# VMUN **2026**

# Advanced Crisis Committee

BACKGROUND GUIDE

# Vancouver Model United Nations
## The Twenty-Fifth Annual Session | January 23rd-25th, 2026

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Advanced Crisis Committee (ACC)! My name is Kelly Mao, and I am a senior student at Semiahmoo Secondary. I am excited to join you this year at VMUN 2026 as your ACC director and alongside my Chair Ingrid Yang, and Assistant Director Mickey Wang, we are eager to guide you all through a weekend of intense debate as you navigate politics in the Malay Peninsula.

If you can picture a grade eight girl in dress pants too small and a blazer too large making an eight-second speech, you have probably got a good picture of your director at her first conference. Model United Nations has allowed me to grow from that to a delegate who can passionately churn out one-minute speeches every caucus; moreover, it has extended chances for me to meet incredible people and experience unique committees and even more interesting topics.

This year, I am happy to have the opportunity to extend those chances to you! During the conference, you will join Lee Kuan Yew's first Singaporean cabinet and guide Singapore through the tumultuous political landscape that was post World War II Asia, and the formation of Malaysia. Although the future is murky, I am confident that with collaboration, you all can build a prosperous Singapore. I implore you to make this committee one filled with memorable moments and fiery debate.

This committee encompasses a myriad of subjects, but please note that many parts of debate will touch on sensitive topics. These include ethnic-based politics, racial-policies under colonial authority, racial segregation, and wartime atrocities. I ask that delegates exercise elevated caution and professionalism while addressing these topics in debate and in position papers. If you ever are—or know of another delegate that is—uncomfortable, do not hesitate to inform us or any VMUN Secretariat members.

If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact me at acc@vmun.com. We wish you luck in your preparations and are looking forward to seeing you at the most memorable VMUN yet!

Best regards,

Kelly Mao
ACC Director

# Position Paper Policy

## What is a Position Paper?

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of your positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At Vancouver Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for each of the committee's topics. Each position paper should not exceed one page and should all be combined into a single document per delegate.

For ACC, position papers, although strongly recommended, are not required. However, delegates who wish to be considered for an award must submit position papers.

## Formatting

Position papers should:

— Include the name of the delegate, his/her country, and the committee

— Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins

— Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders

— Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research
(not included in the 1-page limit)

## Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for this committee must be submitted by **January 12, 2026, at 23:59 PT**. Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as your last name, your first name and send it as an attachment in an email to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as "[last name] [first name] — Position Paper". Please do not add any other attachments to the email. Both your position papers should be combined into a single PDF or Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted.

Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Position Paper award. The email address for this committee is acc@vmun.com.

# The Republic of Singapore

## Overview

The year is 1961. The world's powers are still reeling from the aftermath of World War II, and Western powers are scrambling to contain the rise of Communism. On the very tip of Malaya, or the Malaysian Peninsula, lies a tiny former British crown colony who had been struggling for her independence for many years—Singapore.

The first Cabinet of Singapore is in a difficult position. In the face of Singapore's limited natural resources; its small geographical size; internal instability, which originated in the People's Action Party (PAP); high unemployment levels; and competition with other Asian ports such as Hong Kong, political and economic stability seem implausible.[1]

Furthermore, Singapore's independence did not come without strings; amidst the political and ideological chaoses of post–World War II, the United Kingdom was hesitant to relinquish control to a Singapore it deemed susceptible to Communist ideologies. Even now, Singapore's government has no authority over matters of defense and foreign affairs.[2]

Singapore has a long-history as a key British trading port. Alongside other notable British colonies on Malaya—which were mostly consolidated to form the Federation of Malaya—Singapore served as the United Kingdom's connection to Indo–China and Far Eastern Tropics.[3] Unlike other colonies with primarily Malay demographics, Singapore is seventy-five percent ethnically Chinese; with a population of 1.6 million, Singapore has a Chinese demographic that alone outnumbered the number of all Malay peoples in Malaya.[4]

Independence wise, Singapore is young, exceptionally so. Only fifteen years ago, Singapore was liberated from Japanese occupation—when newfound sparks of independence flared. Only seven years ago, had Singapore gained the right to partial self-governance.[5] Only one year ago, was the first fully elected government of Singapore established, imbued with dreams of economic prosperity, high quality of life, and impeccable infrastructure.[6]

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[1] Government of Singapore, State of Singapore Annual Report 1960 (Authority, 1962).

[2] Tze Lin, "Rendel Commission."

[3] legislation.gov.uk, "Federation of Malaya Independence Act 1957," legislation.gov.uk, The National Archives, accessed July 4, 2025, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/5-6/60/enacted; Joanna Tan, "Port of Singapore," www.nlb.gov.sg, April 19, 2018, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=2043f0bb-78b5-4f2f-b021-ecb53bc4fa8b.

[4] Macrotrends. "Singapore Population 1950-2024." Macrotrends.net. Accessed July 4, 2025. https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/SGP/singapore/population; Economic History of Malaysia, "DETAILS - Population Data," Www.ehm.my, 2020, https://www.ehm.my/data/population-data/details?eid=c131cf4b-dc69-4c78-8da7-24573fbc8cdd.

[5] Tania Tze Lin, "Rendel Commission," www.nlb.gov.sg, September 2023, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=5781af87-b7b5-4c91-a1a7-bfe92c3e0c15.

[6] Singapore National Library Board, "The First Cabinet Is Sworn In," www.nlb.gov.sg, accessed July 5, 2025, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=c51f9647-32ea-43a7-8c65-82b76e4f22ae.

When the PAP won the 1959 election, a solution was proposed: a merger with the Federation of Malaya. This merger for "Mighty Malaysia"[7] promises economic benefit, support from outside threats, stability, and the prevention of Singaporean isolation on the global stage. Though, support for the initiative is waning in light of opposition from left-leaning PAP members and citizens. Moreover, debate is still ongoing with the Chief Minister of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman.[8] There is no question that mounting instabilities, infrastructural challenges, and economic hardship must be addressed, but there is still the question—how?

## Timeline

**1300s —** Maritime merchants and native communities trade on the Malayan Peninsula, often in Singapore.[9]

**February 6, 1819 —** Stamford Raffles establishes Singapore as a free trading port under the East India Company.[10]

**1822 —** Raffles Town is created; it divides residential areas into ethnic communities: Chinese, Indian, Malay, and European.[11]

**1826 —** The Singapore, Malacca, and Penang trading settlements are administratively combined by the East India Company to form the Straits Settlements.[12]

**1832 —** Singapore is named the capital of Straits Settlements. Immigrants from India, China, and other parts of Asia begin coming to Singapore.[13]

**November 17, 1869 —** The Suez Canal is completed. Global trade increases exponentially and much of it flows through Singapore; as a result, the Singaporean economy and population grow.[14]

**1871 —** Singapore's population nears one-hundred thousand, chiefly because of immigration

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[7] Library Board, "Tunku Announces Proposal for Merger," Nlb.gov.sg, 2011, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=42fcc50a-50aa-4ae3-a18c-823094b60be6.

[8] Ibid.

[9] MPA Maritime Singapore Education, "SINGAPORE'S PAST as a TRADING POST," Maritime Singapore Education (Government of Singapore, 2020), https://www.mpa.gov.sg/docs/mpalibraries/mpa-documents-files/comms-and-community/education-series/mpa-mses_theme-1-issue-1_singapore.

[10] Thomas R Leinbach and Richard Olof Winstedt, "History of Singapore | People, Culture, Language, & Facts," Encyclopedia Britannica, July 17, 2023, https://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-Singapore#ref358535.

[11] BBC, "Singapore Profile - Timeline," BBC News, May 10, 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-15971013.https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=82db2bb0-b99c-4a9f-9beb-b25626cb3f87.

[12] Singapore Infopedia, "Straits Settlements," www.nlb.gov.sg, 2014, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=b0d91ecc-3de3-4e79-a132-b2d0d886bb98.

[13] Ibid.

[14] MPA Maritime Singapore Education, "SINGAPORE'S PAST as a TRADING POST."

**February 15, 1915 —** The Muslim 5th Light Infantry, a British military unit stationed in Singapore, attempts a mutiny. The British government cracks down on Singapore's Indian community.[15]

**1922 —** A British naval base is constructed in Singapore following World War I, intended to defend British territories from Japanese maritime influence. It becomes the British naval hub in East Asia.[16]

**September 1, 1939 —** World War II begins; Singapore's naval base acts as a British military hub.[17] The British erect the "Singapore Strategy".

**December 8, 1941 —** Japanese forces land in Malaya, beginning the Malayan Campaign.

**February 15, 1942 —** Singapore falls at the Battle of Singapore. Japanese occupation causes intense inflation and drives Singaporean economy to an all time low.[18]

**September 2, 1945 —** World War II ends; Japanese occupation ceases as British authority returns.[19] The Singaporean economy begins a slow recovery.

**April 1, 1946 —** The Straits Settlements are dissolved. While other territories are set to merge, Singapore becomes an independent crown colony.[20]

**April 1, 1946 —** The rest of Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States, and the Unfederated Malay States form the Union of Malaya. This state achieves near independence from Britain, setting an important precedent for Singapore.[21]

**December 7, 1949 —** The Chinese Communist Party rises to power. Communism continues to spread across the Asian peninsula.

**April 23, 1956 —** Negotiations for Singapore's independence begin. This lengthy process becomes known as the Merdeka Talks.

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[15] Singapore Infopedia, "1915 Singapore Mutiny," www.nlb.gov.sg, 2016, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=82db2bb0-b99c-4a9f-9beb-b25626cb3f87.

[16] BBC, "Singapore Profile."

[17] Ibid.

[18] Lee Kuan Yew, The Singapore Story : Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew. (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2015).

[19] BBC, "Singapore Profile."

[20] Ibid.

[21] The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "History of Malaysia - the Impact of British Rule," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed July 8, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-Malaysia/The-impact-of-British-rule.

**February 8, 1956 —** The Rendel Commission is enacted. Singapore gains partial self-governance and can dictate internal affairs. Foreign relations and internal security, though, are still under the Singaporean governor's jurisdiction; John Nicoll becomes the governor of Singapore.[22]

**1957 —** Protests begin in Malaya demanding independence from colonial influence. The Union of Malaya becomes the Federation of Malaya, and is granted elevated autonomy.[23]

**June 5, 1959 —** Lee Kuan Yew is elected as Prime Minister of Singapore. At the same time, Singapore attains self-governance, marking the end of the Merdeka Talks.

**May 27, 1961 (Crisis Initiation) —** Tunku Abdul proposes the Singapore–Malaya merger, under which the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Borneo, Brunei, and Sarawak would form the Federation of Malaysia.

## Historical Analysis

**British Imperialism**

Singapore's first steps onto the global stage were as a British port colony. Stamford Raffles, an explorer working for the East India Company, landed in Singapore on January 28th, 1819 hoping to establish a trading post on Malaya to contest Dutch influence in China and India.[24] A port for free-trade was established on the island, and the outlines of a town were drawn up.[25] The town plan—known as the Jackson plan—established roads, residential areas, schools, and a court.[26]

Singapore's port held an instrumental position on the Maritime Silk Road. It allowed European vessels access to China and India. Coupled with this fact, Singapore's free-trade and low-tariffs attracted migrants from China, India, and Malaya; within years, Singapore had become a thriving colony.

In 1826, Singapore joined two other British colonies, Penang and Malacca, to form the Straits Settlements. In the coming years, more territories would be annexed into and expelled from the Straits. Six years later, Singapore was named the capitol, contributing to its burgeoning economy and population.

During this time, British influence would lay fundamental foundations for Singapore, but also create intense cultural fissures. In terms of the former, the establishment of a free port—where typical fees paid by traders were low or non-existent—created economic prosperity for an otherwise resource-barren Singapore. The British also founded schools, welfare structures, and used its military to defend Singaporean interests. The latter, however, saw rifts widen in the Singaporean populace; for one, the society built by British authority was ethnically

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[22] Tze Lin, "Rendel Commission."
[23] The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "History of Malaysia."
[24] Singapore Infopedia, "Stamford Raffles's Career and Contributions to Singapore."
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

hierarchical, treating White and European-Asian citizens as above their Malay compatriots. This standard permeated through Singapore's first policing and governing bodies, creating systemic and systematic racism.[27] Ethnic divides were ingrained into Singapore's infrastructure too: since the Jackson Plan, ethnic communities had separate residential areas. British systems also poorly accommodated ethnic groups, leading these communities to develop self-sufficient education, social support, and businesses.[28] Disillusionment with inequitable British institutions, an inhibiting social hierarchy, and deep-seated factionalism led anti-colonialist ideals to begin brewing in Singapore.

### The Singapore Mutiny

By 1914, Singapore boasted a population of more than three-hundred thousand.[29] When World War I began, Germans in Singapore were sent to a prisoner of war camp, guarded by British soldiers; three months later, those soldiers would be sent to France to aid the frontlines. In their place, the Muslim 5th Light Infantry was tasked with guarding the POW camp.[30] A month later, just a day before their scheduled departure, this unit of eight hundred Muslim sepoys would begin a mutiny against their officers.[31] There were two main reasons for this mutiny. Firstly, instability and calls for independence in India spread to the soldiers. Secondly, rumors circulated that the unit would not be sent back to India, but rather to fight Turkey, the Sultan of which was an important Muslim religious figure.[32]

On the last day of Chinese New Year, British officers at the barracks were killed, and the mutineers freed German prisoners from the camp.[33] British authority was caught off guard by the attack; it was a public holiday, and the sepoys were scheduled to return the very next day.[34]Response was slow. The Muslim 5th Light Infantry unit was the only trained force of soldiers in Singapore, save for a small unit of three-hundred twenty-four kilometers away, the mutiny spread to the streets of Singapore's residential areas.[35] There, mutineers killed pedestrians, notably British men and women.[36]

The mutiny lasted ten-days, ending once a counter-attack was launched with the help of Russian, Japanese, French, and Singaporean police and volunteer forces. According to reports, the mutiny resulted in forty-nine non-sepoy casualties, forty-four of which were British officers and civilians.[37] Two-hundred and two mutineers were tried, and all but one was convicted. Following these trials and concerned that the mutiny's anti-colonial

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[27] Tommy Koh, "The British Rule of Singapore: An Evaluation," The Singapore Law Gazette Law Society of Singapore, July 15, 2019, https://lawgazette.com.sg/feature/the-british-rule-of-singapore-an-evaluation/.

[28] Prasani Weerawardane, Khoo Sim Lyn, and Tay Thiam Chye, "An Overview of Singapore's Education System from 1819 to the 1970s," Nlb.gov.sg, July 2009, https://biblioasia.nlb.gov.sg/vol-5/issue2/jul-2009/singapore-education-system-overview/?

[29] Nathan J.E., "The Census of British Malaya : (the Straits Settlements, Federated Malay States and Protected States of Johore, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Trengganu, and Brunei), 1921," Openaccess, 1921, https://digitalgems.nus.edu.sg/view/287407.

[30] Gautam Hazarika, "How a Handful of Indian Soldiers Rose against the British in Singapore during WWI," Scroll.in, February 15, 2025, https://scroll.in/article/1079193/how-a-handful-of-indian-soldiers-rose-against-the-british-in-singapore-during-wwi.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Bonny Tan, "1915 Singapore Mutiny."

[34] Ibid.

[35] Gautam Hazarika, "How a Handful of Indian Soldiers Rose against the British in Singapore during WWI."

[36] Ibid.

[37] Bonny Tan, "1915 Singapore Mutiny."

basis would garner sympathy from Indian and other Asian communities, British authorities organized public executions, which had been previously phased out.[38]

The event, although short lived, became the stem of many significant changes in Singapore's policy and Muslim populations.[39] Most of these adjustments were rooted in mistrust of Indian and Muslim citizens. For instance, in August of that year, the British began enforcing mandatory military service for men aged fifteen to fifty-five to diversify Singapore's internal security force, and prevent future mutinies.[40] Indian residents were also called to register themselves with the government; most Indian citizens, however, were loyal to Britain unlike the sepoy mutineers.[41] Despite these efforts, the desire for autonomy and anti-colonial sentiment only grew amongst disillusioned Singaporeans.

## World War II - The Battle of Singapore

After World War I, Britain began growing concerned about Japan's expanding naval force.[42] A naval hub was needed in Asia, and the colony of Singapore was an optimal location; it had strategic advantages like vicinity to regional belligerents and ease of defense that other British colonies in the region lacked, and was already a common stop for British naval vessels in need of repair or maintenance.[43] Thus, in 1923, construction of the Singapore Naval Base was given the greenlight. This naval base became part of a larger operation called the "Singapore Strategy," with the goal of defending Australia—which was a self-governing British colony at the time—from the threat of Japanese expansion.[44]

World War II broke out in 1939, and by that time the Singapore Naval Base had been completed.[45] However, Britain had invested most of its naval resources in European conflicts; as such, the base was ill-equipped. Once the Japanese expansion had progressed into French Indo–China, it became evident that Malaya, and Singapore by proxy, was in a volatile position—vulnerable to bombings and amphibious attacks.[46] Still, Britain could only afford to send two capital ships to defend the territory, in contrast with initial hopes for a robust line of defense.[47]

The Imperial Japanese landed in Northern Malaya on December 8th, 1941. Two-days later, Japanese attacks sank both capital ships defending Malaya and took down Allied air support; Malaya was now defended neither by water nor air. What followed was a swift Japanese advance, which pushed Allied forces to the island of Singapore in just two months.[48]

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[38] Gautam Hazarika, "How a Handful of Indian Soldiers Rose against the British in Singapore during WWI."

[39] Ibid.

[40] Joseph Hammond, "Singapore: A Mutiny like No Other," The Diplomat, February 10, 2015, https://thediplomat.com/2015/02/singapore-a-mutiny-like-no-other/.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Periodical Today RNZN Navy, "Singapore Naval Base - Origin and Evolution - Page 2 of 2," Naval Historical Society of Australia, March 4, 2007, https://navyhistory.au/singapore-naval-base-origin-and-evolution/2/.

[43] Ibid.

[44] National Museum Australia, "Fall of Singapore | National Museum of Australia," Nma.gov.au 1 (September 6, 2023), https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/fall-of-singapore.

[45] RNZN Navy, "Singapore Naval Base."

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.; the naval squadron deployed to Singapore was centered around the capital ships battleship HMS Prince of Wales and the battlecruiser HMS Repulse.

[48] Ibid.

On February 8th, 1942, the first Japanese troops landed in the North of Singapore.[49] Despite having a numerical advantage, Allied forces quickly succumbed to repeated bombings, limited-resources, and the intensity of Japanese forces.[50] Just one week later, British command surrendered Singapore before naval support could arrive. Winston Churchill described the Battle of Singapore: "the largest capitulation in British history."[51]
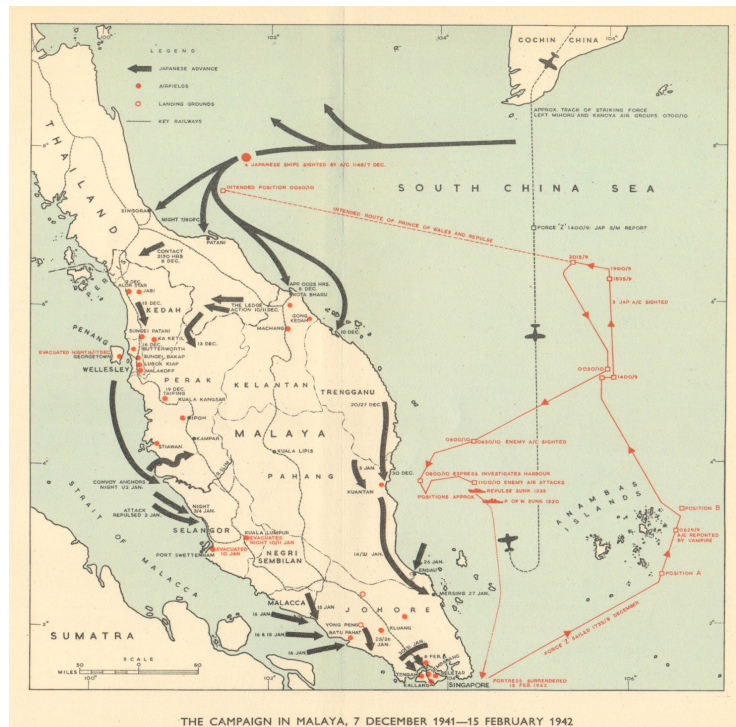


*Figure 1: The Campaign in Malaya, 7 December 1941 - 15 February 1942.[52]*

## World War II - Japanese Occupation

*This section may contain sensitive and potentially disturbing information.*

Although Japanese occupation officially began on the morning of February 15th, the Japanese campaign for Singapore played no small part in shaping wartime Malaya. For one, refugees fleeing the soldiers moved South of the peninsula, leading Singapore's population to abruptly spike.[53] During the campaign and occupation, Singapore's resources—which were not abundant to begin with as they depended heavily on now defunct trade—were stretched to their limits.[54] To exacerbate matters further, Japanese soldiers had cut off supply lines by

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[49] National Museum Australia, "Fall of Singapore."

[50] Ibid.

[51] Terry Stewart, "The Fall of Singapore," Historic UK, 2022, https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryofBritain/The-Fall-of-Singapore/.

[52] Office of Public Sector Information and Her Majesty's Stationery Office, The Campaign in Malaya, 7 December 1941 - 15 February 1942, 1954, Royal Air Force 1939-1945, Volume II, the Fight Avails, 1954.

[53] Lee Geok Boi, "Wartime Victuals: Surviving the Japanese Occupation," Nlb.gov.sg, 2019, https://biblioasia.nlb.gov.sg/vol-15/issue-1/apr-jun-2019/wartime-victuals/.

[54] Hays, "SINGAPORE and ITS ROAD to INDEPENDENCE."

stopping trains and disrupting trading routes.[55] When the occupation began, Singapore had little food to work with; it could not accommodate its population.

Japanese rule was highly oppressive and lacked standardization. The first action Japanese military rule took after the surrender was to seize all resources.[56] Food stores were taken, warehouses and shops were raided, and even residential homes were searched for goods.[57] A large portion of the food went to the Japanese military, the rest was distributed to the Singaporean public through a rations system.[58]

Singapore was renamed Shonan, and was designated as the capital of Japan's Southern occupied regions.[59] The education system, calendar, currency, and economy were also entirely reformed to fit Japanese standards: Japanese was now a mandatory addition to the curriculum in an effort to replace English and Chinese.[60] Moreover, policy changes were implemented; namely, gambling and prostitution were legalized.[61]

The low amount of rations, coupled with the Japanese military's increasing demand for resources, created a heavily flawed rationing system that allocated less and less food for civilians.[62] Many citizens had little option when it came to food: they could either attempt to cultivate their own food on Singapore's nutritionally-weak soil, or risk execution by buying food and medicine from the black market illegally.[63]

The gruesome conditions of Japanese rule was not limited to just food shortages; the Japanese had little sympathy for the residents of their occupied territories and enforced strict, cruel governance. Singaporeans endured countless hardships. The time was no stranger to forced labour; abuse; and arbitrary, baseless executions.[64] The earliest example of these conditions surfaced during Operation Sook Ching. This operation—which occurred in the first months of occupation, February and March of 1942—targeted Chinese–Singaporeans as retribution for the opposition Japanese forces faced in Manchuria.[65] Designated screening centres were created, calling all Chinese–Singaporeans for mandatory inspection.[66] All Chinese citizens suspected of being Communists or anti–Japanese, even if unfoundedly so, were flagged.[67] Furthermore, Chinese men who were deemed capable of taking up arms, or who possessed weapons, were flagged.[68] The flagged offenders would be transported to remote areas where Japanese officers were instructed to dispose of them quietly and discreetly.[69] Although Japanese records

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[55] Ho, "Battle of Singapore."

[56] Boi, "Wartime Victuals."

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Jeffrey Hays, "JAPANESE OCCUPATION of SOUTHEAST ASIA and the PACIFIC during WORLD WAR II | Facts and Details," Factsanddetails.com, 2020, https://factsanddetails.com/asian/ca67/sub427/item2529.html#chapter-8.

[60] MOE Heritage Centre, "The Japanese Occupation," moehc.sg, accessed July 15, 2025, https://moehc.moe.edu.sg/explore/the-japanese-occupation/.

[61] Hays, "SINGAPORE and ITS ROAD to INDEPENDENCE."

[62] Ibid.

[63] Boi, "Wartime Victuals."

[64] Hays, "JAPANESE OCCUPATION of SOUTHEAST ASIA."

[65] Stephanie Ho, "Operation Sook Ching," www.nlb.gov.sg, June 17, 2013, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=cc4da337-3bcd-4f96-bdc6-5210646bdd90.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

report the incident as having caused five thousand casualties, the accurate death-toll of the one-month operation is likely significantly higher.[70]

Atrocities did not end after the Sook Ching Massacre. Singaporeans were often harassed in the streets by Japanese officers; many of them were killed.[71] Those who did not understand Japanese customs frequently offended Japanese authorities unintentionally.[72] The aftermath of public executions were displayed in the streets.[73]

After three gruesome years where the death rate in Singapore rose to double that of the pre-war level, World War II's end was marked by Japanese surrender.[74] News reached Singapore's citizens a week later, who were thankful to avoid a violent battle for reoccupation. On the morning of September 12th, 1945, the surrender ceremony took place.[75]

Despite Singaporean hopes that the state of things would return to normal, British liberation did not solve everything.[76] The food shortage, drug, crime, infrastructural, and employment issues were more than evident. Singapore was no longer known as a bustling port-city, but rather as a hub for drugs, crime, and revolutionaries.[77] Not all was bad, however; amidst adversity, Singaporeans had built a strong cultural bond and unique sense of national identity that contributed to its rise to independence.[78]

The Japanese invasion and subsequent occupation played a major role in igniting the sparks of desire for independence and sovereignty in Singaporeans. Fear instilled by Japanese cruelty turned to anger which rose and emanated throughout the Singaporean zeitgeist.[79] It was clear—even after British rule returned—that Singapore would never be the same.

### The Fight for Independence - The Merdeka Talks

The Singaporean people could not truly become a nation if the British were still in charge of their affairs, legislation, foreign relations, and infrastructure. Luckily, the rise of the want for independence in Singapore aligned quite well with British plans for decolonization. Indeed, the British Colonial Office had been planning before World War II's end to grant neighbouring colonies of the Malay states, Penang, and Malacca severance from British rule; however, no such plans had been prepared for Singapore.[80]

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[70] Ibid.
[71] Lee, "The Singapore Story : Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew."
[72] Hays, "JAPANESE OCCUPATION of SOUTHEAST ASIA."
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Lee, "The Singapore Story : Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew."
[76] Ibid.
[77] Jeffrey Hays, "SINGAPORE and ITS ROAD to INDEPENDENCE after WORLD WAR II | Facts and Details," factsanddetails.com, June 2015, https://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Singapore/sub5_7a/entry-3713.html.
[78] Boi, "Wartime Victuals."
[79] Ho, "Operation Sook Ching."
[80] Hays, "SINGAPORE and ITS ROAD to INDEPENDENCE."

In 1946, Singapore was designated as a Crown Colony—which did not grant the autonomy Singaporeans hoped for.[81] Britain was concerned that with its small size, relative isolation, and inexperienced politicians, Singapore could not survive if thrust into self-governance too hastily.[82] It was not until 1953 when Sir George Rendel, a noble appointed by the colonial government, was sent to review the Singapore constitution that this would change. Rendel was tasked to devise a new political and constitutional structure that would guide Singapore in an intermediary step towards independence.[83] The new constitution, or the Rendel commission, was approved in 1954.[84] Under the Rendel Commission, Singapore now had autonomy over domestic affairs like education, healthcare, and infrastructure through a legislative assembly. This assembly of thirty-two members, twenty-five of whom would be elected by Singaporeans, and the cabinet, a nine member council of colonial ministers, would serve as the new government of Singapore.[85]

Still, these new freedoms came with limits: Britain still had control over internal security, law, finance, defense and foreign affairs; the British governor also retained the power to veto any legislations.[86]

Elections for seats in the assembly were set for April 1955.[87] Eligible Singaporeans were automatically registered as voters under the Commission.[88] When polling day came around, seventy-nine candidates contested the twenty-five available seats. The candidate pool was diverse: consisting of candidates representing six different parties, as well as ten independents.[89] Major parties included the Singapore Labour Front (SLF), Peoples Action Party (PAP), Singapore Progressive Party (PP), and the Singapore Democratic Party (DP).

Unexpectedly, the Singapore Labour Front Party won the majority with ten out of twenty-five seats.[90] The new legislative assembly, in tandem with David Marshall—Chief Minister—set out to campaign and negotiate for a truly independent Singapore.[91] These negotiations became known as the Merdeka Talks.

Initial campaigns focused on immediate independence by means of a merged Singapore and Malaya.[92] This sentiment, although controversial, was driven by the belief that Malaya's size, economy, and location would support Singapore in the long-term.[93]

Between 1956 and 1957, the new Singaporean government represented Singapore in negotiations with the British government for a self-governing constitution.[94] Unfortunately the initial talks yielded little results, creating rifts

[81] Leinbach and Winstedt, "History of Singapore."
[82] Tze Lin, "Rendel Commission."
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Library Board, "1955 Legislative Assembly General Election," Nlb.gov.sg, 2025, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=c58bb498-d6c1-446b-a40e-c78f3e688ae2.
[88] Tze Lin, "Rendel Commission."
[89] Board, "1955 General Election."
[90] Library Board, "Singapore Labour Front Is Formed," Nlb.gov.sg, 2025, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=ff12c3ab-9bec-4b29-a393-989356be644e.
[91] Hays, "SINGAPORE and ITS ROAD to INDEPENDENCE."
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.

in the delegation of negotiators.[95] David Marshall's reliability was thrown into question, with his inability to break impasse's stalling negotiations significantly.

The central point of contention in the new constitution was internal security, as Britain was reluctant to relinquish internal control to a Singaporean government still plagued by threats of a communist takeover.[96] David Marshall's reliability was thrown into question, with his inability to break this impasse stalling negotiations significantly. In July of 1956, Marshall resigned—he was succeeded by Lim Yew Hock.

The delegation returned to Singapore with the goal of squandering burgeoning communist sympathy to better internal security negotiations by proving the Singaporean government's reliability. Restrictions on communist hotspots, like student-unions and Chinese schools, were placed; insurgent organizations were promptly shut-down.[97] This brief period was marked by significant, more radical approaches to reigning in dissenting populations. Though it was successful, it would prove problematic later down the line. By March of 1957, the Singaporean delegation returned to Britain to give a second attempt at negotiations.[98]

During the second negotiation, a final proposal was reached: internal security would be under the joint-jurisdiction of Singapore and Britain.[99] On 28 November 1958, Singapore officially became a self-governing state. Although Singapore was not yet a part of Malaysia, both Singaporean and British authorities expected and encouraged a merger in the near future.[100]

By this time, the economy of Singapore had significantly recovered. Its economy had greatly grown as a result of increasing global demand for rubber and tin. In 1950, Singapore would export thousands of tons of rubber to major countries: the United States, Russia, France, and the United Kingdom.[101] Furthermore, food shortage struggles had ended. Welfare and education were restored to a state that was equal, if not superior, to prewar conditions.

## Aftermath of World War II - Communism

Following the tumultuous end of World War II, people around the world searched for a new society free from the flaws that sparked conflict, war, and corruption. From this search rose an ideology which spurred a multi-decade international detente—communism. In Asia, a new center of international communism was established by Mao Ze Dong in 1949 with the overturning of Mainland China.[102] This development alarmed western countries; many were concerned the ideology would threaten Western powers' place on the global stage. Moreover, Communism rapidly spread across the Asian continent through sporadic revolutionary movements,

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[95] Library Board, "Merdeka Talks," Nlb.gov.sg, September 2018, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=3ff46429-02a6-406c-99f0-e6ab1e6735b3.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Hays, "SINGAPORE and ITS ROAD to INDEPENDENCE."

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Malaya Tribune, "NewspaperSG," Nlb.gov.sg, accessed November 12, 2025, https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/digitised/article/maltribune19500607-1.2.10?qt=rubber&q=rubber.

[102] History.com Editors, "Communism Timeline - Russia, China & Cuba | HISTORY," HISTORY, December 14, 2018, https://www.history.com/articles/communism-timeline.

influence from communist hubs, and within restructuring political systems.[103] In fact, both Singapore and neighbouring Malaya had their fair share of communist and communist sympathizing governmental authorities.[104]

In both Malaya and Singapore, communist sentiments became commonplace. The promise of an equitable government free from colonial influence was appealing. Politics were rife with socialist and communist ideologies. Even the Singaporean government had communist constituents, many of whom were in the legislative assembly between 1955 and 1960.[105]

Communism in Malaysia was unique; it was one of the few instances where a Communist effort to gain control of an undeveloped country was unsuccessful.[106] Even despite near optimal conditions for a communist uprising— economic hardship, political instabilities, and social divides—Malaysia did not turn to communism.[107]

The main driver of communism in Malaysia was the Malayan Communist Party (MCP).[108]Although it was initially an illegal organization, the British accepted an offer to recognize the party during World War II, in exchange for their collaboration in holding back the Japanese campaign.[109] The MCP's fighting arm—Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA)—was trained and then contributed to British resistance to Japanese invasion, even after Britain surrendered.[110] When the war ended, negotiations were accepted to dissolve this party; however, this dissolution was anything but clean, especially while the MCP's political arm remained. Although most MPAJA forces left Singapore, many lingered silently in Malaya.[111]

The population of Malaya was divided into three different ethnic groups: Malayan, Indian, and Chinese, each of which had its own take on communism. At the time, the colonial government's constitution and policies favoured Malaysians. Because of this lack of support, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) grew popular with Chinese populations, who supported the MCP's anti-colonial foundations.[112]

In the spring of 1948, the MCP shifted their agenda; they were now looking towards a more aggressive strategy to usurp British rule. Hence began the twelve-year insurgency known as the Malayan Emergency.[113]

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[103] Ibid.

[104] SG101, "The Early Tumultuous Years: 1950s to 1970s," Sg101.gov.sg, 2023, https://www.sg101.gov.sg/defence-and-security/challenges/the-early-tumultuous-years/.

[105] Ibid.

[106] History.com Editors, "Communism Timeline - Russia, China & Cuba."

[107] The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "Malayan Emergency | Communist Insurgency, British Response & Colonialism," Encyclopedia Britannica, August 14, 2003, https://www.britannica.com/event/Malayan-Emergency#ref775636.

[108] Sheeren Tan, "Communist Party of Malaya," www.nlb.gov.sg, March 2018, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=56327203-9842-46b4-85d3-c4f608578b2c.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Heng Wong, "Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army," www.nlb.gov.sg, 2019, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=1760a982-aef4-4671-aacb-a505114eb908.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Wong, "Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army."

To start, the MCP provoked the government into declaring a state of emergency by spreading a reign of terror. The party carried out 13,585 operations against British forces, even killing a high ranking officer at one point.[114] On February 1st, 1949, the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA) was officially formed from the remnants of the MPAJA.[115] The following decade was filled with countless assassinations and guerilla warfare campaigns that instilled genuine fear among Malayans.[116] Many of these operations were backed by Chinese-Malayans living on the outskirts of guerilla-infested jungles.[117]

The British reacted to the crisis by implementing a bounty system: the death or capture of every communist affiliated member was awarded with valuables.[118] As the campaign progressed, the biggest weakness of total guerrilla warfare—lack of organization, began to poison the insurgency. Combined with rising casualties rate and lack of supply, the campaign began losing momentum.[119]

After twelve years, the emergency was officially declared resolved; however, communism did not leave the Malayan Peninsula.[120] In Singapore, Chinese-educated students and the Chinese population were the primary drivers of communism's spread.[121] Although these actors often supported the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), this support did not necessarily extend to the MCP, which is why the latter party found it hard to establish footing in Singapore. In 1955, a string of almost three-hundred strikes followed by a riot put Singapore's internal government's stability into question.[122] The riot, which occurred on May 12th, further fanned the flames of Chinese dissent, and consequently communist insurgency in Singapore.[123]

Britain, still disapproving, wanted to crack down on communism in the Malaysian Peninsula. The proposal for merger was one such effort to minimize the strong communist influence following WWII.[124]

### The Maria Hertogh Riots

In December of 1950 from the 11th to the 13th, a massive riot broke out in Singapore.[125] It was caused by dissenters of the Maria Herogh trial ruling. Maria Herogh was born into a Catholic family in Tjimahi, Java. During the Japanese occupation, however, she was separated from her family after her mother placed her in the care of a family in the Netherlands, following her father's imprisonment.[126]

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[114] The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "Malaysia - Political Transformation," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed July 23, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/place/Malaysia/Political-transformation#ref509484.

[115] Wong, "Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army."

[116] The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "Malaysia - Political Transformation."

[117] Hays, "SINGAPORE and ITS ROAD to INDEPENDENCE."

[118] The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "Malayan Emergency."

[119] Ibid.

[120] Hays, "SINGAPORE and ITS ROAD to INDEPENDENCE."

[121] SG101, "The Early Tumultuous Years."

[122] Hays, "SINGAPORE and ITS ROAD to INDEPENDENCE."

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Singapore Infopedia, "Maria Hertogh Riots," www.nlb.gov.sg, September 14, 2014, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=fbc266c5-4f6f-49d8-b77e-d37e20742087.

[126] Ibid.

After the war ended, Maria's mother sought out her daughter in the Netherlands.[127] Maria had since been raised by a Muslim family and began following Islamic teachings. Maria's biological mother contested her custody in the Singaporean Supreme Court, since the circumstances surrounding her adoption, or lack thereof, were unclear.[128] During proceedings, the legality of Maria's Islamic marriage was also called into question.[129] Maria, who was underage, had entered into a truncated marriage—which the Singaporean Muslim community regarded as an essential part of the Islamic law of marriage.[130]

The Singaporean Justice ruled Maria be returned to her biological mother, who placed her in a Christian convent.[131] He also ruled her marriage illegitimate.[132] The Muslim community in Singapore objected. Leading up to an activist meeting on December 11th, media began portraying this incident as a microcosm for religious divide between Islam and Christianity.[133]

By noon on December 11th, a group of twenty protestors had grown to almost three thousand. An hour later, a group of activists assaulted an officer; his colleague, in turn, shot and wounded two assailants.[134] This marked the beginning of a riot. The crowd of protestors began targeting European and Eurasian bystanders.[135] The situation deteriorated with numerous incidents of arson, robbery, and looting. By the time Singaporean authorities stopped the violence and detained rioters, nine people had been killed and 127 injured.[136]

This event created further distrust in British colonial rule, as law enforcement and colonial administration made countless oversights which enabled the riot to exacerbate.[137] It also demonstrated the extreme tensions rising in the Muslim community.

### The Union of Malaya and the Federation of Malaya

During World War II, Britain was looking to restructure the Straits Settlement.[138] A new proposal for a Union of Malaya surfaced, promising greater support for the Malay economy, security, and infrastructure.[139] This proposal included the nine Malay states and the Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca.[140] The choice to exclude Singapore from the Union of Malaya was a controversial one.[141] For one, Singapore was just too different

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[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Singapore Infopedia, "Straits Settlements."
[139] Singapore Infopedia, "Malayan Union Is Inaugurated," www.nlb.gov.sg, 2014, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=e8db672a-3571-4fa3-9df0-220e83ee2a88.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Hays, "SINGAPORE and ITS ROAD to INDEPENDENCE."

ethnically to harmoniously fit into the union. Moreover, its critical position in British affairs as both a trading port and a naval base made relinquishing control to a self-governing body unappealing.[142]

The Malayan Union was inaugurated by the British Labour Government on April 1st, 1945.[143] Although its debut would be short-lived, it was a cornerstone in Malayan independence.[144] There was much opposition towards the union, as its constitution and structure were created without consulting local Malayans while also stripping existing rights to governance from Malay authorities.[145] As a result, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) was created and led by the oppositions of the Malayan Union.[146] The main dissent towards the union was simple—equality. While the Malayan Union granted equal rights for every citizen, the UMNO wanted special powers and privileges for Malayan authorities and native Malayan people.[147]

UMNO demanded a return to the political structure before WWII, and their campaigns further decreased British influence within Malaya.[148] The movement garnered significant support from Malayan people after only a few months of existence. Protests and boycotts erupted all over the country from sympathizers.[149]

In contrast, non-native Malayans were campaigning for an independent Malaya of their own.[150] Multiple groups of disparate origins came together to fight for an equal Malaya away from British rule. These groups, which included Chinese and Indian communities, trade-unions, and women's rights bodies, joined the MCP to form the All–Malaya Council of Joint Action (AMCJA).[151] The MCP conceded much of its vision for a self-governing Malaya, which it had pushed while involved in the Malayan Emergency, to align with the AMCJA's overall sentiments.[152]

The clashing of these ideologies, as well as increased consciousness of personal freedoms and nation building created a budding sense of national identity for Malayans. On the UMNO side, a Malaya that prioritized Malay peoples and their rights. On the AMCJA, a new standard of Malayan identity that included all people.[153] These ideologies would often bleed over into Singaporean politics, even more so as the merger gained traction.[154]

It was the UMNO's terms that committed less to severing British rule, and given that Britain wanted to hold on to important political, economic, and strategic positions in Malaya, the British government ultimately conceded to the demands of UMNO.[155] This was in spite of the fact that the AMCJA had the support of much of the public.

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[142] Ibid.
[143] Singapore Infopedia, "Malayan Union Is Inaugurated."
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Cheah Boon Kheng, "The Malayan Union and Its Impact - the Malaysian Bar," www.malaysianbar.org.my, July 2007, https://www.malaysianbar.org.my/article/news/legal-and-general-news/general-news/the-malayan-union-and-its-impact.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.
[153] SG101, "The Early Tumultuous Years."
[154] Hays, "SINGAPORE and ITS ROAD to INDEPENDENCE."
[155] Boon Kheng, "The Malayan Union and Its Impact."

On February 1st, 1948, the British established an agreement with UMNO; the sovereignty of the nation was returned back to Malay leadership, with a tightening of citizenship laws for Chinese, Indians and other ethnic groups.[156] The new constitution included the systemic preferential treatment of native Malay people.[157] Article 153(1) of the constitution reads as follows:

"It shall be the responsibility of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (King of Malaysia) to safeguard the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak and the legitimate interests of other communities in accordance with the provisions of this Article."[158]

This controversial clause not only protects affirmative action initiatives like specific scholarships and preferential admission into government organizations, but also grants the Malayan parliament power to restrict business, such as trade, for non–Malayan actors.

Because the formation of the Federation of Malaya was so rooted in debates about ethnic policy and nationalism, the expectation that Malaya would eventually annex Singapore was thrown into question.[159] The Chinese population in Singapore would significantly displace the Malay population in Malaya, and the interests of the Chinese population in Singapore—which more often than not aligned with communism, unions, and Chinese identity—could outweigh that of Malayans'.[160] Moreover, Singapore's large population, stronger economy, and lucrative free-port were bound to disturb existing metropolitan hubs in Malaya like the capital Kuala Lumpur; the heart of the country was thus forecast to slowly become Singapore.[161]

## Current Situation

**The State of Singapore**



*Figure 2: The Flag of Singapore.[162]*

[156] Ibid.
[157] Singapore Infopedia, "Malayan Union Is Inaugurated."
[158] University of Minnesota Human Rights Library, "Constitution of Malaysia PART I -the STATES, RELIGION and LAW of the FEDERATION," n.d., https://hrlibrary.umn.edu/research/malaysia-constitution.pdf.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Tin Seng Lim, "Merger with Malaysia," www.nlb.gov.sg, November 2017, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=09a2ef2c-743e-44f3-9bb4-39c6ed34c90d.
[161] Ibid.
[162] National Heritage Board, "National Flag," Nhb.gov.sg, 2017, https://www.nhb.gov.sg/what-we-do/our-work/community-engagement/education/resources/national-symbols/national-flag.

Singapore currently has a population of 1,634,100.[163] This populace is primarily divided into Chinese, Indian and Pakistani, and Malay groups: each consisting of 1,230,700, 137,800, and 227,300 people, respectively.[164] The country's official languages are Chinese, Tamil, and English—although only English appears in school curriculum.[165] Singapore has an area of 736.3 km$^2$.[166]

## Communism

Attempts to quell communism have ostensibly curbed societal unrest, but have yet to address communism's underlying propagation. For instance, although alleged communist organizations had been disbanded, nothing had been done to crack down on communists—especially those operating underground.[167] It was made clear through riots, and operations during the Malayan Emergency, that communists were not averse to violence as a means of change.[168] Communism is common in Chinese communities—namely, middle schools which are run without governmental oversight; many riots and demonstrations were driven by Chinese middle school students.[169]

Moreover, the line that divides moderate and left-wing politicians from pro-communist ones is thin. The PAP, as a left-wing party, struggled to draw a clear boundary for communism.[170] In fact, the PAP was originally a socialist-party that relied on the support of work and trade-unions and pro-communists.[171] The question of whether to tolerate or stamp out communism remains contentious for the members of the cabinet and legislative assembly.

## Unemployment

As a result of the Japanese occupation as well as Singapore's strong reliance on its port, almost no local industry exists to create a stable job market.[172] Although no official means of employment registration existed—unemployment is estimated to be more than ten-percent.[173] Singapore needs to industrialize and create new jobs if it has hopes of supporting the ever-growing population, though there is no industrialization without incentive.[174]

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[163] Government of Singapore, State of Singapore Annual Report 1960 (Authority, 1962).
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Kirsten Han, "Operation Coldstore: Singapore's Struggle to Confront History," www.lowyinstitute.org, May 24, 2018, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/operation-coldstore-singapore-s-struggle-confront-history.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Singapore National Library Board, "Protests by Chinese Middle School Students."
[170] Cheryl Sim, "People's Action Party: Pre-Independence Years," www.nlb.gov.sg, January 26, 2015, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=1b1f20c7-d8b6-4ee2-a0bc-90eaf7828da7.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Joanna Tan, "Port of Singapore," www.nlb.gov.sg, April 19, 2018, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=2043f0bb-78b5-4f2f-b021-ecb53bc4fa8b; Lee, "The Singapore Story : Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew."
[173] Government of Singapore, State of Singapore Annual Report 1960 (Authority, 1962); Lee, "The Singapore Story : Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew."
[174] Ibid.

## Economy

Singapore's economic recovery can be attributed in large part to the restoration of its free port.[175]Following its damage during the Japanese occupation, Singapore could no longer accommodate the influx of global trade into its docks. Once the port facilities were restored, however, the Singaporean economy quickly began to recover.[176] Because Singapore's economy is so dependent on foreign interest by means of trade and investment, the importance of maintaining Singapore's free port status cannot be ignored. Of the few local Singaporean industries, rubber, paint, coconut and pineapple are the most notable.[177]

## Infrastructure

The economy's recovery had yet to bleed into Singapore's infrastructure, which was also heavily damaged during the Japanese occupation. Almost seventy-percent of the population lives in slums due to lack of suitable housing.[178] Moreover, although social welfare and public services are back to their prewar levels, both these social-safety nets struggle to properly provide for Singapore's population.[179]

Public transport, healthcare, and education services also had a long way to go. These industries were also now below the global standard when it came to reliability, quality, and funding. However, investing in infrastructure, although it may create jobs, still poses the risk of taking resources away from Singapore's valuable port and thus, trade.

## Conscription

Because the country anticipated the British to withdraw both its internal and military forces after granting full independence, Singapore began implementing mandatory conscription to prepare in 1952.[180] The National Service Ordinance (NSO) bill required men aged 18–20 to register in National Service, and later the military, lest they risk jail-time or a hefty fine.[181] This was a highly controversial choice. Although the national draft had existed for years, this was the first time the new Singaporean government had brought it to the table.[182] To exacerbate matters, divisive national identity made certain groups reluctant to serve in the military of a country their identity did not resonate with.[183]

Specifically, the change was unpopular amongst the Chinese—who by this point already expressed dissent towards the British government.[184] Many believed that this draft would oblige them to defend colonialism.[185]

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[175] Hays, "SINGAPORE and ITS ROAD to INDEPENDENCE."

[176] Ibid.

[177] Government of Singapore, State of Singapore Annual Report 1960 (Authority, 1962).

[178] SG101, "1959-1965: Early Economic Strategies," SG101, accessed July 26, 2025, https://www.sg101.gov.sg/economy/surviving-our-independence/1959-1965/.

[179] Government of Singapore, State of Singapore Annual Report 1960 (Authority, 1962).

[180] Singapore National Library Board, "Protests by Chinese Middle School Students," www.nlb.gov.sg, August 2014, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=376486b7-a68b-4a2b-acad-97e0b678a8e7.

[181] Ibid.

[182] Hammond, "Singapore: A Mutiny like No Other."

[183] Singapore National Library Board, "Protests by Chinese Middle School Students."

[184] Ibid.

[185] Ibid.

Initial plans to implement the NSO were unsuccessful due to opposition from a small, but highly disruptive, community of Chinese dissenters up until 1954.

Nevertheless, when the bill was formally implemented, the population was ostensibly receptive; ninety-eight percent of those who were called upon registered.[186] The government, however, was met with intense opposition from Chinese students.[187] In May, multiple petitions requesting an exemption for Chinese students were halted, ignored, or discarded.[188] Eventually tensions boiled over, and sparked mass protests, demonstrations, and boycotts. Despite the government's best efforts, the 1954 NSO was postponed and is still yet to be implemented.[189]

### Ethnic Divides and Nationalism

Singapore's very first town plan sowed the seeds of ethnic tension: by segregating residential areas based on ethnicity, Raffles Town kickstarted inchoate cracks that eventually worsened to become wide rifts.[190] During the colonial era, British rule and constitution had a habit of overlooking much needed social systems, especially for ethnic minorities, prompting communities to build self-sufficiency via interreliance.[191] These tight-knit groups developed their own culture, customs, and became almost separate nations. Now, as Singapore needs to unite Singaporeans under a common nationalistic umbrella, these nationalities prove stubborn to coalesce.

Economically, businesses too remain confined by ethnic bounds.[192] Few stray outside of their mutually exclusive ethnic boxes. Singapore's Malay, Chinese, and Indian communities existed in tolerant cohabitation rather than in cooperation.[193]

In an attempt to promote blanket nationalism, the PAP redesigned the Singaporean flag in 1959 to replace the Union Jack design that was an homage to British colonialism.[194] It now features five stars, representing the five core democratic values, and a crescent moon.[195] Simultaneously, a state crest and national anthem were introduced.[196]

Without the amelioration of nationalistic and ethnic divides, building a strong Singaporean identity and subsequently, effective national mechanisms are exceedingly difficult. Dissenters have grown reliant on coalition-based, violent, and non-diplomatic means to voice opposition. This could spell an intense future disunion of ethnic groups.

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[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid.
[190] BBC, "Singapore Profile."
[191] Stephen Dziedzic, "Singapore's Quarrel over Colonialism," www.lowyinstitute.org, February 12, 2020,
https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/singapore-s-quarrel-over-colonialism; Government of Singapore, State of Singapore Annual Report 1960 (Authority, 1962).
[192] Ibid.
[193] Lee, "The Singapore Story : Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew."
[194] National Heritage Board, "National Flag."
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid.

**The Chinese Community**

The Chinese populace of Singapore frequently clashes with authority in Singapore. Despite Chinese being an official language of Singapore, there was a notable lack of Chinese culture and language options available in the standard curriculum of Singaporean schools; Chinese communities—being mostly funded by rich philanthropists—operated their own schools outside of governmental purview.[197] Even so, those who graduated from Chinese elementary and middle schools find it difficult to secure opportunities outside of those in Chinese businesses.[198] As such, these graduates believed colonial authorities did not grant equal opportunities to the Chinese educated.[199]

Chinese middle schools, which were the highest level of Chinese education,[200] became a breeding ground for radicalization. Not only did these students mirror and support the political-ideological developments in China—namely communism—but also staunchly opposed political developments by means of protesting and boycotting, the former of which more often than not ended in violence.[201] The government has almost always opted to take a reactive position when it comes to limiting damage. In one instance, Singaporean Chinese-middle schools were closed during the Malayan Emergency in an effort to mitigate the events spreading to Singapore.[202] Although these measures are temporarily effective, they only alienate the Chinese further.

## Initiating Crisis

After nearly half a decade of communications with the Chief Minister of Malaya Tunku Abdul Rahman went unreciprocated, Lee Kuan Yew and his cabinet find themselves surprised when they are met with a seemingly sudden proposal for merger on May 27, 1961. During a recent conference of foreign correspondents, Tunku proposed the idea of, in his words, "Mighty Malaysia."[203] This state would be a merger of the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Borneo, Brunei, and Sarawak to form the Federation of Malaysia. The following are the terms drafted for a formal proposal for the merger.

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1. The states of the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Borneo, Brunei, and Sarawak will merge to form the Federation of Malaysia
   a. Singapore will become a highly autonomous state in the Federation of Malaysia
   b. Singaporeans will be classified as Malaysian nationals, rather than citizens
      i. Singaporeans may apply for Malaysian citizenship
   c. Singaporeans will not lose their Singapore citizenship; however,
      i. They can only vote in Singaporean elections

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[197] Singapore National Library Board, "Protests by Chinese Middle School Students."
[198] BBC, "Singapore Profile - Timeline."
[199] Singapore National Library Board, "Protests by Chinese Middle School Students."
[200] Singapore National Library Board, "Protests by Chinese Middle School Students."
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Library Board, "Tunku Announces Proposal for Merger."

REPRESENTATION

1. Singapore is to be represented by 15 of the 159 seats in the Federal House of Representatives

2. Singapore is to be represented by 2 of the 50 seats in the Federal Senate

LANGUAGE

1. Malay will be the official language of Malaysia

    a. Singapore and its education system is subject to this change

GOVERNMENT

1. Singapore's cabinet retains control over Singaporean affairs including

    a. Labour

    b. Education

2. The Malaysian federal government will have jurisdiction over

    a. Defence

    b. External affairs

        i. Singapore's free port will be protected

    c. Internal Security

ECONOMY

1. A free market will not be established immediately

    a. Singapore must pay 40% of its revenue to the Malaysian government

    b. A free market will be established over a 10-year period

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These changes to the proposal helped the Federation of Malaya warm up to the merger, as with the inclusion of Borneo, Brunei, and Sawarak, Singapore's Chinese population would no longer become the ethnic majority in the newly formed state. Moreover, Singaporean citizens could not vote outside of Singapore, being classified as "nationals" rather than Malaysian citizens.

The cabinet is between a multiplicity of immense pressures: colonial influence pushing for a merger, a more divided populace than ever, mounting pressures from communist influence, internal strife surrounding the terms of a potential merger, and deep fissures in party-relations.

Although many figures in the government believe that a merger with Malaysia is the only way to build a strong economic foundation for Singapore, public sentiment remains nebulous. The future of Singapore now lies at a crossroad.

## Bloc Positions

**The People's Action Party (PAP)**

Founded by Lee Kuan Yew, Goh Keng Swee, and Toh Chin Chye, the People's Action party was built with a simple burden in mind—independence.[204] The moderate-left wing party's main concern for the past decade has undoubtedly been fighting for Singapore's separation from British colonial rule, under the philosophy that "[The People's Action Party] must break down the belief that [Singaporeans] are inferior and will always remain inferior to the Europeans."[205] Outside of that burden, the party advocates for multi-racialism, free-economic policies, integrity, anti-corruption, meritocratic policies, and equality.[206]

Before its official registration, the party set out to win the support of voters. Through campaigning for workers' rights and better economic policy, the party won over most English-educated voters; however, a crucial demographic had yet to be accounted for—the Chinese.[207] In order to garner the support necessary to have a spot in the political limelight, Lee Kuan Yew and his associates would form strong political relationships with radical leftists and influential trade-unionists.[208] Although this move would guarantee the support of Chinese union-members, working class voters, and trade guilds, it would cause the party to become inextricably bound to leftist ideologies more radical than its founders envisioned.[209]

After its inauguration on November 21st, 1954, the PAP would go on to run in the 1955 election, winning three out of four contested seats in the legislative assembly.[210] Its representatives would join the Labour Front Government delegation in the Merdeka talks, and play a key role in securing independence during the negotiations.[211]

Going forward, the party would find itself troubled by communist-sympathizers.[212] Its core members became increasingly alarmed by the sentiment that the PAP was a shelter for communists seeking refuge from communist crack downs.[213] Although the party would make it abundantly clear that it did not condone radical policies, the PAP would be rife with disorganization and confusion—who dissented with the party's core policies and who did

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[204] Cheryl Sim, "People's Action Party: Pre-Independence Years."
[205] People's Action Party, "PAP60 - Tracing Its Roots," YouTube, December 7, 2014,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7Tms79e_Cs.
[206] Sim, "People's Action Party."
[207] Ibid.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Library Board, "1955 Legislative Assembly General Election."
[211] Library Board, "Merdeka Talks."
[212] Sim, "People's Action Party."
[213] Ibid.

not?[214] Furthermore, the PAP also wanted to distance itself from radicalism's tendency to resort to violent measures in politics.

During the Merdeka talks, eighteen significant PAP members would be arrested during communist crack downs. Namely, Lim Chin Siong and Fong Swee Suan, who were the original constituents for the alliance between the PAP and unionist actors, were detained under Lim Yew Hock's government.[215] They were later released, as per conditions outlined in the terms for independence, and returned to the party.[216]

In the 1959 election, the PAP had grown significantly.[217] Now, it endeavours to win every seat in the assembly. With a detailed Manifesto titled "The Tasks Ahead," the PAP campaigned with the promise that it would build a better Singapore through low-cost housing programs, a stronger curriculum, and a more prosperous job market.[218] It also prominently featured the merger with Malaysia as a part of the campaign. The PAP won fifty-three percent of votes and forty-three seats in the assembly, making it the overwhelming majority.[219]

The PAP continues to uphold the values it was founded upon, but it is still struggling with party cohesion. Now, more than ever, it is of the utmost importance to establish a clear standard of policy.

### Singapore People's Alliance (SPA)

Founded just one year prior, the Singapore People's Alliance Party was inaugurated by former Chief Minister and lead negotiator Lim Yew Hock to participate in the 1959 election.[220] It was formed as a result of the merging of the Labour Front—which had led Singapore through the Merdeka Talks—and Liberal Socialist party. The party has a close relationship with Britain, sharing strong anti-communist ideologies with it. It was also anti-colonial as a left-wing party but staunchly anti-communist. As much as the PAP and SPA were similar, the parties clashed when it came to the Malaysia merger. While the PAP advocated for a highly autonomous Singaporean state within the Malayan Union, the SPA preferred an immediate merger. Another primary reason the two parties opposed one another was anti-communism. While the SPA was behind the controversial strict crackdowns during the Merdeka Talks, many see the PAP as too lenient towards communist sympathizers.

Leading up to the 1959 election, the SPA was involved in a scandal where an alleged five-hundred thousand dollars was accepted from an American third-party. This significantly damaged their campaign and led to a catastrophic loss. Out of the thirty-nine seats the party contested in the assembly, only four were won. About twenty percent of overall votes were for the SPA, making it the opposition party in the legislative assembly.

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[214] Lee, "The Singapore Story : Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew."
[215] Sim, "People's Action Party."
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid.
[220] National Heritage Board, "An Excerpted Text from a Singapore People's Alliance (SPA) Speech," Roots.gov.sg, 1959, https://www.roots.gov.sg/Collection-Landing/listing/1223955.

### The United Malays National Organization (UMNO)

Sharing the same name as the Malayan UMNO, the Singaporean UMNO, sometimes referred to as S-UMNO, was formed in the early 1950s.[221] Indeed, the party was born from the Malayan UMNO as the organization spread across the peninsula.[222] The party maintains a close relationship with its Malayan counterpart, able to serve as a Singapore–Malayan liaison. The party is likely to be indispensable in merger negotiations. Its main mission is to protect the interests and rights of Malays in Singapore.[223] This party, although small, boasts the unwavering support of Malay citizens. In 1955, the UMNO cooperated with the PAP, forming the foundation for a potential future political alliance between parties.[224]

## Portfolio Overviews

### Lee Kuan Yew – Prime Minister

As Singapore's current prime minister, Lee faces the seemingly insurmountable task of guiding a decrepit country into prosperity. He is a founding member, and current leader, of the People's Action Party.[225] He is responsible for leading the cabinet, managing PAP party members, and making the final call for new legislation.[226] The PAP's uneasy relationship with its leftmost members has worsened, leading members of the party to turn to Lee for decisive action. In the past, he worked as a lawyer before getting involved in politics; after founding the PAP, he went on to represent Tanjong Pagar as the leader of opposition in the 1955 legislative assembly.[227] During that time, he played a role in negotiating independence for Singapore in the Merdeka Talks.[228] Ideologically, Lee aligns himself square within the PAP, advocating for moderate left-leaning policies.[229] He is one of the most avid supporters of the merger with Malaya, insisting that the move will guarantee stability and act as the basis for growth.[230]

### Toh Chin Chye – Deputy Prime Minister

Toh Chin Chye is the Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore.[231] He was a founding member of the PAP, being the party's chairman from its inauguration to the present day.[232] As chairman Toh is responsible for overseeing the

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[221] PKMS, "About PKMS - Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Singapura (PKMS)," Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Singapura (PKMS), September 3, 2019, https://www.pkms.org.sg/about-pkms/.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Ibid.

[224] Ibid.

[225] Duncan Sutherland, "Lee Kuan Yew," www.nlb.gov.sg, March 2015, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=5d7ebff1-0403-42bc-8f11-eee9f5967755.

[226] Ibid.

[227] Lee, "The Singapore Story : Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew"; Sutherland, "Lee Kuan Yew."

[228] Library Board, "Merdeka Talks."

[229] Sutherland, "Lee Kuan Yew."

[230] Lim, "Merger with Malaysia."

[231] Jenny Tien, "Toh Chin Chye," Nlb.gov.sg, 2012, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=8a68761c-5b59-4758-a2ce-0793a8cddfb1.

[232] Ibid.

PAP: ensuring party cohesion, and mediating infighting.[233] Toh is a close friend and ally to Lee Kuan Yew.[234] Aside from his responsibilities as PAP chairman, he is also an elected assemblyman representing the Rochore constituency. Following Singapore's independence, Toh led the initiative to design a new flag, anthem, and crest.[235] Thus fittingly, he believes the idea of a "Singaporean" national identity is integral to building a successful nation. Ideologically he aligns himself very closely with the moderate-left position of the PAP, supporting cautious merger negotiations.[236] Outside of politics, Toh is an academic with an extensive background in education; he is very often working as a demonstrator in sciences for Raffles College, the University of Singapore, and Singapore Polytechnic.[237]

### Ong Eng Guan – Minister for National Development

Ong Eng Guan was one of the fourteen founding PAP members, currently serving as the Minister for National Development in the Singaporean cabinet, and Hong Lim constituency assemblyman. [238] He supports moderate-left policies, but opposes pro-Chinese legislation. Ong has made significant contributions to the Singaporean government, notably, he served as the Mayor of Singapore between 1957 and 1959.[239] During that time he reorganized the City Council, pushing out many foreign workers in favour of hiring locals.[240] He also began initiatives to improve infrastructure, clean and repair public areas, and open mediums for receiving complaints from citizens.[241] Despite these contributions, he is seen as a controversial figure for his blunt attitude and history of confrontationality. As Minister for National Development, Ong is primarily responsible for the rectification of Singapore's housing situation and the oversight of Singapore's administrative systems.[242] Ong has a background in accounting and finance, having graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce and serving as the PAP's treasurer.[243]

### Goh Keng Swee – Minister for Finance and Defence

Current Minister for Finance of Singapore and elected Kreta Ayer constituency assemblyman Goh Keng Swee is responsible for the improvement of Singapore's economic situation and social welfare programs.[244] Goh is a founding member of the PAP, having served as the party's vice-chairman.[245] As such, he is a core member of the PAP working closely with Lee Kuan Yew and Toh Chin Chye to reign in the party's cohesion. Goh graduated with a degree in economics and a Doctor of Philosophy from the London School of Economics.[246] Ideologically Goh is moderate-left and strongly anti-colonial.[247] He believes the most important parts of building a successful country lie in education; economics, particularly investing in Singapore's free port; local defence; and proper

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[233] Ibid.
[234] Ibid.
[235] National Heritage Board, "National Flag."
[236] Tien, "Toh Chin Chye."
[237] Ibid.
[238] Jaime Koh, "Ong Eng Guan," Nlb.gov.sg, 2016, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=887ace72-f22f-4d8a-b452-2b80597c78b4.
[239] Ibid.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Mui Mun Tien, "Goh Keng Swee," www.nlb.gov.sg, 2016, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=73d1f784-af2b-402d-9fac-534e93db040d.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid.

social welfare.[248] Before becoming a minister, Goh worked in the Social Welfare Department in the colonial civil service.[249] In 1952 he worked with K.M. Byrne to form the Council for Joint Action. This council sought to standardize wages for government workers.[250]

## Ong Pang Boon – Minister for Home Affairs

Ong Pang Boon is the Minister for Home Affairs and assemblyman representative of Telok Ayer.[251] Although he was not one of the original members of the PAP, he grew to become a core member since he joined the party in 1955.[252] Before he was a minister, he served on the City Council and as a secretary for the PAP.[253] As the Minister for Home Affairs, he is primarily responsible for managing and regulating Singapore's laws around culture, the criminal justice system, internal security, and corruption. He notably campaigned for "anti-yellow culture" which aimed to steer Singapore away from gambling, prostitution, and other "morally degenerate"[254] parts of culture that emerged following Japanese occupation.[255] Ong's other areas of concern include bilingual education, polytechnic education, the reorganization of the police force, and stamping out corruption. Ong Pang Boon is a strong advocate for socialism.[256]

## K. M. Byrne – Minister for Labour and Law

Kenneth Michael Byrne serves as Singapore's Minister for Labour and Law.[257] Before joining the Singaporean cabinet, he founded the PAP and worked as a civil servant with Goh Kwee Swee.[258] During his time working as a civil servant, he fought against discriminatory legislation—such as policies that favoured foreign British workers over their Singaporean counterparts—through the Council for Joint Action with Goh.[259] Now as minister, Byrne continues to fervently advocate for the working class of Singapore, even amidst uncertainty and distrust surrounding unions.[260] Apart from issues concerning labour, Byrne is also an advocate for women's rights and healthcare.[261] Outside of politics Byrne worked as a judge and is closely involved in Singapore's judicial system.[262]

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[248] Ibid.

[249] Ibid.

[250] Ibid.

[251] Jaime Koh, "Ong Pang Boon," Nlb.gov.sg, September 14, 2014, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=0618ed95-2618-442a-ba3b-5e402eea23b1.

[252] Ibid.

[253] Ibid.

[254] Ibid.

[255] Ibid.

[256] Ibid.

[257] Cheryl Sim, "K. M. Byrne," Nlb.gov.sg, March 9, 2016, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=51df4534-6da4-44e7-8ecb-a0218a648495.

[258] Ibid.

[259] Ibid.

[260] Ibid.

[261] Ibid.

[262] Ibid.

### Ahmad Ibrahim – Minister for Health

Ahmad Ibrahim is a pivotal Malay voice in the Singaporean cabinet as the Minister for Health.[263] He is a unionist—as such, he believes that it is important to protect the rights of working class Singaporeans. During the 1955 legislative assembly election he contested and won the Sembawang constituency as an independent candidate.[264] In 1956, he joined the PAP and ran in the 1959 election under the party.[265] He is also a Muslim, advocating for Islamic representation in Singaporean legislation.[266] As Minister for Health, he is responsible for both Singaporean medicinal infrastructure and the overall wellbeing of Singaporean citizens.

*It should be noted that multiple people share the name "Ahmad Ibrahim" in Singaporean political history. Conduct research on Ahmad bin Ibrahim not Tan Sri Datuk Professor Ahmad Ibrahim.*

### Yong Nyuk Lin – Minister for Education

Yong Nyuk Lin is the Minister for Education and PAP assemblyman for Geylang West.[267] He is responsible for Singapore's education in all respects, including curricula, logistics, accessibility, and post-secondary institutions.[268] As Minister for Education, Yong has been tasked with realizing the cabinet's goal of standardizing primary education, and expanding opportunities for non-English educated graduates. Yong is a Hakka descendent—a Chinese dialect group making up about eight percent of the Chinese community—and was raised bilingually.[269] He thus understands the importance of building bridges between languages, and by proxy ethnic communities, to facilitate a sense of national identity.[270] In this respect, he promotes the value of bilingual education. In terms of ideology, Yong aligns himself with left policies.[271]

### Sinnathamby Rajaratnam – Minister for Culture

Sinnathamby Sajartnam is a core founding member of the PAP. He serves as the Minister for Culture and elected assemblyman for the Kampong Glam constituency.[272] He is responsible for Singaporean national identity, preserving important history, and protecting minority groups. He works alongside Ong Pang Boon to manage and guide Singaporean culture. Before becoming involved in politics, Rajaratnam was a journalist that often wrote pieces on anti-colonialism and anti-communism.[273] Because of this, Rajaratnam is keenly aware of the unique political position between Singapore and Malaya, and thus wants to ensure Singaporeans don't become alienated in a potential merger.[274]

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[263] Vernon Cornelius, "Ahmad Bin Ibrahim," Nlb.gov.sg, April 2018, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=e970d65b-5c7b-415e-9c42-5475f529d56a.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid.
[266] GERMAINE KOH, "SECULARITY in the SINGAPORE HABITUS: AN INVESTIGATION of the GENEALOGY of SECULARITY in SINGAPORE from 1819 to 1990," Occupational Medicine (2022), https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/40.3.120.
[267] Duncan Sutherland, "Yong Nyuk Lin," Nlb.gov.sg, 2017, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=88f5e806-0ee1-4fd3-9af6-f54a287fd02c.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Jeanne Louise Conceicao, "Hakka Community," www.nlb.gov.sg, June 2016, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=3d1e5563-a199-4cf6-b270-ee4d5769e5cb.
[270] Sutherland, "Yong Nyuk Lin."
[271] Ibid.
[272] Jenny Tien, "S. Rajaratnam," www.nlb.gov.sg, March 1, 2016, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=1a0dced9-8eae-486c-8320-140dd0ad15b3.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid.

### Lee Siew Choh – Member of the Legislative Assembly

In 1958 Lee Siew Choh joined the PAP because it reflected his anticolonial ideologies. Since then, he has represented the party—being the elected assemblyman for the Queenstown constituency.[275] He works closely with Ong Pang Boon, serving as his de facto secretary. His primary concern in policy is the merger with Malaya, being one of the strongest advocates against the move. He, alongside other PAP members, believes the merger will not put Singaporeans on equal footing with Malaysians, let alone the citizens of other merging countries. He is well known for his intense passion in disdain for the merger: Lee often delivers noteworthily lengthy filibusters in opposition. Before his political career Lee was a medical practitioner.[276]

### Teo Hock Guan – Member of the Legislative Assembly

Staunchly nationalistic and vehemently anti-colonial, Teo Hock Guan is the assemblyman representing Changi—one of the most popular tourist regions in Singapore. He is a member of the People's Action Party. As an assemblyman, Guan pushes for the improvement of the Singaporean education system and the notion of a public housing system: wherein the Singaporean government provides standardized housing for all citizens. Although Guan was a PAP member, his relationship with the party was growing strenuous given his tendency to lean towards more intense socialist policy.

### Fung Yin Ching – Member of the Legislative Assembly

Fung Yin Ching is one of the only female assemblywomen present in the Legislative Assembly. She is the People's Action Party representative for the Stamford constituency. Her mandate mostly concerned women's rights, as she is pushing for marriage policy reforms, women's rights and women's opportunities. Her relationship with the PAP has also become strained given her tendency to support more radical-left leaning policies.

### Lee Khoon Choy – Member of the Legislative Assembly

Lee Khoon Choy is a former journalist and reporter.[277] He currently serves as the elected PAP assemblyman for Bukit Panjang. He is also the party whip, meaning he is responsible for keeping PAP representatives voting in line with the party's beliefs.[278] As a Hakka descendent, Lee is a strong supporter for Chinese education and preservation of Chinese culture.[279] For this reason, Lee resigned from his position at *The Straits Times*—the most prominent reporting agency in Singapore—believing it dominated by European perspectives. During the Japanese occupation, Lee learned Japanese and became a teacher.

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[275] Singapore Infopedia, "Lee Siew Choh," www.nlb.gov.sg, April 2019, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=29c5db7c-b9ca-44c8-9c3c-1237f43daa2c.

[276] Ibid.

[277] Valerie Chew, "Lee Khoon Choy," Nlb.gov.sg, 2024, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=d86d51ff-0acf-4290-804f-7d1c0fee51fb.

[278] Ibid.

[279] Ibid.

## Lim Yew Hock – Member of the Legislative Assembly

Lim Yew Hock is currently the leader of the opposition in the Singaporean legislative assembly and leader of the Singapore People's Alliance (SPA).[280] He is left-wing. Lim's history in Singapore's politics is extensive: following a divisive negotiation under David Marshall, Lim was appointed to lead the delegation, becoming the new Chief Minister of Singapore.[281] Lim was an integral member of the delegation, contributing significantly to the Merdeka talks.[282] Lim was also responsible for the suppression of communism in Chinese middle schools.[283] Although his policies were effective, they alienated the Chinese community significantly. This was part of the reason the SPA fared poorly in the 1959 election. Lim and his party's main goal was to secure rights for workers through social welfare programs.[284]

## Thio Chan Bee – Member of the Legislative Assembly

Thio Chan Bee is a Singapore People's Alliance representative serving as the assemblyman for the Tanglin constituency.[285] Before joining the SPA, Thio was the vice-president of the Singapore Progressive Party.[286] Outside of his political career, Thio is an educator and is heavily involved in Singaporean educational institutions.[287] Hence fittingly, he is a fervent advocate for educational reforms, notably the introduction of more polytechnic practices and increased welfare for access to education.[288] Thio is also at the forefront of the push for workers rights and better housing programs.[289] He is a vocal supporter of the Singapore–Malaya merger, although he believes the merger should be carried out in gradual stages.[290]

## Seow Peck Leng – Member of the Legislative Assembly

Seow Peck Leng is one of only five women in the 1959 Singaporean legislative assembly. She is the assemblywoman representing Mountbatten under the SPA. Before running in the 1959 election, Peck Leng was a school principal and philanthropist. As one of the only female voices in the legislative assembly, she is a pivotal figure in women's rights advocacy. Specifically, Peck Leng fights to end polygamy in marriages and push for women's opportunities in Singapore.

*It should be noted that Chua Seng Kim was her maiden name which she did not use at this time.*

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[280] Singapore Infopedia, "Lim Yew Hock," Nlb.gov.sg, 2016, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=bc3a8329-ec60-4be0-a842-49006651f92f.
[281] Singapore Infopedia, "Lim Yew Hock," Nlb.gov.sg, 2016, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=bc3a8329-ec60-4be0-a842-49006651f92f.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Ibid.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Alvin Chua, "Thio Chan Bee," Nlb.gov.sg, December 17, 2014, https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=01e062e5-388f-4c7a-a01a-af2d09778a95.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Ibid.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid.
[290] Ibid.

## C. H. Koh – Member of the Legislative Assembly

C.H. Koh is a member of the Singaporean People's Alliance (SPA). He is a moderate-left wing assemblyman. He represents the Joo Chiat constituency.[291] Though practical, C.H. Koh understands the importance of laying groundwork through inquiries, statistics, and expert opinions before action.[292] He believes Singaporean education is imperative in building a strong nation, and thus advocates for investment into scholarship and educational infrastructure.[293]

## Abdul Hamid Jumat – Member of the Legislative Assembly

Abdul Hamid Jumat is the founder of the Singaporean branch of the UMNO. He is also the assemblyman representing Ulu Bedok. Prior to the 1959 election, Abdul played a significant role in the Merdeka talks and Marshall government, acting as Deputy Chief Minister. He was a reliable ally to David Marshall, and was entrusted with the position of Minister for Local Government, Lands, and Housing between 1955 and 1959.[294] His experience in the Singaporean political landscape as an ethnically Malayan assemblyman makes him an expert voice in the inbound merger.

## Mohammed Ali bin Alwi – Member of the Legislative Assembly

Mohammed Ali bin Alwi is the UMNO assemblyman for the Kampong Kembangan constituency. He is known to advocate for language rights in education and governmental organizations.[295] As an UMNO member, inclusivity of Tamil language is exceptionally important to him.[296] He is also concerned with the state of the job market in Singapore; he believes that the government should prioritize employing Singaporean citizens in lieu of expatriates.[297]

## Ahmad Jabri bin Mohammed Akib – Member of the Legislative Assembly

Ahmad Jabri bin Mohammed Akib is the UMNO assemblyman representing the Southern Islands.[298] He is an Islamic UMNO politician. He advocates strongly for Muslim affirmative action policies, believing that Islam should be recognized by the Singaporean government.[299] He also advocates for the release of Muslim prisoners who were detained as a result of the Maria Hertogh riots.[300]

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[291] FIRST LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY STATE OF SINGAPORE, "FIRST LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY STATE of SINGAPORE," 1962, https://www.parliament.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/no-30_15-jan-1962.pdf?.

[292] Ibid.

[293] Ibid.

[294] Kevin Tan, Marshall of Singapore, Google Books (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2025), 244, https://books.google.ca/books?id=BH88kpvyrdYC&pg=PA244&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=abdul&f=false.

[295] FIRST LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY STATE OF SINGAPORE, "FIRST LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY STATE of SINGAPORE SECOND SESSION ORDER PAPER," parliament.gov.sg, 1960, https://www.parliament.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/no-9_21-sep-1960.pdf.

[296] Ibid.

[297] Ibid.

[298] Singapore. Ministry of Information and the Arts, "Ahmad Jabri Bin Mohammad Akib, Member of First Legislative …," Nas.gov.sg, 1950, https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/photographs/record-details/d0c1726b-1161-11e3-83d5-0050568939ad.

[299] GERMAINE KOH, "SECULARITY in the SINGAPORE HABITUS."

[300] FIRST LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY STATE OF SINGAPORE, "FIRST LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY STATE of SINGAPORE FIRST SESSION at the COMMENCEMENT of PUBLIC BUSINESS Presentation of Government Bills," February 1959, https://www.parliament.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/no-8_14-aug-1959.pdf.

## Discussion Questions

1. In what ways would the white paper benefit Singapore? Is it in Singapore's interest to accept the terms?

2. How can national identity be repaired and strengthened amidst ethnic divides?

3. What should be done to address communist sentiments? Should they be quelled? Should they be parlayed with? And to what extent?

4. What can be done to better infrastructure, diversify the job market, and improve welfare?

5. How can Singapore become more self-sufficient?

6. To what extent should and could Singapore retain political autonomy within the Malaysian Federation?

7. How should the rights and representation of Chinese-Singaporeans be safeguarded in a united Malaysia?

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