**GP Essay Outline - Culture**

**How effective has your country been in creating a national identity?**

**Type of question - Extent of Agreement**

**Thinking Aspect:**

The focus of this question is to examine the capabilities and capacity of the country in the creation of a national identity. To assess these, we need to understand the cultural state of development in the country, the cultural policy the countries have adopted and the hindrances that may undermine a country may face in the building of a national identity. It is also critical to take note on how national identity is forged and to make discussion from this flow and to do so, the idea on how to categorise the discussion must be considered.

**Introduction (general observation about the issue, set the two perspectives, a method on how you answer the question)**

A national identity is imperative to the development of a state as it is the pillar of nationhood. Without her people feeling a sense of belonging through this national identity, countries are finding it hard to embark on progress and development as there is the lack of dedication and sacrifices the people are willing to make in the building of a nation. Given this significance, it is imperative for a small nation like Singapore to embark on this task but such an avenue is no easy path. The patriots possess the frivolous mindset that a national identity can be built as we have the policies and dedication to achieve this but those who are skeptical think otherwise, citing the complexity of the globalized world and modernisation as the hindrances that undermine our efficacy to build a national identity. To assess if Singapore is effective in building a national identity, we need to examine the efforts and policies that Singapore has adopted to develop a Singapore identity and the favourable and unfavorable factors that would affect the government in the creation of a SIngapore identity that guide the nation.

(an approach on how you answer the question)

**Main Body**

Point 1 - Supporting View 1

The enriched cultural heritage of Singaporeans can create a strong cultural bulwark to prevent cultural erosion contributed by globalization from undermining our effort in forging a national identity. Even though there are constant influences of globalisation forces in diverse mediums, the entrenched multiculturalism landscape provides a grounding effect deeply rooting Singaporeans to their place. Whether it is the converse slang of Singlish or a quick meal in the hawker centre, such environmental and social cues reinforce a sense of belonging to the state and counteract influences of foreign ideals. In the similar survey, researchers found that many still oppose the legalisation of such same-sex marriages. Therefore, with the presence of cultural cues, Singapore has been able to create a national identity.

Point 1 - EOA

However, the claim that globalization and modernization undermines Singapore’s efficacy is not unfounded when we consider how the interaction and indoctrination affects the values and behaviours of Singaporeans, shaping our way of life as it distorts our sense of national identity. In this global village, Singapore is an interconnected metropolitan that greatly felt the tectonic social and political shifts. Foreign ideals and values have infiltrated into the minds of the youth, subtly influencing their perceptions and behaviour. Consequently, there is a preference for such foreign values and disconnection with the local identity. For example, the Pinkdot and YOLO movements have gained traction over the years, reinterpreting the unconscious laws of a conservative society. Over the years, Singaporeans are becoming increasingly open towards LGBTQ individuals supported by finidngs by the Institute of Policy Studies in 2013 and 2018. Such liberal attitudes would further polarise a traditionally conservative society, creating a factioned community that displays little sense of national unity.

Point 2 - Supporting View 2

Singapore has the capacity to inculcate a national identity with the education programmes the ministry of education provides which promotes national values and builds a sense of loyalty in the students to the country since young. In Singapore, the Ministry of Education rolled out curriculums and programmes to foster a common appreciation of multicultural values and the Singapore identity. The subtle inculcation of such values dictates the behaviours of individuals, instilling a sense of national belonging and pride. For example, the Ministry of Education made compulsory the study of Social Studies and National Education in the school curriculum. Students learn about the pivotal events that shape the development of the nation and social values such as meritocracy and diversity. Furthermore, schools celebrate the various festivals of the different races with performances, game shows and activities to encourage the appreciation of other cultures in a fun manner. Therefore, the wielding of the education tool by the Singapore government meant that Singapore has the capacity to create a common national unity and identity.

Point 2- EOA

Nonetheless, limited internalisation of values by youths meant that racial prejudices exist and Singaporean society is still unable to foster a common national multicultural identity. Youths may be inculcated since young to adopt a multiculturalist stance but the lack of acceptance of such ideals result in discriminatory behaviour that threaten to harm social fabric and make the creation of a national identity an elusive option. For example, recent scandals of students of elite institutions painting themselves blackface has generated much disgust by local netizens and the media. Even the brown face saga involving Denis Chew exemplify the argument that graduates of the education system have not fully integrated the values of mutual respect of other religions. Therefore, Singaporean society reflects that it has only reached a stage of tolerance rather than acceptance of multiculturalism and has not been effective in the creation of a national identity.

Point 3 - Supporting View 3

We are able to build our sense of belonging and promote our sense of belonging to build our national identity through our social policies which build up a social platform for communication and interaction that builds our Singapore community with a national identity. In Singaporean society, the government effectively utilises constitutional and non-constitutional means to socially engineer a common national identity. This ensures the adherence to national values and common area of bond, crafting unified national values and beliefs. For example, the legislated Ethnic Integration Policy allocates a racial quota in public housing. This prevents the formation of racial enclaves and the mixed interaction and appreciation of different races. Residents are instilled with values of multiculturalism and are integrated into the national identity. In addition, non-constitutional means such as the creation of an intangible UNESCO hawker cultural heritage brings to light the common social unifier of different races in a social setting, nurturing a common appreciation and acceptance of a unique national identity,

Point 3-EOA

However, such assertions held a modicum of truth as the lack of sustainability and acceptance towards such social integration meant superficial success achieved to create a national identity. In Singapore, the social measures are enforced by the government in a paternalistic fashion with little enthusiasm and support by Singaporeans for the vision created by the government. Consequently, results achieved merely foster a sense of tolerance rather than acceptance towards a common national identity. The various race and religious policies have not entirely wiped out disgruntled neighbours with complaints about Malay wedding ceremonies in the Amy Tan scandal and complaints by a Chinese family about the “stench” sourcing from the neighbouring Indian family. Simply, individuals are bonded together in a rigid structure but they do not conform fully to such imposed values. Furthermore, lack of sustainability in the preservation of hawker culture raises alarming questions on the future of this social binding experiment that provided much success till now. Youths today shrug away from the hard work and toil of the hawker trade with little interest in its continuation. Without the assured progress of the hawker culture, how can the continual creation of a unique binding national identity continue? Even with the successful application for the UNESCO status, the mindsets of the youths today undeniably prove difficult to alter.

Therefore, with issues of sustainability and level of acceptance towards prescribed values. Singapore has not been able to create a sustained and entrenched national identity.