

**An Analysis of the Underlying Factors That Affected Malaysia-Singapore  
Relations During the Mahathir Era: Discords and Continuity**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is an analysis of the underlying factors that influenced Malaysia-Singapore relations during the watershed period of Mahathir Mohamad as the Prime Minister of Malaysia (1981-2003). The study proposes that the bilateral tensions between Malaysia and Singapore were, to a large extent, affected by such things as the burden of historical baggage from their acrimonious parting in 1965, after a short period of unification; the differences between them in their perceptions and approaches in handling bilateral relations; and their political cultures and the leadership styles of their prime ministers, but for the purposes of the present study, specifically those of Mahathir and Lee Kuan Yew. The thesis examines a number of key areas of discord between states and leaders alike.

Despite the strong underlying differences, the thesis argues, the two states have existed in a condition of interdependency in the post-1965 period. They have had to find ways in which to suppress the culturally- and historically-conditioned tensions in order to ensure their respective states' economic growth and political and social development. As a result, we have the curious situation in which both Malaysia and Singapore have found ways of maintaining engagement. In doing so, they have avoided raising tensions to the point of conflict, and, indeed, been able to build bridges through consistent, and determined, application to their bilateral affairs. The thesis provides some explanations as why this should be the case.

## DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS**

ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AMDA	Anglo Malayan (Malaysia) Defense Agreement
BN	Barisan Nasional
BMA	British Military Administration
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CIQ	Customs, Immigration and Quarantine
CPF	Central Provident Fund
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DEB	Dasar Ekonomi Baru
EAEC	East Asian Economic Caucus
EAS	East Asian Summit
EEC	European Economic Cooperation
FPDA	Five Power Defence Agreements
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISA	Internal Security Act/ Akta Keselamatan Dalam Negeri
IDFR	Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations
ICP/PKI	Indonesian Communist Party/ Partai Komunis Indonesia
ITLOS	International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

KLIA	Kuala Lumpur International Airport
KTM	Keretapi Tanah Melayu/Malayan Railway
LEP	Look East Policy
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MPAJA	Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army
MSC	Malaysian Solidarity Convention or Malaysian Solidarity Council
MFP	Malaysian Foreign Policy
MSC	Multimedia Super Corridor
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NUS	National University of Singapore
NIC	Newly Industrializing Country/ New Industrialized Country
NEP	New Economic Policy
NOC	National Operations Council
OFC	Offshore Financial Center
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Conference
PAP	People's Action Party
PAS	Parti Islam Se-Malaysia
PETIR	Singapore's PAP Magazine
PKM	Parti Komunis Malaya
PMIP	Pan Malayan Islamic Party

PPP	People's Progressive Party
POA	Point of Agreements
PRC	People's Republic of China
PTP	Port of Tanjung Pelepas
RSAF	Republic of Singapore Air Force
SPA	Singapore People's Alliance
SARO	Search and Rescue Operations
SUPP	Sarawak United Peoples' Party
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Cooperation
TUDM	Tentera Udara DiRaja Malaysia/ Royal Malaysia Air Force
UDP	United Democratic Party
UMNO	United Malays National Organization
US	United States of America
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain
UM	Univesity of Malaya
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
ZOPFAN	Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

## GLOSSARY

Abang-adik	Elder-younger or 'big brother' relationship
Alam Melayu	The Malay World
Alliance	UMNO-MCA-MIC coalition (also see Perikatan)
Bahasa Melayu	Malay Language
Barisan Nasional	National Front
Barisan Alternatif	Alternative Front
Bumiputera or bumiputra	Malays or other natives ('son of the soil')
Causeway or causeway	Land bridge linking Malaysia and Singapore
Clob	Central Limit Order Book
Datuk or Dato	Malay honorific title ('Sir')
Dewan Rakyat or Ra'ayat	House of Representatives, Parliament of Malaya/Malaysia
Istana	Palace
Johor or Johore	West Malaysia's most southern state and Singapore's closest neighbour
Kampong or kampung	Village/hamlet
Kesatuan Melayu Singapura	Singapore Malay Union
Ketuanan Melayu	Malay dominance
Kiasu or kiasu-ism	Negative stereotype of Singapore and its citizens (literally 'fear of losing'- may also be translated as 'fear of getting involved' or 'afraid of losing face')
Konfrontasi	Confrontation
Madrasah	Islamic school
Malaysia Barat	West Malaysia

Malaya (prior to 1946)	Malay Peninsula and Singapore
Malaya (after 1946)	Malay Peninsula, Peninsular Malaysia or West Malaysia
Melayu	Malay
Menteri or Mentri Besar	Chief Minister (of a Malaysian state)
Merdeka	Independence
Nusantara	Southeast Asia in Malay (literally ‘Malay Archipelago’ or ‘Malay World’)
Overseas Chinese	Southeast Asians of Chinese ethnicity
Parti Islam SeMalaysia	Islamic Party of Malaysia
Perdana Menteri or Mentri	Prime Minister
Perikatan	Alliance Party (UMNO-MCA-MIC)
Perpaduan Melayu	Malay solidarity
Pulau Batu Puteh	Batu Puteh Island
Tanah Melayu	Land of the Malays
Tanjong Pagar	Site of Malayan Railway’s Singapore terminal
Temasik or Tumasik	Sea Town (Malay name for pre-colonial Singapore)
Temenggong	Malay chief
Tun	Malay honorific title (‘Lord’)
Tunku or Tengku	Malay honorific title (‘Prince’)
Ummah	Islamic community of believers
Wisma Putra	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia
Yang di-Pertuan Agong	Head of State and Elected King of Malaya