

Journal of Contemporary Asia >

Volume 37, 2007 - [Issue 3](#)

1,645

Views

28

CrossRef citations to date

3

Altmetric


Original Articles

Singapore's National Day Rally speech: A site of ideological negotiation

Kenneth Paul Tan 

Pages 292-308 | Published online: 03 Jul 2007

 Cite this article

 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472330701408635>

Sample our
Area Studies
Journals
>> **Sign in here** to start your access
to the latest two volumes for 14 days

 Full Article

 Figures & data

 References

 Citations

 Metrics

 Reprints & Permissions

Read this article

 Share

Abstract

This article analyses the inaugural National Day Rally speeches of three Singapore prime ministers. It locates these speeches in the continuous ideological work that the People's Action Party (PAP) government has to do in order to maintain consensus and forge new alliances among classes and social forces that are being transformed by globalisation. Increasingly, these speeches have had to deal with the contradictions between nation-building and the tensions between the liberal and reactionary tendencies of the global city. It is argued that such a situation has made it futile for the government to attempt a straightforward ideological mobilisation of the people into a relatively homogeneous national community. The PAP government's ideological struggle to forge consensus has been balanced by a strategy of divide-and-rule. Ironically, the rally speeches have been as much about dividing as they have been about uniting.

Key words:

Notes

¹ Chong cited my paper (Tan, [2001](#)) as an example of the “patriarchal state” approach. While this is not the place to engage in extended debate, I contend that he misunderstood the central thesis of the paper. Rather than arguing, as Chong claimed, that the state has become feminised, that is to say, “softer” in its approach to governance, my paper actually suggested that the “patriarchal state” has shifted from the more brutal and coercive emasculation of civil society in the 1960s to 1980s, towards a partnership with civic society actors, where the state continues to assume the “masculine” or “husbandly” voice of reason and control, while the latter are restricted to “feminine” preoccupations like welfare (care), the arts (expressiveness) and dialogue (communication). True to “patriarchal” form, any hysterical outbursts in civil society or attempts by its actors to meddle in politics will be met by condescension, ridicule, reprimand or even punishment.

² This and the next two paragraphs are based on parts of a public lecture that I delivered on 16 August 2004 for the Political Science Association (Singapore) at the National University of Singapore.

Related research

People also read

Recommended articles

Cited by
28

[Durable and changing views of English: a diachronic thematic analysis of National Day Rally speeches in Singapore](#) >

Angelia Wong et al.
Asian Englishes
Published online: 3 May 2018

[The Ideology of Pragmatism: Neo-liberal Globalisation and Political Authoritarianism in Singapore](#) >

Kenneth Paul Tan

Political Discourse and Aging in a Neoliberal Singapore: Models of Citizenship, Older Adults and Policy Initiatives >

Philip A. Rozario et al.
Journal of Aging & Social Policy
Published online: 11 Jan 2021

[View more](#)

Information for

[Authors](#)
[R&D professionals](#)
[Editors](#)
[Librarians](#)
[Societies](#)

Opportunities

[Reprints and e-prints](#)
[Advertising solutions](#)
[Accelerated publication](#)
[Corporate access solutions](#)

Open access

[Overview](#)
[Open journals](#)
[Open Select](#)
[Dove Medical Press](#)
[F1000Research](#)

Help and information

[Help and contact](#)
[Newsroom](#)
[All journals](#)
[Books](#)

Keep up to date

Register to receive personalised research and resources by email



[Sign me up](#)



Copyright © 2026 Informa UK Limited [Privacy policy](#)

[Cookies](#) [Terms & conditions](#) [Accessibility](#)

Registered in England & Wales No. 01072954
5 Howick Place | London | SW1P 1WG



Taylor & Francis
by **informa**...