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“Clean and Green – That’s The Way We Like It”

Greening a Country, Building a Nation

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This paper focuses on the discursive strategies used by the Singapore government to construct national identity and solidarity on the basis of a ‘clean and green’ environment. By analysing the slogans used in the *Clean and Green Week* campaign in terms of the use of pronouns and the pragmatic notion of ‘politeness’, the paper shows that the people of Singapore are not only persuaded to ‘buy’ the idea of environmentalism but also to buy *into* the ideology of national identity and unity being derived (in part) from the proper management and conservation of Singapore’s scarce resources and limited physical space. The paper concludes with a discussion on how national campaigns such as the *Clean and Green Week* constitutes a form of political discourse, where public educational discourse becomes a veiled medium through which socio-political ideologies are produced and propagated. With the government treading the fine line between information and manipulation where ‘greening’ a country becomes a scaffolding for building a nation, a study like this offers interesting insights on the interplay between the language of politics and the politics of language.

Keywords: national campaigns, environment, political discourse, slogans, Singapore

1. INTRODUCTION

We have built. We have progressed. But there is no hallmark of success more distinctive and more meaningful than achieving our position as the cleanest and greenest city in South Asia.

This is a quote from Singapore’s then Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, when he spoke at the launch of Singapore’s first-ever *Keep Singapore Clean* Campaign on 1 October 1968, capturing the spirit and thrust of an emergent nation in an endeavour to assert itself as a progressive, successful nation by creating an identity as “the cleanest and greenest city in South Asia”.

Campaigns organised on a national scale have been around for a long time and are common in many countries all over the world. Socialist states like the former Soviet Union, particularly under Stalin, and China led by Mao are well known for their use of public campaigns to instil particular socialist ideologies to help materialise their leaders’ utopian visions. China’s *The Great Leap Forward* campaign, for instance, was launched

in 1958 to bring about Mao's vision of creating a uniquely Chinese form of socialism, with the belief that social and ideological change was the prerequisite, not the consequence, of economic development. However, national campaigns are not the prerogative of socialist regimes. Democracies, like the United States of America, have also had a long history of campaigns. From a campaign to get Bostonians to accept inoculation to prevent smallpox and social reforms like the abolition of slavery and desegregation in the past to more recent campaigns like a courtesy drive in New Jersey go to show that social marketing is not alien to Americans. In Europe, from campaigns to combat car crimes to campaigns that promote the use of condoms to the enduring 'Keep Britain Tidy' campaign, government campaigning has long been a feature of British life (Dickason, 2000: 111). And in Asia-Pacific, there has been an annual environmental event since 1998 aimed at encouraging long-term waste reduction among New Zealanders known as 'Clean Up New Zealand Week', with the tag-line: 'Underneath every piece of rubbish is a beautiful country waiting to get out'. This is part of an international 'Clean-up the World' campaign developed in Australia in 1989 in collaboration with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP).

This paper focuses on Singapore's attempt to use a national campaign, ostensibly to instil environmental awareness in its people, as a means of promoting nationalistic values instead. It looks at how the physical environment of the tiny island-state of Singapore of under 650 square kilometres has been exploited for building a cohesive nation out of a pluralistic assemblage of peoples from various regions and diverse cultures. Specifically, the focus is on how the government in Singapore has used the *Clean and Green Week*, an annual campaign introduced in 1990 by the Ministry of Environment to promote environmental awareness, as a platform to rally the people together to engender an environmentally proactive and socially cohesive society. In particular, I will examine the discursive strategies used in the campaign slogans to coax the people of Singapore into accepting the task of environmental conservation as a personal and collective responsibility that they must share with the government.

As a highly salient and symbolic instantiation of campaign discourse, slogans encapsulate the ideologies that underpin the way they have been constructed by the government and construed by the people. As such, my analytic lens will be trained on the various slogans used in conjunction with this campaign, using them as a springboard to articulate a critique on how Singapore's leaders have endeavoured to construct national identity and solidarity on the basis of a 'clean and green' environment. In deconstructing the way the *Clean and Green Week* slogans have been put together, my aim is to uncover the ideologies and assumptions embedded within the discursive structures of these slogans as part of the broader purpose of bringing to light some of the discursive practices that the Singapore government employs to promulgate its social policies and advance its political agenda through the social practice of national campaigning in Singapore. But first, it is useful to provide a sketch of Singapore's historical and political contexts to frame our understanding of how the social practice of national campaigns has evolved to become the nation-building instrument that it is in Singapore.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Singapore's History

From 1819 to the Second World War, Singapore was under British colonial rule and operated relatively peacefully and prosperously as an entrepôt for Southeast Asian raw materials and Western manufactured goods. But the Japanese Occupation of Singapore during World War Two not only brought much misery and suffering to the people, it also exposed the hollowness of the security and prosperity which Singaporeans had enjoyed but had taken largely for granted. Consequently, the three years of Japanese Occupation from 1942 to 1945 not only marked the end of British imperial legitimacy but also fueled a nationalistic fervour that paved the way for Singapore's eventual independence. But it was not until over a decade later in 1959 that a group of Singaporeans, led by Lee Kuan Yew, took over the government of Singapore and formed an independent state as part of the British Commonwealth.

However, faced with one of the world's highest population growth rates at that time and increasing demands for employment and rising expectations in social services, the Lee government realized Singapore's economic survival was a critical issue that demanded urgent attention. Believing that a merger with its northerly neighbour, Malaysia, would secure Singapore's economic survival, Singapore sought shelter under the federal structure of Malaysia and became part of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. However, the merger was short-lived.

On 9 August 1965, Singapore's long struggle for self-rule finally ended, albeit somewhat ironically, when it was asked to leave the Federation of Malaysia to be on its own. As a dismembered, fledgling nation, Singapore faced a bleak prospect of rising unemployment and a ballooning population and was in serious danger of becoming another basket case in the Third World. That in less than thirty years since attaining independence Singapore managed to rise to become a thriving metropolis of over four million people enjoying one of the highest standards of living in the world is an achievement that is attributable to several factors, one of which is the way the ruling government has exploited national campaigns as a means to cohere the people of Singapore in order to steer them towards its nation-building goals.

2.2 Singapore's National Campaigns

A national campaign in the context of Singapore can be defined as “a government initiated and inspired movement which has an organised and formal course of action, used with the intent of arousing public awareness and influencing public behaviour” (Tham 1986: 41). While campaigns mounted on a national scale are neither new nor unique to Singapore, they have become so entrenched within the socio-political structure of Singapore that they can be construed as a form of social practice – socially conditioned, conventionalized, even naturalized activity that at the same time contributes to social formation – unique in the way they have permeated into every crevice of socio-cultural life in Singapore (Long 2003).

There have been campaigns aimed at engineering a large-scale language shift by getting over 70 percent of the population to switch from using dialects to Mandarin (*Speak Mandarin Campaign*), campaigns aimed at fostering social values like courtesy and kindness (*National Courtesy Campaign* and the *Singapore Kindness Movement*) campaigns that promote greater individual and corporate productivity (*Singapore Productivity Campaign*) and even campaigns that encourage people to get romantic (*Romancing Singapore*), get hitched and to have more babies (*National Family Week*). Since the late 1950s, over two hundred national campaigns have been organized by the various government bodies and statutory boards. This averages about five campaigns per year, with some running concurrently over several months and some going on for over twenty years (Teo 2002).

From the late 70s onwards, campaigns in Singapore entered a new phase of development and grew in terms of greater visibility and salience in the life of Singaporeans. This can be attributed to two significant changes that have taken place. First, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) was tasked to co-ordinate the scheduling of national campaigns throughout the year. Prior to 1979, national campaigns were organised by individual ministries without any co-ordination with other government bodies. The involvement of the PMO was to instil some sense of order and timing into the overall organisation of campaigns. This was significant as it implied the government's recognition of the importance of campaigns and therefore a need for concerted strategy through the appointment of a central, co-ordinating body. Secondly, many of the campaigns from 1979 onwards started to take on a recurrent demeanour. The Courtesy (1979), Speak Mandarin (1979) and Productivity (1982) Campaigns are prime examples of campaigns that have been organised on an annual basis since the year they were first launched. The emergence of this new pattern signifies a modification of the government's perception of the use of campaigns. The strategy now is to drive home the message through a sustained effort over time, a strategy which stems from a recognition of the fact that behavioural attitudes or values cannot be instilled over a few months or even a few years. More significantly, this change reflects the changing nature of the issues that the government wishes to address, issues that relate more to attitude and values modification rather than behavioural practices, as in *Don't Waste Water Campaign* and *Keep Singapore Clean and Pollution-Free Campaign*. Having succeeded in overcoming the teething problems of political independence and economic survival, the government now shifted gear to focus on issues that are more social in character. Beliefs and values as reflected through social attitudes, habits and ingrained practices take a long time to change and therefore require sustained effort through repetition. Campaigns organised on an annual basis over a period of several years have therefore become a trend that first began in the late 1970s and continues to the present day.

The expansive scope and variety of the national campaigns in Singapore and the vigour with which they have generally been promulgated over the past decades reflect the Singapore government's commitment towards building a society in terms of the values and ideals espoused by these campaigns, values and ideals that every Singaporean is expected to embody and uphold. At the same time, they also reflect the government's

conviction in the efficacy of these national campaigns as a medium by which these ideals and values can be valorised, propagated and reinforced. In fact, the extent to which national campaigns have been utilized to regulate social behaviour in Singapore has led some people to dub Singapore as a ‘campaign country’ (Lazar 2000: 374; Long 2003:27). This pervasiveness of campaigns is what makes Singapore a nation of campaigns, one of which – the *Clean and Green Week Campaign* – forms the focus of this paper.

2.3 The Clean and Green Week Campaign

In the past, environmental management in Singapore was largely concerned with providing the environmental infrastructure, which was bolstered by legislative regulations and penalties such as imposing hefty fines to modify behaviour. This regulatory approach to modify behaviour was subsequently abandoned in favour of one that was aimed at building an environmentally *pro-active* society. Under the centralized direction of the Ministry of the Environment, a vision for Singapore’s environmental management and protection programme was conceived in the *Singapore Green Plan*, which involves, among others, creating a city conducive to gracious living, with people who are concerned about and take a personal interest in the care of both the local and global environment (Source: *The Singapore Green Plan – Action Programmes*. 1993. Ministry of the Environment, Singapore, p. 10). The *Plan* identified public education as a key strategic direction that had to be addressed if this vision was to become reality.

The *Clean and Green Week*, first launched in 1990 and remounted every year during the first week of November, became the first environmental public-education campaign to have grown out of the new approach of *The Singapore Green Plan*. This new approach involved consciously integrating environmental education into the formal education system, educating through participation and fun rather than compulsion and fines. In his speech at the opening of the Singapore Green Plan Exhibition in November, 1993, the then Minister of the Environment, Mah Bow Tan, underlined the critical role played by the individual: “For the Green Plan to succeed, we will need the strong support, commitment and participation of Singaporeans from all walks of life. The man in the street can, and should, through his simple, everyday actions, help to translate the vision under the Green Plan into reality”. As in all national campaigns in Singapore, no resources have been spared in generating maximum publicity for the Campaign via a slew of programmes and activities, which include public talks, school projects and the display of thousands of posters and banners in schools, community centres, bus shelters and notice boards in housing estates. And on each poster and banner is a slogan that encapsulates the thrust of the green message for that particular year.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE CLEAN AND GREEN WEEK SLOGANS

The term ‘slogan’ is a rhetorical device that stimulates mental or behavioural action, and is commonly associated with political or advertising discourse, where its power in evoking and managing collective attitudes around a concrete symbol has been widely acknowledged. One definition, which focuses on the imperative mood in which slogans are typically formulated, construe slogans as basically “imperative statements ...

single words or phrases with the imperative mood strongly implied” (Bowers and Ochs 1971: 22). This definition, however, might have overstated the *form* of slogans at the expense of the emotive *function* of slogans. As Stewart et al (1995: 401) have noted, “slogans are more than imperative statements – commands, decrees, edicts or fiats; they invoke impressions and elicit emotional responses”. Expressing the function and purpose of slogans in a more succinct and pointed manner, Reboul (1979: 296) has defined a slogan as a “phrase ... whose purpose is not to inform, to enlighten or even to order, but to 'strike' people so as to goad them into action”. It would appear then that the primary intent behind the use of a slogan is to 'strike' or galvanize people into some kind of mental or behavioural activity. It is this intent of slogans to galvanize people that will be demonstrated in the following analysis of the *Clean and Green Week* slogans (see Table 1 below). The analysis will focus on two aspects of the slogans – the use of pronouns and the pragmatic notion of ‘politeness’ – in an attempt to unravel the ideological assumptions embedded within the propositional content and rhetorical structure of the slogans.

Table 1: Clean and Green Week Slogans

YEAR	SLOGAN
1990	From Today, Everyone in Singapore Will Go for Green
1991	When We Think Green, The Possibilities Are Endless
1992	Every Little Thing You Do Counts
1993	Please Act Today For All Our Tomorrows
1994	Please Don't Shatter Our Peace and Quiet
1995	When You Litter, People Look at You Differently
1996	A Gracious Society Cares for the Environment and Its Neighbourhood
1997	Be Green For Life
1998	Every Little Effort Counts in Keeping Our Neighbourhood Clean and Pleasant
1999	A Decade Past, A Millennium Ahead
2000	Clean and Green: That's the way we like it
2001	Don't Throw Away My Future. Recycle Me
2002	Don't Throw Away Our Future. Recycle Us
2003	We Care.We're OK

3.1 Pronouns

There are a number of choices in the pronoun system of English that one can make depending on the kind of interpersonal meaning one wishes to express. At a broad level, a distinction can be made among first, second and third person pronouns. First and second person pronouns express a closer relationship between the writer/speaker and reader/hearer, compared to the third person or impersonal pronoun ‘one’. A person who uses the third person pronoun is manifestly less involved in or more detached from the world she/he is representing (for a fuller discussion of various interpersonal meanings that pronominal choice can encode, see Goatly, 2000).

Among the Clean and Green Week slogans, we see a predilection for the first person pronoun, such as ‘our’ in *Please Act Today for All Our Tomorrows* and ‘we’ in *When We Think Green, The Possibilities are Endless* and *Clean and Green: That’s the Way We Like It* (see Table 2 below). Using the first person pronoun has the effect of constructing the speaker (in this case, the government) together with the hearer (the people). Thus, the tendency to use the first person pronoun creates an impression of the government and the people in partnership, sharing the responsibility of protecting and caring for environmental resources. The recurrent use of the first person possessive pronoun (‘our’), in particular, creates a sense of collective ownership. Thus, it is our tomorrows for which we must act, our peace and quiet that we must not shatter, our neighbourhood that we must keep clean and pleasant, our future we must not throw away, and so on.

Table 2: Use of Pronouns in the Slogans

From Today, Everyone in Singapore Will Go for Green
When We Think Green, The Possibilities are Endless
Every Little Thing You Do Counts
Please Act Today for All Our Tomorrows
Please Don’t Shatter Our Peace and Quiet
When You Litter, People Look at You Differently
Every Little Effort Counts in Keeping Our Neighbourhood Clean and Pleasant
Clean and Green: That’s the Way We Like It
Don’t Throw Away My Future. Recycle Me
Don’t Throw Away Our Future. Recycle Us
We Care We ’re OK

In the last instance, the word ‘our’ has a double meaning. On the surface, it refers to recyclable cans and bottles. But, at a deeper level, the slogan can be interpreted as an exhortation for Singaporeans not to throw away their future by destroying the environment in which they live, in which case there is arguably an extension of meaning from the future use of the cans and bottles to the future livelihood of Singaporeans and destiny of Singapore. Thus, the notion of collective ownership and hence collective responsibility is underlined in these slogans, where caring for the environment is not only the government’s responsibility or that of a special committee tasked with the job but a responsibility that all Singaporeans must collectively shoulder.

The use of the collective pronoun, ‘everyone’, in *From Today, Everyone in Singapore Will Go for Green* unites pluralistic Singapore into a collective body dedicated to the ‘Green Movement’, as the global environmental movement is popularly referred to. That this is merely an assertion of idealistic optimism and not necessarily a statement of fact is obvious and hence unremarkable. What is more interesting is that, in

choosing to use the indefinite collective pronoun ('Everyone'), the slogan assumes a desire or even need for people in Singapore to conform to societal norms, and uses this assumption as the basis to impel people to 'go green'. This underlying ideology of conformism emerges more clearly if we contrast the slogan with reformulated ones like 'From Today, Singapore Will Go For Green' or 'From Today, We Will Go For Green'. In 'From Today, Singapore Will Go For Green', the emphasis is on the country, which could be viewed in a detached manner by the people, depending on their level of emotional affiliation towards their country, and thus may or may not have much impact on them; in 'From Today, We Will Go For Green', the effect is inclusive, emphasising the togetherness of the speaker (i.e. the government) and the hearer (the people), where the achievement of the effect hinges on the extent the people wish to be allied with the government. But in choosing to use the collective pronoun 'everyone', the accent is on each and every individual in Singapore and even the world, and by dint of the herd instinct the slogan impels people to follow what everyone else will, apparently, be doing, that is 'going for green'. In this way, the slogan attempts to persuade by appealing to the people's assumed desire for conformity and concomitant fear of public ostracism.

While there is a distinct favouring of collective pronouns that co-construct the government and people as one unified, undifferentiated body, the use of the second person pronoun, 'you' and its possessive form 'your', as in *Every Little Thing You Do Counts*, *When You Litter, People Look at You Differently* and (the implicit *You*) *Be Green For Life*, though less common is nonetheless significant. On the surface, these instances may seem to run counter to the observation made earlier concerning the deliberate attempt to co-construct the government and people as one in order to convey the ideology of collective ownership of and hence responsibility for the environment. However, upon closer examination, it is clear that they merely represent a different facet of the government's comprehensive persuasive rhetoric. They are directed at the individual member of society to emphasise personal responsibility and accountability, as part of the 'Think Local, Act Global' mantra spouted by the government. Just as Singapore as a nation is committed to do its part in the global green movement, the government also expects its citizens as individuals to do their part in this national campaign. The persuasive strategy is two-pronged: get the people to share the responsibility and hence work collaboratively with the government and get individuals to do their part ('Act Local'), no matter how small, towards the fulfilment of a greater global goal ('Think Global').

3.2 Politeness

At a most overt level, politeness is expressed through the use of the word, 'please'. We see this in two slogans: *Please Act Today for All Our Tomorrows* and *Please Don't Shatter Our Peace and Quiet*. Adding the word 'please' makes an utterance more polite and, used at the beginning of an otherwise bald-on-record imperative command, 'softens' and effectively transforms it into a plea. This is significant as a plea assumes that the one doing the pleading is less powerful in relation to the one to whom the plea is directed. Thus, the use of the politeness marker, 'please', is a clever sleight-of-hand that seemingly reverses the traditional power relations between the government and the governed and constructs the people in a more powerful position vis-à-vis the government.

Let's take this notion of politeness a little further. In pragmatics, the term 'politeness' is related but not reducible to its conventional, non-technical sense of proper social conduct and tactful behaviour; it is a notion referring to ways in which the relational function in linguistic action is carried out (Kasper 1998) or how the relationship between the interactants is linguistically encoded and enacted. Leech's 'Principle of Politeness' (1983) conceptualizes the pragmatic value of politeness in terms of maxims like the 'Tact Maxim': minimize cost to other, while maximizing benefit to other. The 'cost' is what the hearer needs to incur in relation to the 'benefit' that the hearer would receive if he/she were to act according to the speaker's directive. To illustrate, if your hostess says, 'Try some of my home-made cookies', the directive can be construed as polite as it (normally) involves more benefit than cost to the hearer. Conversely, if a drill sergeant says to his soldier, 'Do fifty push-ups right now', the directive would clearly be construed as involving more cost than benefit to the hearer and hence is impolite. Thus, by focusing on the maxim of 'Tact', i.e. by looking at politeness in terms of the relative 'cost' and 'benefit' of the utterance to the hearer, we may be able to have a better understanding of the 'relational function' encoded by the campaign slogans.

Slogans using bald imperatives, such as ***Be green for life*** and ***Don't Throw Away My Future. Recycle Me***, direct the people to perform an act or behave in a certain way, like adopting an environmentally conscious attitude or recycling, acts that manifestly entail effort and are therefore 'costly'. However, not all bald imperatives are equally 'costly'. The adverbial 'for life' in the slogan ***Be green for life*** spells out a life-long commitment that people ought to embrace; it prescribes an attitude, a philosophy even, rather than mere action¹. Put in sociological terms, the 'social product' (Kotler and Roberto 1989) being targeted is at the higher level of social attitudes and values, transforming social ideology rather than merely changing social practice or behaviour. The effort required on the part of the people and hence 'cost' is therefore arguably greater than that implied by slogans that merely advocate a change in a particular social act or behaviour like recycling (***Don't Throw Away My Future. Recycle Me***). Similarly, the time adverbial in the slogans ***Please act today for all our tomorrows*** also specifies a time-frame. The adverbial 'today' highlights the urgency of the matter; in so doing, it adds considerable 'cost' to the slogan. This is contrasted with slogans that are targeted at a higher level of generality like, ***Don't Throw Away Our Future. Recycle Us***, without specifying the extent or time-frame of the action called for.

The slogan ***When you litter, people look at you differently*** is interesting because the 'cost' being constructed here is a social one: when people commit an 'anti-social act', such as littering, they would have to bear the 'cost' of society looking at them in a contemptuous way. Thus, the 'cost' here is not manifest in terms of effort but the full weight of social pressure that is brought to bear on the individual. How 'costly' this is to the individual, though, is a function of the extent the individual fears social rejection or even ostracism.

This slogan contrasts with a similar but diametrically opposed slogan: ***When we think green, the possibilities are endless***. While these two slogans are similar in that

they both entail some form of ‘cost’, it is the difference in the way they use the ‘cost-benefit’ relation to persuade that is interesting. While the former applies social pressure to constrain people against littering by referring to the *negative* repercussion (‘cost’) that would befall the person who litters, the latter attempts to appeal by referring to the *positive* result (‘benefit’) of adopting a ‘green’ attitude. The former invokes the ‘stick’ as a deterrent against littering, while the latter invokes the ‘carrot’ (albeit a vaguely worded one) to get people to be environmentally friendly. The former emphasises the *negative* consequences of littering; the slogan therefore *discourages*. In the latter, the emphasis is on the *positive* rewards that can accrue from environmental consciousness; the slogan therefore *encourages*. While the former appeals to social pressure to disempower – being a litter-bug invites public disapproval and even social ostracism, the latter tries to appeal through empowerment – having a ‘green’ attitude empowers people to do an infinite number of things (to protect and conserve the environment). Although both attempt to get people to adopt an environmentally responsible attitude by stressing the ‘cost’, albeit in different ways, one endeavours to do so by appealing to the power of collective pressure to deter an individual act (‘when *you* litter’ [my emphasis]), while the other appeals to the power of collective effort (‘when *we* think green’ [my emphasis]). In this sense, the persuasive strategies used by these slogans are diametrically opposed to each other.

More significant, however, is the ideologically motivated assumption embedded within the slogan, ***When You Litter, People Look at You Differently***. It assumes that being different or, more accurately, being *looked at* differently is undesirable. The persuasive strategy employed by the slogan is based on the assumption that people have an innate need to belong, to conform to the normative structure of society, and that being different is therefore undesirable, even unnatural. This is a highly contestable viewpoint, which implicitly champions conformism over individualism. Individualism, which advocates the free and independent action of the individual to be different as opposed to the sorts of communistic or collectivistic behaviour resulting from, say, state interference, becomes negativized and sacrificed at the altar of conformism. Thus, the implicit message inscribed within the slogan is that when you litter, people look at you not only differently but *negatively*. In this way, the slogan brings the full weight of public perception to bear on the individual, with the implication that if the public perceives an act to be negative, then it *must* be negative. In other words, the slogan invokes the tyranny of the majority. The sort of society assumed, implied and championed by the slogan leaves little, if any, room for individualistic behaviour, thereby implicitly encouraging social unity and conformity. At another level, the slogan also belies the ideology that the norm in Singapore society is *not* to litter, and therefore littering would constitute a deviation from the norm and hence invite social reprehension. But if the norm in Singapore were indeed not to litter, then there probably would not be a need for a *national* campaign targeted at litter-bugs in the first place, now would there?

A decade past, a millennium ahead is a rather striking slogan for the simple reason that it does not encode any overt or covert cost or benefit, but merely refers to the past and future through two contrasting nominal phrases. In the context of the 1999 *Clean and Green Week* in which the slogan was used, the significance of the reference to the ‘decade past’ lies in the fact that 1999 marked the tenth anniversary of the *Clean and*

Green Week. The purpose behind the slogan, presumably, is to direct the people's vision to the new millennium, with a general message of hope for the future rather than a specific one on environmental protection. The slogan attempts to capture the spirit of hope that people harbour for the future, as signified by the dawn of a new millennium, in order to exhort them to care for the global environment which contributes to the assurance of a future. The message appears to be: If the world environment becomes irreparably damaged, the hope and future of humankind will die along with it. Thus, the benefit of environmental protection which this slogan seems to be suggesting, though rather obliquely, is potentially of global proportions as it relates to the hope that the entire humankind has invested in the future. It echoes an earlier (1993) slogan, ***Please act for all our tomorrows***, which also constructs the benefit in terms of a vision of a (common) future for Singapore. The slogan ***A gracious society cares for the environment and its neighbourhood*** attempts to persuade by appealing to the people's (presumed) admiration for and desire to be regarded as a 'gracious society'. Hence, the implied 'benefit' of caring for the environment and its neighbourhood in this case is that of becoming a gracious people. Of course, this 'benefit' would only be actualized if the notion of becoming a gracious society is a sufficiently attractive proposition for the people to take up.

The slogans ***Every little effort counts in keeping our neighbourhood clean and pleasant*** and ***Every little thing you do counts*** attempt to persuade by minimizing the amount of effort needed to perform the act, where the operative word is 'little', while, at the same time, maximizing the 'benefits' that can be gained. The 'benefit' is more explicit in the first slogan (having a clean and pleasant neighbourhood) than the second, where the implication is that every small act that people perform would contribute towards the general cause of environmental conservation. The 'benefit' here is therefore only hinted at via the word 'counts' rather than directly alluded to. In the slogans, ***Please act for all our tomorrows*** and ***Don't Throw Away Our Future. Recycle Us*** (see note i) the 'benefit' is also signalled in explicit, though less personal or tangible, terms through the collective possessive pronoun 'our'. Here, the construction of the 'benefit' is premised on the idea that *we* will have a future ('all our tomorrows').

Probing into the cost-benefit quotient of slogans in this way allows us a peek into the power structure that underpins the formulation of the slogans. Slogans that incur a high cost in relation to the promise of benefit are inherently "face-threatening" (Brown and Levinson 1987) and imply an asymmetrical power structure, in that the powerful are in a position to impel the less powerful to do things that they would otherwise not want to do, since the costs outweigh the benefits. Conversely, slogans that emphasise benefits over costs suggest that the power lies with the people, and that the government, being in a less powerful position, has to now dangle carrots in front of the people in order to coax them into action. Looking at the *Clean and Green Week* slogans as a whole, we observe the government appealing to both costs and benefits to varying degrees in various slogans by, for instance, invoking social pressure (cost) to produce conformity or the vision of a collective hope (benefit) in a common future. More significantly, underlying this rhetorical structure based on costs and benefits appears to be a motif of solidarity, a message of the people being bound by social cords that simultaneously encourage certain

positive behaviours as well as discourage certain negative behaviours and pulled together, almost inexorably, towards a shared destiny. This is the platform on which the message of nationhood is constructed and promulgated to the masses in Singapore.

It is perhaps unsurprising that this nation-building message that underlies the *Clean and Green Week* slogans is echoed in other environmentally-oriented campaigns, both past and present, in Singapore, which ties in with the government's exploitation of the practice of national campaigns as a means of achieving social cohesion and political unity (Teo 2002).

4. DISCUSSION

Even as early as the *Keep Singapore Clean Campaign* first launched in 1968, the Singapore government did not merely seek to get Singaporeans to maintain the cleanliness of the country but also sought to evoke a sense of pride among Singaporeans in their newly independent country. Indeed, it is not a coincidence that that particular campaign was launched just three years after Singapore had gained independence in 1965. Through this Campaign, Singaporeans were urged to treat Singapore as their home which would make them co-owners of the country, unlike in the colonial days when Singapore was merely a piece of real estate which belonged to the British and Singaporeans were merely employees working under a foreign master. As co-owners, they would therefore be expected to assume the responsibility to keep the streets, parks and other public places clean, just as they would for their own homes. Besides, a clean living environment was also seen by the government as a reflection of an orderly and well-organized society, which would in turn boost Singapore's economic development and progress. The government believed that a clean and orderly environment would not only help to boost the morale of individual Singaporeans, which would help the people to raise their standards of economic performance, but also help attract foreign investors to the fledgling nation. It was felt that whether a foreign company decides to invest in Singapore depended to some extent on what their executives saw when they were in Singapore to make preliminary studies. If they were impressed by the degree of organization and social discipline in Singapore, they were more likely to set up their factories and even headquarters in the country. Other environmentally-oriented campaigns mounted by the Singapore government over the years included the *Keep Singapore Clean and Mosquito-Free Campaign* in 1969, the *Keep Singapore Pollution-Free Campaign* in 1970 and even a *Clean Public Toilets Campaign* in 1996, when the state of cleanliness of public toilets became used as an index of social graciousness and civic consciousness in Singapore.

In general, the Singapore government, through the *Clean and Green Week* and these other environmentally oriented campaigns, has constructed a clean, green and hygienic environment as a national asset which Singaporeans should not only be proud of but zealously guard. In this sense, such campaigns were conceived not merely to spruce up the physical environment of the country, but more importantly to strengthen the spirit of the people to be disciplined, responsible, robust and, above all, proud of their own country. In this way, they become a political instrument by which the government's

goals of nation-building and economic development are directly expressed, and the discourse of public education campaigns becomes inextricably intertwined with the political discourse of social cohesion and solidarity. Since the island of Singapore lacks natural resources, with the exception of a natural, deep harbour, the physical land itself becomes an emblem of the nation that Singaporeans possess, a reification of the sense of identity and pride in one's homeland. To this end, the Singapore government has constructed the physical territoriality of Singapore as part of the heritage that Singaporeans can be proud of and would be willing to protect and defend. This is clearly seen in a speech made by the former Minister for the Environment in 1983, an excerpt of which is reproduced below:

A clean environment is important. It is a measure of the quality of our life, an asset which the future generations will find worth defending. It is important for a citizen returning to Singapore after a business or holiday trip to feel relieved that he has returned home to a place where the air is clean, the water is safe to drink, and where tropical diseases are relatively unknown. It is important that he should step from his plane into an airport terminal which is kept spotlessly clean and drive through a green city free of decaying refuse and litter. We are building a heritage (Ong 1983: 28-29).

This construction of Singapore's 'heritage' in terms of its physical environment represents part of the government's broader vision of nation-building, which it hopes to achieve by getting Singaporeans to develop a sense of ownership of Singapore.

This idea of collective ownership of the environment and, by extension, the nation itself, is partly expressed through slogans like *When we think green, the possibilities are endless, Clean and Green: That's the Way We Like It* and *Don't Throw Away Our Future. Recycle Us*. Be it collaborative efforts in thinking green, recycling or even expressing what we like in unison, these slogans simultaneously appeal to and reinforce the sense of *esprit de corps* and collective ownership and accountability. This accent on togetherness constructed on the ideology of the government standing shoulder to shoulder with the people in unison is echoed in several other national campaign slogans, the most recent ones of which include: *Clean Toilet in Our Garden City* (1999 *Clean Public Toilets Campaign*), *Let's fight SARS together* and *Let's keep our toilets clean and dry. Together, Singapore's OK, Let's keep it clean and fresh. Together, Singapore's OK* (2003 *Singapore's OK Campaign*). Thus, the distinctive collectivistic posturing in the *Clean and Green Week* slogans is just part of a systematic and concerted effort by the Singapore government to use public education campaigns as a platform to project and hopefully perpetuate the ideology of a collective and united Singapore. Some of the *Clean and Green Week* slogans, as we have seen, not only construct Singapore as belonging to all Singaporeans, they also construct a reality in which Singaporeans share a common future, a common destiny. Slogans like *Please act today for all our tomorrows* and *A decade past, a millennium ahead* presuppose or imply a 'tomorrow' shared by all Singaporeans, with the underlying message that they therefore have a vested interest in

protecting their common destiny. Thus, it would appear that the government wants to rally the people of Singapore together to encourage them not only to care and protect Singapore as their home and property, but also their common future and destiny. Environmentalism therefore becomes the ground on which the government's nation-building goal is constructed and a rallying point around which the nationhood of Singapore would hopefully cohere.

That such a strong and overt nation-building posturing can be created under the aegis of environmental concerns speaks volumes about the way national campaigning in Singapore has become a veritable extension of the political arm of the PAP government. How has this come to be so? The answer lies in a combination of factors.

First, with a heterogeneous population comprising largely immigrants forming a multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-lingual social fabric, the newly formed PAP government had to find a means of knitting together its diverse populace. Secondly, at the political front, with Britain relinquishing its control over its former colony and the threat of communism looming large in the near horizon together with the pangs suffered by Singapore's separation from the Malaya Federation, the government had to think of ways to galvanise its people into a politically and socially cohesive nation. The post-war baby boom coupled with rising unemployment also meant that the government had to implement measures to check the rising birth-rate while stimulating economic growth to create more jobs.

In the face of these social, political and economic exigencies, the PAP government was determined to make the newly independent nation of Singapore succeed and prosper, a determination which is reflected in Singapore's national anthem entitled '*Majulah Singapura*' (which means 'Let Singapore Flourish' in Malay). Hence, all available human resources in the land-scarce, resource-poor but densely populated island-state had to be harnessed fully. To do this, social cohesion and political unity must first be put in place through an efficient and organised means of political socialisation, mass education and participation. The government saw campaigns organised on a national scale as the instrument through which these goals could be achieved with minimum time and maximum efficiency.

As such, the past four decades or so of Singapore's relatively brief history have witnessed a plethora of campaigns being launched to fulfil specific goals according to the exigency of the situation. For instance, with the advent of self-government and subsequently political independence in the mid 60s, the mobilising function of campaigns was significant not only to garner votes for the newly formed government but also for the purpose of nation-building. As the channels of mass mobilisation became more established and government concerns shifted from politics to economics in the 60s and 70s, the need to use campaigns for mass mobilisation purposes waned. Instead, campaigns began to be used more generally as a platform to communicate the kinds of orientations and attitudes the government had deemed appropriate and desirable for the people of Singapore to embrace. In this capacity, campaigns were used not so much as a forum for public debate or discussion between the political leadership and the masses but

more as a platform for the former to promulgate and propagate certain attitudes and practices to the latter. In this way, campaigns became not only a channel through which the government's power and position in society are expressed and consolidated but also a symbol of the government's paternalism.

This role of campaigns continued through the 80s into the 90s when various campaigns took on the specific functions of inculcating social discipline, such as courtesy and productivity, as well as re-orientating or re-shaping certain values, beliefs and habits like speaking Mandarin (instead of dialects), maintaining strong family ties and leading a healthy lifestyle. This is the function of political socialisation and education. In tandem with this role of socialisation was the function of legislation that several campaigns also served. Certain campaigns like the *Keep Singapore Clean Campaign* (1968), *National Road Safety Campaign* (1975) and *Clean Public Toilet Campaign* (1991) were accompanied by laws that sought to deter recalcitrant behaviour, like imposing a \$500 fine for littering, jaywalking and not flushing the toilet! Thus, the period during which a campaign was held also became the grace period for the general public to familiarise themselves with the legislative measures that had been introduced in conjunction with these campaigns. Thus, throughout the years, campaigns have functioned as a socialising ground for legal measures to be introduced, adapted and internalised by the general public to create, presumably, an atmosphere of fair play so that individuals cannot complain of inadequate warning, ignorance or insufficient time for adjustment to the new legislation.

Last but not least, it can be argued that campaigns have been employed not only to demonstrate but also to legitimise the power and position of the ruling elite in Singapore. The persuasiveness (and hence effectiveness) of national campaigns in Singapore hinges on the people's conviction that these campaigns originate from a legitimate source with a beneficent purpose. The nation, it has been argued, should be seen as a social construction, resulting from a protracted negotiation between its leaders and a population which is increasingly educated into conceptions of legitimacy and citizenship (Hill and Lian 1995). The ruling elite in Singapore have earned their legitimacy through the political stability, economic prosperity and high living standards that they have managed to bring to Singapore over a remarkably short span of time. Such legitimacy motivates wilful submission and obligation from the masses to trust that whatever policies or campaigns that are being implemented by them must be for the collective good of the people of Singapore. At the same time, the government has also used campaigns to reinforce its legitimacy as leaders of Singapore. Certain campaigns, whether through sheer coincidence or political design, were held several months prior to the general elections, which come approximately once in every four years. This acts as a timely reminder to the people of the government's alertness and foresight in identifying and anticipating certain adverse issues or problems, as well as their efficiency and effectiveness in dealing with them. For example, the National Anti-Drug Abuse campaign in 1976 was held eight months before the General Elections in December. It therefore came as a timely assurance that everything was well under control and the government had been keeping a vigilant eye on the drug problem. It also made the people aware of what the ruling elites had done to eradicate this threat which, left unchecked,

could wreak much social havoc, which would in turn incur a high political cost. In short, there exists a dialectical relationship between campaigns and the government in Singapore: campaigns gain their success through the government's legitimacy to rule as much as the government gains its legitimate right to rule through the success of these campaigns.

5. CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, the relationship between greening a country and building a nation in Singapore can be conceived as a symbiotic one: the government wants its citizens to feel a sense of pride and belonging to their country because it has a clean, safe and pleasant environment, a pride which would help cohere Singapore's pluralistic populace to achieve a culture of solidarity which will, in turn, boost investor confidence in the economy; at the same time, the government wants Singaporeans to care for Singapore's physical environment by making them believe that Singapore belongs to them. One ideology simultaneously feeds on and nourishes the other, to make Singaporeans feel that a 'clean and green Singapore' is indeed the way they like it!

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Notes:

ⁱ The author recognises an inherent, perhaps deliberate, ambiguity in the phrase, 'For Life', which can refer to an adverb of time or duration (i.e. answering the question 'for how long') or an adverb of reason (answering the question 'for what purpose'). Being green, in this second reading, is therefore not only about the conservation of the environment but is tantamount to the preservation of life itself.