have the potential to portray ideological meaning, especially the choice of words used in newspaper writing. I hope to gradually reveal the construction of any racist ideology embedded within the structure of newspaper discourse.

3.2 Analysis of the articles reporting the September 11 attacks

The September 11, 2001 attack on New York was the incident which sparked a worldwide interest in the study of how Islam is portrayed in the Western media with resultant global *islamophobia*. Many analysts blamed politicians and also media coverage for demonizing Islam and portraying Islam as a violent and extreme religion. Islam became a major consideration in the many discussions regarding terrorism, and this affected the understanding of the Malay identity and its impact on social cohesion and national integration. Such portrayals

of terrorism and violence as a problem conditioned by interpretations of Islam have influenced the opinions of non-Malays in Singapore (Noraslinda, 2010, p. 177).

Within hours of the September 11 attacks, many Americans likened it to the attack on Pearl Harbour by the Japanese. The president of the United States, George W. Bush, referred to the “war on terrorism” as a “crusade” (The White House, 2001), a term which is as much misunderstood in the Muslim world as “jihad” is in the West. The September 11 attack was not an attack by Islam against the West⁵⁴, however it was often portrayed as such (Alatas S. F., 2004, p. 16), constantly reproduced and reinforced by the Western media.

The Chinese tabloid *Shin Min Daily News* reported “Terrorists hijacked four passenger planes, destroyed New York’s Political and Financial Centre, and America faces a devastating catastrophe! The numbers of people injured and killed overshadow the attack over Pearl Harbour”⁵⁵.

The Chinese broadsheet *Lianhe Zaobao* published an article on September 13th, 2011, with the headlines “Bush: The terrorist attacks are acts of war, The United States House of Representatives and United States Senate swear to take revenge.” It was also reported that Bush identified the culprit responsible for the September 11 attacks as Osama Bin Laden and the “exiled Saudi Arabia Islamic militants in Afghanistan”. He claimed that no other organisation except that led by Osama Bin Laden was able to execute such a well-planned terrorist attack⁵⁶. The photograph published with the article depicted the collapsed World Trade Centre and

⁵⁴ The September 11 attack was an attempt by a minority group of extremists (claimed to be Muslims) who targeted America for their involvement in the Middle East

⁵⁵ Shin Min Daily. 12 September 2011. Front Page

⁵⁶ Lianhe Zaobao. 12 September 2011. Page 1.

captioned “more than two hundred fire fighters and rescuers did not manage to escape in time and perished in the fire”.

The identification of “Islamic militants” to the public before concrete evidence was presented is problematic, and the mention of “war”, “terrorism”, and “crusade” further produce the image that Muslims are responsible and accountable for the September 11 attacks against the United States of America. It stoked feelings of anger in readers not only in America, but across the globe as news agencies garnered information and updates of the aftermath from the American media.

The September 11 attacks also sparked an increasing interest in Islam. Scholars and researchers wrote extensively on the link between Islam, terrorism and radicalism, and the interpretations of ideas and views inherent to the Islamic religion. Despite attempts to explain Islam to the masses, the dominant perception that has emerged is that terrorism and aggression is “inextricably linked to Islam” and that Islam is “the cause of violence and terror”.

Although New York is more than 15,000 kilometers away from Singapore, the Muslims in Singapore became the target of national attention as they are, to certain extent, not insulated from global events affecting other Muslims. Events or incidents affected Muslim communities across the globe, and the Muslims in Singapore were no exception. When it was reported that the September 11 attacks were masterminded and executed by Muslims, the Malays in Singapore were concerned and the issue of Islam and Muslim identity was highlighted. Although different races had lived together harmoniously for a long time, there were concerns regarding the Malay Muslim community’s identity and its impact on social cohesion. The Malay elite responded to these concerns and by doing so, they revealed how they perceived the markers of their identity. The linking of Islam and the Muslim identity with violence caused

the Singaporean Malay Muslims to feel the pressure and fear of being ostracized and singled out by the non-Muslim communities in Singapore (Noraslinda, 2010).

Immediately after the September 11 attacks, the president of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, Maarof Salleh, condemned the terrorist attacks and stated that “there is no excuse for the actions and they went against basic human principles...Islam does not condone such acts of violence and cruelties”⁵⁷. It is interesting to note that the statement by Maarof Salleh was also published in the *Business Times* on 14 September 2001, perhaps to reach out to a greater population and affirm to readers in Singapore that the Muslims in Singapore do not support such terrorist acts, and terrorist acts are against the true teachings of Islam.

The *Lianhe Zaobao* published the views of the government on the September 11 attacks in an article on October 1st, 2001. Then Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong was concerned about the diverse reactions in the wake of the attacks, and the government continued to engage with and remind Singaporeans (through announcements and media reports) to strengthen the relations between the different races and religions. The government expressed their position, and will continue to remind Singaporeans what remarks are acceptable, what are not acceptable, and what statements may undermine racial and religious relations. Lee reminded Singaporeans that ‘Singaporeans are one people... The September 11 attacks were not carried out by Singaporean Muslims, and it has nothing to do with them... Muslims should not be affected or over sensitive to the actions of non-Muslims, but view this incident from a Singaporean perspective’⁵⁸. Lee highlighted that Singapore is very vulnerable and must not assume such attacks will not happen in Singapore. Lee expressed that the September 11 attacks were a real

⁵⁷ The *Business Times*. 14 September 2001. “Islamic council condemns attack”. Page 5.

⁵⁸ *Lianhe Zaobao*. October 1, 2001. “Government leaders will continue to express their views and re-integrate the various communities”. Page 4.

test for multi-racial and multi-religious Singapore, and emphasized that the Singapore Muslim community and the Muslim leaders condemned the actions of the terrorists, and many Malays attended a memorial service at the National Stadium to remember those who had died in the September 11 attacks.

On the same day, October 1st, 2001, there was another article on page 17 of Lianhe Zaobao with the headlines “Islamic Party⁵⁹ wants Mahathir⁶⁰ to announce that Malaysia is an Islamic Country⁶¹ in Parliament”. The political squabbling in Malaysia had further raised the suspicion of the Singaporean Malay Muslims, especially during the wake of the September 11 attacks where the United States and international media agencies had pointed fingers at Muslims and blamed Islam for the violence. The intention to declare Malaysia as an “Islamic country” had definitely raise suspicion of the Muslims, especially the Chinese term for Islam, huijiao (回教), is used to describe the religion (huijiao), the Muslims (huijiao-tu), the ‘Muslim’ terrorist groups, such as the Jemaah Islamiyah (huijiao-qidao-tuan).

A Chinese wrote in to The Straits Times on October 5th, 2001 to share that he had a ‘very good Malay/Muslim neighbor and we look after one another... always make it a point to share our joys and our pain... We are Singaporeans and this is our home. I want Muslims to know that this is their home too. And together, we will make it a secure home... I am a Christian and my Bible teaches me to love all men... I will not let the incident on Sept 11 affect my relationship with Muslims.’⁶² On October 6th, another non-Muslim responded to the letter published on

⁵⁹ “Islamic Party” refers to the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party or the ‘Parti Islam Se-Malaysia’(PAS). It is referred to as “Islamic Party” in Chinese (回教党)

⁶⁰ Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad – The Prime Minister of Malaysia from 1981 to 2003.

⁶¹ Islamic Country – 回教国

⁶² The Straits Times. October 5, 2001. “Muslims, S’pore your home too”. Page 27.

October 5th, and agreed that she love her Muslim friends and will not let the incident on Sept 11 to influence her relationship with Muslim friends⁶³.

The Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP) released a statement to remind Malay Muslim Singaporeans must not allow external events such as the September 11 attacks in the US to damage inter-ethnic relations in Singapore⁶⁴. A day after the AMP released their statement, the Malay Members of Parliament (MPs) condemned the terrorist attacks on the United States in a joint statement and labelled the attacks as “evil”⁶⁵, and urged Muslim Singaporeans not to be ‘swayed or affected’ by external events if the United States decided to launch attacks at Afghanistan.

The statements to urge fellow Muslim Singaporeans not to be affected by global events is already a testament that global events will affect the way others perceive, not limited to only Muslims. In 2005, the British government released the results of a study that one in ten Muslim students would not inform the police if they learnt of a fellow Muslim planning a terrorist attack⁶⁶.

3.2.1 The Straits Times’ position in reporting Islamic issues

As this thesis argues that it is important to understand the actual role of the media in Singapore and how it may influence the way in which people understand and interact with one another, it is also crucial to understand the newspaper’s stand in reporting sensitive topics such as race

⁶³ The Straits Times. October 6, 2001. “Muslims must press on in life”. Page 27.

⁶⁴ The Business Times. October 2, 2001. “Maintain ethnic harmony”. Page 4.

⁶⁵ The New Paper. October 3, 2001. “Don’t be swayed”. Page 6.

⁶⁶ Today. 23 September 2005. “Muslim silence very worrying”. Page 20.

and religion. Do the news agencies in Singapore simply reproduce the stories from other reputable foreign news agencies, including biased contents? Or do the news agencies filter out contents deemed biased or malicious? By filtering out news, does it constitute to lack of press freedom?

The Straits Times published a commentary on Friday, October 5th, 2001, headlined ‘No reason to be defensive’ that ‘Malay Singaporean civic and political leaders have been bending over backwards to emphasise the benevolence of Islam, and asking Singaporeans of all persuasions to hold fast to the virtue of tolerance. This is a helpful antidote against misimpressions and distortions arising from the acts of mass murder committed in the United States... This newspaper understands these commotions grew out of mischief, and ignorance or misrepresentation of Islam and its striving for human decency. It is right that early warning be sounded by the Government and citizen group in unacceptable. In spite of that – and we do not underestimate the sensitivities – race relations are not under threat. Certainly, they are under stress. This is manageable. Singaporeans by and large have taken a clinical view of the Sept 11 events and the aftermath, although they concede that the developments can have an effect on their short-term future. In common with puzzled people elsewhere, they have tried – not too successfully, we suspect – to make sense of an inexplicable bout of madness. The authorities and media organisations need to ponder whether gaps in Singaporeans’ understanding of Islam and civilisation, and its place in the modern world, are an impediment to social equity. We strive to be objective in our reporting of Islamic issues, the good and the bad, as we do other faiths. Muslim tend to be more sensitive (Catholics, slightly so) than others to reporting they consider unfavourable. The truth is, readers will not begin to know of the slanted and bigoted garbage from reputable foreign sources which this paper filters out⁶⁷.’

⁶⁷ The Straits Times. October 5, 2001. “No Reason to be defensive”. Page 24.

The commentary concluded that ‘the pleadings for understanding and tolerance by the Malay-Muslim community, while welcome and timely, may give the impression it is under siege. It has no reason to feel defensive. If at all, the lack of understanding is a reflection on non-Muslims, a common failing in other societies. If one is indifferent to this, the demonization of Islam and Muslims, which has infested many Christian Western countries, can contaminate Singapore. Leaders of all other major faiths here – Buddhism, Hinduism, Protestantism, Catholicism – have a greater duty than Islamic religious leaders to educate their followers of the need to be respectful of others’ beliefs. As for the schools, Education Ministry guidelines for teachers to place the Sept 11 issue in context are a help, but also an acknowledgement that too many people have been steering in the dark.’⁶⁸

It is interesting to note that The Straits Times affirmed its position of reporting Islamic issues, and openly criticised the ‘authorities and media organisations in Christian Western countries’ for demonising Islam and Muslims. The Straits Times openly acknowledged that reports from reputable foreign sources may be ‘slanted’ and prejudiced towards other people’s beliefs and practices, and the newspaper censored out these ‘garbage’ to prevent its readers to be ‘contaminated’ by these biased reports.

The filtering out of contents deemed ‘prejudiced’ by The Straits Times, it is suggested that the Singaporean newspapers do report news selectively and the choice of words and information published are regulated by journalists and editors. It is also argued that such filtering of contents is a testament that newspapers can influence how the readers perceive world events, and shape the way they think. The journalists and editors can manipulate how people receive information. This is a double-edged sword as the media actors may filter out viewpoints which promote

⁶⁸ The Straits Times. October 5, 2001. “No Reason to be defensive”. Page 24.

extremism, violence, or disharmony between the racial and religious communities; and they may also, knowingly or unknowingly, reproduce stereotypes and prejudices.

The Straits Times reported that it 'strives to be objective in our reporting of Islamic issues, the good and the bad, as we do other faiths', and this affirms that it practices neutrality in reporting news. While such neutral journalistic approach was suggested to be able to support the status quo and ethnic and religious harmony since it is neither 'for' nor 'against' any viewpoint, it is still able to influence social consciousness by the selection of the contents for publication.

It is argued that the statement to be objective in reporting the 'good and the bad' of 'Islamic issues' suggested to the readers that there is a 'bad' side of Islam which has to be reported. It is, as if, reporting to the readers that although there are Muslims who do good and contributes significantly towards the society, there are also Muslims who are extremists and go around executing terrorist activities.

Such reporting is biased and it may reinforce more negative perspectives than positive values. Professor of communication at Stanford University Clifford Nass suggested that there is a 'general tendency for everyone to zero in on our negative experiences... some people do have a more positive outlook, but almost everyone remembers negative things more strongly and in more detail.' The physiological reason for people to ruminate more about unpleasant events and use stronger words to describe such unpleasant events than happy ones is because negative emotions generally involve more thinking and such information will be processed by the brain more thoroughly than positive ones (Tugend, 2012). Nass also suggested that it is better to offer criticism at once than to follow with a list of positive attributes, as people remember much more after they heard disapproving remarks than before.

It is suggested that The Straits Times may have contributed to the reinforcing of negative portrayals of Malay and Muslims in Singapore. Even if The Straits Times attempted to 'balance'

the article with another more positive article, the much negative article will have a much greater impact on the readers.

On October 2nd, 2001, the front page of The Straits Times featured an article where the top Muslim religious leader, the Mufti of Singapore, urged Singaporeans to ‘continue to live in harmony if Afghanistan is attacked by the United States’, and further explained the concept of ‘*jihad*’ and highlighted that the Arabic term should not be confused with the term ‘holy war’ coined in reference to Christian crusaders in the Middle Ages⁶⁹. On page three of The Straits Times on the same day, October 2nd, another article which reported ‘Malays and Indians make academic leaps’ with the lead ‘students from all races are reaching higher levels of education, with Chinese leading pack, but others fast catching up’. Although the article portrayed the Malays’ achievements in Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE) and General Cambridge Examination (GCE) Ordinary Level examination (‘O’ Levels), they still did not perform well in the GCE Advance Level examination (‘A’ Levels) and not performing as well as the Chinese students academically.

Abdullah Tarmugi, then Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs, reminded non-Muslim Singaporeans to help maintain social cohesion in Singapore by ‘recognising that their Muslim counterparts here have nothing to do with the terrorists behind the Sept 11 attacks on the United States... the Malay/Muslim community, for its part, should not be over-sensitive to perceived slights’ in the wake of the Sept 11 attacks⁷⁰. Abdullah highlighted that the media published

⁶⁹ The Straits Times. October 2, 2001. “Live with others in peace: Mufti”. Page 1.

⁷⁰ The Straits Times. October 6, 2001. “Singaporeans must stay united in the wake of US attacks: Abdullah”. Page H2.

images of Muslims rejoicing after the attacks, and made ‘thoughtless remarks that equated Islam with terrorism... these images and remarks stick in the minds of non-Muslims’⁷¹.

The following day, October 7th, 2001, after his statement to urge non-Muslims to play their part in maintaining social cohesion, Abdullah spoke on how Muslim Singaporeans felt ‘singled out’ in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, and asked ‘why the scrutiny of the Malay Muslim community here when the attacks happened so far away?’⁷² He further blamed CNN for reproducing pictures of Muslims rejoicing after the attacks, and also images of Muslims burning effigies and flags. He suggested the impact such visuals have on the non-Muslim community, and the matter was made worse by government officials and people equating terrorism with Islam and that equation sticks in the mind of non-Muslims. Yet on the same page of the report, there was an article featuring contributions of Muslims to the community, and the lead of the story was ‘the beauty of Islam lies in the contribution of Muslims to the community – not in the “misguided and misplaced calls or views uttered or expressed by a few Muslims.”’⁷³

Maarof Salleh, the president of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), presented Meritorious Service Awards to four Muslims volunteers and suggested that ‘it would be a shame to overlook these good and beautiful faces of Islam and the Muslim community.’⁷⁴ Also on the same page of the above two articles, was another article which reported that many Muslims did not pay the religious ‘tax’, or the *zakat harta*⁷⁵.

⁷¹ The Straits Times. October 6, 2001. “Singaporeans must stay united in the wake of US attacks: Abdullah”. Page H2.

⁷² The Straits Times. October 7, 2001. “Muslims distancing themselves from attacks, says Abdullah”. Page 22.

⁷³ The Straits Times. October 7, 2001. “Muis president hits out at ‘misguided views’ about Muslims”. Page 22.

⁷⁴ The Straits Times. October 7, 2001. “Muis president hits out at ‘misguided views’ about Muslims”. Page 22.

⁷⁵ The Straits Times. October 7, 2001. “Many Muslims not paying religious ‘tax’: Muis”. Page 22.



Figure 9: Article of a young Muslim who is 'ready to die fighting'.

On October 7th, 2001, same day as the article where Abdullah reminded that Singaporean Muslims were not responsible for the September 11 attacks and urged non-Muslims to be rational, an article featured the story of a 15-year-old Pakistani Muslim *madrasah* (religious school) student who was prepared to die for his faith should the elders tell him to fight. Such article is demerit

This is, perhaps, the style of reporting adopted by The Straits Times – to highlight positive achievements and also to reflect negative results; to report on Muslims who contributed significantly to the country, and also Muslims who are willing to fight and die for their faith.

Professor of social psychology Roy F. Baumeister suggested that 'bad emotions, bad parents and bad feedback have more impact than good ones. Bad impressions and bad stereotypes are quicker to form and more resistant to disconfirmation than good ones... bad events wear off more slowly than good ones.' (Tugend, 2012)



Figure 10: Negative stereotypes of Malays are still evident, even in online search engines

The reporting of negative stories involving the Malays or Muslims will definitely leave a much negative image of them to the other ethnic communities. Despite attempts to highlight positive actions of the Malays, such as improvements academically or positive contributions towards the community, it is suggested that the demonizing of Islam had significantly caused further negative stereotypes to be associated with the Malays.

3.2.2 Demonizing Islam through ‘terrorist’ acts

The September 11 attack is a significant event especially in Singapore because the government placed increased attention on ethnic and religious relations in Singapore.

Professor Syed Farid Alatas suggested two explanations for the demonization of Islam, first the historical consciousness that Islam was seen a threat and a problem in the form of anti-colonial movement, and that the feeling of animosity and threat is deep-seated both in the West

and among the Muslims (Alatas S. F., 2004). A second explanation would be the Orientalist constructions of Islam which has been taking place for centuries.

The September 11 attacks were not carried out against the values of freedom and democracy, or the way of life of the Americans or other countries, but against United States foreign policy in the Middle East. Muslims before and after September 11 are convinced that the West is against them due to the topics that the media reports on Muslims and Arabs, writings of Orientalist-type journalists, and the portrayal of Arab and Muslims in Hollywood films (Alatas S. F., 2004).

Islam is regarded as an ideological competitor to capitalism and socialism, and viewed as a challenge to the West. Strange and bizarre stories have been reported or written to “confirm” the stereotypes against the Muslims, and generalized to the entire Muslim world and Islam is blamed for all the happenings (ibid). Islam is often portrayed as oppressive, restrictive, extremist, backward, causing conflicts, and a dangerous religion. Such reporting of Islam is problematic as there little attention to positive aspects of the Muslim world, and Islam would be emphasised when negative incidents occur, but not the case for other incidents involving adherents of other religions. Stereotyping influences and shapes how people perceive things around them. In 1995, many Americans blamed Islamic nations immediately after the Oklahoma City bombing. Investigations later discovered that a non-Muslim American right-wing extremist⁷⁶ executed the bombing.

⁷⁶ The Straits Times. September 14, 2001. “With friends like these...”. Page 4.

3.2.3 How the Chinese print media presented the September 11 attacks

The Chinese newspapers reported extensively about the September 11 attacks, and it is important to note that the reports were all extracted or reproduced from the Western media, citing other news agencies as the source of the information.

The religion of the “terrorists” was constantly portrayed in the news articles and it is suggested that such constant portrayal of “violent” and “dangerous” Muslims is rather misleading and gave a false impression that Islam is the cause of all these conflicts. The terrorists are just a minority extremists who used religion as a guise for their actions, and they do not represent the view of all Muslims and they may not represent Islam.

The previous section examines the English newspaper The Straits Times’s position in reporting Malay and Islamic issues, which attempts to report as objectively as possible and also neutrality, reporting the both sides of the issue without standing on any side.

3.2.3.1 Zaobao reporting the September 11 attacks

A day after September 11, 2001, the report on the attacks splashed over the front pages of all newspapers internationally. Lianhe Zaobao published an article adapted from the Associated Press in New York. The Associated Press is the world’s oldest and largest newsgathering organisation⁷⁷, and it distributes news to media agencies around the world. A chronology of news alerts, bulletins and flashes that ran on the morning of September 11, 2001 was made

⁷⁷ <http://www.ap.org/company/about-us>

available online by Free Republic⁷⁸, and there was no mention of the identity of the attackers then.



Figure 11: Front page of Lianhe Zaobao on Sep 12, 2001 – Terrorists hystericly attacked America

The next day, on September 13, 2001, the report adapted from Associated Press (Washington) stated that President George Walker Bush ‘did not identify who is the murderer, and did not clearly indicate revenge actions by Washington. However, intelligence analysts blamed Saudi Arabia Islamic extremist group led by Osama bin Laden (沙地阿拉伯汇缴激进派首领奥萨马), and they claimed that other than Osama bin Laden, no other group could coordinate such terror attacks⁷⁹’.

On the same day, the Zaobao reported in the section “Malaysian News”⁸⁰ that Mahathir was worried that America will take revenge actions which may lead to more casualties. The Zaobao article also cited the Associated Press saying that Mohd Hatta Ramli of the Islamic Party (回

⁷⁸ <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/748464/posts>

⁷⁹ Sep 13, 2001. Lianhe Zaobao. Front Page. “Bush: Terror attacks are actions of war”

⁸⁰ Sep 13, 2001. Lianhe Zaobao. Page 14. “Mahathir wrote to Bush to condemn attacks”

教党资深领袖哈达南利) suggested that America's Middle Eastern policies might be the cause of the terror attacks. Hatta Ramli warned that America will very soon push the blame to Islamic extremists, especially Osama who was wanted for the bombing of the American embassy⁸¹ and warship⁸².



Figure 12: Lianhe Zaobao article on September 13, 2001

“We expect America will sooner or later direct the blame at Islamic extremists, and this will be a blow to the image of Islam, and will lead Americans to stay away from Osama bin Laden, and even (stay away from) Islam⁸³”, said Hatta Ramli, as quoted on the news article.

The party condemned the terror attacks. However, the statement by Hatta Ramli suggested a mistrust of the Americans and that the Americans may negatively portray Islam.

⁸¹ A grenade was thrown at the British embassy in Yemen which blew up an electric generator on 13 October 2000

⁸² The terrorist attack by al-Qaeda against the United States Naval warship USS Cole on 12 October 2000

⁸³ “我们预料美国迟早会把矛头指向回教极端分子，这将打击回教的形象，并使美国人疏远奥萨马，甚至回教。”。September 13, 2001. Page 14. “Mahathir wrote to Bush to condemn attacks”

It is interesting to note that the article was adapted from several sources. The primary source of the news which reported Mahathir's letter to Bush was from the Associate News in Kuala Lumpur (吉隆坡综合电), but the Zaobao specifically cited the Associate Press (美联社) which reported the comments by Hatta Ramli. It is therefore suggested that the Zaobao is careful in quoting sensitive comments and statements and they will clearly cite their sources.

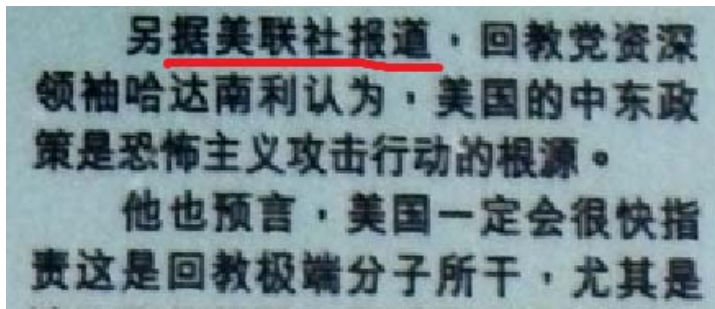


Figure 13: Sensitive statements and comments in new articles are clearly cited

It is suggested that this may be an indication that the newspaper is aware of the sensitivities and but they found that the comments are of interest to the public, and readers should know about such discourse (America blaming Muslims) among the Malaysian politicians.

They may not be accused of stoking religious sensitivities since it was quoted from a reliable news source, and may be viewed as presenting factual news to the readers and not intentionally stirring up sentiments.

I shall study the headlines and leads of reports by the Lianhe Zaobao following the September 11 attacks. The following table displays the headline and some lead of the news reports translated literally from the Chinese newspaper, and not rephrased into Standard English sentences. The headlines were translated word to word, and may not be grammatically correct. However, I kept the original formatting (positioning of the words or terminologies in the sentences) by the newspaper with the original text at the footnote.

Headlines and leads of reports by Lianhe Zaobao		
Date	Page	Headline and lead
Sep 12, 2001	1	<u>Terrorists attacked</u> USA⁸⁴ : <i>Passenger Plane crashed into the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon</i> ⁸⁵
Sep 12, 2001	1	Bush swore to arrest the <u>terrorists</u> and bring them to justice⁸⁶
Sep 13, 2001	1	Bush: <u>Terrorist</u> attacks are <u>acts of war</u>. America <u>vows revenge</u>⁸⁷
Sep 14, 2001	1	North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Russia and Japan, and other countries supports the <u>use of armed forces</u> against the <u>terrorists</u>⁸⁸
Sep 14, 2001	1	Jiang Zemin⁸⁹ called Bush to express (China's) support to co-operate with (USA) to <u>combat terrorist activities</u>⁹⁰
Sep 15, 2001	1	USA prepares 20 billion US Dollars to <u>eliminate</u> the <u>terrorists</u>⁹¹
Sep 15, 2001	1	Powell asserts <u>prime suspect</u> as Osama <i>US Secretary of State Colin Luther Powell affirms <u>Muslim</u></i>

⁸⁴ The term “美国” (mei-guo) refers to the United States of America (USA), and it should not be confused with the term “美洲” (mei-zhou) which refers to the continent of America.

⁸⁵ 恐怖分子狂袭美国 - 客机猛撞世贸中心飞机撞击五角大楼国务院...

⁸⁶ 布什誓言把恐怖分子追捕归案

⁸⁷ 布什：恐怖攻击是战争行为美国参众两院誓言报复

⁸⁸ 北约与俄日等支持军事打击恐怖分子

⁸⁹ Jiang Zemin was President of the People's Republic of China from 1993 to 2003

⁹⁰ 江泽民与布什通电表示愿合作打击恐怖主义活动

⁹¹ 美国拨 200 亿美元准备消灭恐怖分子

		<i>extremist leader Osama bin Laden as the prime suspect of the <u>attacks</u> on World Trade Centre and the Pentagon⁹²</i>
Sep 15, 2001	1	Planes will be <u>shot down</u> if pilots fail to provide the correct password while approaching important locations in China⁹³
Sep 16, 2001	1	USA enters a <u>state of emergency</u>⁹⁴ and Bush urged Americans to prepare for <u>sacrifice</u>⁹⁵
Sep 16, 2001	1	Taliban warned that it will use <u>military force</u> against any neighbouring countries which support USA's <u>attack</u> of Afghanistan⁹⁶
Sep 16, 2001	1	Deputy Prime Minister (Brigadier General) Lee Hsien Loong (urged) Singaporeans to think rationally towards the <u>terrorist attacks</u> in USA to prevent <u>racial and religious disharmony</u>⁹⁷
Sep 18, 2001	2	USA September 11 <u>terrorist attacks</u>: <i>Preventing weapons of mass destruction from eliminating mankind</i>⁹⁸

Main headlines are represented in bold type to distinguish them from leads (in *italics*)

⁹² 鲍威尔锁定主谋为奥萨马 - 美国国务卿鲍威尔锁定回教激进派领袖奥萨马是世贸中心和五角大楼恐怖攻击行动的首要嫌犯

⁹³ 飞近中国重要方位飞机对不上密码就一律击落

⁹⁴ The United States has been in a state of national emergency continuously since September 14, 2001, when the Bush administration invoked it premised on the September 11 attacks. In September 2010, President Barack Obama informed Congress that the State of National Emergency in effect since September 14, 2001, will be extended another year. The National Emergencies Act grants various powers to the president during times of emergency, and was intended to prevent a president from declaring a state of emergency of indefinite duration.

⁹⁵ 美国进入紧急状态布什吁人民准备牺牲

⁹⁶ 塔利班政权警告 邻国若助美攻击阿富汗将遭武力反击

⁹⁷ 副总理李显龙准将 国人应理智看待美国被袭以免破坏种族及宗教和谐

⁹⁸ 美国九一一遇袭事件 - 防生化武器杀人于无

A casual glance at the headlines summarised in the above table reflects a theme of violence suggested by the lexical choices used in the headlines. The terms which denote forms of violence or disharmony are underlined. In a genre of discourse, news headlines are constructed to package the entire story with the minimum number of words, and it often encapsulate the newspaper's ideological values and attitudes, and by analyzing the lexical choices and syntactic structures of newspaper headlines, the Critical Discourse Analyst will be able to peek into the underlying ideological meaning behind newspaper reporting (Teo, 2000, p. 15).

The use of free direct speech in the headlines gave the impression that a particular person is speaking directly to the readers (ibid). For example, on September 12 and 13, the headlines read “Bush swore to arrest the terrorists and bring them to justice”⁹⁹ and “Bush: Terrorist attacks are acts of war. America vows revenge.”¹⁰⁰

On September 12, 2001, the headline “Terrorists attacked USA: Passenger Plane crashed into the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon¹⁰¹” suggested the fear and insecurity arising from the attacks, and it created a very tense atmosphere that the most powerful country in the world could not prevent the attack. But a couple of days later, on September 15, the headline “USA prepares a huge sum of money to counter the terrorists”, and the U.S. Secretary of State identified the prime suspect to be a Muslim extremist. This is strategically timed to re-assert the authority of the U.S. government and to restore public faith in them.

The syntactic manipulation of information in the headline ‘Powell asserts prime suspect as Osama’ on September 15, 2001, is apparent if we re-write it as either (a) Osama bin Laden identified as prime suspect by Powell; or (b) Osama bin Laden is the prime suspect. Both the passivization in (a) and the omission of the government official in (b) significantly diminish

⁹⁹ 布什誓言把恐怖分子追捕归案

¹⁰⁰ 布什：恐怖攻击是战争行为美国参众两院誓言报复

¹⁰¹ 恐怖分子狂袭美国 - 客机猛撞世贸中心飞机撞击五角大楼国务院...

the significance and perforated the power of the US government. The frontal positioning of 'Bush' and 'Powell' foregrounds the U.S. government and is consistent with enhancing their visibility and credibility in their 'war' against the terrorists.

The attack of the World Trade Centre and Pentagon is big news, but it also highlighted the weakness and incapability of the United States to prevent the attacks. To highlight the attacks on the front page of newspapers around the world is actually to give credit to the attackers, which makes no sense. Therefore, what is newsworthy is not the destruction of World Trade Centre or damages at the Pentagon, but the 'dramatic reversal' of the power-relations (Teo, 2000, p. 16) between the U.S. government and the terrorists. The 'reversal' contrasts with the headline "Terrorists attacked USA" on September 12, 2001, where the 'terrorists' occupies the informationally significant frontal position. From the very next day, the U.S. President and U.S. Secretary of State took over the frontal position in headlines.

In summary, we can observe how the active choices made in the way newspaper headlines and leads are understood can have a very powerful ideological impact on readers' perceptions and interpretation of people and events (ibid).

An important characteristic of newspaper discourse under analysis is the reliance of various sources of information on which the news report is constructed (Teo, 2000, p. 18). Direct and indirect quotes are frequently used to give news discourse a semblance of 'facticity' and authenticity, as a quote from the newsmaker's own words renders it as incontrovertible fact (ibid). Scannell (1992) argued that the dependence on legitimized sources of information results in a predominantly establishment view of the world, in which lay people are only entitled to their experience but not their opinions (Scannell, 1992). In this way, the use of quotation becomes a gate-keeping device that allows only those in positions of power and influence to voice out, while shutting out the opinions and perspectives of those deemed by

society to be powerless (Teo, 2000, p. 18). The powerful are further empowered through quotation patterns that enhance their status and visibility, which systematically silenced the powerless, including the poor, the young, the uneducated, and etcetera, and further disempowers them.

Van Dijk suggested that one of the ‘properties’ of racism in the press is that minorities are largely silent and are hardly quoted or quoted with suspicion or distance in newspaper reporting.

It was quite obvious that U.S. President Bush and U.S. Secretary are the most quoted in the reports of September 11, and there were very little quote (almost none) by ordinary citizens of the United States.

Another example would be the Lianhe Zaobao article¹⁰² on October 1, 2001 presenting government leaders’ views of the September 11 attacks. The headlines stated that then Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong was concerned over the reactions to the attacks and government leaders will continue dialogue with the people to renew the relationship between the people of different ethnic communities. Lee mentioned that “we must remind ourselves that we are Singaporeans. We are an entity. Those actions (the terror attacks) were not done by the Muslims in Singapore, and it has nothing to do with them (Singaporean Muslims). On the other hand, the Muslims (in Singapore) should not be over sensitive to the reactions by non-Muslims. We have to look at these issues from the Singapore’s perspective.”

The style of writing the article was cautious and continued to remind readers that Muslims in Singapore are not to be blamed for the September 11 attacks and the entire article were quotes by Lee Hsien Loong. It is observed that the entire article contained only quotes from Lee, and

¹⁰² Oct 1, 2001. Lianhe Zaobao. Page 4.

the newspaper did not include any personal opinions or include other facts, except what Lee had said.

On the same day, the Lianhe Zaobao reported that the “Islamic Party wants Mahathir to declare that Malaysia is an Islamic country in Parliament.”¹⁰³ In the wake of the September 11 attacks, negative portrayals of Islam by the Western media already put the Islamic religion in a rather negative light, and an “Islamic Party” declaring Malaysia as an “Islamic country” was untimely.

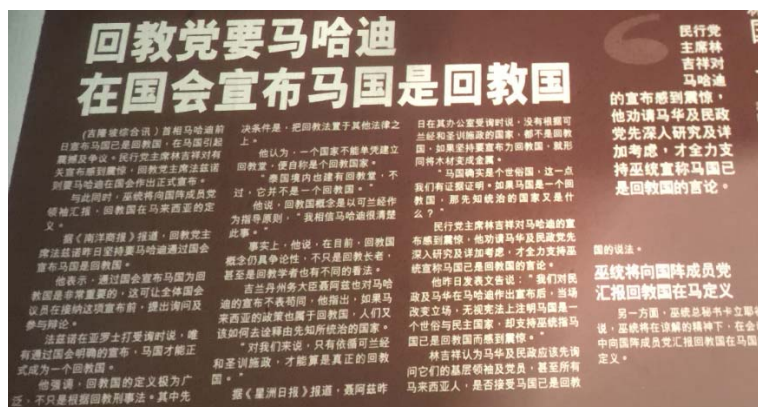


Figure 14: In bold – Islamic Party wants Mahathir to declare that Malaysia is an Islamic country in Parliament

Nevertheless, this article was clarified under the category “Malaysia news”, thus it is also suggested that the Lianhe Zaobao took efforts not to overlay the news by placing it under “Prime News” in the same that the article mentioned earlier about a Malaysian political leader suggesting that America will “sooner or later push the blame to the Muslims”¹⁰⁴. This clearly distinguished that these are not the views of the Singaporean government and the Lianhe Zaobao.

¹⁰³ Oct 1, 2001. Lianhe Zaobao. Page 17

¹⁰⁴ Sep 13, 2001. Page 14. “Mahathir wrote to Bush to condemn attacks”

It is crucial to note that in these articles, the headlines included the term “huijiao” (Islam) and this would easily capture the Chinese readers’ attention to the news. The term appeared twice in the above article and it is prominent, easy to spot when the reader browses through the paper considering that the headlines are meant to capture the attention of readers so they will continue reading the rest of the article.

3.3 Analysis of the articles reporting the arrest and detention of JI members

Soon after the September 11 attacks, Singapore identified and arrested 15 people in December 2001, of whom 13 were members of a regional Islamic group known as “Jemaah Islamiyah”, also known as “JI” or in English “Islamic community”. The 13 JI members were detained while the other two were released in January 2002 on Restriction Order.

I shall analyze two main sources for this section – first the government’s position in regard to the JI arrests through the *White Paper for the Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests and the threat of terrorism* published by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2003, and also English and Chinese newspaper reports, commentaries, and forum articles with regards to the arrests.

After September 2011, the media has been following up closely with terrorism news such as the rise of insurgency in the Middle East, Pakistan as a training ground for terrorists, and reactions by the United States and other European countries against terrorism. Almost every other day there will be some follow-up articles on the happenings in the Middle East and reports on how countries are gearing up for the fight against terrorism.

The Internal Security Department (ISD) of Singapore is tasked to confront and address security issues and latent threats such as international terrorism, foreign subversion, espionage, and also from communalism or racial and religious extremism. The department investigates and where

necessary takes direct action in relation to the defined security threats of terrorism or politically motivated violence, foreign subversion, espionage and communal extremism (Internal Security Department, 2003). The ISD arrested 13 JI members between December 9 and 24 in 2001 for terrorist activities, by this was not reported in the media.

The United States intelligence discovered notes and videotapes in the rubble of the home of an Al-Qaeda leader in Afghanistan on December 14th¹⁰⁵, which included details of a bomb plot targeted at locations in Singapore. The ISD received copies of the materials on December 28th, 2001, and they officially released news of the discovery on January 11th, 2002.

On January 11th, 2002, The Straits Times reproduced an article from the International Herald Tribune written by professor of national security policy at the National War College, Marvin Ott, titled 'Islam's clash with modernization fuels hatred of West'¹⁰⁶. The article highlighted that 'the root cause of widespread Arab anger towards the West is the historic failure of the Islamic world to come to terms with modernization'¹⁰⁷. The article also mentioned that 'much of Asia is well down the road of modernization, one major segment of global society is not – the Muslim world... some Muslim countries have achieved a degree of success in modernization, including Malaysia (which had a large Chinese population)... societies which reject the core values that underpin modernization are condemned to remain west and backward.'¹⁰⁸ Ott condemned the Muslim world as having no institutions, no indigenous multi-

¹⁰⁵ The Straits Times. January 12, 2002. "Yishun target in group's plans". Page 1.

¹⁰⁶ Marvin Ott's article 'Why Do They Hate? Because Modernity Passed Them By' was published on January 9, 2002 (http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/09/opinion/09iht-edott_ed3_.html)

¹⁰⁷ The Straits Times. January 11, 2002. "Islam's clash with modernization fuels hatred of West". Commentary/Analysis.

¹⁰⁸ The Straits Times. January 11, 2002. "Islam's clash with modernization fuels hatred of West". Commentary/Analysis.

national corporations, and no advances in science and technology and that it ‘turned its back on modern science’, thus barely 1 per cent of the world’s scientists are Muslim.

This article, although reproduced from other sources, is problematic as it portrayed the Western negative attitudes towards the Muslim world and claimed that Malaysia had achieved ‘a degree of success in modernization’ because it had a large Chinese population. This portrays the majority Malays in Malaysia, who are Muslims, as not modern or progressive, and portrays Malaysia as modernized because of the large Chinese population. Although this article was not written by journalists from The Straits Times, the decision to reproduce the article in The Straits Times is problematic. This could potentially stoke negative portrayals of the Malays.

On the same day on January 11th, 2002, The Straits Times reported that members of a Muslim terrorist group in Malaysia had received military training in a ‘neighbouring country’ and identified that country as Indonesia¹⁰⁹. The Straits Times also featured an article where NUS Muslim Society and Islamic scholars and teachers voice their support for the Government’s move to hold 15 people under ISA (Internal Security Act), and the NUS Muslim Society was quoted to seek ‘greater dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims’ and the need to maintain trust between the government and the Malay/Muslim community¹¹⁰. Pergas, the association of Islamic scholars and religious teachers, said that they were shocked by the arrests and that ‘people in the Malay/Muslim community were, by nature, peace-loving and tolerant.’ Pergas also expressed that ‘Malay/Muslim Singaporeans appreciated living in a peaceful and harmonious multi-racial and multi-religious society.’¹¹¹ We can see from this article that the ‘Malay’ and ‘Muslim’ are used together, and this suggested the correlation between the racial

¹⁰⁹ The Straits Times. January 11, 2002. “Militants ‘trained in nearby countries’”. Page A15

¹¹⁰ The Straits Times. January 11, 2002. “Muslim undergrads, Pergas back arrests’. Page H4.

¹¹¹ The Straits Times. January 11, 2002. “Muslim undergrads, Pergas back arrests’. Page H4.

and religious identities. It may cause confusion to other readers, such as the Chinese readers, that if it's a Malay issue, it is therefore also a Muslim issue, and vice versa. Relating it to the earlier article 'Islam's clash with modernization fuels hatred of West', the reader may unconsciously interpret Malaysia's modernization as fueled by the Chinese while the Malays are not modern and backward.

On January 12th, 2002, newspapers in Singapore reported on the JI arrests and video recordings of locations in Singapore. The Straits Times headline was 'Yishun targeted in group's plans' and it reported on the discovery of bomb plot in Yishun. It highlighted that the discovery of the videotape amid the rubble of an Al-Qaeda leader's house in Afghanistan 'might well have saved many lives in Singapore'¹¹². The report also featured the JI's local leader, Ibrahim Maidin, as an 'Indian Muslim condominium manager and part-time *ustaz* or religious teacher', and that the 13 JI members arrested were 'not known to be active members of any particular mosque or local Muslim organisation.'¹¹³ The government said that the JI seemed to be dominated by foreign extremist ideology with anti-American, anti-West agenda¹¹⁴. It is interesting to note that the Chinese media did not indicate Ibrahim Maidin as an Indian Muslim, but just Muslim. It is suggested that the Chinese journalists may not be aware that Muslims may refer to any adherents who embraced Islam regardless of their ethnicity. However, it is suggested that the Chinese media may not want to extend that suspicion towards the Indian community. Nevertheless, the fact that the detainees claimed to be Muslims already sent a negative message of Islam.

¹¹² The Straits Times. January 12, 2002. "Al-Qaeda video leads here". Page 1.

¹¹³ The Straits Times. January 12, 2002. "Yishun target in group's plans". Page 1.

¹¹⁴ The Straits Times. January 12, 2002. "Yishun target in group's plans". Page 1.

On January 12th, 2002, the Lianhe Zaobao headlines was 'ISD crackdown on terrorism and exposed the schemes of the terrorists: Yishun MRT station is a target of a (planned) attack'. The Jemaah Islamyah was interpreted as *huijiao qidao tuan*, or 'Islamic prayer group'. The Chinese papers interviewed several politicians, including the Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defence, Teo Chee Hean; Minister for National Development, Mah Bow Tan; Minister for Law and Foreign Affairs, Professor S Jayakumar; and Parliamentary Secretary for Information, Communications and the Arts, Yatiman Yusof. It is a rather fair representation from the politicians of different ethnicities.

Teo mentioned that the detainees were all ordinary Singaporeans who received education in national schools, some of the detainees had served National Service, and had proper jobs and family, however, they were brainwashed with extremist ideologies and eventually to resort to violence. Mah expressed that he was shocked that Singaporeans attempted to hurt fellow Singaporeans to achieve their goals, and saw it as a 'test' for Singapore as a multi-ethnic society. Mah also urged for non-Muslims to recognize the difference between religion and terrorism, and not correlate such violence with the innocent Muslims. Jayakumar expressed that Singaporeans should be united regardless of race or religion to resist terrorism.

Yatiman Yusof, the only Malay politician interviewed, said that if the JI members successfully detonated a bomb at the Yishun MRT station, it would definitely spark anger and suspicion (of the Muslims) by the non-Muslim communities, and would hurt the inter-racial relations built over the years and that it would take many years to recover (to rebuild trust amongst the different ethnic communities) after such disaster. Yusof clarified that the JI detainees did not graduate from the *madrasahs*, and they did not participate in any mosque activities or events within the Muslim community. He added that there will be Singaporeans who have frustrations or dislikes (towards the society), regardless of religious or educational background. Those who possess hatred towards the society are most vulnerable and weak, and they easily became

candidates for terrorist groups. He explicitly suggested that the JI detainees were ‘not highly educated thus they fell into the traps of the overseas (terror) groups’¹¹⁵. The Straits Times quoted Yusof stating that the detainees ‘are social saboteurs who undermine our continuous, sustained efforts at creating a multiracial community living in harmony... should they succeed in setting off an explosion... there will be lives lost and there will be unhappiness and feelings of suspicion from other communities.’¹¹⁶ He thought that those who are not highly educated may not differentiate what is right and what is wrong, and can be easily influenced by the terrorist groups. He also felt that the actions of the arrested JI members were irresponsible and they damaged the reputation (and image) of Islam. The statement by Yusof may be sensitive as he suggested those who were not highly educated are vulnerable to brainwashing and recruitment by ‘terrorists’. With the Malays were already stereotyped to be lagging behind the other communities and not doing as well as the Chinese academically, and his comment may have further suggested that the Malays are at a higher risk of joining terrorist groups and more vulnerable to such threats. Although Yusof’s personal observations may seem to be rather negative, but it also suggested that the Malay leaders are aware of the situation and they are working on these issues.

On January 12, 2002, The Straits Times also reported that 50 Malaysians were identified with links to Al-Qaeda¹¹⁷. This warned Singaporeans that terrorism is a real threat and it affects not only in Singapore, but also neighbouring countries. Just two days of news reporting on the newspapers from January 11 to 12 may suggest the two neighbouring Muslim countries had

¹¹⁵ Lianhe Zaobao. January 12, 2002. “Political leaders’ response to the arrests of terrorists”. Page 1.

¹¹⁶ The Straits Times. January 12, 2002. “Undermining Multiracialism”. Page H4.

¹¹⁷ The Straits Times. January 12, 2002. “50 Malaysians with Al-Qaeda links”. Page A23.

links with international terrorist groups such as the Al-Qaeda, and Indonesia was a training ground for terrorists, thus Singapore is vulnerable.

On January 13th, then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong urged Singaporeans not to doubt or be suspicious of other races to prevent misunderstandings¹¹⁸. The Straits Times quoted him urging Singaporeans to preserve multi-racial, multi-religious harmony, and do not overreact¹¹⁹. After January 13th, the news of the arrests and bomb plot was no longer published on the front page of the papers, and by 15th, it was no longer reported.

This incident, although happening merely months after the September 11 attacks, reflected the stand of the Singaporean media. It is suggested that the Singaporean media reported the facts released by the Internal Security Department and quoted politicians and leaders from the Malay Muslim community, and also non-Muslim Singaporeans, to urge the racial and religious communities not to overreact or doubt fellow Singaporeans. Even The New Paper, a tabloid paper, did not attempt to sensationalize the news. They featured Minister of State for Community Development and Sports Dr. Yaacob Ibrahim urging Muslims to speak up and not remain silent as the acts of the JI members do not represent the Muslim community. He also urged Muslims not to ‘look the other way and pretend nothing has happened’¹²⁰. Muslim youths were also interviewed to express their views of the incident¹²¹.

It is argued that The Straits Times, Lianhe Zaobao, and other print media in Singapore did not attempt to sensationalize the story or point fingers at any particular racial or religious community, but reported the facts according to official sources. The articles served to remind

¹¹⁸ Lianhe Zaobao. January 13, 2002. “Singaporeans of all races should not doubt each other”. Page 1.

¹¹⁹ The Straits Times. January 13, 2002. “Carry on as usual: PM Goh”. Page 1.

¹²⁰ The New Paper. January 14, 2002. “Yaacob to Muslims: Time to speak up”. Page 3.

¹²¹ The New Paper. January 14, 2002. “Muslim youth leader: Here’s what I think”. Page 3.

Singaporeans to stay united and remain calm. Articles were also published to express the views of the Islamic Religious Council (MUIS), Malay and Muslim leaders, politicians and youths, and also provide channels for Islam to be explained to non-Muslims.

This is a stark difference from the way the American media reported the September 11 attacks, which portrayed Muslims negatively and stoking suspicion of the Muslims, including Muslims in America. But the decision to reproduce articles from foreign media, such as the article ‘Islam’s clash with modernization fuels hatred of West’ by Marvin Ott, was not helpful in promoting positive understanding of the Muslims.

This article reproduced many stereotypes and prejudices against the Muslims and may potentially cause misunderstandings between the Chinese and the Malay community, especially so Ott’s the example of Malaysia becoming modernized because of the Chinese population and not due to the majority Malays. Such discourse may lead to unnecessary unhappiness and potential suspicion between the communities.

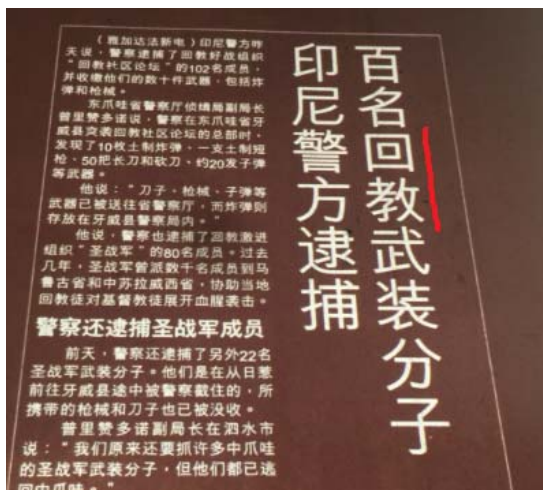


Figure 15: The term “huijiao” which means “Islam” (the religion) on the headlines

On December 3, 2001, shortly before the ISD announced the detention of the JI members, an article reported that “a hundred Islamic armed militants had been arrested by Indonesian

Police¹²². Although the armed militants regarded themselves as Muslims, highlighting that they were “Islamic armed militants” in the headlines may unintentionally cause readers to associate Islam with violence. Headlines will grab readers’ attention. Readers may skip the article after reading the headline if the topic of the article is not of interest to them, but it may be problematic if the reader reads the headlines and not the article, and therefore assumed that Islam is associated with violence.

3.3.1 Analyzing the Lianhe Zaobao news reports

The following table are the headlines and leads of reports by the Lianhe Zaobao on the arrest of JI members.

Headlines and leads of reports by Lianhe Zaobao		
Date	Page	Headline and lead
Jan 12, 2002	1	<u>Internal Security Department (ISD) anti-terrorism efforts uncovered treacherous plans: Yishun MRT (was) the attack target</u>
Jan 12, 2002	1	Repeatedly went Afghanistan to receive military training
Jan 12, 2002	2	<p><i>Politicians’ comments on the terrorist arrests¹²³</i></p> <p>1. <u>Rear Admiral Teo Chee Hean</u>¹²⁴: The arrest of terrorists is a testament of heightened security in Singapore¹²⁵</p>

¹²² Dec 3, 2001. Page 2. “A hundred Islamic armed militants arrested by Indonesian Police”

¹²³ 政治领袖评恐怖分子被捕事件

¹²⁴ Teo Chee Hean was then Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defence

¹²⁵ 张志贤准将：恐怖分子被捕证明新加坡已加强保安

		<p>2. <u>Mah Bow Tan</u>¹²⁶ urges non-Muslims to distinguish religion and terrorism¹²⁷</p> <p>3. <u>Yatiman Yusof</u>¹²⁸ : Terrorists smeared the reputation of Islam</p> <p>4. <u>S. Jayakumar (Prof)</u>¹²⁹: Singaporeans must view terrorism activities very seriously</p>
Jan 13, 2002	1	<p><u>Prime Minister Goh (Chok Tong)</u>: Facing the foiling of the terror plans, Singaporeans of all racial groups should not have suspicious or misunderstanding¹³⁰.</p> <p><u>Ministry of Education</u> requests principals to guide teachers and students to proper understand the incident where Singaporeans participated in terror activities¹³¹.</p> <p><u>U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Henry Rumsfeld</u>: Singapore's decisive arrests of the extremists, U.S. government felt extremely happy¹³².</p>
Jan 13, 2002	4	<p><u>Zainudin (Nordin)</u>¹³³: Terrorism may penetrate from even tiny holes (areas), Singaporeans should be prepared for danger even if living in peacetime. <i>Singaporeans should</i></p>

¹²⁶ Mah Bow Tan was then Minister for National Development

¹²⁷ 马宝山吁请非回教徒分清宗教和恐怖主义

¹²⁸ Yatiman Yusof was then Senior Parliamentary Secretary Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts

¹²⁹ S. Jayakumar (Prof) was then Minister for Law & Minister for Foreign Affairs.

¹³⁰ 吴总理：对恐怖组织阴谋被揭发事件 各族国人不应互相猜疑和误会

¹³¹ 教育部要求校长协助教师学生正确看待有国人涉恐怖活动事件

¹³² 防长拉姆斯菲尔德 新加坡果断逮捕极端分子美国政府感到非常高兴

¹³³ Zainudin Nordin was then a Member of the Singapore Parliament

		<p><i>understand that those arrested are minority Muslims who were misguided and do not represent the entire community¹³⁴.</i></p> <p><u>Mahathir</u> believes Jemaah Islamiyah may be linked with extremist groups in Malaysia¹³⁵.</p> <p><u>Mufti of Singapore</u> urges (Muslims) followers to be vigilant and not allow anyone with ulterior motives to affect our harmony¹³⁶.</p>
Jan 14, 2002	1	<p><u>Wong Kan Seng</u>¹³⁷: ISD received the original tape(s)¹³⁸</p> <p>To allow Singaporeans better understand the entire terror plot: Government will at the appropriate time publish the White Paper¹³⁹</p>
Jan 15, 2002	-	<i>No article</i>

Main headlines are represented in bold type to distinguish them from leads (in italics)

The Lianhe Zaobao published the news of the JI arrests on January 12, 2002, with the headlines “Internal Security Department (ISD) anti-terrorism efforts uncovered treacherous plans: Yishun MRT (was) the attack target¹⁴⁰.”

¹³⁴再努丁恐怖活动无孔不入新加坡人应居安思危希望新加坡人能够明白逮捕的人是少数被误导的回教徒并不足以代整个族群。

¹³⁵ 马哈迪相信回教祈祷团与马国极端组织有联系

¹³⁶我国回教宗教司告诚信徒提防意图不良者破坏和谐

¹³⁷ Wong Kan Seng was then the Minister for Home Affairs

¹³⁸ 黄根成：内安局起获录像带是原装带子

¹³⁹让国人对整个恐怖活动有更全面了解 政府在适当时机可能发表白皮书

¹⁴⁰内安局反恐大出击揭发恐怖分子大阴谋 义顺地铁站是攻击目标

The ISD took the frontal most position in the headlines, which emphasized its authority, visibility and credibility in their ‘fight’ against the terrorists. The second page features a full spread report featuring comments by politicians. As underlined in the above table, the frontal most positioning of political leaders in the headlines suggested the importance and seriousness of the incident, with politicians urging non-Muslims to be rational and not be suspicious of the Muslim (and Malay) community. These remarks were, however, indications and suggestive of a fragile relationship between the racial communities.

All the articles quoted politicians and those in positions of power and influence, including the President of the Islamic Council of Singapore (MUIS), Mufti of Singapore, except an article on Jan 13, 2002, where a close friend of a JI detainee was interviewed and expressed shock and disbelief that his childhood playmate would become a JI member¹⁴¹

The interview with the friend of a detainee contrasted to the other reports where the influential people were quoted extensively, and the interview was placed at page 5 of the newspaper which is indicatively that the ‘friend of the detainee’ was of low-value status and represent the only sympathetic voice about the detainees throughout the report. While the interviewee portrayed the detained friend as seemingly ‘harmless’, the authorities portrayed the detainees as highly dangerous and directly responsible for the security threat in Singapore.

3.4 Analysis of the articles reporting the *Tudung* Incident in 2002

The *tudung*, a veil in the Malay language or *hijab* in Arabic, is religious requirement for all Muslim women to express modesty. However, how the women don the *tudung* is based on cultural practices.

¹⁴¹Lianhe Zaobao. Jan 13, 2002. Page 5. - 被捕技工好友：难以相信童年玩伴涉案

This incident happened shortly after the arrests of the JI members and bomb plot at Yishun MRT station, and it sparked much debate in the public sphere and also heightened interest among academics. Researchers find the incident “rare for the parents of students to become involved in civil disobedience in a country well-known for its authoritarianism and paternalism” (Law, 2003, p. 52). It was seen as a quest to fight for religious freedom and the actions reflected the awkward situation of the Malay Muslims which was perceived to have been marginalized for a long period of time in the process of social mobility and ethnic integration (ibid).

On January 28th, 2002, Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong mentioned that the reasons for not allowing muslim girls wear headscarves to school is to inculcate a sense of understanding and acceptance amongst children of diverse racial backgrounds.

On February 1, 2002, The Straits Times headlines was “Minorities assured of protection: PM, BG Lee give their word on ensuring racial harmony, but say minority races must also be prepared to give and take.”¹⁴² The Chinese Lianhe Zaobao headlines read ‘Government assured protection of minority race, but all races should avoid bringing up harsh requests’¹⁴³. We can see the different angles of reporting by the English and Chinese newspapers – to ‘give and take’ is a much placid approach than to ‘avoid bringing up harsh requests’¹⁴⁴, and may suggest that the request by the Malay community (in this context the Malay parents) is an unreasonable one. This incident happened shortly after the arrest of the JI members, thus having the potential

¹⁴² The Straits Times. February 1, 2002. “Minorities assured of protection: PM, BG Lee give their word on ensuring racial harmony, but say minority races must also be prepared to give and take.”. Page 1.

¹⁴³ Lianhe Zaobao. February 1, 2002. “Government assured protection of minority race, but all races should avoid bringing up harsh requests”. Page 1.

¹⁴⁴“但各族应少提苛刻要求” – Translated as ‘but the respective ethnic communities should bring up lesser harsh requests’.

effect of unintentionally and unwittingly reaffirming Islamism, i.e. through an orientalist stereotyping of Muslims as unreasonable in their demands and practices.

On the same day, The headlines of the Home section of The Straits Times read ‘Three girls to wear tudung to school today: They could face suspension as a result, but parents say it is a matter of faith and they will defend it in court if they have to.’¹⁴⁵

The Straits Times article reported that “Parents of the three *tudung*-wearing Primary 1 Muslim girls say that they intended to send them to school today dressed in the headscarf, in spite of the suspension threat hanging over them.” The article mentioned about the “Muslim community”, “Muslim student” and “Muslims”, but there was no mention of “Malay” in the article. This may suggest *The Straits Times* did not angle this as a “racial issue”. However, in the Chinese papers, the *Lianhe Zaobao* interviewed Madam Halimah Yacob as she was the only Malay female Member of Parliament. The article shared that she was afraid to attend school after the Chinese Lunar New Year as students will be dressed in new and colourful clothes to school, but her family was poor and could not afford new clothes. She felt comforted that she had her school uniform, and felt she was no different from others. The *Lianhe Zaobao* went on to report that “the parents of four Malay-Muslim girls¹⁴⁶ insisted their child to wear the headscarf to school, thus sparked a ‘headscarf (tudung) saga’.”

The Straits Times and the *Lianhe Zaobao* did not continue the story for the next few days; however, *Shin Min Daily News* continued to follow up on the news and reported on the incident. It is suggested that the Singaporean media did not continuously report the news because to

¹⁴⁵ The Straits Times. February 1, 2002. “Three girls to wear tudung to school today: They could face suspension as a result, but parents say it is a matter of faith and they will defend it in court if they have to”. Page H1.

¹⁴⁶ Lianhe Zaobao. 1 February 2002. Page 4. “四名马来族回教徒女生的家长” – 马来族 means “Malay race” and 回教徒 means “Muslim”.

avoid being regarded as prejudiced against the Malays. Interestingly, the tudung incident also sparked a debate on the educational system in Singapore, the madrasah system and also the Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools which provide Higher Chinese. Then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong emphasized that the Government will not shut down SAP schools¹⁴⁷, but students who take up Higher Malay may also enroll in an elective programme in Malay language for Secondary Schools.

The SAP schools were established in 1979 with the objective of developing students with high competency in English and Chinese¹⁴⁸. Only students who are proficient in the Chinese language are allowed to enter the SAP schools, thus this policy precludes most non-Chinese from enrolling in the SAP schools, resulting in a lack of racial diversity among the students. It was also deemed as discriminatory against the less privileged and non-Chinese students (Zhang, 2014, p. 15). It may be argued that the Chinese media played up the racial card by highlighting the issue of SAP schools as though it reflected the sentiments of the entire community though the *tudung* issue was voiced by a few politicized Malays. Zhang (2014) commented that the SAP schools scheme “further disadvantages the Malay Muslims in their educational journey (Zhang, 2014, p. 18). Suriani noted that the Malays were seen by the Singaporean society as not grasping the importance of education (Suriani, 2004, p. 6), and the highlighting of SAP schools in the Chinese media during the *tudung* issue may reinforce the portrayal of the ‘backward’ Malays to the Chinese readers.

The next day, on February 4, 2002, the *Shin Min Daily News* published an article with the headlines ‘Father ignored warnings: One girl still wore the headscarf to school and was

¹⁴⁷ Shin Min Daily News. February 3, 2002. “Prime Minister Goh emphasized that the Government will not shut down SAP schools”. Page 5. (吴总理强调：政府不会关闭特选学校)

¹⁴⁸ January 25, 2016. The Straits Times. 'Time to end SAP school system'.
<<http://www.straitstimes.com/forum/letters-in-print/time-to-end-sap-school-system>>

suspended from school this afternoon’. The word *nai* (乃) used in the headlines meant “despite” or “still”, suggesting defiance¹⁴⁹. On February 5, 2002, the *Shin Min Daily News* reported that two girls who wore headscarves to school were suspended¹⁵⁰.

On February 6, 2002, the *Lianhe Zaobao* reported the Mufti of Singapore emphasizing education is more important than donning the headscarves¹⁵¹. The *Shin Min Daily News* published a small article on page 4 where a Malay leader urged the parents of the four students to heed the advice of the mufti and allow the girls go back to school¹⁵².

On February 6, a sex video scandal involving a Taiwanese politician became the lead news of the Chinese papers, and the reports on the *tudung* incident faded away and did not receive any more attention. The demise of former President of the Republic of Singapore Ong Teng Cheong on February 9th further diluted the reporting on the *tudung* incident on the English and Chinese papers. However, the *tudung* incident reminded the Singaporean government that race and religious issues may be sparked by the actions of a few people, and that can definitely stir much emotions amongst the population.

Law Kam-Yee concluded in his paper on the *tudung* incident that national solidarity as pursued by the Singapore government can never be achieved while the Muslim is marginalized, and he was concerned that the incident sent a “dangerous message that global anti-terrorism movement can be easily abused and hence transformed into a regional anti-Muslim agenda. Law also

¹⁴⁹ Shin Min Daily News. February 4, 2002. “Father ignored warnings: One girl still wore the headscarf to school and was suspended from school this afternoon”. Page 5.

¹⁵⁰ Shin Min Daily News. February 5, 2002. “Two girls who wore headscarves to school were suspended”. Page 4. (戴头巾上课两女生遭停学)

¹⁵¹ Lianhe Zaobao. February 6, 2002. “Mufti: Education is more important than headscarves”. Page 2.

¹⁵² Shin Min Daily News. February 7. “Maidin: The parents of the four girls should heed the advice of the mufti and allow them back to school”. Page 4.

concluded in his research that the tudung incident revealed the marginalization of Malay Muslim in terms of religious rights and social mobility, and the deeper significance is the exposure of a perceived incompatibility between their religious ethos and the PAP's creed of economic growth.

Law also claimed that the Malays are targeted because of their religion, with more pressure imposed upon them (Law, 2003, p. 59). He also claimed that the Singapore government has violated Malay Muslims' right to religious freedom by disallowing the Muslim schoolgirls to wear the *tudung*, a right that does not infringe on the rights of others. The Malays lack both social recognition and political security, and have been long marginalized in Singapore. He argued that Islam serves the Malays as a spiritual support, by abolishing the right to wear the tudung, the Singapore government had sent a strong message to the Malays that their social status has been further marginalized and their spiritual support is under threat (Law, 2003, p. 67).

In summary, the way the Chinese newspapers have reported on the incident as highlighted above suggests the unintentional consequences of heightening social tensions when it generated debates on the basis of an orientalising representation of Malay Muslims. This is all the more problematic when such reporting took place in the context of the arrest of JI members, making it easy for readers to associate the *tudung* incident with Islamism or at least the need to guard against it. When interpreted in light of the perceived inferiority of Malay's social status in Singapore, it can create distrust and suspicion among the Chinese of Malay Muslims in Singapore, potentially straining racial and religious relations in the process.

3.4.1 Exceptional interest by *Shin Min Daily News*

Headlines and/or lead are definitive features of news reporting used to express the bottom line of the news event and to orient the readers to process the text in a pre-determined direction (Teo, 2000, p. 13). Readers may obtain a fairly accurate idea of what the entire story is about by glancing the headlines or leads. Headlines and leads are regarded as the most important or newsworthy information, and are located at the top of the article¹⁵³. News headlines are specifically crafted to employ the minimum number of words to package maximum information, therefore, every word in the headline is carefully chosen and structured so as to maximize its effect and impact. Hence, headlines often encapsulate the newspaper's ideological values and attitudes, and analyzing the choice of words and syntactic structures of the newspaper headlines, leads, and captions of photographs that may accompany the news reports would allow the critical discourse analyst to understand the underlying ideological meaning behind newspaper reporting (ibid).

One issue to note was the exceptional interest to report the incident by the *Shin Min Daily News* after the “tudung incident” occurred.

After the incident was report on *The Straits Times* and *Lianhe Zaobo* on February 1, 2002, the papers stopped reporting on the incident. However, the *Shin Min Daily News* ran an extensive report on the incident. It is surprising that the Chinese tabloid ran the story on the incident and seemed that the paper has an exceptional interest in this news about the *tudung* issue.

The following are the headlines and leads on the local newspapers – *The Straits Times*, *Lianhe Zaobao*, *Lianhe Wanbao*, and *Shin Min Daily News* – following the *tudung* incident in February 2002, where main headlines are represented in bold type to distinguish them from the leads (in

¹⁵³ Most important or newsworthy information is located at the top and least important information at the bottom in the ‘inverted pyramid’ style in journalism.

italics). The headlines and leads in the Chinese papers are translated into English, and I took special attention to translate the terms and meaning as close to the original text as possible.

1 February 2002		
Newspaper	Headlines	Page
The Straits Times	Minorities assured of protection: PM <i>BG Lee give their word on ensuring racial harmony, but say minority races must also be prepared to give and take.</i>	Front Page
	<u>Three girls to wear tudung to school today</u> <i>They could face suspension as a result, but parents say it is a matter of faith and they will defend it in court if they have to.</i>	H1 Home
Lianhe Zaobao	<u>Government</u> assured protection of minority race, but all races should avoid requesting harsh requests. 政府保证保护少数种族，但各族应少提苛刻要求。	Front Page
	<u>The problem</u> (issue) of Muslim girls wearing headscarves to school <i>Halimah Yacob came from a poor family when she was young and could not afford new clothes for the new year, and was glad to don the school uniform.</i> 回教女生戴头巾上学问题： 小时家贫过节无新衣，哈莉玛穿校服心自在。	4 Prime News

Lianhe Wanbao	<u>Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong: Assured</u> protection of minority race 吴作栋总理：保证保护少数民族	11 Local News
	<u>Three Muslim students</u> wore headscarves to school today 3回教徒学生今戴头纱上学	16 Local News
Shin Min Daily News	No report	N.A.

2 February 2002		
Newspaper	Headlines	Page
The Straits Times	No report	
Lianhe Zaobao	No report	
Lianhe Wanbao	No report	
Shin Min Daily News	<u>Parents disregarded the deadline</u> <i>2 Malay girls still wore the headscarves for</i> <i>classes.</i> 父母不顾昨日限期：2马来女生仍戴头巾上课	8 Local News

3 February 2002		
Newspaper	Headlines	Page
The Straits Times	No report	
Lianhe Zaobao	No report	
Lianhe Wanbao	No report	

Shin Min Daily News	<u>Malay girl</u> wore headscarves to school <i>Prime Minister Goh advised parents of the girls to think for them and allow them to receive proper education</i> 马来女童戴头巾上课 吴总理建议女童家长：为孩子着想先受正规教育 (large, bold)	4 Local News
	<u>Prime Minister Goh</u> emphasized that the Government will not shut down SAP schools 吴总理强调：政府不会关闭特选学校	4 Local News

4 February 2002		
Newspaper	Headlines	Page
The Straits Times	No report	
Lianhe Zaobao	No report	
Lianhe Wanbao	No report	
Shin Min Daily News	<u>Father</u> ignored warnings <i>One girl still wore the headscarf to school and was suspended from school this afternoon</i> 父亲不顾警告：今午仍戴头巾上学一女童被令停学	5 Local News

5 February 2002

Newspaper	Headlines	Page
The Straits Times	No report	
Lianhe Zaobao	No report	
Lianhe Wanbao	No report	
Shin Min Daily News	<u>Two girls</u> who wore headscarves to school were suspended from school 戴头巾上课两女生遭停学	4 Comprehe nsive News

6 February 2002		
Newspaper	Headlines	Page
The Straits Times	No Report	
Lianhe Zaobao	No Report	
Lianhe Wanbao	No Report	
Shin Min Daily News	No Report	

7 February 2002		
Newspaper	Headlines	Page
The Straits Times	No Report	
Lianhe Zaobao	No Report	
Lianhe Wanbao	No Report	

Shin Min Daily News	<u>Maidin</u>¹⁵⁴: (the parents should) Heed the advice by the Mufti, and allow their daughters to return school 麦汀：应听取宗教司劝告，4家长快让女儿上学 (tiny, bottom right of page)	4 Local News
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We can see that The Straits Times, Lianhe Zaobao, and Lianhe Wanbao stopped publishing reports of the ‘tudung incident’ from February 2, 2002, possibly not wanting the readers to over-react to the incident and downplaying it.

A quick glance at the above headlines points to a motif of defiance and the unwillingness of the Malay parents to conform to the majority norms. The use of ‘free direct speech’ by the Shin Min Daily News on 7 February 2002 portrayed the authorities in a personal and palpable manner, giving the impression that the government (by Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs Maidin) is speaking directly to the readers. We can see that that what is newsworthy is not the students wearing tudung, but the power-relations between the state and Malay community (through the parents of the schoolgirls), where the government rebuked the Malay ‘race’ for making ‘harsh requests’. Such headlines (and leads) may have negative perceptions of the Malay Muslim community. In this instance, it is important to note that in contrast from the previous two examples, the frontal most position in the headlines are not the politicians or people of authority, but the girls and the parents. This may be indicative that the reports attempted to sensationalized or highlight the acts of the parents and the school girls for refusing to comply with school regulations and insisted on wearing the *tudung*.

¹⁵⁴ Mohamad Maidin Packer Mohd. was the Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs in 2002 when the Tudung incident happened.

However, it is noted that *Shin Min Daily* News reported the incident extensively almost a week after it was first reported by the media, and the headlines suggested defiance by the Malay students and parents. This will influence the way how the Chinese perceive the Malay students and also the community as a whole. This episode drew mixed feelings from the Chinese community – some sympathizing the students and felt that why the Ministry of Education so harsh against them, while others questioning why the students not willing to integrate and follow the rest of the Malay students studying in national schools.

3.5 Summary of findings

I had shown that most of the articles and reports in the Chinese newspapers on the September 11 attacks were largely taken from Western media sources, and the Chinese newspapers had inevitably promoted much of the Western discourses in their selection and reporting of news. The dominant perception that the attacks were induced by the Western media, and that is reflected. However, it is crucial to note that the arrests of JI members in Singapore and the tudung issue were local incidents, and in these instances, public discourses within the Singaporean society had a significant impact on how the Chinese community understood the circumstances.

I would summarize my findings for the above three mentioned incidents. The analysis of lexical choice and syntactic structure of newspaper headlines and leads reveals an ideology of a prejudiced view of Islam by the media. For example when Powell identified the prime suspect of the September 11 attacks as Osama, the media featured Osama bin Laden as a leader of a Muslim extremist group, and the acts of the ‘Muslim extremists’ as wrongful and sinful. However, when Bush vowed revenge and using armed ‘violence’ against the ‘terrorists’, that act was portrayed as ‘sacred’, using the term ‘crusade’ to describe the war on terrorism as

‘rightful’. While both sides used violence to support their cause, one a terrorist group, and the other a nation state, the former was slammed as ‘barbaric’ and the latter was deemed as ‘rightful’ by much of the popular press. There is lexical and structural evidence of what Van Dijk sees as positive ‘Us’-portrayal and negative ‘Them’-portrayal in the news headlines, a typical example being how the press reported Bush (positive-‘us’) swore to arrest the terrorists (negative-‘them’) and bring them to justice¹⁵⁵, and how foreign nations called the United States president to express support (‘us’) to condemn and combat the terrorists (‘them’).

The wrongful actions of the ‘terrorists’ are extended through generalization to the entire Muslim community globally. Muslims living in other parts of the world, including Singapore, were at times implicated. This is evident in the Chinese press where politicians came forward to urge non-Muslims in Singapore to distinguish Islam from terrorism¹⁵⁶, and Malay politicians and religious leaders to urge the Muslim community to be vigilant and not to over-react. For example, following Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s call for Singaporeans to think rationally towards the terrorist attacks in USA to prevent racial and religious disharmony¹⁵⁷, Muslim organisations in Singapore and Muslim leaders came forward to condemn the terrorist acts¹⁵⁸ and request Muslims to remain vigilant and rational.

Islamism is manifested in the local newspapers, reproduced from news shared by the Western media, phrases such as “Muslim Extremism” and “Islamic extremism”¹⁵⁹ originating in the

¹⁵⁵ 布什誓言把恐怖分子追捕归案

¹⁵⁶ Lianhe Zaobao. Jan 12, 2002. Page 2. - Mah Bao Tan urges non-Muslims to distinguish religion and terrorism

¹⁵⁷ 副总理李显龙准将 国人应理智看待美国被袭以免破坏种族及宗教和谐

¹⁵⁸ Lianhe Zaobao. Sep 16, 2001. Page 3. - Many local Muslim organisations condemned the terrorists (本地多个回教组织同声谴责恐怖分子)

¹⁵⁹ Friday Sep 21, 2001. George Bush's address to a joint session of Congress and the American people. (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/21/september11.usa13>)

American press. These reflected stereotyping in its most ugly form. The often irrelevant reference to Muslims frequently in news reporting gives the impression that being a Muslim is synonymous with violence and terror. For instance, how Colin Luther Powell identified Osama bin Laden as “Muslim extremist”¹⁶⁰ may give readers the impression that Muslims are generally ‘extremists’



Figure 16: Morning news aired on CNN, on Jun 19, 2015. Phrases such as “Muslim Extremism” are uncommon.

The analysis of the quotation patterns and information sources points to an overwhelming disproportion of voices by those in influential positions against the minority voice. How readers understand and make sense of the ‘terrorists’ are shaped by politicians and the ‘experts’. In the case of the *tudung* incident, the voices of politicians and ‘experts’ silenced the voices of the minority group of parents and students who insisted on their rights to wear the headscarves to school. The reports in the Lianhe Zaobao, for example, problematized the issue by publishing how Malay politician Halimah Yacob could not afford new clothes when she was young and how she was glad to wear the school uniform together with other students¹⁶¹. This report also

¹⁶⁰ 鲍威尔锁定主谋为奥萨马 - 美国国务卿鲍威尔锁定回教激进派领袖奥萨马是世贸中心和五角大楼恐怖攻击行动的首要嫌犯

¹⁶¹ Lianhe Zaobao. Feb 1, 2002. Page 4. “The problem (issue) of Muslim girls wearing headscarves to school”

reminded the greater Malay population to emulate the examples set by the Malay politicians and not the actions of the group of parents who insisted their daughters to don the *tudung*.

It is the manipulation of quotation patterns in headlines and leads that silenced the powerless, and made them even less visible and voiceless for example, headlines such as “parents disregarded the deadline”¹⁶², and how the father ignored the warnings and their daughters suspended from school, further silenced their voices and subjected them to punishment (through suspension from school). The minority group (the parents of the three girls) are literally at the mercy of those who do to say whatever they will of them. This produces a stereotype of the Malays (extended via generalization by the parents of the three schoolgirls to the entire Malay-Muslim community) as defiant, which leads to the manifestation of Islamism.

The newspaper is thus an amplifier which is capable to spread and reproduce the existing unequal power relations in the society. As the interface between the discourse and the society, the media has the power to resist and also challenge, instead of reinforcing and reproducing, the social dominance of the elites (Teo, 2000, p. 44).

¹⁶² Shin Min Daily News. Feb 2, 2002. Page 8. “Parents disregarded the deadline”.

Chapter 4: Discussions and Analysis

Increasingly in modern media, news is sourced from a single location such as Reuters or news broadcasting corporations such as CNN and the BBC, and then represented by local news media across the world. The effects of the foreign press and negative stereotyping will be examined through an analysis of the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in connection with violence and terrorism in section 4.1, and will focus on related race issues in Singapore in section 4.2. These themes will be developed further in section 4.3 by introducing the effects of racial stereotyping in Western non-print media that I argue has indirectly influenced attitudes and therefore journalism in the print media in Singapore.

The chapter will conclude by discussing ‘new racism’ and how this has affected Singapore through racial generalizations, and the role of selective quoting of influential individuals in supporting these generalizations. In context of the wider thesis, this chapter illustrates how the image of the Muslims is shaped and portrayed to the public through the manipulation of headlines and leads, therefore it seeks to explain how the press may influence the Chinese perceptions of the Malays.

4.1 The image of the violent Muslims

The portrayal of Islam or Muslims as “terrorists” or linked to “terrorism” or “terrorist activities” did not happen only after the September 11 attacks. Long before the attacks in New York, the media had already linked terrorism to Muslims in numerous events worldwide. The following are a selection of these reporting.

In 1954, The Singapore Free Press reported that the Egyptian Government demanded all Arab countries to join its current crusade against the terrorist squads of the fanatical Muslim Brotherhood organisation¹⁶³.

In 1981, The Straits Times reported that “Muslim Separatists threw a grenade into a crowded boxing stadium in Narathawai district, killing two men and injuring 69, Thai police said yesterday. Muslim activists have turned increasingly to terrorist tactics in the past year to reinforce their demands for an autonomous state...”¹⁶⁴

After the September 11 attacks, the media continued to link terrorism to Islam. On 24 June 2002, The Straits Times published a story by AFP with the headlines “They’re Alive”, and that “Al-Qaeda terrorist leader said to be planning televised address to Muslim world”¹⁶⁵. A report by Reuters published on The Straits Times on 1 July 2003 reported that “Muslim militant Rizwan Ahmed Basheer ... was one of the three men sentenced to death yesterday by a Pakistani anti-terrorism court ...” with the headlines “Death penalty for terrorist”¹⁶⁶.

There are also incidents which happened not in the “West” but closer to Singapore, such the “Muslim separatist movements” in Southern Thailand”. Reports by Reuters on the Thailand government seeking Malaysia’s help in “stamping out a renewed separatist campaign by Muslim guerillas in southern Thailand along their joint border that has killed nearly 20 Thais in the past two month”¹⁶⁷ reproduced the image of violent Muslims. In Myanmar, reports on Muslims training to fight against the Buddhist military government of Myanmar to restore the

¹⁶³ The Singapore Free Press. 22 December 1954. “Egypt hunting down Brotherhood”. Page 4.

¹⁶⁴ The Straits Times. 18 April 1981. “Boxing stadium horror”. Page 2.

¹⁶⁵ The Straits Times. 24 June 2002. “They’re alive”. Page 3.

¹⁶⁶ The Straits Times. 1 July 2003. “Death penalty for terrorist”. Page 5.

¹⁶⁷ The Business Times. 8 January 1998. “Thais to ask for KL’s help against Muslim guerrillas”. Page 6.

once independent Muslim homeland of Arakan on Myanmar's west coast¹⁶⁸ further reproduced the negative image of the Muslims. *Today* reported that Cambodia has “broken up an Islamic group with links to the Al Qaeda network...”¹⁶⁹ Such reports further reminded Singaporeans that the threat of “violent Muslims linked to terrorism” is real and near to us.

The September 11 attacks is no doubt a significant event where Islam was targeted for terrorist extremism, however, many events have been reported during the course of this thesis, such as the killing of 12 staff at the Charlie Hebdo Headquarters in Paris on January 7, 2015, the expansion of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and the beheading of hostages, which have further lead to intense demonization and negative portrayals of Islam as a violent and dangerous religion.



Figure 17: ISIS members in veils (*niqāb*) beheading hostages and shouting “Allahu Akbar”

Militants who were on suicide missions often shouted the *takbir* “Allahu Akbar”, which newspapers usually interpreted the phrase as “God is great.” The Straits Times article on March 4, 2015 “Two Malaysians spotted in ISIS beheading video identified by police” wrote “the clip showed the beheading of a Syrian man accused by ISIS of being a spy for the regime of President Bashar al-Assad. A militant identified as an Arab carried out the beheading, before

¹⁶⁸ The Straits Times. 4 July 1991. “Muslims training to fight Myanmar”. Page 2.

¹⁶⁹ Today. 29 May 2003. “Cambodia crushes terrorist web”. Page 16.

another militant identified as an Indonesian held the head of the victim aloft as he shouted “*Allahu Akbar* (God is Great)”¹⁷⁰.” This may be seen as detraction¹⁷¹ where the contents of the report are disconnected with the headlines. The narration of the Indonesian militant screaming “*Allau Akbar*” is somehow not critical to the headline where the article was supposed to identify the two Malaysians. The constant portrayal and reproduction of militants shouting “*Allau Akbar*” somewhat correlated it to Islam, where followers proclaim the greatness of God, but it may portray Islam negatively if such verse was used to depict violence.

The media has the influence and tendency to mislead readers to link the term ‘*Allau Akbar*’ to terrorism and violence. The fact is this term merely meant “God is great(er)”, and it is used by Muslims during prayers and also in daily conversations to praise the wonders and miracles of God. Recently the words have taken on new associations and have become associated with violence, but the media could have unwittingly contributed in promoting religious extremism through misrepresenting ideas and key terms and making associations where previously there may have been none.

4.2 Demonizing Islam and Muslims

The ways in which Islam is consistently represented when reporting terrorist acts have done much damage to the public image and understanding of Islam. “Muslim rebels”, “Muslim terrorists”, “Muslim separatists”, are among the most commonly used phrases reported in such articles. No other religion has ever been reported to be as “violent” and “brutal” as Islam by

¹⁷⁰ The Straits Times. March 4, 2015. “Two Malaysians spotted in ISIS beheading video identified by police”.

¹⁷¹ ‘Detraction’ is a term used in discourse analysis where a disjuncture occurs between the headline and report. (van Dijk, 1991)

the media. This has significantly impacted the Malay Muslim community in Singapore who may feel their national identity and religious identity is called into question.

The then Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, raised the concern that global events had “made it tough being a Muslim”¹⁷² Anyone with a Muslim name becomes a suspect of being a terrorist or extremist, especially if it includes “bin” and people associate them as sharing the same “name” as the terrorist Osama bin Laden, even though the word “bin” as a Muslim name means “son of” in Arabic. Thus it is problematic if people are not familiar with Muslim names which may lead to unnecessary suspicion of the Muslims around them. A vast majority of Malays tend to favour Arabic names as a result of increased religious awareness during the last century, and majority of male Malays have their first name as “Mohammad” or “Muhammad” after the Islamic Prophet.

The perceived mistrust of the Malay community was felt when the issue of Malay soldiers was brought up into public sphere. I suggest that this mistrust and suspicious was linked to this (selective) historical events in Singapore such as riots and clashes between different communities. It is important to note that the 1960s racial riots are not the first riots in Singapore. Singapore had experienced numerous communal riots since the early days, as far back as the 1800s. The conflicts were not purely between the Malays and the Chinese, but also between different communities. There were conflicts between Christian and non-Christian members of the Chinese immigrant community in 1851, also known as the “Anti-Catholic Riots” (Yong, 2011); The Hokkiens and the Teochews, both Chinese dialect communities, clashed in 1854; Chinese Post office riots between the colonial government and the Chinese community in 1876;

¹⁷² Today. 13 October 2001. “When a Muslim name is suspect”. Page 5.

Riots by Chinese middle school student against the introduction of compulsory conscription to National Service in 1954.

Singapore gained independence as a sovereign country in 1965, shortly after the racial riots in 1964 which was caused by deep political and economic differences between the ruling parties of Malaysia and Singapore (Chan H. C., 1969). The imbalanced Chinese-Malay population in Singapore and Malaysia were subjected to communal prejudices which were played up by the political leaders. The two major political parties in Malaysia, namely the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and the People's Action Party (PAP), accused each other of communalism, and such accusations escalated into such tensions which sparked the racial riots in 1964 (National Library Board, n.d.).

Singapore was out of Malaysia because of racial sensitivities as the PAP government rejects the precondition that PAP "should stay out of the Malay world and leave it entirely to UMNO to deal with the Malays"¹⁷³ in Singapore. Politics in Malaysia, when Singapore was still part of the federation, were along racial lines. Both UMNO and the PAP had different discourses on racial issues, especially between the Chinese and the Malays. The PAP government disagreed with UMNO's policy of assisting the *bumiputra* (a term to describe the Malays and other indigeneous peoples of South-east Asia) who are the original settlers of Malaya. UMNO defended the policy and claimed that the *bumiputra* were placed in a disadvantaged position caused by the immigrants who came to the Malay Archipelago during the colonial times, many of the immigrants had the opportunity to earn money and live in the cities, while the Malays were still poor in the rural areas. The PAP saw UMNO's views as discrimination against other races, and the PAP, together with several minority Malaysian political parties, proposed

¹⁷³ The Straits Times. Opinion. 28 January 2015. "Singapore could have become 'one country, two systems' within Malaysia, not sovereign country". <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/opinion/eye-singapore/story/singapore-could-have-become-one-country-two-systems-within-malaysia>

“Malaysian Malaysia” to serve all Malaysians by nationality and not merely the Malays by race. “Malaysian Malaysia” was seen as a threat to the special position of the Malays in Malaysia, and conflicting discourses by the two political parties eventually led to separation. Then Prime Minister of Malaysia Tunku Abdul Rahman’s statement to the Malaysian parliament highlighted that “political rivalry” and both the Singapore and Malaysia Central Government were “at a stage where it is difficult to agree on anything at all, however trivial the matter may be”¹⁷⁴.

We can see that race was a sensitive issue which had escalated to riots and conflicts, causing bloodshed, extensive damage of properties, and disrupted the lives of the people. After the establishment of Singapore as a sovereign country, the PAP government focused on equal treatment of all race (Chinese, Malay, Indians and Eurasians) and religion in all areas of public service, including equal treatment in education, housing, and health (People's Action Party, 2015). This is a clear distinction from the UMNO’s policy of granting special privileges to the *bumiputra*. Constructing a national narrative centred on a discourse of vulnerability due to fragile multi-racial relations was both a result of historical events and express political aims of building a race-blind society based on meritocracy and equality of race, language, and religion. This was the backdrop for creating a highly regulated media environment in which the media is expected to be sensitive to racial and religious tensions by being secular and apolitical.

4.3 Foreign Press and negative stereotyping through broadcast media

The presentation by BG Lee Hsien Loong in 1987 highlighted the dangers of how news agencies may mount campaigns and false allegations to influence the readers. A Malay

¹⁷⁴ The Straits Times. 10 August 1965. “A dream shattered... now the parting of the ways”. Page 10.

language newspaper alleged that the Chinese suppressed the rights of the Malays¹⁷⁵ amidst the political bickering between the Malaysian and Singaporean government, which ended in a racial riot between the Chinese and the Malays. Lee had said that the “most straightforward way to destabilize Singapore is to foment racial and religious discord”. It is suggested that the government viewed racial and religious relations as most fragile and vulnerable for the sovereign state.

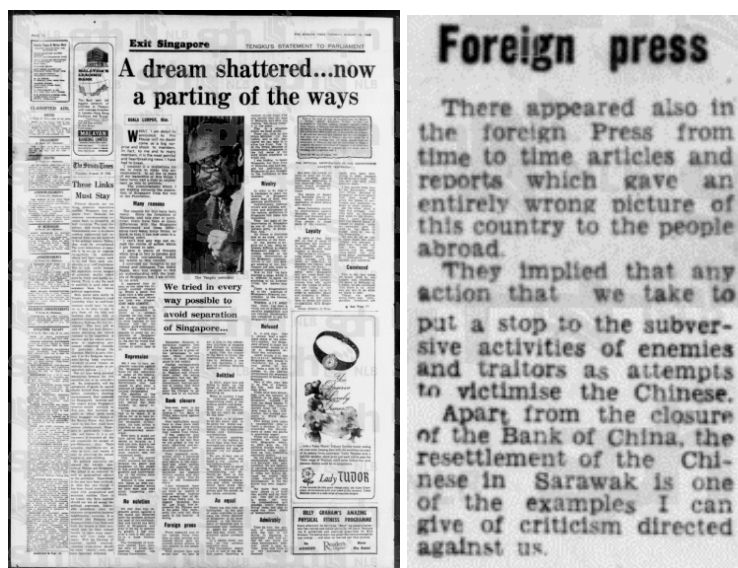


Figure 18: Foreign press blamed for providing wrong information (*The Straits Times*, Aug 10, 1965)

During the statement to Malaysian parliament by Tunku Abdul Rahman to explain the reasons for Singapore to exit Malaysia, the foreign press was also blamed for portraying Malaysia in an “entirely wrong picture”, which implied that any actions Malaysia took to curb subversive activities of enemies and traitors as attempts to victimise the Chinese. It is therefore suggested

¹⁷⁵ Singapore Government Press Release, Release Number 40/MAY (15-1/87/05/26) on 26 May 1987, available on the website of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, at <http://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2013/02/Singapore-Government-press-release_When-the-press-misinforms_26051987.pdf>, accessed 01 May 2014

that media portrayals of disputes between the races, Malays and Chinese, significantly influence the way how both communities perceive one another.

The contents of news articles of international events in the Singapore newspapers were mainly excerpts or re-published from the foreign “Western” media, and it is suggested that any stereotyping or prejudices against the Muslims may be reproduced on local media. The earlier chapters discussed and analyzed examples of how Islam and Muslims are demonized by the media agencies in the “West”, and how Muslims were portrayed as violent and dangerous people.

Television programmes in the West usually portray prejudices along ethnic and racial lines. Many early cartoons produced in the United States were deemed to be racist as it produced much negative portrayals of other ethnicities and races. American cartoons produced much stereotypes of the Blacks and depict them resembling monkeys with huge lips and not as intelligent or diligent as the Whites. The portrayals of other ethnicities may seem not offensive to the ones who produced them, however, it may hurt the feelings of those race or ethnicities that were portrayed negatively in such productions. A 1941 production “Scrub me mama with a boogie beat” portrayed lazy blacks in “lazy town”, and they became full with vigor when a pretty White woman came to teach them how to wash their laundries and the norms of the White people. Such portrayals of the superiority of a particular race, in this case the Whites, against other races is problematic.



Figure 19: The indigenous people were portrayed like monkeys, Asians mocked by the using of chopsticks to play the piano, Japanese with tiny eyes, and portrayals of the “barbaric” Arabs in Aladdin.

Foucault's explanation of ideology may help us understand these phenomenon. Such discourses of a certain race, nationality, or religion have actual effects, and these portrayals may become "true" to the viewers. Foucault suggested that power produced knowledge, and power has the ability to construct things "true" rather than the actual facts about the reality. Thus, it is the motion picture companies that have the actual power to influence the people and construct them to think and perceive things in a specific manner.

Will the portrayals in the foreign press and media influence Singaporeans? There is no known study to date that looked at the effects of cartoons on Singaporean children, but there were studies done to analyze the prejudices in American cartoons produced between the 1930's to 1960's.

Although this paper examines print media, it is suggested that such experiences with materials which are discriminatory in nature may influence how the media actors, editors and journalists, craft the contents of the articles and the language they use in their stories.

It is important to note that the Americans have a long history of slavery and the racial prejudices between the blacks and whites can be traced back to the early years of American history. Even till today, racial attitudes have not improved in the United States. In October 2012, an Associated Press (AP) poll, conducted with researchers from Stanford University, the University of Michigan and NORC¹⁷⁶ at the University of Chicago, found that a slight majority of Americans express prejudice towards the blacks whether they recognize those feelings or

¹⁷⁶ NORC is the independent research organisation at the University of Chicago, incorporated in 1941 as the National Opinion Research Centre. NORC is the name of the research organisation.

not” (The Associated Press, 2012). Back in 2011, another AP survey found that most Americans expressed anti-Hispanic attitudes.



Figure 20: A disclaimer by Warner Brothers to warn viewers of ethnic and racial prejudices in their cartoons

The cartoons that were produced by the Americans often portray prejudices against other ethnicities. The Walt Disney Company released *Aladdin*, an animated film which related a version of the story of Aladdin and the magic lamp from *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights*, and the opening song “*Arabian Nights*” depicted the Aladdin came from “a faraway place where the caravan camels roam... where they cut off your ear if they don’t like your face. It’s barbaric, but hey, it’s home” (The Disney Wiki, 2010). The interesting the Americans portray Aladdin as an Arab when the character is clearly a Chinese, and the story was set in China (Plotz, 2001).

Many of the early American cartoons with racial discrimination or stereotypes continue to be broadcast today. Many of the cartoons reproduce and misrepresent the “others” and the audiences may internalize these stereotypes and develop prejudice against the “others”. Such cartoons are targeted at younger audiences, and if the cartoons continually portray the Blacks as inferior to the Whites in television, the children will internalize and such portrayals may

become “true” to them. The stereotypes that are held “true” produces not only prejudice but may lead to persistent racial and religious discrimination.

4.4 Manifestations of “new racism” in the local newspapers

This thesis examines how the Chinese newspapers shape the perceptions of the readers in understanding Malay and Islamic issues in Singapore, and one of the crucial subject of this study is ‘racism’. I have presented how newspapers in Singapore are segregated along racial lines, and the distinction of the different races in Singapore through the C-M-I-O policies and news reporting in earlier chapters.

‘Racism’ does not merely refer to the sort that is overt and often violent, which includes verbal or physical abuse on the ethnic group that is being victimized (Teo, 2000). Racism that involve violence is regarded as ‘old racism’, and it has now developed to a form of ‘new racism’ which is more indirect, subtle, covert and therefore insidious (ibid). The term ‘new racism’ was coined by Martin Barker in 1981 (Barker, 1981), in the context of the ideologies which supported Margaret Hilda Thatcher¹⁷⁷’s popularity, which he felt was racist public discourse based on assumptions that the immigrants were a threat to the British ‘way of life’ (Chin, Fehrenbach, Eley, & Grossmann, 2009).

New racism uses mass media to manipulate ideas, reproduce such knowledge, and disseminate the ideologies required to justify racism. It does not appear to be ‘racist’, and it allowed for racial inequality in the society without infringing any legislations prescribed by the state.

The African Americans low educational achievement, limited employment opportunities, poverty and consequent assimilation into a culture of drugs and crime would be rationalized by

¹⁷⁷ Margaret Hilda Thatcher was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990.

the “new racist” as stemming from the minority’s lack of drive and desire for achievement and over-reliance on social welfare (Teo, 2000, p. 8). If the African Americans (the “blacks”) perceive themselves as being socially marginalized and economically disadvantaged, it is *their* fault and not the society’s (ibid).

In the case of the tudung issue in 2002, Law suggested that the Malays in Singapore lacked social recognition and political security, thus wearing of the tudong served as a spiritual support for the Malays (Law, 2003, p. 59). He suggested that the government’s decision to abolish the right for Malay schoolgirls to wear tudung was an act which further marginalized the rights and social status of the Malays. This would have portrayed the ‘defiant’ Malays or Muslims who insisted on their own beliefs and not willing to conform to the other (non-Malay or non-Muslim) students who don’t wear the tudung. Of course, the non-Malay residents in Singapore will not react violently and aggressively towards the Malays because of the incidents and news reporting, but we cannot deny the existence of ‘new racism’ which may lead one race to think negatively about another race, in the case, the Chinese feeling negatively towards the Malays for being ‘defiant’ and not willing to ‘integrate’ with the majority.

4.4.1 Generalization

Generalization refers to the extension of the characteristics or activities of a specific and specifiable group of people to a much more general and open-ended set (Teo, 2000, p. 16). Generalization allows journalists a convenient way to ascribe certain key qualities to the main participants of the news discourse without hampering the readers with tedious details, and on another level, the selection and repetition of a particular generalizing attribute also hints at an underlying ideology that might have motivated the choice in the first place.

The generalization of the Muslims and Islam as violent people and extreme religion is suggestive of stereotyping or cognitive prejudice. Stereotypes are the cognitive culprits in prejudice and discrimination (Teo, 2000, p. 17) and the stereotyping of the Malays and Muslims is not merely an example of slotting them into a particular ethnic compartment; it also affects our attitude and behavior towards them and their actions (ibid). Such stereotyping may perpetuate an unhealthy Us-versus-Them mentality between the dominant Chinese majority, and the Malays (minorities) in Singapore.

We can see the generalization of the Malays as backward (in articles reporting the academic results of students and where Malay students generally do not fare as well as the majority Chinese) and not willing to integrate (in the case of the *tudung* incident where Malay students refused to don the same uniform as other students) is problematic and it can lead to real and unintended consequences to how the Chinese perceive the Malays.

4.4.2 Quotation Patterns

Another characteristic of newspaper discourse under analysis is the reliance on various sources of information on which the news report is constructed (Teo, 2000, p. 18). Both direct and indirect quotes are often woven into the fabric of the news discourse to give it an impression of ‘facticity’ and authenticity (ibid). It is observed that news articles in local newspapers will often quote government officials in the news reports, even to the extent of publishing an entire story with only quotes from a government official (in the case of the article¹⁷⁸ published in the Lianhe Zaobao on October 1, 2015, where then Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong was quoted throughout the entire article, without any opinion or facts presentation by the journalist).

¹⁷⁸ Oct 1, 2001. Lianhe Zaobao. Page 4.

This style of news reporting and dependence on legitimized sources of information results in a predominantly establishment view of the world, where lay people are only entitled to their experience but not their opinions (Teo, 2000, p. 18).

The use of quotations becomes a gate-keeping device that admits only those in positions of power and influence while shutting out the opinions and perspectives of those deemed by society to be powerless. The powerful are further empowered through quotation patterns that enhance their status and visibility, and the systematic silencing of the powerless only further disempowers them (ibid). Van Dijk (1996) suggested that one of the ‘properties’ of racism in the press is that the minorities are largely silent and are rarely quoted or quoted with suspicion or distance in newspaper reporting. In the case of the *Tudung* incident, we can see that the parents of the schoolgirls were quoted less than one-quarter of time compared to the authorities and ‘experts’. Although the newspapers’ narration of the parents and students involved in the *Tudung* incident is not particularly derogatory, we can observe that the newspapers seem to be interested in seeking the opinions and perspectives of only the elite majority, as though only the elites have anything valuable or insightful to say about the parents involved.

4.4.3 How is Islamism related to the ‘new racism’

Islamism refers to a prejudiced view of Islam which resembles ‘orientalism’, which El-Sayed el-Aswad used to trace changes in the images of the Muslim of the Orient, a product of Orientalism, to contemporary images of the Muslim post September 11 which marked a transition from classical Orientalism to a new Orientalism, which he referred to as ‘Islamism’ (el-Sayed, 2013). While ‘Orientalism’ presents the Eastern cultures as inferior to the West, ‘Islamism’ is a type of discourse which presents the Islamic culture or identity as problematic and inferior ‘Other’. It is a form of racism where, in this case Islam, was perceived to be inferior

to another. While racism is race-based, 'Islamism' identifies any prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination towards Islam. Such negative portrayals and representation may be presented through social actions or political systems which may support the expression of prejudice or hatred in discriminatory practices.

The Singaporean government declares itself as a secular state, and Article 15 of the Constitution of Singapore guarantees the freedom of religion in Singapore, stating that "every person has the right to profess and practise his religion and to propagate it."¹⁷⁹ and Article 12 states that all persons are equal before the law, and there shall be no discrimination against the citizens of Singapore on the ground of religion, race, descent or place of birth. While the legal framework forbids and discourages any form of discrimination, the complex interaction in the Singaporean society and discriminatory practices inherited from the colonial administrators may lead to misrepresentations and stereotyping of the different communities in Singapore (Alatas S. H., 1977, p. 56). The stereotyping of the people in Singapore (and Malaya) by the colonial administrators and production of the images of the "lazy Malay", "venal Chinese" and "cringing and cheating Indian" has been the most persistent and widespread sources of communal misunderstanding (Alatas S. H., 1977, p. 127).

I would argue that the above stereotyping of the Chinese, Malays and Indians is much less prevailing since September 11, and efforts such as the goodwill committees, grassroots organisations, Inter-Religious Organisation, Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles have clarified many misconceptions and fostered better understanding amongst Singaporeans. However, as earlier discussed in section 4.4, a non-violent, indirect yet serious form of 'racism'

¹⁷⁹ Constitution of the Republic of Singapore available through Singapore Statutes Online (<http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/>)

may exist through mass media, which has the capability to manipulate how people perceive knowledge and disseminate ideologies that may be discriminatory, in a much hushed form.

This chapter examined the news headlines and leads which reported the September 11 attacks, arrests of the JI members, and the *Tudung* incident, and it is observed that hints of ‘new racism’ may be expressed through the styles of reporting, generalizations and the ordering of interviews and quotes in news stories. Articles such as those reporting the *Tudung* incident did not openly criticise or condemn the Malay Muslim community, but the reports presented a ‘defiant’ image of the Malay parents who refused to integrate and follow the majority of the population, and such image may be reproduced over and over again leading to generalisations associating the acts of specific individuals with traits of the community as a whole. In regard to this point, there is potential for future research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Discussing the hypothesis – proven or unproven?

In chapter 1, my hypothesis proposed that legislative tools ensuring the largely self-censuring nature of journalism in Singapore have affected the reporting of race or religion in favor of presenting balanced viewpoints, and that this has manifested in the choice of words and phrases and related writing mechanics. In turn, that these have influenced readers' interpretations of events, and may therefore have reinforced ethnic and religious stereotyping.

Examples of reporting in the print media provided in chapters two through four support this hypothesis by illustrating how the media has unintentionally been the cause of inter-ethnic and inter-religious friction, and my analysis of the headlines and leads in news articles further supported this hypothesis. Other factors have also been taken into account including the influence of overseas media, prejudiced news sources and misinformed journalists, therefore raising interconnected issues such as over-generalised terminologies constructed by overseas journalists and brought into local print media.

This thesis thus addressed questions of whether or not the local newspapers have positively or negatively portrayed the Malay or Muslim community in Singapore, and whether or not the local press has acted as a mouthpiece of the government in promoting state defined social values, ideologies and discourses. Through examining reports in the Singaporean press and the ways in which the Malays and Muslims have been generalized about by the majority of the Chinese population, I have shown that ethnic specific print media panders to the expectations of readers. Therefore, as the target audiences for the different papers differ, the news has been reported according to the interests of the readers. For example, news that is of national interest and importance will be reported across all national papers while some incidents which are not important or deemed not of interest to the Chinese community may not be featured in the

Chinese language newspapers, and even if mentioned, will merely be so in a tiny column. However, analysing newspaper articles quantitatively revealed limited frameworks and themes associated with the Malays and Muslims in Singapore, and it is suggested that within a national context, salient topics relating to national identity and inclusivity take precedence in the representation of the minority communities such as the Malays and the Indians.

There are ten major religions represented in the *Inter-Religious Organisation, Singapore* (IRO), and these ten religions – Hinduism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, and the Bahá'í Faith – are generally regarded as the ‘ten major religions of Singapore’. The Chinese media and population affectionately referred these major religions as the ‘ten main religions’ (十大宗教), and the four major races – Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian – are known as the ‘four main races’ (四大种族). This is reflected in the print media, where Chinese issues are predominantly reported in the Chinese language press, Indian in the Tamil language press and so forth, division of news being along ethnic and linguistic lines, not along religious lines. The majority of the Malays profess Islam, and thus Islamic issues are usually reported alongside Malay issues. It is not uncommon to find articles in the Straits Times reporting ‘Malay/Muslim’ as a singular entity. This suggests that the local press has acted as a mouthpiece of the government in promoting state defined social values, ideologies and discourses.

As such, while I have shown that much of my hypothesis to holds true, it could be argued that my analysis, in the process of highlighting issues, deliberately problematizes the same issues. Playing the Devil’s Advocate, it could be argued that the newsmaker(s) have no intention to sow any discord between the races in Singapore, and may have no intention to reproduce stereotypes, and that my research intentionally presents atypical or unusually bias reporting in the analysis. However, I do not believe this to be the case. Nevertheless, there is clearly room

for further in-depth research on these fascinating topics which are of national as well as international interest.

5.2. Research questions and the implications of their answers

Moving onto my research questions, to recap, they asked whether or not the press has influenced ethnic relations positively or negatively, and in cases where the press has influenced ethnic relations, how the contents of news articles has influenced or affected the readers. These research questions are of immediate importance as it is crucial to find out if the Chinese newspapers have influenced or are still influencing how the Chinese perceive the Malays, and whether or not racial stereotyping that contributes to racial or religious disharmony in Singapore is still being practiced. As highlighted in chapter two, it seems that studies show that the media is a very powerful tool to disseminate information and influence the masses, and it potentially has the ability to cause fractions in the society if it is not managed well.

Moving temporarily away from traditional print media, further examples can be cited that support the argument that there are still racial sensitivities and discrimination in Singapore. For instance, there were several recent incidents where Singaporeans made insensitive comments along racial lines online that led to much anger and debate. In August 2011, a family from China complained about the smell of curry from their neighbours who are Singaporean Indians, and Singaporeans took to Facebook to organise a “cook a pot of curry” day to express their solidarity with the Indian family.

In another incident in 2005, a letter was written to The Straits Times by Madam Zuraimah Mohammed who asked if taxi companies allow uncaged pets to be transported in the taxis, after

she saw a dog in a taxi uncaged. She raised the concern that Muslims in Singapore are forbidden by their religion to come into contact with dogs' saliva.

Another 25-year-old blogger Nicholas Lim also posted similar but less extreme comments on an online dog lovers' forum, and he used 'highly insulting words' against the Muslim community. Lim was charged under the Sedition Act and imprisoned for one day and fined the maximum of \$5,000. He eventually apologized for his comments.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Amarjit Singh warned bloggers who still have similar offending remarks that they are well advised to remove them immediately, and that the Court will not hesitate to impose stiffer sentences in future cases. He stressed that the prosecution was not attempting to police and regulate the internet, however, basic rules had to be followed to maintain order in Singapore's multi-ethnic society.

A more serious online incident occurred in 2012 when an assistant director of the NTUC (National Trades Union Congress) posted disrespectful comments with regards to Malay void deck weddings on Facebook. The post went viral and was quickly spread and shared online. The Prime Minister, together with several ministers, condemned the remarks and the Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong urged Singaporeans to be mindful of what was said online as 'a few thoughtless words can cause grave offence to many, and undermine our racial and religious harmony'¹⁸⁰. Minister for Foreign Affairs and Law K. Shanmugam slammed the comments by Cheong as 'shameful' and said that the incident verified the existence of 'deep fault lines in our (Singapore) society' based on race and religion. Cheong was eventually sacked from her job.

¹⁸⁰ The Straits Times Asiaone News. October 9, 2012. "Ministers, Singaporeans weigh in on Amy Cheong case".

Such incidents and reactions to the Malays by the Chinese serve as a stark reminder that negative stereotypes and perceptions of the Malays still exist till today. Among the recommendations arising from this thesis is that the Chinese print media should become increasingly sensitive to such issues and not allow sensational reporting to stoke negative emotions and portrayals. Further recommendations will be discussed in section 5.4.

Returning to my research questions, not all of them could be fully addressed, for example, whether journalists intentionally contribute to or reproduce racial stereotyping. Such questions require further examination and investigation which is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this current thesis.

5.3 Methodology and analysis: the benefits of employing CDA in my research

I feel that the methodology I used was successful because it enabled me to understand why the headlines of news reports were crafted in a specific manner, and the motivations behind the choice of headlines and leads. In terms of analysis, the CDA has proven a useful tool in this research as it has allowed me to illustrate how the choice of words used in headlines and also the patterns in quotations influences public perceptions. However, while newspapers provide important data regarding news worthy incidents, the journalists and editors rarely include their personal views.

This thesis addressed questions of whether or not the local newspapers positively or negatively portrays the Malay or Muslim community in Singapore, and if the local press acts as a mouthpiece of the government in promoting state defined social values, ideologies and discourses.

Through examining reports in the Singaporean press and the ways the Malays and Muslims are perceived by the majority Chinese population reveals convergences and divergences within press coverage based on the expectations of the readers. The target audiences for the various papers differ and news was reported according to the interests of the readers, with the exception of news of national interest and importance which is reported across all national papers. Some incidents which are not important or deemed not of interest to the Chinese community may not be featured in the Chinese language newspapers, even if featured it will merely be a tiny column.

Analysing newspaper articles quantitatively revealed limited frameworks and themes associated with the Malays and Muslims in Singapore, and it is suggested that within a national context, salient topics relating to national identity and inclusivity take precedence in the representation of the minority communities such as the Malays and the Indians.

The main Chinese broadsheet, *Lianhe Zaobao* will thus report on Malay issues only if they are of national interest thus making the Chinese community aware of them. The newspaper is regarded as one of the tools for nation building, therefore anything that is related to the four main races may be regarded as of national interest. Chinese tabloid papers, on the other hand, hardly report on Malay issues, and when they do, they are merely reproduced or excerpted from the *Lianhe Zaobao*, the *Lianhe Wanbao* and *Shin Min Daily News*.

The discourse which is prevalent in the Chinese papers is that the Malay community is different from the Chinese community, and as such, news which matters to the Malay community may not be thought to be relevant to the Chinese community.

In 2012, Mr Adil Hakeem Mohamad Rafee became the first Malay in 44 years to be named a President's Scholar¹⁸¹. The following are the headlines of the newspapers on August 16, 2012.

The Straits Times	Front Page	President's Scholarship: Malay Student is one of five winners
Lianhe Zaobao	Front Page	In the past 44 years, First Malay student to receive President's Scholarship (44 年来 首位马来学生获总统奖学金)

The headlines for the article on Lianhe Wanbao read "In the past 44 years, the first Malay received the President's Scholarship" (44 年来首个马来族获总统奖学金). It is interesting to note that the term "ma-lai zu" (马来族) identified the student from the "Malay Community", where the term "zu" refers to the (ethnic) group. This clearly suggested that there is still an ethnic bias reproduced in the newspaper article, and that the Malay community is different from the Chinese community despite a common nationality.

However, the fact is that the five students are granted the scholarship because of their academic excellence, not because of their ethnicity. Therefore, emphasizing the race of the recipient may in fact be constructed as congratulatory.

¹⁸¹ The Straits Times. 16 August 2012. Malay leaders hail President's Scholarship achievement. <http://www.straitstimes.com/breaking-news/singapore/story/malay-leaders-hail-presidents-scholarship-achievement-20120816>.

5.4 Discussions: Relating results to ongoing policies

Newspapers are important and influential in defining social reality for the Malay Muslims, and news reports allow readers to make sense of the social meanings of Islam. The newspapers have a significant role in contributing to, and also to sustaining these meanings. It has been suggested previously that such articles which portrayed the Malays in a rather negative light may have legitimized the then current social relations and power structures (Poole, 2009, p. 259), and thus the continuing patterns of prejudices against the Malays at the turn of this century. In the past, such news reporting may have hindered positive social relations and caused mistrust between the Chinese and the Malays. That however us a thing of the past.

In light of this, would suggest that newspapers should not continue to be segregated along racial lines. News may be presented in different languages, which in the case of Singapore will be English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil, and should include information relevant to the four primary racial communities so that the readers will be able to gain a greater diversity of information leading to improvements in relations between the primary racial groups.

The prominence or absence of information in a news report is indicative of what model the media would like the public to perceive. The prominence of the term “huijiao” (回教) in headlines and story leads, especially those associated with violence, terrorism, may influence how the Chinese in Singapore understand Islam, which is also the religion of almost the entire Malay population in Singapore. The misinterpretation of Islam as a violent religion, though still prevalent in elements of the Western media, should not be reproduced in Singapore’s media.

The following are some examples of how the term “huijiao” (Islam) being highlighted in the headlines of news articles, usually associated with rather negative terms such as suffering, fear, or violence.



Figure 21: The headlines of the above image reads “Islamic law has flexibility, non-Muslims will not suffer”.



Figure 22: The headlines of the above image reads “Some Muslims deviated from the teachings, which caused fear and insecurity to non-Muslims”.



Figure 23: The headlines of the above image reads “Violence in Islamic countries has no relationship with practicing Islam: Mahathir urged non-Muslims not to be afraid”.

It is important to note that the above articles are from the 1980’s, and are reports on issues in Malaysia. The term ‘huijiao’ (Islam) was used to refer to the Muslims and Malays in Malaysia, and Malays in Malaysia are usually referred as “Muslims”.

I would propose that journalists and editors should be mindful that neither race nor religion should be over emphasized in headlines to describe the religious affiliation of individuals to avoid confusing misrepresentation. I suggest this as some readers may not read the entire story after reading the headlines, and they may make presumptions without understanding the entire story. Journalists should not sensationalize the headlines to make their story seem more interesting, but be rational and objective in reporting. Of course, I am not suggesting that any term describing any religion to be censored from headlines or leads, as the news will be pointless and out of context if facts were left out. Therefore, the media must be careful not to over

The press in Malaysia stands in stark contrast to the unbiased reporting common in Singapore's print media. However, while the Singapore media is prudent in reporting racial issues, the majority of news highlighting racial and religious sentiments are reports from Malaysia reproduced in the Chinese language press. For example, "Islamic Party announced that once they topple Barisan National, they will enforce Islamic law on non-Muslims"¹⁸², and "Abdullah: "Jemaah Islamiya" is not exactly a terrorist group"¹⁸³. This practice of reproducing Malaysian news articles without considerations relating to racial and religious harmony may be considered unethical in light of Singapore's media policies.

Political debates in Malaysia are very much race related. Political parties in Malaysia usually play 'racial cards' and such reports of incidents in Malaysia may have a spill-over effect and affect how the Chinese in Singapore perceive the Malays in Malaysia. It is important to note that the Malays are the majority in Malaysia and there will always be this majority-minority

¹⁸² July 10, 2002. Lianhe Zaobao. Page 27. "Islamic Party announced that once they topple Barisan National, they will enforce Islamic law on non-Muslims" (回教党表明一旦推翻国阵将向非回教徒实施回教法)

¹⁸³ Nov 1, 2002. Lianhe Zaobao. Page 26. "Abdullah: "Jemaah Islamiya" is not exactly a terrorist group"(阿都拉: "回教祈祷团"不全是恐怖组织)

and power discourse between the races. The elites and media are drawn from the majority of the population, and may portray positive images of self and negative images of the other, in this case, the minorities.

News such as Islamic laws to be proposed to enforce on non-Muslims in Malaysia may cause fear and suspicion among the Singaporean Chinese. Although the citizens of Singapore know this will not happen if the Singapore Constitution is in force, such reporting may cause unnecessary suspicion. Therefore, I suggest that journalists in Singapore be clear in their reporting and not confuse issues in Malaysia with local issues. The headlines should not be suggestive or over sensationalize to avoid any unintended consequences.

As early as 1980's, the Malays have been addressed as "malai tongbao" (马来同胞)¹⁸⁴, where the noun "tongbao" means brother, siblings, countrymen, compatriot, or fellow citizens of the country. This term is still used by the Chinese media to refer to the Malays in Singapore, suggesting the cordial relationship between the Malays and the Chinese. It is also important to note that the term "tongbao" was also used by China to refer to Taiwanese, where they view Taiwanese as part of China. In this instance, it may be viewed as political in nature.

Stories such as Malays attending the lunar seventh month (Zhong Yuan) festival celebrations¹⁸⁵, Malays attending Chinese opera¹⁸⁶, Malays accepting Traditional Chinese Medicine¹⁸⁷, a

¹⁸⁴ Aug 2, 1981. Sin Chew Jit Poh. Page 3. "Celebrating Ramadan". (欢渡开斋节全 国的马来同胞今日欢渡愉快的开斋节...)

¹⁸⁵ Aug 28, 2002. Lianhe Wanbao. Page 10. "Fellow Malays attended the Zhong Yuan Celebrations". (马来同胞出席中元会)

¹⁸⁶ Jan 31, 2006. Lianhe Zaobao. Page 6. "Fellow Malays watched 'Madame White Snake'(opera)" (《白蛇传》也有马来观众)

¹⁸⁷ May 23, 2005. Lianhe Wanbao. Page 8. "Fellow Malays gradually accepting Traditional Chinese Medicine" (马来同胞逐渐 接受中医中药)

Malay neighbor exchanging a flat with a Chinese resident so the Chinese need not take the stairs to reach home¹⁸⁸, are all stories which highlight good relationships and inter-ethnic engagement between both communities. These are positive examples of successful integration between the Malays and the Chinese, showing how Malays participate in Chinese activities.

Despite occasional mis-portrayals of the so called “backward Malay”, the usage of the term “tongbao” together with the term “Malay” in reporting will definitely be a reminder for the Chinese majority that the Malays are fellow countrymen (like siblings of the same family) in Singapore and there shall not be any cause for disharmony.

The use of “tongbao” in news reporting will definitely help to lessen the differences of the “self” and the “other”, and it will definitely influence the way the Chinese in Singapore perceive the Malays – as fellow siblings and fellow countrymen. This will forge a greater sense of national identity and definitely be helpful to minimize any misunderstandings.

Despite efforts to also highlight positive news within the Malay Muslim community, people tend to remember the negative news rather than the positive news. How many people can remember the Malay Muslim volunteers who received awards compared to recalling Osama bin Laden, Mas Selamat, and other Muslims for terrorism related activities?

In the Chinese media, Islam and Malay are correlated and it is common to find the mentioning of “Muslims” (*huijiao tu*) and “Malays” (*malai zu*) in the same article. China has changed the official interpretation of Islam to *yisilan-jiao* (伊斯兰教), and refers the Muslims as “*Musilin*” (穆斯林). These terms “*Yisilan*” (Islam) and “*Musilin*” (Muslim) are contemporary Chinese romanization used by mainland China, and are not commonly used in Chinese societies outside

¹⁸⁸ Apr 4, 1998. Lianhe Wanbao. Page 3. “Good hearted Malay family exchanged (HDB) flat with him so he need not take the steps”. (好心马来同胞 跟他交换组屋使他免上下楼梯)

China. Singapore has continued to use the term *hui-jiao* for Islam, which is a classical term which may be traced back to more than a thousand years in ancient Chinese writings to describe Islam. *Hui-jiao* was used to describe the religion of the *Hui* people (回族), a predominantly Muslim ethnic group in China. It is suggested that the early Chinese traders related the Malays in the Malay Archipelago and assumed that they are similar to the *Hui* people since they professed the same religion. This assumption of the early Chinese from China that Malays are similar to the minority Hui people in China may also lead to stereotyping of the Malays based on any prejudice they had to the Hui people back in China. Any prejudices the Chinese had towards the Hui people in China may fuse with the stereotypes the British had of the Malays, which set the foundations for any prejudices the Chinese later had towards the Malays. These prejudices and fascinating period of history are both deserving of further research, but this falls outside the boundaries of this thesis.

Returning to more recent history, a decade after Singapore left Malaysia, on 20 May 1970, The Straits Times published a report “Special rights to stay for ‘hundreds of years’” where the Malaysian Attorney-General said that the special rights of the Malays will continue to be a permanent feature in Malaysia, because “many Malays are *backward* in the various aspects of life, including education where Malay pupils are still receiving government scholarships.¹⁸⁹” The Attorney-General further emphasised that the provision of Malay privileges “could never be tampered with” even if Malaysia was to be ruled by non-Malays. On December 9th, 1984, Singapore Social Affairs Minister Dr. Ahmad Mattar suggested that the Malays need the help of the government and the understanding of the other races to climb the economic ladder¹⁹⁰.

¹⁸⁹ The Straits Times. 20 May 1970. “Special rights to stay for ‘hundreds of years’”. Page 1.

¹⁹⁰ The Straits Times. 9 December 1984. Page 14. “‘Help Malays to help themselves’: Dr Mattar on how they can move up economic ladder”.

Such reports, even after independence, suggested that the Malays are still backward and lagging behind the Chinese. These no doubt influenced the way the pioneer generation of Singaporean Chinese perceived the Malays. However, the 2nd and 3rd generations of Singaporean Chinese after independence underwent much of their childhood and early adulthood together with Singaporean Malays through education in national schools, co-curriculum activities¹⁹¹, and also in the National Service. These shared experiences allowed better understanding and interaction between the different racial groups and thus helped them better understand one another.

The Chinese do not know or make sense of the Malays primarily by reading newspapers, watching television, or listening to radio. They have many personal and genuine interactions with the other communities. Many Singaporeans live in a mixed race neighbourhood because of the Ethnic Integration Policy (EIP) introduced by the Housing and Development Board (HDB), and there are many such policies in place to ensure the minority races are represented and receive fair and unbiased treatments.

With the strict legislations and regulations to govern the media industry and foreign press agencies, and defamation lawsuits against media actors who published false allegations and untrue contents, the content of published articles are now generally non provocative and neutral.

The journalists in Singapore rarely report on race and religious matters, unless the incidents received much public attention possibly through wide circulation on the internet. As much as the news agencies would like to minimize reporting on such sensitive events, perhaps to avoid possible persecutions for sedition or causing hurt to any communities in Singapore, they have to report on these incidents so do so in an unbiased manner.

¹⁹¹ Co-Curriculum Activities (CCA), formerly known as Extra-Curriculum Activities (ECA), are non-academic activities a student partakes outside school, which may include sports, uniformed groups, interest groups, etc.

5.5 Conclusion

The C-M-I-O categories had informed Singapore's system of governance way before independence in 1965. The racial and religious riots in the 1960s only served to reaffirm the need to manage ethnic and religious diversity in Singapore. Co-opting the media as a stabilizing force for religious and racial harmony was made possible through nationalizing our media industry and enacting effective legislation to control the content of media production and consumption. While the express aims of these measures were intended at nurturing an objective and politically neutral media, various conditions have produced unintended though not necessarily unanticipated consequences.

The C-M-I-O approach for multicultural governance perhaps unwittingly accentuates the differences between the various ethnic groups. The global immigration trends have also meant that we can no longer simplify diversity in Singaporean society based only on the C-M-I-O understanding. Regional and global events elsewhere such as religious conflicts and terrorist acts are beyond our control but can have an impact on local social relations. The C-M-I-O categorization may be so deeply internalized by the Singapore community that racial and religious stereotypes are still widely reproduced in media reports.

Recent technological developments and the ubiquity of social (and new) media only complicates the future of racial and religious relations in Singapore. This thesis has strived to demonstrate how the Chinese print media may have unintentionally continued to reinforce racial and religious stereotypes of the Malays.

The Straits Times published an article with the headlines "Malay population the most unhealthy group in Singapore" on December 21, 2014, and the first sentence of the article reaffirms that "The Malay population is the unhealthiest in Singapore." However, none of the three Chinese

papers (*Lianhe Zaobao*, *Lianhe Wanbao*, *Shin Min Daily News*) reproduced the article. Perhaps it was timely for the Singaporean media to re-consider news reporting along racial lines.

Moving forward, we have to seriously reconsider the relevance and impact of a continued C-M-I-O approach to multicultural governance. While the intention of the C-M-I-O policy on managing race is to bring the Singapore society closer, it has real unintended consequences, such as everyday racism which is still prevalent today. It has real impact on how Singaporeans think, speak, and act in their everyday lives. More importantly, we also need to open dialogue about the role of the media institutions in Singapore, including both mainstream print media and new media platforms.

This is an interesting topic of study and it may be a baseline of comparison for future research. A lot more questions still need to be asked, and I feel that the role of the print media is still of great importance in relation to nation building and racial harmony in Singapore.

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