Chapter 5

Governance and meritocracy: a study of policy implementation in Singapore

David Seth Jones

5.1 Introduction

Over the years, Singapore’s public bureaucracy (comprising the civil service and statutory boards) has been recognized for its professionalism and integrity, and for its pivotal role in promoting the country’s socio-economic development, which has enhanced Singapore’s reputation for high standards of governance and administration.

The country has been awarded high percentile rankings for five of the World Bank’s governance indicators for 2013: government effectiveness (99.5), political stability and absence of violence/terrorism (95.7), control of corruption (96.7), regulatory quality (100) and rule of law (95.3) (World Bank 2014). These rankings are corroborated by the high global rankings (often within the first three) on other governance indicators in the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Reports, the World Bank’s Doing Business surveys and Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). Critics of Singapore have argued that such achievements have been won at the expense of individual freedom and open democracy. In fact, the only governance indicator used by the World Bank for which Singapore does...
not have a high percentile rank is voice and accountability (52.1, in 2013), due in part to controls over the press and broadcast media (World Bank 2014). However, this indicator has not taken into account the complexity and shifting nature of Singapore’s political culture in recent years.

This chapter is in two parts. The first part examines policy implementation in Singapore as a key factor in its achievement of a high standard of governance. It focuses on the essential features of policy implementation in Singapore by adopting the framework developed by Van Meter and Van Horn (1975: 462–74). To facilitate the understanding of policy implementation in Singapore, this part analyses the policy context, the profile of the public bureaucracy, the main characteristics of policy formulation, and provides three policy recommendations to address its limitations. The second part of the chapter deals with the implementation of these two ASEAN policies by the public bureaucracy in Singapore: the ASEAN Cosmetic Directive (ACD) of 2003 and the ASEAN Declaration on Transnational Crime of 1997, administered by the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) and the Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC).

5.2 Policy context

This section describes the context which influences how policy is implemented in Singapore by identifying important aspects of its geography, history, society, economy, public finances and the political and legal system.
5.2.1 Geographical and historical context

Singapore is a city state comprising a small island with a land area of 718.3 sq. km (including over 123 sq. km of land reclaimed from the sea). It occupies a strategic position between Peninsular Malaysia and Indonesia at the southern tip of mainland Southeast Asia but is lacking in natural resources except for deep water and sheltered harbours and anchorages. Singapore’s history is marked by its British colonial past, and influxes of immigrants from China, India, Ceylon, Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. Other important historical occurrences were the Japanese Occupation during 1942–1945, the fight against communism in the 1950s and early 1960s, the granting of self-government in June 1959 and separation from Malaysia in August 1965 (Abshire 2011: 57–158).

The geographical features and historical experiences of Singapore have in a number of ways influenced how it is governed. Its smallness, lack of natural resources and the Japanese Occupation have fostered among the political leaders a sense of vulnerability and a long-held belief that nothing can be taken for granted with respect to safeguarding its prosperity and security. The country’s smallness and lack of natural resources have also made the political leaders aware of the need to build the country’s human capital through education and meritocracy as the essential path to prosperity and stability. The upshot has been the creation of strong institutional capacity within the public bureaucracy, and a clear commitment to innovation and reform to meet the ever-changing economic and social needs of the country.
5.2.2 Demographic and social context

The population of Singapore has grown from just over 3 million in 1990 to 5.4 million in June 2013 (Department of Statistics 2014: 23). This has been achieved despite the decreasing rate of marriage and a declining birth rate, which dropped to 1.19 births per woman in 2013 (one of the lowest in the world) (Department of Statistics 2014: 10, 28). Much of the expansion of the population has been due to the influx of large numbers of foreigners who have taken jobs in business and the professions. The population is multi-ethnic, with a large Chinese majority and the remainder mainly being Malays and Indians (see Table 5.1). It is also a religiously diverse population comprising to varying degrees Buddhists, Taoists, Hindus, Muslims and Christians, as well those professing no religious belief (see Table 5.2). This has further reinforced the commitment to meritocracy, discussed below, which does not accord privileges to any one ethnic or religious group.

Table 5.1 Composition of the Singapore population by ethnic group, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The economy is characterized by strong real GDP growth rates which averaged 6.04 per cent per year between 2005 and 2013 and is categorized as high income, with a GDP per capita of US$54,776 in 2013 (Schwab 2014: 402). The economy is strongly export-oriented and is mainly based on high-value-added products and services such as advanced technology and professional, business and technical services (Ghesquiere 2007: 152–3; Economic Development Board 2012). Reflecting the trends in the economy, the composition of the workforce has changed over the last ten years with a greater proportion classified as senior white collar and a declining proportion as blue collar (see Table 5.3). With increased prosperity, income inequality has widened. The Gini coefficient has risen from just over 0.43 in 2000 to 0.45 in 2010, and the ratio of average income in the top quintile of employed households to that in the lowest quintile has
increased from 10.1 to 12.9 in the same period (Bhaskaran et al. 2012: 4–5). These measures of income inequality are higher than those of other states in Southeast Asia, except Malaysia (Asian Development Bank 2014: 153).

Further contributing to Singapore’s economic development has been a conservative fiscal policy in which government spending has normally remained below 15 per cent of GDP (in fiscal year 2013/14 it was 14.2 per cent of GDP) and fiscal surpluses have been regularly achieved (Ghesquiere 2007: 51–8; Ministry of Finance 2010a: 28; 2014: 1; Asian Development Bank 2014: 283). Regular fiscal surpluses have contributed to the accumulation of substantial foreign reserves, amounting to US$346.5 billion in June 2014 (Monetary Authority of Singapore 2014). Strong revenue flows have also enabled the government to allocate the necessary human and financial resources to the public bureaucracy for effective policy implementation.

Table 5.3 Composition of the Singapore population by occupational group, 2001 and 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational group</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(percentage of workforce)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior white collar</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior white collar</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled blue collar</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled and semi-skilled blue collar</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.4 Political and legal context

The system of government in Singapore is based on the Westminster parliamentary model but with the Elected President as Head of State, instead of being purely titular, exercising limited executive powers. The President, in his personal discretion, may veto the spending of reserves which the government of the day did not accumulate, and must approve key public service appointments, namely the Chief Justice, the Attorney-General, the chairman and members of the Public Service Commission, the Chief of the Defence Force, and the Commissioner of Police. The President may also exercise oversight to a limited extent over the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau and the government’s use of the Internal Security Act and the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act.

The executive itself consists of a cabinet of eighteen Ministers assisted by Junior Ministers (Senior Ministers of State and Ministers of State) and Parliamentary Secretaries, collectively responsible to a ninety-nine-member unicameral parliament. Apart from the eighty-seven elected MPs, there are two other types of MPs. First, there are the Non-elected Constituency MPs (NCMPs), who are designed to ensure representation of a minimum number of opposition MPs in Parliament. Their number is nine minus the number of opposition MPs elected and they are drawn from those who have secured the highest percentage of the votes cast for defeated opposition candidates. The second type of MP is the Nominated MP (NMP), designed to reflect an independent and non-partisan view in Parliament. There may be up to nine NMPs who are chosen by a Special Select Committee of
Parliament from names submitted by the public. They must be individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to Singapore or have a distinguished record within their field. There are currently a maximum of nine NMPs. Singapore’s Parliament and politics in general are dominated by the People’s Action Party (PAP) which has held power since June 1959.

The criteria of appointment to the cabinet are stringent. Those appointed are often talent spotted through informal feedback with major consideration given to professional achievement and high academic attainment. Of the eighteen members of the present cabinet, three have a successful background in the corporate sector, four in the military, seven in the bureaucracy (mainly statutory boards, including the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS)), three in the professions and one in academia. In nearly all cases, they had reached a senior management level or had made a noticeable impact within their profession (Government of Singapore 2012). Prior to their career, they attended highly reputable universities, in many cases up to postgraduate level.

The stringent criteria governing full ministerial appointments are also reflected in the small number of Junior Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries who enter the cabinet. Of the fifty-nine MPs who were appointed as Junior Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries between 1990 and 2010, only sixteen advanced to a full ministerial position by 2011 (this occurred within a short period of one to five years of their initial appointment) (Ministry of Communications and Information 1990; Ministry of Information and the Arts 1991–2001; Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts
The emphasis on talent in cabinet appointments points to a political leadership culture in Singapore which is strongly rooted in the principle of meritocracy as measured by academic and career success, and parallels the meritocracy in government administration as discussed below. The extended system of meritocracy to include the political leadership was described by Vogel as ‘macho-meritocracy’ (1989: 1052–4).

The legal system in Singapore combines common law and parliamentary statutory law. Common law principles may be applied to contract, trust and equity, property and tort law, which are largely judge-made with precedents drawn from cases both in the Singapore courts and in the courts in England and other common law jurisdictions. However, over time these areas of law have also been modified by statutes of the Singapore parliament. Nearly all criminal, company and family law is derived from parliamentary statutes (Bell 1999: 1–5).

Although lacking specialist administrative courts, Singapore has a clearly defined system of administrative law. Ministers, civil servants and public agencies are required to act fairly, reasonably and in accordance with the law. If their actions do not meet such criteria, they can be invalidated and declared unlawful through judicial review, especially in cases of ultra vires and procedural impropriety (Thio 1999: 160–7). In addition, under Singapore’s system of administrative law, a great deal of the responsibilities and powers of public agencies have been stipulated in lower-level instruments governing implementation, such as statutory orders, regulations, guidelines, manuals and circulars, which are discussed below. For
example, the procurement responsibilities and powers of public agencies are enshrined in detail in the *Instruction Manual* 3, rather than in the Government Procurement Act, which contains only a broad and brief set of provisions.

### 5.3 Profile of the public bureaucracy

The public bureaucracy consists mainly of the civil service and statutory boards. It does not include government-linked companies and such institutions of public character as universities and community grassroots organizations.

#### 5.3.1 Personnel of the civil service

The Singapore civil service consists of sixteen ministries employing, currently, 81,508 officers (including a small number employed in organs of state), compared with 61,032 in 2001 (an increase of over 33 per cent). This total is supplemented by a further 57,212 employees working in sixty-six statutory boards, with the overall public payroll standing at 138,720 in 2013 (Department of Statistics 2014: 63). The personnel of the civil service are differentiated on the basis of four hierarchical divisions, ranging from Division I at the top to Division IV. Which division a civil servant belongs to depends upon his/her educational qualifications and the nature and level of the responsibility undertaken. Division I officers are graduates involved in management, professional or specialist work. This Division also includes officers in the Administrative Service. Division II includes executive and supervisory grades with a minimum qualification of A levels
or a diploma, while Division III consists of clerical, technical and other support grades, with a minimum qualification of GCE O levels. Division IV employees are mainly those who perform manual and routine work (PWC Consulting 2002: vi).

Table 5.4 shows a large increase in Division I officers in absolute and proportionate terms over the last twelve years (they now comprise 57 per cent of all personnel) and an equally large decrease in Division III officers. These shifts are perhaps a response to the changing nature of public administration in Singapore as a result of the expansion of the range of specialist and professional roles to meet the increasingly complex demands of modern policy-making and policy implementation. The decrease in the size of Division III and Division IV may be attributed to the reduced need for straightforward administrative and routine work as a result of automation, use of IT and the streamlining of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage of total workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>24,765</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>18,227</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>13,772</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>4,268</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>61,032</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

bureaucratic processes, as well as the outsourcing of certain routine functions to the private sector.

5.3.2 The Management Associates Programme and the Administrative Service

The Administrative Service is the elite service within the Singapore civil service. Although its numbers are small (277 officers in December 2010), it exerts a crucial influence upon the formulation and implementation of policy throughout the different ministries and statutory boards. As such, it dominates the senior positions in the civil service and enjoys an exclusive monopoly of the two highest positions, namely Permanent Secretary and Deputy Secretary. Administrative Officers are, as well, seconded to senior positions in statutory boards. Those below the rank of Permanent and Deputy Secretary also occupy important policy-making positions (Jones 2002a: 72–3; Public Service Division 2008: 19).

Entry to the Administrative Service is via a special scheme known as the Management Associates Programme (MAP) introduced in 2002. Those who wish to enter the Service, including scholarship holders, initially apply to join the MAP (they do not apply for a particular advertised position) and are subject to a rigorous selection process (Singapore Administrative Service 2012; Public Service Commission 2002: 1–2; Chan 2009). The majority of those joining the MAP enter directly from a prestigious university and have a strong academic record, many of them holders of government scholarships. In 2010, 52 out of 69 appointees were direct entrants. A small number of entrants are in-service
appointees who are nominated by their own ministry (11 in 2010) or recruited from outside the civil service by means of an open advertisement (6 in 2010) (Ong 2011: 1).

Under the MAP, appointees work for two years in a ministry of their choosing, and then work for a further one to two years in other ministries. During and at the end of this period, MAP appointees are carefully assessed, and those who have demonstrated the highest levels of all-round ability are appointed to the Administrative Service. Academic record is still an important criterion of recruitment, but the MAP ensures that proven work ability in different settings is given equal consideration. About a third to half of MAP officers are selected to join the Administrative Service; the others in the MAP are deployed in one of the professional services (Public Service Division 2008: 19; 2009: 23; Chan 2009).

The salaries and bonus packages for the fourteen grades of the Administrative Service are substantial and comparable with those for a commensurate position in the private sector (Singapore Parliament 2007a: cols. 53–136; 2007b: cols. 396–494; Quah 2010: 104–16). Promotion and salary increments depend on a rigorous assessment of Administrative Officers’ policy-making, management and leadership skills within the annual appraisal. In addition, they are ranked within a cohort of peers, and given a current estimated potential (CEP) score, which is a measure of career potential in terms of the most senior position an Administrative Officer is expected to reach. The CEP score can be reviewed especially at key milestone points on the Officer’s career path (Jones 2002a: 81–2; Quah 2010: 79–82; Saxena 2011: 60; Singapore Parliament 2007a: cols. 53–136). An Administrative Officer
who demonstrates significant ability moves up the ladder quickly, and may expect to become Deputy Secretary within seven years of entering the service. For the most effective performers, promotion to Permanent Secretary will occur after a further five to seven years (usually by the age of 40) (Jones 2002a: 80–1; Saxena 2011: 59–60). However, under the so-called ‘flow-through’ arrangement, Deputy Secretaries and Permanent Secretaries can only enjoy tenure for ten years. This is designed to facilitate rapid promotion of able younger officers (Jones 2002a: 81; Saxena 2011: 60). The prospects of rapid promotion together with the high salaries and bonuses are designed to prevent an outflow of the most able officers to the private sector, and to provide incentives for high level performance. Such an outflow has been a persistent problem over the years (Jones 2002a: 76–7; Singapore Parliament 2007a: cols. 53–136; Quah 2010: 104–22).

During their careers, Administrative Officers are frequently rotated, moving from one ministry to another to gain wide experience of government administration. During the first five years, they may be rotated through three or more ministries (Public Service Division 2008: 34). Given the nature of their work, they are normally concentrated in the headquarters and in the policy planning units of ministries. In addition, at any one time, 15 per cent of Administrative Officers are seconded to positions in statutory boards, the corporate sector, National Trades Union Congress, overseas organizations and the increasingly important third sector (community and grassroots organizations) (Jones 2002a: 73–4; Public Service Division 2008: 34; 2009: 23; Ong 2011: 2–3).
5.3.3 Professional and non-graduate schemes of service

Division I of the civil service also includes eight professional schemes of service in addition to the Administrative Service, which are linked to specialist areas (with the exception of the Management Executive Scheme, which is a generalist scheme). The officers in the professional schemes often work alongside Administrative Officers, providing necessary input into policy-making and implementation and day-to-day management, which require professional and specialist knowledge. Some of these officers previously worked in the MAP, and although failing to meet the requirements of the Administrative Service they were still considered able to work in a professional and specialist service. Other professional officers are recruited directly from the university or private sector. During their career they are also subject to rigorous appraisal including CEP ratings (Singapore Parliament 2007b: cols. 396–494; Public Service Division 2008: 34).

Many non-graduates are hired under the Management Support Scheme, and quite a number have progressed to levels of responsibility and remuneration previously reserved for professional graduate officers. From October 2014, non-graduates are able to earn faster promotion, and plans are afoot to merge some of the graduate and non-graduate schemes. This will enable performance and potential together with in-service practical training (as opposed to paper qualifications) to have greater weight in determining upward progression for graduate and non-graduate officers alike. Like the MAP, this is further testimony to a shift to a
more flexible and performance-based meritocratic system (Public Service Division 2014).

5.3.4 Statutory boards

The public bureaucracy also consists of sixty-six statutory boards, which are established by special Acts of Parliament, and are governed by a board of directors. Statutory boards are separate from the civil service as their employees are not civil servants, and each board, as a corporation, has its own legal personality separate from that of the government. Moreover, in their day-to-day work they enjoy operational autonomy (Sin 1990: 52–3; Worthington 2003: 45; Quah 2010: 41–3, 46–8).

Nonetheless, statutory boards are subject to government control and adhere to government policy. Each is affiliated to a parent ministry and comes under the authority of the responsible minister for that ministry, who makes key policy decisions affecting the board and exercises ultimate executive control (Sin 1990: 52; Worthington 2003: 44–6, 70, 172). Members of the board are appointed by the government, some being Ministers and senior civil servants. In addition, top management positions may be held by Administrative Officers seconded from the civil service (Jones 2002a: 73–5; 2006: 260; Quah 2010: 42). The areas of public administration in which statutory boards figure most prominently are specialist and professional services, requiring management autonomy and technical expertise not normally found in the civil service itself (Sin 1990: 52; Vennewald 1994: 18; Quah 2010: 46–58). Statutory boards may set up subsidiary
companies to undertake some of the programmes within their remit (Jones 2006: 261–2, 270–4).

Statutory boards derive their income from several sources to meet their operating and capital expenditure. In the case of operating expenditure, revenue may be generated from fees and charges for the services they provide. Where these cannot meet operating expenditure, income is supplemented by a grant-in-aid from the parent ministry (Jones 2006: 262). In meeting capital expenditure, statutory boards rely on capital grants from the parent ministry (now recognized as equity issued to Minister for Finance Inc.) and loans from either the parent ministry or the market through the issue of bonds (262–70).

5.3.5 Commitment to meritocracy

From the early days after self-government until the present, the PAP government has strongly asserted the importance of meritocracy and professional competence in the civil service, in which top positions are awarded only to the ‘brightest and best’. This dovetails with meritocracy in the government itself, as mentioned above. Under the meritocracy of the civil service and statutory boards, the Division or scheme of service a civil servant enters is closely linked to his/her academic qualifications, with subsequent promotion depending on proven work performance, as measured by a rigorous appraisal system and CEP assessment. The commitment to meritocracy has resulted in an unwillingness to engage in affirmative discrimination in favour of ethnicity or gender (Jones 2002a: 72–3, 75, 81–2).
5.4 Policy formulation

5.4.1 The civil service’s role in policy formulation

The senior civil service, most notably at the higher levels of the Administrative Service, plays a key role in policy formulation. However, the precise details of their responsibilities and how much discretion they exercise are not easy to pin down. Ho (2003: 263–5, 279–81) has emphasized the traditionally subordinate and instrumental role of the civil service over the years, largely concerned with matters of policy implementation, with most policy decisions left to Cabinet Ministers and Junior Ministers. This to some extent is true. The Singapore civil service has never emulated the independent policy-making and veto powers of the Japanese senior bureaucracy; nor those of the Grands Corps in France and senior officials in the European Commission. Furthermore, policy-making is rarely constrained by entrenched policy positions within a ministry or department as has happened occasionally in the United Kingdom. The replacement of Permanent Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries every few years, and the frequent rotation of Administrative Officers may prevent them from solidifying a policy position in any one ministry or policy area.

Nonetheless, as policy-making has become more technically complex and specialized in many areas (e.g., financial and corporate regulation, support services for niche businesses, taxation policy, maritime and port services, and integration of land transport), invariably the senior civil service has assumed a greater responsibility in drafting policy papers and undertaking policy analysis. Their policy role includes anticipating and alerting Ministers to impending
and future problems and opportunities. This was emphasized by Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean in an ‘Addendum to the President’s Address’ in 2011 (Prime Minister’s Office 2011: 1). A further requirement is to gather and analyse complex information, and provide detailed policy options, including the financial costs of each option. Senior civil servants have been encouraged by government leaders to be innovative and so identify new and untried options, as well as those which can be transferred from other countries. It is also necessary for them to advise Ministers on whether a policy measure is workable, based on a careful assessment of the likelihood of achieving the expected outcomes, and avoiding unintended adverse consequences. In doing this, the senior civil servants may play an important role in evaluating policy proposals submitted by independent policy review committees, and also feedback provided by relevant organizations, individuals and the public at large in public consultations, which will be discussed below. Such analytical and advisory work in policy-making allows top civil servants a degree of influence in shaping policy measures. The influence is more pronounced if the policy is largely shaped by the information gathered, in contrast with a policy shaped by the core values of the government and ruling party.

Of course, Cabinet Ministers and Junior Ministers decide policy strategy, create the policy agenda, determine if a problem needs to be addressed and at what level, make the decision on any significant change in policy direction, and have the final say on the recommendations submitted by the civil servants. It is noticeable how Ministers when speaking in Parliament emphasize how closely they work with their top
civil servants, seeing them as partners in the policy team (Ho 2003: 263–5, 276–81).

5.4.2 Approaches to policy formulation

The approach to policy formulation by the government and senior civil service in Singapore has been described as essentially pragmatic, entailing a willingness to introduce new policies or modify existing ones as circumstances dictate, regardless of ideological principle. For example, the expansionary budgets introduced in 2008 and 2009 resulted in a rise in public spending and a shrinking of the budget surplus to mitigate the impact of the global recession. Such budgets represented a modest departure from the principles of fiscal conservatism to which the government was strongly committed (Ghesquiere 2007: 86–91; Das 2010: 75–86, 89–95; Asian Development Bank 2012: 268).

Within this pragmatic approach, policy responses to problems have in some cases been proactive and in others reactive. Government leaders in Singapore have occasionally stressed the need to anticipate problems and proactively formulate policy in response. This has been reflected in the creation of a special office in the Public Service Division called the Centre for Strategic Futures, set up in 2009, whose job is, in the words of the Deputy Prime Minister, to conduct ‘research on emerging risks and opportunities’ and help ‘the Public Service think long-term and strategically’ (Prime Minister’s Office 2011: 1; Public Service Division 2012). For example, measures were introduced between 2002 and 2008 to reduce the amount that can be withdrawn
for house purchases from Central Provident Fund (CPF) accounts, to forestall the anticipated shortfall of CPF savings that can be used for retirement. This was seen as a serious problem that was likely to arise in the near future (Jones 2005a: 86–9).

In other cases, the policy response has been reactive, addressing a problem that has existed for some time and is well recognized. The new legislation to improve occupational safety and health (the Workplace Safety and Health Act introduced in 2006) was a response to a poor work safety record over a number of years in certain sectors. Another reactive response were the adjustments to the Ministry of Education’s policy in the teaching of the mother tongue, which began in the late 1990s, with the most recent arising from the recommendations of the report of the 2010 Mother Tongue Language Review Committee (MTLRC) (Mother Tongue Language Review Committee 2011: 14–25, 73–6; Lee 2012: 183–201). The adjustments were intended to facilitate the learning of the mother tongue (especially Mandarin) for students who struggled to acquire the necessary proficiency. Many were Chinese students from largely English-speaking households, who had difficulty learning Mandarin. This had been a problem for quite a number of years. Lee Kuan Yew in an interview in 2009 spoke of recent improvements in teaching Mandarin in the schools as becoming ‘wise after the event’ (Han et al. 2011: 251). The promotion of the mother tongue language has been a bedrock policy of the Singapore government. Perhaps the delay in tackling the problem was a natural caution in modifying such a policy despite a normally pragmatic approach to policy-making.
Policy formulation in Singapore is also characterized by public consultation. This has gradually evolved since the establishment of the Feedback Unit in 1985 and further encouraged by Goh Chok Tong after he became Prime Minister in 1990 (Quah 2010: 208, 228). The Feedback Unit was superseded by the REACH (Reaching Everyone for Active Citizenry @ Home) scheme. Through its web portal, consultations are regularly undertaken on a wide range of policy issues and the feedback given provides an important input into the making of policy. Such consultations are supplemented by open-ended feedback from the general public on issues of concern, through online discussion forums, blogs and e-polls conducted under the REACH web portal. The number of feedback inputs submitted has increased significantly since REACH was set up (see Table 5.5). A discernible rise was recorded after the 2011 general election, with the monthly number of inputs averaging 260 after the election (June–November 2011) compared with 153 before it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Percentage increase</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>9,400</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>26,900</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>52,000</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: REACH 2011.
(January–May 2011) (REACH 2011). The consultative approach is further reflected in the regular use of independent review committees to evaluate a policy, which gather evidence from a wide range of stakeholders and submit recommendations to the government.

5.5 Policy implementation

5.5.1 Size and competence of staff in implementing agencies

A high proportion of the 138,720 employees working in ministries and statutory boards are involved in different aspects of policy implementation such as operational management and supervision, technical support, service delivery, enforcement, counter services and day-to-day administration. The various schemes involved in these aspects of policy implementation comprise over 70 per cent of the workforce.

The emphasis on meritocracy in Singapore’s public bureaucracy, as mentioned above, has resulted in a high level of competence of staff involved in policy implementation. This has been achieved by requiring staff to undergo 100 hours of professional training and skills upgrading per year. The importance of training is reflected as well in the range and frequency of courses offered by the Civil Service College and other training institutions in Singapore that deal with policy implementation issues, and the size of the enrolments for these courses (Public Service Division 2008: 20, 25). The high level of competence is reflected too in the number of positions involving policy implementation functions which require
academic and professional qualifications. Advertisements for such positions often specify that applicants must have a university degree or professional diploma.

5.5.2 Levels of implementation

The implementation process may be divided into two levels. The first level is the amplification of the operational details of a policy providing the all-important interpretations and minutiae. These may be included in statutory orders and regulations, and, at a more detailed level, in the guidelines, manuals and circulars issued by ministries. For example, the competition policy is based on the Competition Act and is implemented by the Competition Commission of Singapore (CCS) through two statutory orders, six sets of regulations and thirteen sets of guidelines, some of which include a lengthy list of provisions. The guidelines ‘indicate the manner in which the CCS will interpret and give effect to the provisions of the Act’ and how it ‘will apply and enforce the prohibitions against anti-competitive activities under the Act’ (Competition Commission of Singapore 2007).

The second level of implementation entails day-to-day operations. This involves dealing with the public by providing services, processing claims and applications, deciding entitlements, issuing notifications, conducting surveillance, inspections and scientific tests, resolving what if any enforcement action is necessary and responding to complaints and receiving feedback. This is undertaken by a large pool of counter-officers, technicians, inspectors, enforcement officers and other street-level officials, together with their
supervisors. In addition, much daily operational work is also required in tax administration, land administration, tender management and infrastructure projects.

5.5.3 Networks of cooperation and communication

Policy implementation in Singapore, as well as policy formulation, has been characterized by cooperation between different agencies. This is reflected in the use of inter-ministerial and inter-agency committees and working groups to examine policy and operational issues and to make recommendations (Public Service Division 2008: 17). The membership of such committees and working groups comprises Ministers and senior and mid-level officials drawn from different agencies, who work together in gathering and analysing evidence, and submitting proposals. Involving different agencies in such an exercise has its benefits especially when the issue is multifaceted and spans different policy areas. In such cases, sharing of expertise and knowledge, and the articulation of different perspectives, increases the chances of reaching balanced and workable decisions on how best to implement a policy. Recent examples of such cooperation include the inter-ministerial committees on construction safety, sustainable development, climate change, terrorism and the ageing of the population.

Such cooperation has been given added importance with the recent adoption of the ‘whole-of-government’ or ‘networked government’ approach. According to the Singapore Public Sector Outcomes Review, this approach emphasizes the need to ‘transcend Ministry boundaries’, and for public agencies
to work hand in glove to address any given issue effectively’. In doing this, ‘agencies have agreed on a set of common outcomes, with which their priorities have been aligned’ (Ministry of Finance 2010a: 1; S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies 2008: 1–3, 5, 10). Thus there has been an explicit commitment under the ‘whole-of-government’ approach to adopting a holistic view of many complex issues which transcend different policy areas, forging inter-agency cooperation in dealing with such issues, and, where agency functions are related or overlap, developing common outcome indicators.

In addition, policy implementation has involved communication with the public and external organizations through public consultations based on the REACH portal, referred to above. The consultation often covers rules and guidelines governing implementation and everyday operations. A recent example in 2014 is the consultation of food importers and manufacturers on the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority’s (AVA) draft proposals to amend Food Regulations. These concern new additives in food, and also safe mercury levels in fish, intended ‘to provide greater transparency to the (food) industry on Singapore’s requirements’ (Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore 2014).

Likewise, consultations undertaken by the independent committees of inquiry concern ways to improve implementation through practical guidelines, and everyday enforcement and service delivery. For example, the recent Censorship Review Committee report recommended the fine tuning of film and video classification and the issue of artistic performance licences (Censorship Review Committee 2010: iv, vi, viii, 8, 23).
However, occasionally communication between the public and government agencies has been undermined when the matter concerned several agencies, resulting in uncertainty about which agency was primarily responsible. This typically arose on issues relating to the upkeep and maintenance of communal living areas such as roads and footpaths, drains and other public facilities. The Singapore government established in October 2014 the Municipal Services Office in the Ministry of National Development (MND) to deal with feedback on such matters and to identify the lead agency or to coordinate the response of different agencies. This also fits into the whole-of-government approach to policy implementation (Ministry of National Development 2014; Sim 2014; Yap 2014).

5.5.4 Decentralization and hierarchical control

A significant degree of responsibility for policy implementation has been delegated to statutory boards resulting in their increase from thirty-seven to sixty-six statutory boards from 1989 to 2014. Statutory boards implement the bulk of regulations and also administer a wide range of support services to businesses and the public, including the provision of loans, grants and subsidies. In fact, when such schemes are announced in the budget, the Minister for Finance often will state that the operational details will be drafted by the relevant statutory board. For example, SPRING Singapore, the statutory board with responsibility for enterprise development, developed and publicized operational details for the Angel Investor Scheme announced in the 2010 budget. Under this
scheme, wealthy and experienced business leaders were given major tax incentives to sink their personal capital into accredited start-up companies (Ministry of Finance 2010b: 39–40).

Decentralization has also been achieved through the outsourcing of certain services. Service standards are set by the relevant ministry or statutory board and an independent provider is chosen usually through a competitive tender to undertake management and delivery of the service. Within the terms of the contract, the provider has scope to determine how best this can be done. To illustrate, the training programmes in occupational safety and health, which were previously conducted by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), have been outsourced to independent institutions, the major ones being PSB Academy and various polytechnics (Ministry of Manpower 2012).

The exercise of policy implementation responsibilities by statutory boards and independent providers reflects a decentralized system of implementation, in which it is more clearly separated from policy formulation and centralized hierarchical control by the senior management of ministries. This has been the result of the amount of operational decisions in many areas now requiring specialist and professional expertise, which involves greater operational autonomy. Within a statutory board, top level managers, operational managers and their front-line service staff can more readily enjoy such autonomy (Jones 2006: 261).

In other respects the decentralized system is evident. One is the delegation of budget allocations to ministries under the Block Vote Budget Allocation System (BVBAS). In addition, many recruitment and promotional functions have been
transferred from the Public Service Commission (PSC) to Personnel Boards in ministries (the main exceptions being the recruitment of Administrative Officers, and their promotion to Grade 7 or above, which are still the responsibility of the PSC). Of further note is the decentralization of tender management in procurement to ministries and statutory boards (Jones 1998a: 286–7; 2002b: 45–50; Quah 2010: 82–8).

However, within statutory boards and civil service departments that undertake implementation, street level officials dealing with the public and external organizations on a daily basis are often allowed to influence how services should be delivered and laws enforced within specific situations where a professional judgement is necessary. While they are subject to controls within the local hierarchy, such officials are able to use discretion when situations so require or when special cases arise. For example, occupational safety, food safety and environmental health officers may issue warnings at their own discretion rather than summonses if minor offences occur or extenuating circumstances prevail (Jones 1998b: 31–42; 2001a: 192–8).

5.5.5 Policy standards and objectives

Standards and objectives have been set in policy implementation through the introduction of performance measurement. Consequently, the statutory boards or operational departments in ministries, which are the implementing agencies, systematically evaluate their performance through the use of key performance indicators and targets. This has been undertaken for the last fifteen years or so, beginning with the Budgeting For Results
(BFR) initiative implemented in 1996. The BFR sought to link, wherever possible, budget allocations to ministries to the measurement of performance (Jones 2001b: 494–506; 2004: 194–6; Quah 2010: 141). In most cases, performance data are provided in a section of a ministry or statutory board’s website or in its annual report. From a study by the author of five agencies (the Singapore Prison Service, the AVA, the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, the Occupational Health & Safety Division of MOM and the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA)), the indicators adopted measured output in terms of both the amount of work done and the standard of service provided, and also the outcomes of the policy which reveal whether its ultimate goals are being achieved.

The study showed that the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) mainly focuses upon outcomes relating to prisoners becoming well adjusted, law abiding and useful members of society after release. The SPS measures these outcomes by such indicators as recidivism rates for each annual cohort of prisoners released, employability rates (number of prisoners who found a job prior to release), number of prisoners given employment training during their term in prison and percentage of prisoners who completed community-based programmes such as work release programmes, and halfway house and home detention schemes (Singapore Prison Service 2012: 88–92).

The AVA includes all three types of indicators, namely outputs, service standards and outcomes, to measure its performance. For example, in its Veterinary Public Health and Food Safety Programme, it has adopted two outcome indicators concerned with food security and food safety,
namely the total number of cases of food-borne illnesses per 100,000 population and the number of key food items of which less than 50 per cent of the supply is obtained from a single country. Alongside these were five output indicators, including the total of food samples tested and the number of laboratory tests conducted, and three indicators to assess service standards, all of which measured timeliness (an example being the proportion of applications for a food licence processed within seven days) (Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore 2011: 86–7). Performance measurement is designed to provide sectional managers, senior officials, government leaders and members of the public with a precise disclosure of how well an agency is implementing its policies and delivering its services, and what improvements are necessary.

However, the study of the five agencies shows that performance measurement has not been comprehensively developed and provides an uncertain basis to evaluate agency performance. The main limitation has been the limited criteria by which performance scores can be assessed. All the agencies relied on comparison with performance in previous years. Only one, the AVA, adopted target-setting, although this is widely recognized as an important means to assess performance based on how far the target was achieved or not. Even then, most of the AVA’s targets were regularly met, and, in some cases, easily exceeded. This was compounded by the absence of any upward adjustment of targets in the AVA in response to regularly meeting or exceeding them (Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore 2011: 86–7).
A further limitation in the assessment of performance scores was the lack in all five agencies of benchmarking against the performance of similar agencies in other jurisdictions with which relevant comparisons can be made (such as some of the developed states of East Asia). There was no system of rating performance scores using a rating scale (usually a five- or three-point scale), often linked either to target achievement or to comparisons of performance through benchmarking. A rating scale readily identifies weak performance (below expectations), average performance (meets expectations) and good performance (exceeds expectations). Benchmarking and ratings may of course be developed in the future as greater importance is attached to performance measurement as a tool of agency evaluation.

5.5.6Disposition of implementers

Achieving intended policy outcomes may rest in part on the disposition of the implementers towards the policy itself and towards the public and groups to whom the policy applies. By and large, policy implementers in Singapore have interpreted and applied policy in a way consistent with policy objectives. This applies to the interpretation of the policy when translated into more detailed and specific requirements through statutory orders, regulations, guidelines, manuals and circulars. Consistency is also reflected in the application of the policy in everyday operations, although, as mentioned above, discretion is permitted when professional judgement is called for or special cases arise. There is little evidence of policy implementers holding values contrary to the policies they
administer and seeking to frustrate the achievement of the intended outcomes. Consequently, corruption is not a serious problem in Singapore.

The disposition of policy implementers towards the public at large and to the individuals and organizations they deal with, has been marked in recent years by a greater emphasis given to customer service. To foster better quality customer service, the Service Improvement Unit (SIU) was set up in April 1991, which drew upon feedback from the general public. The objective of better customer service was incorporated into PS21 (Public Service for the 21st Century), introduced in May 1995, which mapped out the vision and future direction for the Singapore public service (Haque 2009: 255–6; Quah 2010: 147–9; Saxena 2011: 88–94). Several steps have been taken to enhance customer service under the guidance of the SIU and the Service Quality Committee of PS21. One is to improve transparency by providing a greater range of information and guidance to members of the public about regulations, schemes and entitlements. Another is to trim red tape and paperwork with respect to the submission and processing of requests, applications and claims, an example being the now streamlined procedures in applications to purchase a Housing and Development Board (HDB) apartment (Housing and Development Board 2012). An additional benefit is to reduce the time taken in processing such applications and claims, often used as an indicator to assess agency performance, as discussed above. To achieve greater customer orientation, emphasis has been given under the guidance of the SIU to training and incentivizing counter staff so that they are amenable to the public, provide relevant advice and
display a generally courteous and helpful attitude to the public (Quah 2010: 148–50, 189; Saxena 2011: 91–4, 139–41).

A further initiative in streamlining services was the setting up of the Cut Waste Panel (CWP) in September 2003. It invites suggestions from the public on eliminating unnecessary procedures and resource usage with a view to making cost savings and achieving greater efficiency. The suggestions, which may include clarification of existing practices, are submitted by email to the CWP portal. The panel then identifies those suggestions which relate to cutting waste and forwards them to the relevant agency. The agency’s reply, which is vetted by the CWP, is sent within twenty-two days to the suggestor (Cut Waste Panel 2012a). From 2003 to December 2011, 3,592 suggestions were received which concerned cutting waste. Among these suggestions, 3.1 per cent were accepted, 20.5 per cent were already being undertaken, and 14.9 per cent were considered unsuitable for implementation. A further 61.5 per cent were requests by suggestors for clarification on how specific concerns were being addressed. Since 2003, the savings in costs from cutting waste through the CWP scheme have been over SGD11.5 million (Cut Waste Panel 2012b; Quah 2010: 162–3).

Another important scheme to improve the practices and services of the public bureaucracy are the Work Improvement Teams (WITs), which were first set up in 1987. These are work groups comprising six to ten staff members in the same office or section, who are given the task of identifying areas of work where improvements could be made or problems exist, and then to determine, plan and implement a solution. Awards are given for viable solutions with the best projects
given a gold award. The WITs programme is based on the idea that agencies must and can continuously improve, and has become an integral part of PS21. Over the years WITs have encountered various challenges. Not least is the need to sustain the momentum in implementing projects and to continue identifying new problems in working practices and determining viable solutions. A further challenge is to ensure that team members remain involved in a WITs project when demands are made on their working time by everyday duties (Civil Service College 2006: 8–56; Public Service Division 2008: 25; Quah 2010: 159–65).

Improved customer service and more efficient and faster operations have been made possible through the development of e-government. A wide range of online services are now available which benefit the public. These provide information and guidance, entail streamlined procedures and facilitate transactions and payments, usually involving a simply constructed single access window. Examples are the Government Electronic Business (GeBiz) as the e-procurement portal and the online business licensing service (Quah 2010: 153–5; GeBiz 2014; EnterpriseOne 2014).

One of the consequences of improving customer service has been the streamlining of bureaucratic regulations and procedures for the business sector. According to the World Bank’s Doing Business Survey, in 2014, Singapore was ranked first among 189 countries for the ease of doing business. This assessment in part covers regulatory requirements, bureaucratic procedures and red tape, which can impede doing business across different business activities. It is evident from the survey that such regulations and procedures have been
kept to a minimum by the Singapore civil service. For example, only three bureaucratic procedures are involved in starting a business (i.e., obtaining a business registration), taking two and a half days to complete, giving Singapore fifth place in the global ranking of ease of starting a business (World Bank 2013: 222).

Three reasons may be given for Singapore’s high rankings. The most important is a commitment by the government that bureaucratic impediments to business activity should be no more than are necessary. The second reason is the desire to keep public agencies lean and efficient, avoiding unnecessary and wasteful paperwork and procedures. The third reason is the provision of online services and single access windows to make it easier for businesses to meet regulatory and procedural requirements. This increases Singapore’s competitiveness in attracting foreign investment and reinforces its policy of zero tolerance for corruption by reducing the opportunities for corruption caused by red tape.

5.5.7 Policy resources

Substantial revenue resulting from strong economic growth and an efficient system of tax collection has ensured that the spending requirements of implementing agencies are properly met, as well as generating a budget surplus. A key reform of public spending was the BVBAS introduced in 1989, under which, budget allocations for individual programmes, hitherto decided by the Ministry of Finance, were delegated to the parent ministry and authorized by its Permanent Secretary. This has enabled ministries in their own right to allocate...
operational spending according to the funding needs of their programmes and of their affiliated statutory boards. The BVBAS has also provided the ministries with the flexibility to transfer funds from one programme to another as operational spending priorities change even during the course of the financial year. One of the benefits of this is to reduce the possibility of programmes being overfunded or underfunded. Similar flexibility has been given to ministries in relation to their capital budgets, allowing them to adjust funding allocations within a capital project and allocate funding from year to year during the course of the project as its progress and circumstances dictated (Jones 1998a: 286–7; 2001c: 142–4; Quah 2010: 141).

Although funding for operational and capital spending has been forthcoming, managers in ministries and statutory boards are expected to make savings, avoid waste, and so secure a greater return for each dollar spent. An example is the system of procurement. Ministries and statutory boards now undertake their own purchasing, with the exception of bulk purchases and information technology systems, but are required to achieve value for money through open and competitive tenders, in which they must choose the lowest or most advantageous bid. Further, to ensure efficient use of resources, accrual accounting has been adopted to varying degrees in both the civil service and statutory boards. This necessitates that non-cash costs are recognized in the accounts, such as depreciation, imputed rentals, deferred capital grants, costs of capital (return on equity) and records of expenditure when goods and services are received (not when payments are made). It is reasoned that accrual accounting enables the
managers to be informed of the full costs of their programmes and therefore better enables them to make savings where necessary (Jones 2005b: 109–15; 2006: 266–7).

Accountability in the use of financial and physical resources is enforced through the Office of the Auditor-General (AG). The AG’s audits of public accounts cover ministries, statutory boards, government funds, certain government-owned companies and government-regulated accounts. Audits of statutory boards are often undertaken by commercial auditors with the approval of the AG (Auditor-General 2014: 2). The regular annual audit by the AG, known as the financial statements audit, is concerned with the extent of compliance with the relevant statutes and stipulated procedures, and assesses whether a proper disclosure of accounts has been published which reflects fairly and accurately all the financial transactions undertaken. A further concern is to determine whether proper accounting and transactional records have been kept, and if adequate controls were exercised to prevent non-compliance and irregularities in revenue collection and spending (Auditor-General 2014: 1–4; 2011: 8). In addition, from time to time, the AG undertakes an in-depth audit, known as a ‘selective audit’. This provides a more detailed assessment of compliance, and highlights, too, ‘excess, extravagance or gross inefficiency leading to waste and whether measures to prevent them are in place’ (Auditor-General 2014: 1; 2011: 9–10, 14). As a measure of how rigorous the audit can be, the AG’s report of 2013/14 highlighted lapses by five ministries and thirteen statutory boards. The audit revealed lapses in the administration of grants, commitment of public funds, administration of schemes and

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projects, management of land and assets, and procurement (Auditor-General 2014: i–iv, 3). Referring to the procurement lapses in one government agency, the AG’s report for 2013/14 highlighted ‘instances of contracts awarded through waiver of competition without compelling reasons. There were also irregularities in sourcing for quotations, lapses in evaluation of quotations, and payments without adequate evidence that the goods or services had been received.’ The report continued: ‘as a result there was no assurance that this entity had obtained value for money for its purchases. The failure to ensure open and fair competition could also subject the entity to allegations of unfairness and lack of transparency’ (Auditor-General 2014: 6).

Accountability in policy implementation and the use of resources is reinforced through the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB), which is part of the Prime Minister’s Office and responsible for implementing the Prevention of Corruption Act. Its task is to investigate complaints regarding alleged corruption by public officers, and any other evidence that indicates malpractice and misconduct. The CPIB has wide powers of investigation, and thereby spares no effort to unveil corrupt dealings. It can arrest suspects, cross-examine them, question witnesses, search premises, seize assets and recommend prosecutions to the Public Prosecutor. As part of its investigation, it can inspect bank, share and purchase accounts. If there is insufficient evidence to mount a prosecution, suspected officials may be referred to their Head of Department for disciplinary action with the concurrence of the Public Prosecutor (Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau 2014; Quah 2003: 114–19).
Furthermore, the CPIB reviews controls within ministries, statutory boards and other public bodies to ensure that evidence of corruption can be brought to light and opportunities for corrupt dealings are minimized. If the review shows failings in work methods and practices that could lead to corruption, the CPIB can recommend that remedial measures are taken (Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau 2014; Quah 2003: 118). The CPIB may also investigate evidence of corruption in the private sector. As part of its work to prevent corruption, it regularly conducts lectures and seminars to educate public officers, especially those who come into contact with the public, on how corruption can occur and what their responsibilities are in avoiding and reporting corrupt dealings (Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau 2014). The CPIB has been over the years an effective instrument in combating corruption in both the public and private sectors, and has been one of the key factors contributing to Singapore’s low level of corruption (Quah 2003: 124–6; 2010: 184–90).

5.6 Singapore’s implementation of two ASEAN agreements

The second part of the chapter deals with the ASEAN context influencing governance in Singapore and has two objectives. First, it will examine the overall role and contribution of Singapore in shaping and implementing ASEAN agreements. The second objective is to discuss the implementation of the ACD and AMMTC/SOMTC in Singapore. Over the years, Singapore has closely identified with ASEAN and fully
supported agreements promoting ASEAN cooperation and integration. This arises from its small size and its lack of resources and self-sufficiency necessitating dependence on and cooperation with other states. This section deals with the Singapore government’s role in the formulation and implementation of these agreements in Singapore.

5.6.1 Singapore government’s contribution to ASEAN measures

Singapore has contributed substantially to dialogue and agreements fostering closer cooperation and integration within the ASEAN. This has included the involvement of Singapore representatives sometimes making a significant contribution in various steering and coordinating committees, task forces and working groups, and regularly attending regional meetings, forums, seminars and workshops. In so doing, the Singapore government has played its part in shaping a wide range of ASEAN agreements, such as treaties, directives, protocols, actions plans, working programmes and other commitments where harmonization is sought. The input is all the more valuable when elements of such measures are already well established in Singapore, allowing the Singapore government to draw upon its experience in the drafting of key provisions.

In addition, at meetings dealing with the practical implementation of ASEAN initiatives, Singapore delegates are sometimes in a good position to impart the relevant knowledge and skills. Such input is particularly useful when matters of a specialist and technical nature are under
consideration, in which Singapore government agencies may have more experience than the agencies in other member states. This may be described as capacity building.

An example of Singapore’s role in capacity building was provided by the tenth meeting of the ASEAN Experts Group on Competition, which was held in Brunei Darussalam in November 2012. The remit of the meeting was to consider how best to implement a plan to harmonize competition law across ASEAN. This included reviewing the progress made so far to this end, to develop the competencies required in framing and implementing competition law, and to lay the groundwork for a manual spelling out the operational requirements that could be used by the member states. Although the official status of the Singapore delegation (officers from the CCS) was the same as that of the other delegations, it was specifically called upon in the plenary and breakout sessions of the meeting to explain the application of competition law in Singapore (the Competition Act and its implementing regulations and guidelines). The Singapore delegates had a specific knowledge of how to apply competition law whilst in many of the other member states competition law did not exist or was in its infancy (Borneo Bulletin 2012: 1; Borneo Post 2012).

A further contribution of the Singapore government to the implementation of ASEAN agreements is the provision of technical assistance, based on the resources and expertise of the relevant agencies. An example is the technical assistance provided by the Meteorological Service of the National Environmental Agency of Singapore (MSNEAS) to the ASEAN

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1 The meeting was attended by the author.
Specialized Meteorological Centre (ASMC) as part of the ASEAN programme to combat trans-boundary haze pollution in the region (Jones 2005c: 65–84). The responsibilities of the MSNEAS are, from the analysis of weather patterns, to predict and provide early warning of outbreaks of forest burning in neighbouring states, most notably Indonesia. When they occur, it then identifies, classifies and maps the areas of burning (hotspots) and measures the extent and direction of the resultant haze pollution. This work is undertaken by the meteorologists of MSNEAS through its remote sensing and satellite reception facilities. The information is then sent to the ASMC and subsequently forwarded to the relevant authorities in Indonesia (Chiam 2010). Another example are the laboratories in Singapore authorized by SPRING for testing products from other ASEAN states to ensure that they meet the technical standard required in ASEAN free trade arrangements (SPRING 2014: 59–72).

5.6.2 Singapore’s implementation of ASEAN agreements

For its part the Singapore government has been committed over the years to implement effectively within its jurisdiction any ASEAN instrument to which it has been a signatory. There are a number of aspects of the implementation worth noting.

If the instrument is legally binding, it is of course submitted to Parliament for ratification and converted into an appropriate domestic legal instrument. This normally takes the form of an amendment to an existing statute or of new subsidiary legislation such as a statutory order or regulation. An example is the
ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) of 2010 under the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) Agreement, which has been translated into domestic law through the amendments to the Customs (Duties) Order under the Customs Act (International Enterprise Singapore 2014; Singapore Customs 2011). ATIGA is the main instrument for implementing the Common Effective Preferential Tariff whereby goods produced within ASEAN entering Singapore (and a number of other ASEAN states) are zero rated for customs purposes.

The implementation of ASEAN arrangements is also undertaken at the administrative level through specific and detailed guidelines, circulars and programmes provided by the ministries and statutory boards. An example is the circular sent to manufacturers and traders by Singapore Customs in 2010, spelling out in detail the procedures and guidelines to be followed when importing goods from other ASEAN states under ATIGA. These include the forms to complete, cost statements to be disclosed and the certificates to be submitted (Singapore Customs 2010). The circular also contained an explanation of ATIGA, reflecting a commitment to raising awareness in the business community about the agreement.

Facilitating the implementation of ASEAN agreements is the existence of high levels of organizational, technical and personnel capacity in the Singapore public bureaucracy. This applies where implementation involves complex and technical processes such as product standard testing under ATIGA (SPRING 2014: 1–23). Furthermore, low levels of corruption remove major obstacles to fair and impartial implementation. For example, the absence of bribery in customs administration ensures a genuinely free flow of goods
from other ASEAN states as stipulated by ATIGA (International Enterprise Singapore 2014).

Decisions on ASEAN matters which affect Singapore are to a certain extent decentralized. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has an ASEAN Directorate with seventeen officers, and, together with a number of other regional Directorates, comes under the purview of the Deputy Secretary (International) of the MFA. The ASEAN Directorate handles foreign policy and general matters relating to ASEAN. Other more specialized matters concerning specific sectors are dealt with by the relevant ministry or statutory board. This is reflected in the attendance at many of the ASEAN meetings, forums and workshops within a specific sector by delegates from the competent ministry or statutory board. For example, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) has an ASEAN Division that handles trade negotiations with ASEAN (Ministry of Trade and Industry 2012). In addition, there are no parliamentary committees with responsibility for vetting the translation of ASEAN measures into domestic legal instruments. Instead, each ministry or statutory board is responsible for the instruments by which ASEAN arrangements relevant to its policy area are implemented.

5.7 Implementing the ASEAN Cosmetic Directive (ACD)

5.7.1 The ACD

The ASEAN Cosmetic Directive (ACD), signed in 2003, provides a common set of rules, applicable to all member states,
for controlling the manufacture and distribution of cosmetics products. It was subsequently amplified by a list of appendices and guidelines. The purpose of the ACD is to ensure protection against the health hazards posed by certain of these products. The ACD is binding and, as such, each state was required to incorporate the various provisions into its domestic law. In so doing, it had discretion to amplify and interpret those provisions for the purpose of implementation (ASEAN 2003). This first case study examines: (1) how the ACD and its appendices have been implemented in Singapore; and (2) what factors have influenced the effectiveness of the implementation.

5.7.2 Regulatory scheme based on the ACD

The ACD was incorporated into Singapore law in 2007 with the passing of the Health Products Act, and the issue of the Health Products (Cosmetic Products – ASEAN Cosmetic Directive) Regulations, 2007 (amended in 2010) (Attorney-General’s Chambers 2008; 2010). The latter were supplemented by a set of regulatory guidelines (revised in 2011), which also include in their annex two of the appendices of the ACD (Health Sciences Authority 2011a). Responsibility for implementing the Act and for drafting and implementing the regulations and guidelines is undertaken by the Health Sciences Authority (HSA), which is a statutory board. Day-to-day implementation and enforcement are undertaken by the Health Products Regulation Group of the HSA.

The HSA regulations and guidelines cover all the main aspects of controlling cosmetics manufacture and
distribution as laid down in the ACD. In nearly all cases, they replicate the relevant provisions in the ACD and its appendices and guidelines, although the sequencing and wording of some of the provisions differ. In formulating its cosmetics regulations, the HSA added a stipulation, not in the ACD, that judicial penalties may be applied when companies breach the regulations and guidelines (Attorney-General’s Chambers 2008; 2010: ss. 4–11). However, in other respects, the appendices and guidelines of the ACD are more extensive and detailed than the HSA regulations and guidelines, such as how a cosmetics product should be tested and what may be claimed as a benefit of a cosmetics product (ASEAN 2007: 3–14).

5.7.3 Monitoring and enforcement

The HSA monitors the cosmetics industry to ensure compliance with both the ACD and its own regulations and guidelines. The monitoring function requires the manufacturer or distributor to notify the HSA of each product accompanied by ‘such particulars, information, documents and samples of the cosmetics product as the Authority may require’ (Attorney-General’s Chambers 2010: s. 4; Health Sciences Authority 2009a: 33; 2009b: 1–2; 2011a: 8). If there is a possibility that it contains prohibited ingredients, the HSA may require the company to send the product for testing (this can be done voluntarily at any time). In 2008/09 there were 108,200 notifications, and since then the number has exceeded 130,000 in each year, with 138,745 recorded in 2012/13 (Health Sciences Authority 2009a: 39–40; 2010: 43; 2011b: 45; 2012: 78; 2013: 86).
The second aspect of the monitoring function of the HSA is the auditing of manufacturers’ and distributors’ product information files (PIFs) to check if the information about the product is in order. Audits are conducted ‘routinely or on an ad hoc basis’. Ad hoc audits are normally carried out when a sample test has shown the product to contain a banned ingredient, or when an adverse event has occurred or when a complaint based on credible information is received from a member of the public (Health Sciences Authority 2009a: 33; 2009b: 2; 2011a: 24–32).

A further aspect of the monitoring process is selective sampling and laboratory testing of cosmetics products after they have been placed on the market, to check if they contain ingredients that pose a health risk (Health Sciences Authority 2009a: 33; 2009b: 2; 2010: 36, 60; 2011a: 10). Laboratory testing is undertaken regularly, but will be conducted too if the product notification, PIF audit, and an adverse event report suggest that a health risk exists (Attorney-General’s Chambers 2010; Health Sciences Authority 2009a: 33).

Through its monitoring programme, the HSA is responsible for taking enforcement action when the product is found to be unsafe, or when the rules laid down in the ACD itself and the HSA regulations and guidelines have been violated. Failure to submit a notification, compiling an incomplete or inaccurate PIF, or not reporting an adverse event may be penalized through a fine or jail term under the HSA regulations (Attorney-General’s Chambers 2010: ss. 4, 10, 11; Health Sciences Authority 2011a: 13). In practice, where such offences are committed for the first time and do not lead to harm to the consumer, the offender would more probably be given a warning.
In addition, when the cosmetics product is proven to be unsafe or to contain a banned substance, the HSA, in accordance with the ACD, has powers requiring its withdrawal from the market (Health Sciences Authority 2011a: 13). Products too may be withdrawn if evidence is gathered from other countries that particular ingredients not yet prohibited may be harmful (Health Sciences Authority 2011b: 37). Withdrawal of the product is the most common type of enforcement action taken by the HSA. In 2008/09, 270 products were withheld/withdrawn; in 2009/10, the figure was 425 products (Health Sciences Authority 2009a: 40; 2010: 43).

5.7.4 Educational outreach

The HSA has also favoured a preventive approach to ensure compliance with the ACD, based on educational outreach to the cosmetics industry. This has been done in partnership with the Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Association of Singapore (CTFAS), which is generally the principal organizer of an outreach event. Other government agencies and private businesses may participate as partners.

The purpose of such events is to familiarize manufacturers and distributors with the requirements of the ACD and the HSA regulations and guidelines, and the steps necessary to achieve compliance. The events in the main take the form of workshops and, on a more informal level, ‘tea talks’. Since 2008, quite a number of events have been held. These events explain the requirements of the ACD and also provide hands-on training to enable companies to achieve compliance and offer advice in response to queries in question-and-answer...
sessions (Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Association of Singapore 2014a; 2014b). The educational outreach is consistent with the spirit of the ACD since many of the provisions in the appendices and guidelines, as mentioned above, contain explanations and advice.

5.7.5 Factors influencing the ACD’s implementation

Despite minor divergences, the regulatory system for cosmetics products in Singapore based on the ACD, as described above, and the monitoring, enforcement and outreach activities which are regularly undertaken, attest to largely effective implementation. This has been due to four factors. First, Singapore has both the resources and expertise for testing cosmetics products. Of particular importance is the cosmetics laboratory of the HSA, which is internationally accredited and provides a wide range of testing services, including spectrometry and liquid and gas chromatography (Health Sciences Authority 2010: 60; 2011b: 62; 2013: 59). The second factor is the widespread consumption of cosmetics products amongst the local population. With increasing affluence and rising incomes in Singapore, the consumption of non-essential or luxury goods, which enhance appearance and status, such as cosmetics items, inevitably rises. Given that some cosmetics products may carry a risk, such mass consumption obviously calls for a degree of control. The third factor is the willingness of the HSA to enter into a partnership with the cosmetics industry through the CTFAS for purposes of education and feedback. The fourth factor responsible for the effective
implementation of the ACD is the existence of regulatory schemes administered by the HSA for other health products over a number of years. These include pharmaceutical products, health supplements, homeopathic and traditional medicines, and Chinese proprietary medicines. Such schemes may have perhaps provided a guide and the necessary experience for a similar scheme for cosmetics.

5.8 Implementing the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC)/Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC)

In response to the growing threat of transnational crime, the member states of ASEAN drew up an agreement in 1997 entitled theASEAN Declaration on Transnational Crime. The agreement, signed by the Minister for Home Affairs or Minister for the Interior, committed the member states to a common effort in fighting transnational crime. Subsequently, the Declaration was amplified by two further agreements relating to implementation: the ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime in 1999 and the Work Programme to Implement the ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime in 2002. The body responsible for reviewing and overseeing the implementation of the ASEAN agreements on transnational crime is the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC),
which is described as ‘the highest policy making body on ASEAN cooperation in combating transnational crime’ (Sovannasam 2011: 78–83). The AMMTC is supported by the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC), mainly senior level officials in the Ministry of Home Affairs or the Ministry of the Interior (79–83).

This second case study examines the implementation of the ASEAN agreements in Singapore and resolutions of the AMMTC/SOMTC with respect to two contrasting cases. One is combating terrorism in which implementation has been largely effective, and the other is combating trafficking in persons in which implementation has been less effective.

5.8.2 Terrorism

For many years, the Singapore government has been alert to the possibility of terrorist attacks in the country and in recent years has focused on the threat posed by the terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). It has been equally concerned that Singapore as a communications hub could be used as a transit for terrorists to carry out attacks elsewhere. For this reason the government has spared no effort in ensuring that the police and armed forces have the requisite legal powers, resources and expertise to prevent terrorist attacks and to track down terrorists (Weatherbee 2009: 170–7; Hor 2012: 272–89).

The powers and responsibilities to combat terrorism are laid down in several statutes and regulations. These include the United Nations (Anti-terrorism Measures) Regulations of 2001 and subsequent amendments; the Terrorism
(Suppression of Bombings) Act of 2007 and the Singapore Armed Forces (Amendment) Act of 2007, which enhances the role of the military in searching and detaining terrorist suspects (Attorney-General’s Chambers 2003; 2007a; 2007b). Under these and other measures, priority is given to gathering intelligence about terrorist networks, ensuring constant surveillance at check points, vital installations and vulnerable public places, and detaining terrorist suspects. No less important are enhancing public awareness of the dangers of terrorism and ensuring public authorities and the community are well prepared in the event of a terrorist attack. The involvement of the community is part of the concept of ‘total defence’ which is at the heart of Singapore’s security strategy. Much of the responsibility in preventing terrorist attacks and tracking down terrorists is undertaken by special enforcement units, namely the Singapore Special Operations Force, Special Operations Command and Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Explosive Defence Group (Hor 2012: 272–9). Such measures to combat terrorism closely correspond with, and in some respects go beyond, the provisions relating to terrorism in the ASEAN agreements and the resolutions of the AMMTC/SOMTC.

Furthermore, as prescribed in the ASEAN agreements and the resolutions of the AMMTC/SOMTC, Singapore has cooperated with its ASEAN neighbours through intelligence sharing about terrorist networks, passing on information about an intended terrorist attack and tracking down terrorists and deporting them to a member state where they are wanted. This has been exemplified by several instances of cooperation between Singapore and its closest
neighbours, Indonesia and Malaysia, which have involved sharing of information and handing over of wanted persons. One example was the tracking down and arrest by the Malaysian authorities in early 2012 of three members of the JI network wanted in Singapore, to which country they were soon after deported (Chen 2012).

5.8.3 Trafficking in persons

The ASEAN agreements identify trafficking in persons (TIP) for purposes of prostitution and forced labour as a growing transnational crime (Weatherbee 2009: 190–5). However, until recently, only limited progress had been made in Singapore in implementing many of the recommendations relating to TIP. Little was done to undertake a country study or self-assessment and provide case studies of TIP, or to enhance awareness of it in the enforcement and judicial community. Although several laws exist that prohibit TIP, they do not reflect the complexity of TIP offences, which remain ill-defined, nor do they stipulate penalties commensurate with the offences. Nor had much been done to build capacity through specialized enforcement teams and by information sharing and cooperation amongst different agencies. Moreover, low priority had been given to prevention and to the rehabilitation of victims. This was perhaps due to the limited numbers of victims who were reported or detected. Lastly, there was little evidence of initiatives to liaise and develop joint exercises with other member states to combat TIP (Singapore Inter-Agency Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons).
2012). Such actions had all been proposed in the ASEAN Plan of Action and Work Programme.

However, in 2010, mindful of the growing need to address TIP crimes, an inter-agency task force, the Singapore Inter-Agency Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons (SITTP), was set up by the Singapore government to identify measures to combat them. It comprised several government agencies and private associations. After a public consultation, the task force drafted a National Plan of Action which was announced in March 2012 to be implemented over the following three years (Singapore Parliament 2011: col. 14; Durai 2012; Singapore Inter-Agency Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons 2012).

The National Plan includes measures to improve the collection of data, with reports to be regularly compiled about trends in TIP. Attention is to be given to defining in more detail TIP offences and determining appropriate penalties, to be incorporated into possible new legislation (Singapore Inter-Agency Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons 2012: 9, 11). At the same time, enforcement is to be strengthened through expediting investigations and prosecutions and setting up a specialized enforcement unit (11). Equally important is the intention to raise awareness about TIP in enforcement agencies, the judiciary and the business community, as well as amongst the general public (4–5, 8–9, 11). Emphasis is to be given to the care and rehabilitation of victims through medical and counselling services, improved management of shelters and the provision of legal advice. It is also planned that training programmes will be enhanced to improve detection of trafficking offences and to provide care for victims. What is more, references are made in the National Plan to ‘stronger
collaboration with foreign governments and embassies’, with the intention of ‘engag[ing] enforcement agencies of source countries for joint-investigation and sharing of information’ (14–15). Overall, the National Plan of Action will bring Singapore in line with the majority of the requirements of the ASEAN Action Plan and Work Programme and also with the provisions of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

Many of the measures advocated in the National Plan have now been converted into legislation in the Human Trafficking Bill passed by the Singapore Parliament in November 2014 (Singapore Parliament 2014). Despite the National Plan and the Bill, Singapore has yet to sign and ratify the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. But, speaking at the second reading of the Bill, the Senior Minister of State for Home Affairs announced that ‘we intend to ratify [the Protocol] after the proper requirements are met’ (Singapore Parliament 2014). Although combating TIP is still a work in progress, the new legislation is a significant step forward.

5.8.4 Explaining the difference

The differences in the progress made in implementing the provisions of the ASEAN Declaration, Action Plan and Work Programme and resolutions of the AMMTC/SOMTC with respect to terrorism and TIP may be attributed to the degree of threat posed by the two types of transnational crime.
Terrorism has posed an ever present and serious threat to the population of Singapore, which could also undermine its economic well-being. This is due to the existence of terrorist networks in the region and Singapore’s role as a transport and communications hub. The threat posed by TIP is less imminent, due to a relatively small number of TIP offences, although in the long term it could affect Singapore’s reputation for ethical standards, effective law enforcement and low crime.

5.9 Conclusion

5.9.1 Policy implementation in Singapore

Policy implementation in Singapore is characterized by these eight features: (1) strong institutional capacity in implementing agencies through a proper framework of rules and responsibilities, high standards of professional competence, based on meritocracy and the availability of resources and funding to meet operational requirements; (2) decentralization in service delivery, budget allocations, personnel management and procurement; (3) emphasis on efficiency, cost saving and avoidance of waste in the use of resources, which is reflected in competitive procurement, reducing unnecessary procedures (exemplified by the Cut Waste Panel) and the use of accrual accounting; (4) inter-agency cooperation in implementing policies (the ‘whole-of-government’ or ‘networked government’ approach); (5) performance measurement of the implementing agencies through indicators that measure output, service standards and outcomes; (6) public consultation over
how policy is implemented through REACH and independent inquiries; (7) customer-centred disposition of implementing agencies, based on minimizing red tape, streamlined procedures, responsive counter services and online services to facilitate both the public and business sectors; and (8) rigorous audit scrutiny which focuses on both compliance and value for money and strong anti-corruption measures to deter bribery, embezzlement and other forms of corruption.

Three of the above features of policy implementation are also evident in policy formulation, namely meritocracy, public consultation and the ‘whole-of-government’ approach, including inter-agency cooperation. However, it should be pointed out that in contrast with the decentralized system of implementation, policy formulation is highly centralized, being largely exercised by Ministers, Junior Ministers and Permanent and Deputy Secretaries at the headquarters of the ministries. In addition, whilst meritocracy is common to both policy formulation and implementation, it is much more elite-based through the Administrative Service in the case of policy formulation.

5.9.2 Policy recommendations

One of the weaknesses of policy implementation in Singapore has been performance measurement, as indicated above. In view of the limitations identified, three recommendations may be made. First, more attention should be focused on setting targets and making those targets demanding. In addition, comparisons of performance with other developed countries could be introduced, and a three- or five-point
rating system should be adopted. The purpose of these three recommendations is to provide a more adequate basis for assessing performance.

A further question concerns the future of public consultation. The rate of acceptance of suggestions submitted has varied a great deal. For example, for some consultations undertaken by the Ministry of Law and Ministry of Manpower, the rate of acceptance was very low, whereas in consultations by the Ministry of Finance with regard to taxation, a significant number of suggestions submitted were accepted. Of course, there may be good reasons to reject suggestions, such as budgetary constraints or divergence from core policy objectives. However, in the future it may be a good idea to avoid low acceptance rates if suggestions indicate a degree of unanimity amongst respondents, especially if they reflect informed views of the business, professional and voluntary associations.

It was mentioned above that the promotion of Administrative Officers to Deputy and Permanent Secretaries was tied to certain age thresholds. A recommendation may be made to allow greater flexibility in this matter. While age tagging of promotion may favour those who show early promise within the fast promotion stream, it may work against those ‘late-bloomers’ who realize their potential at a later stage, in their mid-career. The latter may thus be denied the opportunity of reaching top positions despite their high calibre. In addition, flexibility may be shown in the application of the flow-through arrangement which limits the tenure to ten years of Permanent and Deputy Secretaries. In certain situations, it may be appropriate to extend the tenure of these
positions where experience and institutional memory would be a valuable asset in making policy and operational decisions.

5.9.3 Singapore’s contribution to and implementation of ASEAN agreements

In discussing Singapore’s contribution to and implementation of ASEAN agreements in general, it is noteworthy that Singapore has in the main been fully supportive of measures to promote ASEAN cooperation and integration. Its contribution has entailed three key roles. One is to provide guidance in shaping the details of ASEAN agreements, where it possesses the necessary experience and expertise. The second is to contribute to capacity building for other states of ASEAN to enable them to implement the agreements. The third is to provide technical assistance to further facilitate their implementation by other states. In implementing ASEAN agreements, Singapore has developed the necessary legal and operational frameworks, and has benefited from the high level of institutional capacity of its government agencies, created by its meritocratic system, as well as from the low level of corruption. However, the implementation process has not been centralized in any one agency.

The case studies have focused on how Singapore has implemented the ACD and the AMMTC/SOMTC. They show how the implementation of both instruments reflects the features of mainstream policy implementation, as indicated in this chapter. First, the ability of the Singapore government to implement both instruments stems again from the
strong institutional capacity in various regulatory and enforcement agencies. This has been achieved as a result of the meritocratic system with its emphasis on qualifications, training, performance appraisal and specialized knowledge and skills.

In applying the ACD, the HSA engages in a partnership with the CTFAS to promote educational outreach and provide feedback. Such partnerships are evident in combating other types of transnational crime such as drug abuse and sea piracy. The emphasis on partnership dovetails with the consultative approach that the government has adopted in policy-making and implementation discussed earlier. In promoting partnership and consultation, the public and external organizations are seen as a resource which may provide specialist information and feedback to help in making or reviewing policy and operational decisions.

The implementation of the ASEAN agreements with respect to combating terrorism depends on the coordination of different agencies. These include the Singapore Special Operations Force, Special Operations Command and the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Explosives Defence Group. In addition, the formulation of the National Action Plan to address the problem of TIP was the responsibility of an inter-agency task force comprising eight agencies, which is also tasked with its implementation. Similar inter-agency cooperation has occurred in tackling other transnational crimes such as cyber-crime and money laundering. This reflects the ‘whole-government’ or ‘networked government’ approach in formulating and implementing policy, referred to above, which has become an important feature of governance of Singapore.
Lastly, in implementing the ACD, the HSA, as a statutory board, enjoys operational autonomy with regard to regulation, surveillance and enforcement. Statutory boards are also involved in combating other forms of transnational crime, under the ASEAN agreements, such as cyber-crime, money laundering and sea piracy, and enjoy similar operational autonomy. This exemplifies the decentralization which characterizes policy implementation in Singapore, as discussed earlier.

There are, though, a few important differences that are worth noting between the implementation of the ACD and its appendices, and the ASEAN agreements and resolutions of the AMMTC/SOMTC on combating terrorism and TIP and other transnational crimes. The ASEAN agreements on transnational crime and resolutions of the AMMTC/SOMTC cover a diverse set of issues and contain often general and discretionary provisions, which do not create binding and precisely defined responsibilities requiring translation into domestic law. This is not so surprising in view of the desire of the ASEAN states to protect their sovereignty, not least in matters relating to law and order and criminal justice. By contrast, the ACD covers a single issue and creates a clear and precise set of mandatory obligations which must be enshrined into domestic law (in Singapore by the Health Products Regulations of 2007). For this reason the ACD is more readily implementable than the more complex and discretionary ASEAN agreements on transnational crime.

A further point of contrast is the extent of interdependence of member states in the application of the two ASEAN instruments. To be effective, implementation of the
ACD does not depend upon compliance in other ASEAN states. Thus, the Singapore government has been able successfully to implement the ACD regardless of the progress of implementation in the other ASEAN states. By contrast, the ability in Singapore to implement the ASEAN agreements on combating terrorism and other transnational crimes depends upon the ability of other states in the region to do so together with a strong commitment to engage in cross-border cooperation. Given the nature of transnational crime, which may involve criminal networks that span national boundaries, shortcomings in combating it in one state may impact on the ability to do so in Singapore itself. For example, the failure to deal effectively with terrorists groups or drug cartels in other states of the region will increase the possibility of terrorism or drug-related crime in Singapore itself. Also, a cautious approach of the ASEAN states to everyday cross-border cooperation in enforcement and capacity building, indicated in the ASEAN agreements, may likewise hinder enforcement agencies in combating transnational crime in Singapore.

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