Defending the Legitimacy of Singapore Elections: MARUAH Position Paper on the GRC system Q3 2013

MARUAH’s 2nd paper in our Electoral System Review
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Executive Summary

In this position paper, the second in its electoral reform series, MARUAH approaches the issue of Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs) from the standpoint of the right to representative government as well as free and fair elections.

This paper concurs with the goal of ensuring minority representation in Parliament. However it argues that the GRC system is a poor tool to this end because it creates more impediments to electoral and representational fairness than it solves.

The GRC system was introduced in the late 1980s with the stated aim of ensuring minority representation in Parliament. In the mid-1990s, and prior to the 1997 General Election, the law was amended to allow for GRCs to be massively enlarged, making possible the 5-Member of Parliament (MP) and 6-MP GRCs that we find on today’s electoral map.

The GRC system has been widely criticized, particularly since the enlargement of the GRCs in the mid-1990s. Criticism has focused on the effects of GRCs in terms of creating an unlevel playing field between the PAP and Opposition parties, preventing by-elections from happening, allowing for free-riding of potentially less electable candidates into Parliament and entrenching the expectation of ethnic voting despite how ethnic minorities had not been under-represented before the GRC system was introduced.

In terms of the right of Singaporeans to representative government through free and fair elections, this paper thus argues that the GRC system weakens the link between the individual MP and his or her constituents, thus weakening the representative character of Parliament. It also generates a stigma of ethnic minority MPs from GRCs having come into Parliament on a quota system, preventing them from having the chance to win (or lose) a straight fight.

MARUAH’s proposed alternative is straightforward - a reversion to SMCs nation-wide combined with a requirement that all parties contesting multiple constituencies maintain a specified minimum share of ethnic minority candidates. Should the elections return a Parliament with ethnic minorities under-represented, the law would allow for the best performing losing ethnic minority candidates to become MPs not associated with any particular wards, so as to ensure sufficient ethnic minority representation.

MARUAH maintains that under such a system, it is probable that elections would return a sufficient number of ethnic minority MPs, rendering the party list “top up” unnecessary. The basis for this opinion is the fact that prior to GRCs having been created, ethnic minorities were not under-represented in Singapore’s Parliament. The 1981 Anson by-election and the GE 2011 Punggol East SMC result also serve as concrete precedents for how Singaporean voters can elect ethnic minority candidates over ethnic majority candidates.

MARUAH argues that this alternative system would act to remove the stigmatization associated with minority MPs elected on GRCs while maintaining a fall-back protection against ethnic minority under-representation in a worst-case scenario.
A. GROUP REPRESENTATION CONSTITUENCIES: WHAT?

The Group Representation Constituency (‘GRC’) system has been a key element of the Singaporean electoral system ever since it was introduced in 1988 following a series of constitutional amendments.¹

Under the GRC system, electoral divisions are formed that are usually larger in terms of population and physical area than the other type of electoral division in Singapore, the Single Member Constituency (‘SMC’). For example, in the most recent general election in 2011, Moulmein-Kallang was the ‘smallest’ GRC out of the fifteen with 84,190 voters. In contrast, the ‘largest’ SMC out of the twelve was Punggol East with 32,225 voters.²

GRCs are also larger in that each is represented in Parliament by a group comprising between three and six Members of Parliament (‘MP’), usually headed by a Cabinet minister in the case of PAP GRCs. The size of the group varies from GRC to GRC. In contrast, only one MP represents each SMC. This is to say that during elections, each party wishing to contest a GRC will put forward a group of individuals, and each voter in a GRC will vote for one of these groups to be his MPs. In contrast, a voter in an SMC will only vote for a single individual to be his MP.³

(The number of MPs to be returned by GRCs cannot be less than one-quarter of the total number of MPs to be returned at a general election, though there must also be at least 8 SMCs.⁴)

In addition, at least one of the individuals in a group contesting a GRC must belong to a minority racial community – either the Malay community or the Indian and other minority communities. But there is a catch here in that the number of designated GRCs with a Malay community MP cannot be more than three-fifths (rounded up to the next highest whole number) of the total number of GRCs.⁵ This means that ethnic representation always stays within the boundaries of representational politics.

The boundaries and sizes of GRCs and SMCs are not fixed. The Electoral Boundaries Review Committee (‘EBRC’) has primary responsibility for designating GRCs and SMCs. The EBRC is appointed and given its Terms Of Reference by the Prime Minister prior to an election. It then compiles and submits its report to the government, which may accept or reject the recommendations contained therein (though in practice the recommendations are normally accepted).⁶

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³ Ibid.
⁴ s. 8A Parliamentary Elections Act.
⁵ s. 8A Parliamentary Elections Act.
B. GROUP REPRESENTATION CONSTITUENCIES: WHY?

The GRC system is the brainchild of the Government, which has always maintained that the primary reason for the introduction of the GRC system was to “secure the long-term political stability of Singapore in two ways: first, by ensuring that Parliament will always be multi-racial and representative of our society, and second, by encouraging the practice of multi-racial politics by all political parties”.

This is also the PAP's primary justification for the continued existence of the system.

This was reiterated in the wake of the May 2011 General Elections, when Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong credited the GRC system with the fact that all parties contested with multi-racial lists of candidates – with the implication being that had the GRC system not existed, voting along ethnic lines would have ensured that this was not the case.

The PAP argued that the catalyst for the initiative arose when the PAP noticed a voting trend circa-1982 whereby young voters were “preferring candidates who were best suited to their own needs without being sufficiently aware of the need to return a racially balanced party slate of candidates…[consequently] [t]he Prime Minister feared that in the 1990s, the Malays could be under-represented in Parliament”.

Initial proposals in 1982 to counteract this trend and secure ethnic minority representation in Parliament were met with disapproval on the basis that they would undermine minorities. Ethnic minority members of the PAP itself also voiced such disapproval, although they did recognise the general need to have a Parliament that adequately represented minorities.

The 1984 elections, it was argued, demonstrated a “continuation in the trend of younger voters preferring candidates who were better qualified and suited to serve their own needs because of [inter alia] their culture and languages, including dialects”. This led ethnic minority members of the PAP to change their views and support the GRC system “as a safeguard to ensure that [ethnic minority] candidates…will be returned in future elections in fair numbers”.

Up until that time, it was claimed that only the PAP had consistently fielded minority candidates in elections. It was thus suggested that the GRC system would also prompt other parties to promote multi-racialism more strongly.

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8 PM's post-election press conference, 8 May 2011. “And in particular they contested, all of them, on multi-racial platforms. And this I'm sure is a result of the GRC system, which gave them strong incentive to do so.” [http://www.asiaone.com/print/News/Elections/Story/A1Story20110508-277699.html](http://www.asiaone.com/print/News/Elections/Story/A1Story20110508-277699.html)
11 Ibid, col. 181-183; during the Parliamentary debate on the bill itself, a number of PAP MPs recounted their difficulties in dealing with the increasing influence of race on voters. Also see the voting figures outlined by Dr. Ow Chin Hock, then-MP for Leng Kee – Singapore Parliament Reports (Hansard), 12 Jan. 1988, col. 302-303.
Parliamentary debate on the GRC bills

The main Parliamentary debate on the bills to introduce the GRC system occurred in January 1988.

The debate demonstrated that although there was consensus that a multi-racial Parliament and politics was desirable, more uncertainty existed over whether the GRC system was the best way to achieve this objective.

To this end, several PAP MPs, most notably then-MP for Marine Parade, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, Mr Goh Chok Tong, considered a number of different alternatives to the GRC system. These were eventually rejected:

The main threads of the debate in Parliament are summarized below.

Proportional representation

- “Proportional representation will lead to racially-based parties, and religious based political parties too...What it would mean is the polarisation of racial and religious groups and this goes against our intention of building mutual tolerance and respect and down-playing race and religion. Furthermore, proportional representation as a system has been shown to paralyse governments even in developed Europe because of the inability of parties to win a majority in Parliament” – Mr Goh Chok Tong.

- “Some have suggested proportional representation to ensure a multi-racial Parliament. The fact is that proportional representation will give rise to divisive and disruptive activities. Candidates will tend to emphasize sectional interest at the expense of national interest, making extreme demands to gain popular support. Debate will become more emotionally charged and there is a very real risk that political stability would be undermined and not protected” – Mr. Lau Ping Sum, then-MP for Yio Chu Kang.

- “Proportional representation...has the same effect [detrimental] as voting along communal lines. Very quickly you will have a Malay-based party, an Indian-based party and a Chinese-based party, because each party can get a certain number of votes and they would enter Parliament through proportional representation” – Mr Goh Chok Tong.

Communal-based elections

- “Communal-based elections mean defining and allocating seats in Parliament based on racial groups. It means Chinese will vote for Chinese, Malays vote for

13 A 1966 Constitutional Commission had previously considered the issue of ethnic minority representation in Parliament. Amongst the proposals considered and rejected by the commission were a type of nominated MP system, proportional representation and the establishment of an upper house in Parliament that would include minority representatives. A GRC-type system was not considered.


16 Ibid, col. 333.
Malays, Indians for Indians, and so on. This will forever enshrine racialism in politics. It is against what we want” – Mr Goh Chok Tong.\(^\text{17}\)

- “Another way of ensuring Malay presence in Parliament, Sir, is the PKMS way where Malays elect Malays to represent Malays in Parliament. But where do we go from here? Very soon, chauvinistic Chinese political parties will also demand that Chinese elect Chinese to represent Chinese interests in Parliament, and likewise, chauvinistic Indian political parties. Will this do us good in the long term? Will this do Singapore good in the long run? I leave it to the good and rational judgment of my fellow Singaporeans to decide” – Dr. Ahmad Mattar, then-MP for Brickworks and Minister for the Environment.\(^\text{18}\)

- “Each community elects members of its own community. If we do this for the Malays, we have to do it for the Indians, and others. We have to do it for the Chinese. Then we slip into the Cyprus model where the Greeks elect Greeks, the Turks elect Turks. What is the result? The result is eventual partition of the country because, in order to be elected into Parliament, the candidates will have to appeal to the emotions, to the gut feelings of the people within their own community… All MPs in Singapore will have to represent all constituents, not constituents belonging to one community alone.” – Mr Goh Chok Tong.\(^\text{19}\)

- “If two votes are to be given to the minority Malay community, would it not be possible that the minority Indian community would also demand two votes? So what would happen is that a few communities will be electing their own representatives. What would be the result? Once they are elected...it would mean that they would once again raise demands or issues in their communities' interests alone, because they have received the mandate from their community to do so. If this continues, such a stance would draw the attention of the majority, that is, the Chinese and willy-nilly, within the majority there will be groups seeking to protect their interests. Each community, like it or not, would have to put up its own racial defences, and from behind these racial defences each would launch attacks of a totally racial nature. The result would be the creation of three communal groups participating in an arena of communal politics that supersede national political concerns. Mr Deputy Speaker, this formula i.e., where a vote is vested in a particular community, would result in a conflagration of communal politics.” – Encik Wan Hussin bin Haji Zoorhi, then-MP for Kampong Ubi.\(^\text{20}\)

**Reserve ward system**

- “The reserve ward system means that specific constituencies will have minority MPs only. But I do not think that voters in such constituencies, granted the spread of our electorate at the present moment, will be happy to be restricted in their choice” – Mr. Goh Chok Tong.\(^\text{21}\)

- “...one way of ensuring Malay presence in Parliament is to assign constituencies for Malays only where only Malay candidates can stand in General Elections. But let us ask ourselves, Sir: will this be fair to the non-Malays in these constituencies? Should they be compelled to choose their representatives in


\(^{19}\) Ibid, col. 332-333.

\(^{20}\) Singapore Parliament Reports (Hansard), 18 May 1988, col. 43-45. This speech was made on the third reading of the bills, that is, after they returned to Parliament from the select committee.

Parliament from among candidates from a particular race? The answer is obvious, Sir” – Dr. Ahmad Mattar, then-MP for Brickworks and Minister for the Environment.  

- “…we can reserve certain constituencies for Malay candidates. Problem: we accentuate communalism. The Malays will always appeal to Malays and their sentiments for support. They would be living in separate enclaves. They would not be integrated into the mainstream of life in Singapore. So again, we rejected this idea” – Mr. Goh Chok Tong.

*Nominated MPs to correct for ethnic under-representation*

- “The nominated MP system, if an insufficient minority of MPs are voted in, would give these minority MPs the status of runners-up MPs, or worse, labelled as second-class MPs. If we are to judge the reaction and the action of people to the non-constituency MPs system, we would conclude that the nominated MP system would be an unsatisfactory system. The runners-up minority candidates may not take their seats in Parliament” – Mr. Goh Chok Tong.

- “…we can always nominate Malays or Indians if they are under-represented in Parliament after an election into Parliament. We rejected it. Not democratic because they are not elected by the people. It is against the principle of democracy” – Mr. Goh Chok Tong.

*Other systems*

- Dr. Arthur Beng Kian Lam, then-MP for Fengshan, briefly considered the examples of Cyprus, New Zealand and, in greater depth, Fiji. He concluded that the GRC system was superior as “[f]irstly, minority representation will be ensured in the House. Secondly, the one-man-one-vote system remains. Thirdly, on the ground, to hold the ground and serve the people, a team of MPs of various races will have to work closely together…Fourthly, …any party that refuses to contest a GRC will obviously be one that cannot field a multi-racial team regardless of whatever excuse they may want to give”.

- Mr. Heng Chiang Meng, then-MP for Jalan Kayu, gave in-depth consideration to Mauritius’ electoral system, which he believed had been successful. He stated that the GRC system in fact “adopted two features of [Mauritius’] system, i.e., the Group Representation Constituency as well as the Non-Constituency MPs”. It should also be noted that Mr. Heng’s support of institutional arrangements to provide for adequate representation of minorities in Parliament and prevent interracial conflict was not confined to the GRC system – he did not wish to dismiss proportionate representation or a “bicameral system where [Singapore] can have an Upper House based on a multi-racial voting basis”.

- Mr. Chiam See Tong, then-MP for Potong Pasir and sole Member of the Opposition in Parliament, referred to Cyprus as a negative example of what a

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23 Ibid, col. 332.
24 Ibid, col. 332.
GRC-type system could do to Singapore. This was rebutted by Mr. Goh Chok Tong: “[f]ar from institutionalizing racialism in our Constitution [as in the case of Cyprus], we are trying to institutionalize multi-racialism”.

Switzerland

- Unlike his view of the other alternative systems of addressing ethnic minority under-representation in the legislature, Mr. Goh Chok Tong lauded the Swiss system. He stated that three particular aspects of the Swiss system were relevant to Singapore:
  
  i. “[o]ne, Switzerland succeeds as a politically stable country because it is a state based upon the acceptance of differences between ethnic groups. Acceptance of differences, not a melting pot idea…”[t]he GRC proposal of electing three MPs from at least two different communities as a team recognizes and accepts that there are differences between us, even though we are all Singaporeans. These are differences which even over time will not disappear because each community does not want it to disappear. Each community wants to retain its own ethnic identity”

  ii. “Two, in a plural society divided by language, ethnicity, religion or race, the Westminster Model view of democracy of majority rule has to be modified…the Westminster Model of democracy based on majority rule by a majority community cannot work in a plural society…We are a plural society comprising people of different ethnicity, religion, race and language…The GRC proposal is our institutional mechanism to ensure that the minority communities are able to share power with the majority community”.

  iii. “Three, in a plural society, it is the spirit of the constitution, the informal arrangements, the political culture, that will make or break the society, not the formal institutions…[t]he change to our Constitution and Parliamentary Elections Act to provide for election of MPs on a team basis is putting into place an institutional mechanism to ensure a multi-racial Parliament. On its own, it will not ensure success in building up or strengthening our multi-racial society. It is a formal institutional arrangement. For us to succeed, we must have the same spirit as the Swiss to search for consensus, to work through informal as much as formal arrangements, to make every citizen, whichever community, he belongs to, feel that he is a Singaporean”.  

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28 See, for example, *ibid*, col. 203-204; and Singapore Parliament Reports (Hansard), 18 May 1988, col. 31.
29 Singapore Parliament Reports (Hansard), 18 May 1988, col. 48-49.
30 *Ibid*, col. 49-53. This speech was made on the third reading of the bills, that is, after they returned to Parliament from the select committee.
Aftermath of the debate

Following the debate, the bills were sent to a select committee for detailed consideration as well as public consultation. The select committee then produced its report on the bills, which favoured their adoption. The bills were returned to Parliament and passed into law in May 1988. They came into force in May and June 1988, in time for the general election later that year.

C. EVOLUTION OF THE GRC

The GRC system has evolved under the auspices of the PAP ever since its introduction in 1988.

1988 general election

Legislative amendments

The GRC system was passed into law earlier that year.

GRC-SMC composition

There were 13 three-member GRCs and 39 SMCs in the election.\(^{31}\)

1991 general election

Legislative amendments

Legislative amendments prior to the 1991 general election increased the maximum number of MPs in each GRC from three to four.\(^{32}\)

The rationale for this amendment, as stated by Mr. Goh Chok Tong, was “to provide for flexibility in dealing with a GRC whose population is growing rapidly. Take, for example, Tampines GRC. Tampines GRC has an electorate of 65,000 in the 1988 General Election. By 1993, the electorate is expected to grow to 76,000. Instead of breaking up such a GRC, this amendment will allow the GRC to be retained intact and yet allow it to be adequately serviced by an additional MP. That means four MPs serving this enlarged GRC electorally. Such flexibility will be especially helpful to town councils as there will be some permanence to the areas falling under their charge”.\(^{33}\)

An amendment also changed the upper limit of the number of MPs to be returned by all GRCs from one-half to three-quarters of the total number of elected MPs so as to prevent incompatibility with the new, larger GRCs.\(^{34}\)

GRC-SMC composition

There were 15 four-member GRCs and 21 SMCs in the election.\(^{35}\)


1997 general election

Legislative amendments

Legislative amendments prior to the 1997 general election increased the maximum number of MPs in each GRC again, this time from four to six.\(^{36}\)

To justify this amendment, Mr. Goh Chok Tong stated that “[b]oth the Town Council and the GRC schemes have been successful. As we gained confidence in the schemes, we adapted and extended them in the light of our experience. Thus in 1990, we changed the maximum number of GRC candidates from three to four, to provide flexibility in dealing with a GRC whose population was expanding rapidly. I now propose to take the ideas of Town Councils and GRCs another step further… I intend to devolve still more authority to the local communities, by setting up Community Development Councils (CDCs)… For CDCs to be effective, they need to have responsibility for a critical mass of residents. Increasing the maximum number of MPs in a GRC from four to six will give more flexibility to the Electoral Boundaries Review Committee to configure a GRC which is the right size for this purpose…”.

He added that “[d]evolving more powers to MPs in Town Councils and CDCs, and enlarging the maximum size of GRCs, is electorally neutral. It gives no unfair advantage either to the PAP or the opposition parties. But it gives voters a bigger stake in the result of their choice, because team MPs will manage more matters… Bigger GRCs also put a premium on a strong anchor-man for the team of candidates standing there. Then whichever party wins, the GRC is better off with a strong anchor-man heading a strong team, and not just a glib talker supported by a group of straw men. Therefore, the party which wins the largest number of GRCs is more likely to be able to put together a team of competent Ministers to govern the country… Voters will not only be voting for a team of MPs to manage their constituency, but also for part of the core leadership team of the winning party. This will strengthen the political system. Democracy is about exercising the choice of voting for, rather than voting against, something. At the national level, this means voting for a government which will make sound policies and lead the country into the future. At the GRC level, it means voting for a team who will make life better for the residents of the GRC”.

Mr. Goh Chok Tong also spoke on the effect that the amendment might have on ethnic minority representation in the legislature: “this change to the GRC rules will compromise minority representation in Parliament. I have said that this will not happen: the PAP will not field fewer minority MPs as a result of this change. If necessary, it will field more than one minority candidate in some GRCs, especially the larger ones, or field minority candidates in single member constituencies… Some people have suggested that if we increase the maximum size of GRCs, we could require the larger GRCs to have two candidates belonging to two different minority communities, instead of one as at present. We may also guarantee a higher minimum proportion of minority MPs in other ways, for example, by requiring a larger proportion of MPs to be returned from GRCs. This is worth considering. But I do not think we are ready to implement it now. We should first gain some experience with the system which allows GRCs to have between three to six members. Only then may we consider writing such a provision into the law”.\(^{37}\)

Amendments were also made to remove the upper limit of MPs to be returned from GRCs and to require that there be a minimum of 8 SMCs. On these amendments, Mr. Wong Kan Seng, then-MP for Thomson and Minister for Home Affairs, stated that “[t]here is no intention to eliminate SMCs altogether from our electoral system. The Bill ensures that there will be a minimum of eight SMCs…roughly 10% of the current number of seats in Parliament. Since this amendment provides for a minimum number of Members to be returned by SMCs, there is no need to provide for a maximum number of MPs to be returned by GRCs…Some people might say that the reduced number of SMCs is against the interest of the opposition. There is no reason to feel this way, as the opposition can contest in GRCs…If they cannot contest in a GRC, it is because they do not have enough candidates, not because there are fewer SMCs”.

GRC-SMC composition

There were 5 four-member GRCs, 6 five-member GRCs, 4 six-member GRCs and 9 SMCs in the election.

2001 general election

Legislative amendments

No legislative amendments were made for the 2001 general election.

GRC-SMC composition

There were 9 five-member GRCs, 5 six-member GRCs and 9 SMCs in the election.

2006 general election

Legislative amendments

No legislative amendments were made for the 2006 general election.

GRC-SMC composition

The composition of GRCs and SMCs remained unchanged from 2001 for the 2006 general elections.

2011 general election

Legislative amendments

No legislative amendments were made for the most recent general election in 2011.

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38 Ibid, col. 827.
GRC-SMC composition

There were 2 four-member GRCs, 11 five-member GRCs, 2 six-member GRCs and 12 SMCs in the election.\(^\text{42}\)

Notably, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong stated in 2009 that smaller GRCs were generally preferable to larger GRCs: although the latter “enable[d] stronger multi-racial teams to be formed...[and]...encourage[d] responsible and credible Opposition parties to emerge”, these advantages were outweighed by the difficulty voters had in “identify[ing] with the whole GRC or with the whole GRC team”.\(^\text{43}\)

D. GROUP REPRESENTATION CONSTITUENCIES TODAY

The GRC system remains a key element of Singapore’s electoral system. However, it has attracted considerable criticism since its inception and in particular after GE2011.

Criticisms\(^\text{44}\)

*Stifling opposition parties*

A longstanding and common accusation made against the GRC system is that it has never really been for the promotion of ethnic minorities in Parliament, and that the system’s true purpose is to stifle the progress of opposition parties.\(^\text{45}\)

To quote from then Worker’s Party NCMP Sylvia Lim’s speech in Parliament on 26 April 2010:

“Sir, at that time in 1984, there had emerged a trend of declining support for the PAP. The PAP then came up with a double whammy to secure its political power – GRCs and gerrymandering. The ruling party introduced GRCs in the 1988 GE – this was avowedly for the purpose of minority representation, despite the fact that minority candidates were still defeating Chinese candidates at the previous GEs... Sir, over the years, the PAP has itself admitted that the GRCs serve its party purposes. In 2006, Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong noted that having GRCs helped to recruit PAP candidates since, "without some assurance of a good chance of winning, at least, their first election, many able and successful young Singaporeans may not risk their careers to join politics". Minister Mentor had also commented then on the GRCs being useful training tools, since the

\(^{43}\) Parliamentary report 27-05-09
Health Minister who had been with him in Tanjong Pagar GRC from the previous GE "should be ready to lead his own GRC team" in the coming 2006 election."\(^{46}\)

Such a disadvantage occurs as GRCs imply higher electoral barriers of entry. These barriers include the numbers of candidates required, the cost of recruiting and funding the deposits and campaign costs for this increased number of candidates and the amount of ground that must be worked by parties in terms of grassroots campaigning, thus privileging the party with the largest base of members and volunteers.

In this way, the GRC system tends to favour the PAP as the only party with the resources to overcome such barriers.\(^{47}\) Tan’s observations are particularly striking in this respect: “innovations such as the GRC introduced in 1988 have spiked the number of uncontested seats from 13.6% in 1988 to 65.5% in 2001 (easing to 44% in 2006 GE). From 1991 to 2001, more than 50% of seats were uncontested”.\(^{48}\)

The fact that the GRC system acts to reduce the seat share of the Opposition is proven by the fact that the excess of PAP seat share over vote share is significantly greater among the GRCs that it is among the SMCs, a trend that somewhat changed only in GE 2011. The data from the last three GE\(s\) is provided below. This demonstrates that the GRC system tangibly generated a pro-incumbent (or, in the context of Singapore, pro-PAP) bias in the allocation of Parliamentary seats.

**Table 1: Seat share and vote share of GRCs versus SMCs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PAP Share of seats (%)</th>
<th>PAP share of votes (%)</th>
<th>Difference between seat and vote share in % points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GE2001</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All GRCs</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>77.94</td>
<td>22.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>All SMCs</td>
<td>77.78</td>
<td>65.89</td>
<td>11.89</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GE 2006</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRCs</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>61.87</td>
<td>38.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMCs</td>
<td>77.78</td>
<td>58.02</td>
<td>19.76</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GE 2011</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRCs</td>
<td>93.33</td>
<td>54.92</td>
<td>38.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMCs</td>
<td>91.67</td>
<td>54.24</td>
<td>37.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The timing of the introduction of the GRC system adds weight to theories that it was at least in part intended by the PAP as an additional lever to curb opposition representation in Parliament. This is because the PAP was struggling with vote-share as it went into the 1988 GE, with its vote share having slid by 12 percentage points in GE 1984 versus GE 1980.\(^{49}\)

Notwithstanding the prevalence of these ideas, it must be recalled that there exists an important distinction between an electoral system that provides for ethnic minority representation in Parliament and \textit{incidentally} affects opposition parties and an electoral system that is \textit{designed} to affect opposition parties. Whilst the latter is reprehensible, the former is not necessarily.\(^{50}\)

\textit{A device to reduce the risk of by-election defeats for the ruling party}

Since the 1981 Anson by-election, which saw the PAP lose to the Worker’s Party’s Mr JB Jeyaretnam, the government has been reluctant to call by-elections when seats were vacated. From 1981 to 2012 – a space of 31 years - the only by-election called was that for Marine Parade in 1992, which was a by-election voluntarily initiated by then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong.

This situation persisted until 2012 and 2013, which saw by-elections in the SMCs of Hougang and Punggol East both of whom saw their MPs vacate their posts as a result of scandals in their personal lives.

Of the four by-elections held in Singapore since 1981 and including the 1981 Anson-by-election, the ruling party lost three.\(^{51}\) In his press statement reacting to the PAP’s loss in the Punggol East by-election in January 2013, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong attributed the PAP’s loss in Punggol East to a “by-election effect.”

“In a by-election, the governing party candidate always has a tougher fight. Voters see it as choosing an MP, not choosing a government, and opposition parties encourage them to do so.”\(^{52}\)

In the event of an MP vacating their seat in a GRC, it becomes much more plausible for the government to maintain that a by-election need not be held since the duties of that MP can be “covered” by his or her colleagues on the GRC team. Post-1981, the government had also avoided by-elections when SMC MPs vacated their seat.

But this stance changed since the 2012 Hougang by-election. The 2012 and 2013 by-elections in the Hougang and Punggol East SMCs confirm a change in the stance of the government towards holding by-elections in SMCs, one that will be hard to reverse given that two precedents have been set.

\(^{49}\) In Singapore’s first-ever Parliamentary elections in 1968. In contrast, it won only 64.8% of the popular vote in 1984 – \textit{Singapore Elections}, \textit{op. cit.}.


\(^{51}\) The Elections Department \url{http://www.eld.gov.sg/elections_past_by.html}

The same is not true for GRCs, where there has never been a by-election called when a GRC seat was vacated, as the following examples make clear:

1. Dr Tay Eng Soon - Eunos GRC passed away 5 August 1993 (seat vacated for 3 years and 5 months)
2. Mr Ong Teng Cheong - Toa Payoh GRC resigned to run for president August 1993 (seat vacated for 3 years and 5 months)
3. Mr Choo Wee Khiang - Jalan Besar GRC resigned due to cheating charges December 1999 (seat vacated for 1 year 10 months)
4. Dr S.Balaji - Ang Mo Kio GRC passed away on 27 September 2010 (seat vacated for 7 months)
5. Mr Ong Chit Chung - Jurong GRC passed away on July 2008 (seat vacated for 2 years and 10 months)

It can thus be concluded that GRCs, whether by conscious design or incidental side-effect, provide a device that prevents by-elections from being held, by-elections that the PAP, by its own admission, is more likely to lose relative to a General Election. The cost is borne by constituents when GRC seats are vacated, as they are deprived of proper representation in parliament. This amounts to an additional advantage of the GRC scheme for the incumbent party. It also diminishes the representative character of Parliament.

**Demise of ‘one person one vote’**

It has been suggested that the GRC system is incompatible with the principle of ‘one person one vote’, or equality of the vote, a basic tenet of democracy enshrined in Art. 12 of the Constitution.53

The GRC system has been criticised for according less power to voters in GRCs than in SMCs: “in a GRC a single vote returns 4-6 candidates into power, compared to a vote in an SMC which returns a single representative to power. Compared to an SMC, the power of a single vote in a GRC is greatly reduced and prevents voters from ejecting an unpopular individual. This prevents the PAP from accurately assessing a mandate in a ward. It also allows for the retention of unpopular individuals, weakens the PAP mandate and disenfranchises the electorate, as well as weakens the affinity of the electorate towards the PAP”.54

**Free-Rider**

Another way of expressing this disadvantage is to couch it in terms of a free-rider system. The current GRC system allows untested candidates who might otherwise lose were they fielded in an SMC to “free-ride” into Parliament on the backs of stronger candidates with better name recognition and reputations. This erodes the representative character of Parliament and degrades the link between the voters and their MP, which would affect the degree of communication and hence interest articulation that MPs can undertake on behalf of their constituents.

It is possible to unpack this criticism into two further issues. The first is that the untested candidate does not truly receive the mandate of the electorate. As such, it is possible to question his legitimacy as an MP or member of government.

53 Tan, N. “‘Winner-Takes-All”: A Study of the Effects of Group Representative Constituencies (GRCs) in Singapore”, op. cit., p. 4. This principle is also enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

The second issue is that an untested candidate will be unable to advance the interests of his constituency in Parliament, or contribute to Parliament or government in a way that advances the national interest.

The free rider criticism came to the fore most recently in the 2011 general election: Ms. Tin Pei Ling was voted in as one of 4 MPs for Marine Parade GRC despite attracting widespread criticism during elections; her successful run has been attributed to the well-respected Mr. Goh Chok Tong’s presence in her GRC team.\(^{55}\)

In fact this facet of the GRC system, far from being a negative externality, is seen by the PAP as a positive benefit. To quote again from the Parliamentary speech by NCMP Sylvia Lim on 10 April 2006:

"In 2006, Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong noted that having GRCs helped to recruit PAP candidates since, "without some assurance of a good chance of winning, at least, their first election, many able and successful young Singaporeans may not risk their careers to join politics"."\(^{56}\)

It is noted that several past and present members of government have entered Parliament by initially being fielded in an uncontested GRC, including Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan (former Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports), Dr. Ng Eng Hen (Minister of Defence), Mr. Lim Swee Say (Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office), and Rear Admiral (NS) Lui Tuck Yew (Minister for Transport).

Not dissimilarly, Mr Wong Kan Seng, the former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs, has only contested two general elections in his nearly-20 year political career.\(^{57}\)

The GRC system may also enable the ruling party to introduce potentially less electable candidates that it favours into public office. Former Cabinet Minister Mr Mah Bow Tan was a PAP candidate who had been rejected at the polls, having lost the 1984 GE contest in Potong Pasir to Mr Chiam See Tong, but was successfully re-fielded as part of a GRC slate (in Tampines) during the 1988 GE, subsequently serving in the Cabinet,

*Entrenching ethnic voting: creating the problem it was intended to solve?*

The PAP government and other supporters of the GRC system point to it as a means through which Singapore has been able to maintain racial harmony. An alternative analysis is that the system has actually institutionalised and entrenched notions of race.\(^{58}\)

Mr. Chiam See Tong argued during the 1988 Parliamentary debates that the PAP’s rationale for introducing the GRC system did not match up with the empirical evidence, as ethnic minorities had not previously struggled to gain representation in the legislature. Indeed the PAP relied primarily on qualitative evidence, such as accounts provided by their own MPs.


\(^{56}\) Singapore Parliament Reports (Hansard), 26 Apr. 2010.


There was also many ethnic minority MPs in Parliament prior to the introduction of the GRC system, and they won in SMCs. For example:

- ethnically Indian Workers’ Party candidate, Mr. Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam, won Anson constituency against Chinese PAP candidates in both the 1981 by-election and the 1984 general election.\(^{59}\)
- an ethnic Malay PAP candidate – Mr Abdullah bin Tarmugi – also defeated an ethnic Chinese Opposition candidate – Mr Chong Tung Shang – in the SMC of Siglap during the 1988 GE, winning a decisive 73.73% of votes cast in that constituency.\(^{60}\)
- Other examples of non-Chinese MPs elected in SMCs prior to the GRC system being introduced include David Saul Marshall, Devan Nair, S. Rajaratnam, E. W. Barker and Othman Wok.

More quantitatively-based, recent research claims that “[t]he overall minority parliamentary representation was not severely imbalanced to begin with…”, and that the introduction of the GRC system has only been followed by a modest improvement in representation at best.\(^{61}\)

The Annex to this paper clearly shows that the introduction of GRCs was accompanied by a tiny drop in the ethnic minority share of seats in 1988 – from 20.25% in 1984 to 19.75% in 1988, rising slightly to 21% in 1991. There is insufficient evidence to determine if the GRC system made any significant impact on this figure. Moreover, one recent case – Michael Palmer’s victory in Punggol east in GE 2011 over Chinese Singaporean opponents – demonstrates that the electorate can vote in a minority candidate in an SMC.

However, the weakness in this analysis is that it could be argued (though this is not the position of MARUAH) that ethnic representation would have been worse without the GRC system, and that Michael Palmer’s margin of victory would have been greater in GE2011 had he been of majority ethnicity.

We note the fact that whether Singaporean voters tend to vote along ethnic lines is a question that can, in principle, be answered via opinion research. This paper calls for more research to be undertaken in this direction.

*Legislative process in relation to the GRC bill*

During the Parliamentary debates on the GRC bill in 1988, a number of PAP MPs mooted the possibility of a referendum in order to approve the GRC system. Mr. Goh Chok Tong rejected this: “[t]he purpose of going to referendum is to get a "yes" or "no" answer. Let us say we put the GRC concept…to a referendum, to be decided by the people. If the outcome is going to be a "yes", why do it? Incuring unnecessary costs just to get a "yes" for it. If the outcome is "no"…what are we telling members of the minority communities in Singapore? We are telling them that as a majority community in Singapore - because I think the Chinese will swing the votes - we do not have to make provision for the fears, the sentiments, the interests of the minority communities…So the question is, how does a referendum help you to look for a better solution? It tells you "no", it tells you "yes", to go ahead or not to go ahead. But how does it improve upon the scheme that we have? It does not".\(^{62}\) However, given the

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\(^{61}\) Tan, N. "'Winner-Takes-All': A Study of the Effects of Group Representative Constituencies (GRCs) in Singapore", *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4; Tan, N. "Institutionalized Hegemonic Party: The Resilience of the People's Action Party (PAP) in Singapore", *op. cit.*, p. 18. Other sources, such as The Online Citizen argue that ethnic minority representation in Parliament has actually decreased since the introduction of the GRC system – The Online Citizen. *GRC system: Wool Over Eyes (Part 1 of 6)*, *op. cit.*

ease with which the PAP government amended fundamentally important, constitutional laws\textsuperscript{63}, the decision not to hold a referendum is debatable at best.

The PAP response

Unsurprisingly, the PAP’s foremost defence for the continued existence of the GRC system is the need to secure ethnic minority representation in Parliament\textsuperscript{64}.

Another longstanding defence that the PAP uses is the lack of a convincing and coherent alternative to the GRC system. To be sure, PAP and opposition MPs alike have mooted other systems. However, these tend to be dismissed either as deficient or unsuited to the Singaporean context\textsuperscript{65}.

To its credit, the PAP has always maintained that the GRC system is not perfect, and in 2009 Mr. Lee Hsien Loong reviewed some of the advantages and disadvantages of GRCs in Parliament. The changes that he then suggested were implemented in the 2011 general election\textsuperscript{66}.

E. OTHER SYSTEMS ESTABLISHED TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF ETHNIC MINORITY UNDER-REPRESENTATION IN THE LEGISLATURE

The issue of ethnic minority under-representation in the legislature is not unique to Singapore. However, other countries employ different systems to address it. In this section, we review the electoral systems of the legislatures of Mauritius and New Zealand as two interesting case studies that comparably racially diverse Singapore can consider.

Mauritius

The electoral system of Mauritius’ National Assembly may roughly be described as a majority-block voting system.

Mauritius is currently split up into 21 constituencies, all of which return 3 MPs except Rodrigues, which returns only 2 MPs. (The number of votes that a voter can cast is the same as the number of MPs that are supposed to be returned by his constituency. Hence, voters in any constituency except Rodrigues can cast 3 votes; voters in Rodrigues can only cast 2. In every constituency except Rodrigues, the 3 candidates who garner the most votes are returned as MPs; in Rodrigues, the 2 candidates who garner the most votes are returned as MPs.)

Notably, the system also provides for up to 8 additional seats to be allocated so as to ensure ‘a fair and adequate representation of each community’.

\textsuperscript{63} The normal legislative process in Singapore requires that a simple majority in Parliament support a bill in order for it to be passed into law. However bills that seek to amend the Constitution, such as the GRC bills, require a ‘super-majority’ of two-thirds – Constitution of the Republic of Singapore. Since Singapore gained independence in 1965, the PAP has never held less than two-thirds of Parliament. Indeed in the 1984-1988 Parliament, which passed the GRC bills, PAP MPs held 77 out of 79 (97.5\%) seats – Parliamentary General Election Seats. Singapore Elections. Web. 5 Dec. 2012. <http://www.singapore-elections.com/parl-1984-ge/seats.html>.
\textsuperscript{64} Speech of Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, Singapore Parliament Reports (Hansard), 27 May 2009.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
The allocation process is as follows:

1. The degree of ethnic representation of Mauritius’ 4 ethnic communities in the legislature is calculated following the election (candidates must declare their ethnic community beforehand).

2. The most under-represented ethnic community gets one of the first 4 additional seats, which is allocated to the best unsuccessful candidate of that community, irrespective of party (but he must be a party candidate).

   This is repeated with the other 3 of the first 4 additional seats, each time re-calculating the most under-represented ethnic community.

3. It is ascertained how many of the first 4 seats have not been given to the biggest party (in respect of the election as a whole). The corresponding number of seats is then allocated - one by one - to candidates of that party who belong to the most under-represented ethnic community immediately prior to that allocation.

4. If, for some reason, not all of the additional seats are allocated in accordance with the above provisions then those remaining seats are allocated to those parties that have not so far got any of the additional seats.67

New Zealand

The electoral system for New Zealand’s House of Representatives is called Mixed Member Proportional representation (‘MMP’). MMP replaced a First-Past-the-Post system in 1993 following a series of referendums. A 2011 referendum confirmed that New Zealanders wished to continue with MMP.68

Normally, 120 seats are contested in the House. To determine the allocation of these seats, each voter on the general electoral roll has two votes – a “party vote” and an “electorate vote”.

The party vote determines the number of seats that each party, represented by a party list, will receive in the House. So long as the minimum thresholds are cleared, each party will be proportionally represented in the House. For example, if Party X wins 40% of the party vote, it will receive 48 seats (48 being 40% of 120).

Each party will then begin filling its received seats with MPs returned from the electorate vote. An electorate vote is cast for a candidate standing in a single-member general electoral district, the winner being the candidate with the most votes. As there are 63 single-member general electoral districts, 63 MPs are returned in this way.

Each party then calculates how many seats it has yet to fill. If a party finds that it has leftover seats, then it fills these seats with names from its party list (excluding those who have been returned by the electoral vote). In the present House, 50 MPs were returned in this way.

Notably, New Zealand’s electoral system also provides for a number of MPs to be returned from single-member *Maori* electoral districts by voters on the Maori electoral roll. 7 MPs were returned in this way to the present House, but this number can change according to the size of the Maori electoral roll. Voters on the Maori electoral roll must be of Maori ethnicity or ancestry, can only cast their electoral vote in favour of candidates in the single-member *Maori* electoral districts, and are excluded from the general electoral roll (although voters on both rolls exercise their party votes in the same way). Notably, there is no requirement for MPs of Maori electoral districts to be of Maori ethnicity or ancestry.69

It is noted that Taiwan similarly reserves a certain number of seats in the legislature for aboriginal Taiwanese.

**F. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SINGAPORE**

**Conclusion on the GRC system**

It is widely accepted that ethnic minority representation in Parliament is desirable for Singapore. However, there exists significantly less consensus on how such an objective should be achieved.

Ideally of course, Singapore would simply be able to rely on the enlightened state of the electorate in order to secure ethnic minority representation in Parliament, thereby rendering any system, safeguard or failsafe superfluous.

MARUAH has faith in the political maturity of Singaporeans in voting for candidates who can best represent them in Parliament rather than based on purely communal grounds.

Nonetheless, some form of institutional protection of minority representation in Parliament is advisable, to mitigate against a worst-case scenario.

However the method for delivering this protection should not carry an in-built assumption that Singaporeans would vote along ethnic lines and impose quotas. Rather it should provide a mechanism for redress *should they do so*. Ethnic minority MPs should be allowed to contest on their own merits in SMCs.

The current GRC system suffers from the disadvantage of assuming and perhaps perpetuating the problem it is intended to solve, while also degrading the standing of ethnic minority representatives. Interestingly, this was pre-figured by the arguments of Opposition MP Mr Chiam See Tong during the GRC amendment debate in Parliament itself, where he argued that the GRC system would perpetuate racialism in Singapore politics.

The GRC system also generates a number of other massive externalities that erode Singaporean democracy and undermine the claim of Singapore’s electoral system to represent the will of the electorate. These include:

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• throwing up barriers to entry to Opposition parties and historically helping to raise the PAP seat share from what its vote share entails, weakening Singaporean democracy and the institution of Parliament
• diluting the link between voters and their MP, eroding the ability of MPs to communicate with and articulate the interests of constituents
• allowing potentially less electable candidates to free-ride into Parliament by virtue of the PAP’s decision-making process rather than that of the electorate

The widespread disaffection with the GRC system after GE 2011, as reflected in letters to the mainstream media and online media contributions, suggest that the replacement of GRCs with something better is an idea whose time has come.

MARUAH’s alternative: the Ethnic Balancing Contingency System

It is the position of MARUAH that the GRC system should be replaced by a system that provides an ethnic fair representation failsafe without the disadvantages of GRCs. Such a system can be termed the Ethnic Balancing Contingency System or EBCS.

The basic premise of the EBCS is that the electoral system should not presume a tendency among the electorate to vote along ethnic lines, which risks creating a self-fulfilling prophecy and undermines the standing of ethnic minority MPs regardless of the actual voting behaviour of the electorate.

The EBCS only kicks in if voters elect an insufficient number of ethnic minority candidates.

The key planks of the EBCS are as follows.

1. Electoral boundaries would be redrawn to abolish GRCs and dissolve the existing GRCs into their constituent wards as SMCs. [We should note that the way GRCs currently operate is one where individual MPs attend to duties in their individual wards under the GRC umbrella in any case. This fact is sometimes overlooked in the discussion about GRCs.]
2. Every party contesting the elections would be required to ensure fair ethnic minority representation within their total slate of candidates. This would not apply to independent candidates of course.
3. After electoral results are known, the proportion of ethnic minority candidates would be calculated, based on the current classification system of allocating minority certificates.
4. If the ethnic minority representation falls below what is deemed to be fair (which MARUAH suggests be fixed at 2 percentage points below the ethnic minority proportion of the total population) the EBCS provision would be mandatorily triggered. MARUAH recommends that the ethnic threshold be set at two percentage points below the population share to allow for flexibility based on candidate availability and quality – after all the law does not have a maximum representation for ethnic minorities in Parliament, so the minimum representation should not be too rigidly pegged to the population share.
5. The EBCS provision would then mandate that the ethnic minority candidates who were the best losers would be “added” to the population of Parliamentary MPs with full voting rights. They would not be NCMPs but full MPs, albeit without being representatives of specific constituencies. There is a precedent for such a mechanism in the current NCMP and NMP system. While the NCMPs and NMPs currently do not have voting rights, they participate fully in the life of Parliament with this sole exception.
It is the view of MARUAH that the EBCS would serve the same function as the GRC system but without any of the drawbacks that have tended to undermined the legitimacy of Singapore’s electoral system, particularly after GE 2011.

The only respect in which the EBCS compares poorly with GRCs is that under the EBCS, it is possible that some ethnic minority MPs may not represent specific constituencies (see point 4 in table below). However this may not occur under the EBCS if voters do not vote along ethnic lines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Electoral system attributes</th>
<th>GRC system</th>
<th>MARUAH’s proposed EBCS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Guarantees that ethnic minority representation in Parliament does not fall below the legislated minimum</td>
<td>Fulfils this</td>
<td>Fulfils this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gives voters a chance to demonstrate that they do not vote along ethnic lines</td>
<td>Does not allow this in GRCs</td>
<td>Allows this – the “adding of MPs” provision need not be triggered at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ethnic minority MPs avoid the stigma of being in Parliament due to quotas: they have a chance to win (or lose) straight fights in SMCs</td>
<td>Does not allow for this</td>
<td>Assures this for ethnic minority MPs not elected by triggering the ECBS mechanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Possibility of some ethnic minority MPs not representing specific constituencies</td>
<td>Will not occur</td>
<td>May or may not occur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Creates barriers to entry for Opposition parties</td>
<td>Promotes this</td>
<td>Does not promote this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Weakens the link between an MP and their constituents, thus weakening the representative character and function of Parliament</td>
<td>Does this</td>
<td>Does not do this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Allows potentially less electable candidates to free ride into Parliament, undermining the public standing of Parliament</td>
<td>Does this</td>
<td>Does not do this</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is also MARUAH’s view that the EBCS provision mandating MPs to be “added” may not be triggered at all. It should be emphasized that the EBCS still mandates parties to ensure fair representation of minorities on their slate of candidates across all single constituencies, but at the same time allows minority candidates to win or lose straight fights in SMCs.

If the EBCS provision mandating that MPs be “added” is not triggered, it would be an immense boon to the standing of ethnic minority MPs, who would then be able to shed the stigma of being perceived to have entered Parliament via a quota system (GRCs) rather than on their own merits. Most importantly it will also mark how Singaporeans no longer think along racial lines, but more along the lines of the best people for the job.

The extent to which this provision is triggered could be used as a measure of the success of our efforts at ethnic integration and nation-building. Corrective measures along the lines of promoting inter-racial harmony could be undertaken by the government of the day to the extent that the “addition” of MPs is triggered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of ethnic minority MPs in Singapore Parliament</th>
<th>Total number of elected MP’s</th>
<th>% of ethnic minority MPs in Singapore’s Parliament*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>20.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988 (GRC system introduced)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>19.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>20.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>22.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>26.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>27.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>27.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*excluding NCMPs and NMPs

Source: MARUAH analysis of data from the Elections Department
http://www.eld.gov.sg/homepage.html
Annex B – Evolution of the GRC System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of GRCs</th>
<th>GRC seats in total</th>
<th>No of SMCs</th>
<th>SMC seats in total</th>
<th>Total number of seats in Parliament</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MARUAH analysis of data from the Elections Department  
http://www.eld.gov.sg/homepage.html