

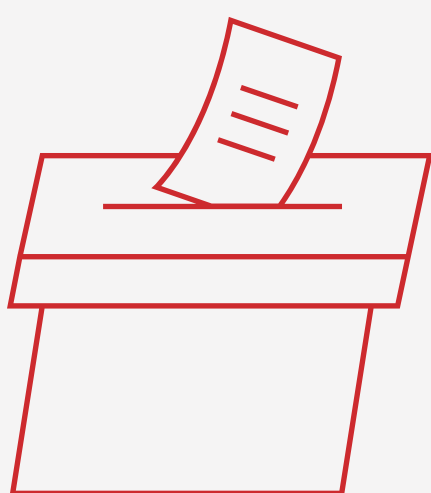
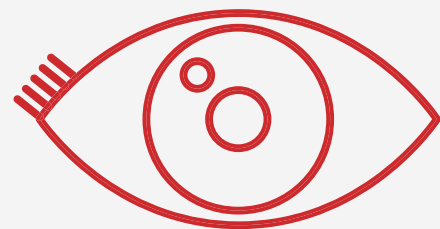
A HINT OF PRAGMATISM WITH A TRACE OF AUTHORITARIANISM

AN ANALYSIS OF SINGAPORE'S TRACETOGETHER DATA SCANDAL

The Incident

A government admission that personal data from the digital contact tracing app TraceTogether was being used for police investigations sparks controversy.

Government statements in the past indicated that the data would only be used to combat the spread of COVID-19.



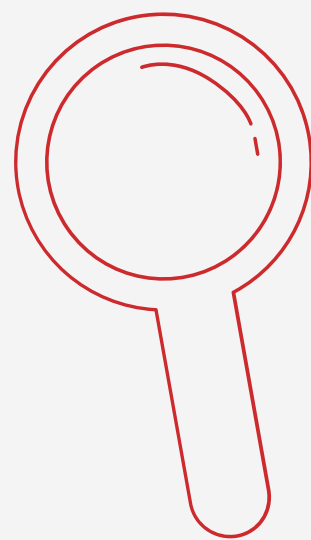
Political Situation

Given that the People's Action Party, the ruling party in Singapore, has a secure grasp on the levers of power the thorough apology and accountability expressed by the government in response to the incident does not track with expectations of other similar forms of unrepresentative political systems.

Pragmatism and TraceTogether

TraceTogether was an application built around the ruling party's ideology of pragmatism as initiated by former PM Lee Kuan Yew:

foresaking the traditional left/right dichotomy and instead the most functional solutions. The app exchanges anonymous Bluetooth markers with other devices that can be decrypted and used as a database to inform those who have had close contact with a COVID-19 case. Critics



Soft Authoritarianism

Singapore's political history since independence has been that of opposition persecution without resorting to force and societal micromanagement by the PAP. This legacy of soft authoritarianism combined with the ideology of pragmatism can be seen as the current precedent for Singaporean policy.

Reasoning

Despite the overall position of the PAP as head of the country is not at risk, the 2020 election results were underwhelming for the party and indicated dissatisfaction with the government's handling of COVID-19 as well as a strengthened opposition. Given the potential for another scandal that could undermine government confidence, the response can be explained through the PAP's desire to retain public support during a politically tumultuous time.