

SINGAPORE

A Journey Through Time,
1299-1970s

SECONDARY TWO





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Old Supreme Court and Municipal Building, c. 1960s © Courtesy of National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board. National Gallery Singapore, 2021 © Star Publishing Pte Ltd.

Preface

You are about to continue the exciting journey through the past!

In Secondary 1, you started the journey with **From Temasek to Singapore (1299–Early 1800s)** and traced Singapore's connections to India, China, the Southeast Asian region and beyond from as early as 1299. You would have found out how Singapore was part of the key trading networks even before the arrival of the British.

Your journey continued with **Singapore's Development as a Port City Under the British (1819–1942)**. Here, you examined how British rule and external developments shaped Singapore in various ways. During this period, many different groups of people from the region and beyond also came to live and work in Singapore. You would have learnt about their experiences, the challenges they faced and their contributions up to the fall of Singapore in 1942.

This year, you will proceed to study **Singapore's Struggle for Independence (1942–1965)**. You will explore how key developments from the 1940s to the 1960s shifted Singapore from a British colony to an independent country. As you learn more about Singapore's road to independence, you will discover how this was influenced by post-war global and regional forces, and individuals during this period.

The journey comes to a rest with **Surviving as an Independent Nation-State (1965–Late 1970s)**. Here, you will find out how a sense of belonging, reality and hope was fostered as Singapore navigated the challenges of being a newly independent nation-state during this time.

Similar to your journey in Secondary 1, various features in this coursebook will guide you in making sense of Singapore's history. You will continue to develop greater awareness and curiosity about the past and its relationship to the present. The knowledge and skills you acquire will enable you to be open to multiple perspectives and empathise with people from diverse backgrounds. These will stand you in good stead, not just academically, but also in your everyday life.

Singapore's history does not just end here. Your experiences and stories will one day become part of it as time passes. Knowing history puts you in a better position to make decisions that will shape the future.

Continue to have an enriching and exciting journey ahead as you learn more about Singapore's rich history!

How to Use This Book

In each chapter, interwoven in the content are historical concepts, skills and activities that can guide you in answering the inquiry question.

Features to Guide and Consolidate Learning

CHAPTER

8

How Did Singapore Become an Independent Nation?

Chapter Inquiry

The key question provides a focal point for you to investigate the chapter topic.

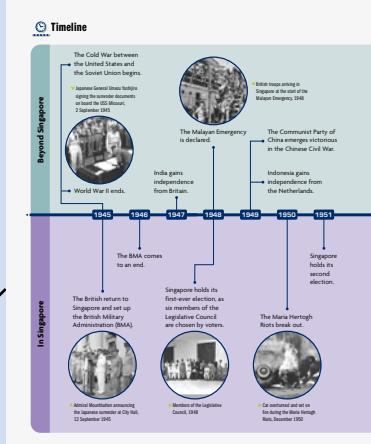
Chapter at a Glance

You will learn:

- What the people in Singapore experienced during the Japanese Occupation
- What problems the people faced immediately after the Japanese surrender

Chapter at a Glance

This feature outlines the content that you will learn from the chapter.

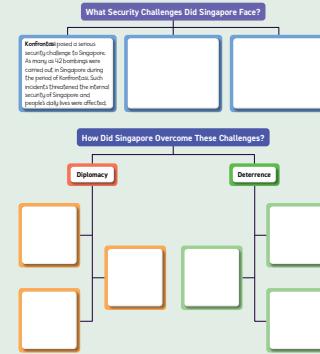


Timeline

The timeline helps you understand key events and developments that took place in Singapore and beyond. You will see the sequence of events that will be mentioned in the chapter.

LET'S REVIEW

In this chapter, you looked at the security challenges Singapore faced after independence and how it overcame them. Complete the graphic organiser below to summarise what you have learnt. An example has been done for you.



Let's Review

This feature helps you consolidate your learning by linking it to the chapter inquiry.

Features to Develop Skills and Conceptual Understanding

Learn a Skill

This feature introduces the skills of historical analysis. Using examples from the chapter, it highlights a particular skill and gives you opportunities to apply your learning.



LEARN A SKILL: STUDYING PAINTINGS

Artwork can serve as historical sources. By studying a piece of art, you can find out more about the time and place in which it was produced. It can give you an idea of:

- what people did and how they did them;
- how people saw themselves or were seen by others.

When studying an artwork, you need to know its context. This means knowing where it was created and the period in which the artwork was produced. Knowing the context helps us to better understand the messages embedded in the artwork. It also helps us to understand why the artwork was produced.

Look at the painting below, Telok On Strike. It was completed in 1955 by artist Tan Boon Chia. Tan was born in China in 1928 and studied at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in Singapore, from which he graduated in 1951. He is known for his series of works depicting the plight and hardships faced by people in post-war Singapore.

Tan Boon Chia
1955
Oil on canvas, 60 x 85 cm
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

In Chapter 4, you learnt how to examine images using the process of See-Think-Wonder:

Step 1 See
What do you see?

Step 2 Think
What do you think is going on?

Step 3 Wonder
What does it make you wonder?

BE A YOUNG HISTORIAN: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

In Chapter 3, you learnt how historians use the terms ‘change’ and ‘continuity’ to describe key changes developments over time. In your study of Singapore’s history, you will have seen that while many things changed, others remained the same. For example, although Singapore became a sovereign nation in 1963, some developments continued to influence Singapore regardless of who the rulers were.

Admittedly, the *pace* at which change happens may not be constant. It may *accelerate* or *slow down* significantly as a result of certain events or developments.

One such event is Singapore gaining independence on 9 August 1965. While this had taken place prior to independence, this day marked the start of a period of accelerated change in areas such as economic and social development. As you continue to learn about Singapore’s history since post-independence Singapore, bear the following questions in mind:

- In what ways did changes take place?
 - How quickly did changes take place?
 - How great were the changes?
 - How did people react to the changes?
- In what ways was there continuity?
- In what ways did change and continuity take place at the same time?



Case Investigation

This feature explores historical issues using a range of sources, allowing you to engage in a short inquiry task related to the chapter inquiry.



CASE INVESTIGATION

How far did the experiences of women in the workplace in Singapore change between 1965 and the end of the 1970s?

Up to the 1960s, many women in Singapore did not have the chance to go to school or work. They were often expected to focus on their traditional roles as wives and mothers, while men had the opportunity to receive an education and work in the labour force. This changed, especially after independence, as more educational and job opportunities became available to women.

More and more parents became open to sending their daughters to school. By 1974, the number of girls enrolling in secondary schools was almost equal to that of boys. Female students also made up 45.1 per cent of students enrolled in local universities in the same year.

Women also had more opportunities to work outside their homes. More decided to join the workforce, as Singapore’s growing economy meant more jobs were available. Women in the labour force also increased in numbers and benefits. As a result, the percentage of women in the labour force increased significantly between 1970 and 1980, as shown in Figure 10.8. Did these opportunities change the experiences of women in every workplace? Read the following sources to find out more.

Figure 10.8 Graph showing the participation in the labour force in 1970 and 1980

Community	1970 (%)	1980 (%)
All Males	72.2%	72.8%
All Females	24.4%	39.2%
Chinese Males	66.8%	71.5%
Chinese Females	25.0%	38.7%
Malay Males	44.2%	71.9%
Malay Females	14.2%	38.2%
Indian Males	75.4%	72.2%
Indian Females	14.8%	38.2%

Legend: ■ 1970 ■ 1980

Be a Young Historian

This feature introduces you to key historical concepts and explains how they are relevant to the study of history.



SOURCE 2

Our army is to be engaged in the defence of the country and our people against external aggression. This task we are unable to do today by ourselves. It is no use pretending that without the British military presence in Singapore today, the island cannot be easily over-run by any neighbouring country within a radius of 1,000 miles, if any of them cared to do so. ...

British military protection today has made quite a number of our citizens complacent about the need to conduct our own defence preparations. These people assume that this protection will be permanent. I regard it as the *height of folly** to plan our future on this assumption ... Nobody, neither we nor the British, can say when *this*[†] will be. It may be five, ten, fifteen years; maybe more, maybe less. Whatever the time may be, it would be useless then to think about building up our defence forces. The time to do so is now.

- Adapted from a speech by Dr Goh Keng Swee to Parliament, 23 December 1965

* If something is the height of folly, it is extremely foolish.

† “This” refers to the British withdrawal of their defence forces.

1. According to Source 2, why did Singapore’s leaders feel it was important to build up our defence forces?

Sources

Sources are used to illustrate people’s experiences or perspectives. The accompanying questions guide you in examining these sources more closely.

Features to Enhance Understanding or Encourage Exploration

Illustrated Stories

This feature combines illustrations and narration to help enhance your understanding of people, events and developments in history.



DID YOU KNOW?

To ensure safe passage of the hijackers of the *Laju* from Singapore to Kuwait, a group of Singapore government officials, led by S. R. Nathan, accompanied the hijackers on their flight. Nathan (leaning forward in the image below) was then Director of the Security and Intelligence Division at the Ministry of Defence, and would later go on to serve as President of Singapore. The Singapore team comprised Nathan, eight government officials and four Singapore Armed Forces commandos.



▲ The 13 Singaporean officials upon returning to Singapore from Kuwait on 9 February 1974

Did You Know?

This feature provides you with fun facts relevant to the chapter content.

Think!

What does the 1948 election tell you about British attitudes towards the locals?



“Think” Bubbles

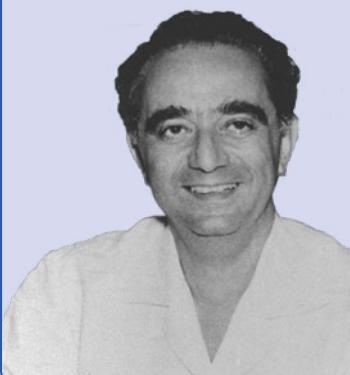
This feature encourages you to think more deeply about what you have just read on the page.

Who was DAVID MARSHALL?

David Marshall (1908–1995) was born in Singapore into a Jewish family from Baghdad (in present-day Iraq). During World War II, he joined local volunteer forces to fight against the Japanese, but was captured and sent to various prison camps overseas.

After his return to Singapore in 1946, Marshall enjoyed a successful career as a lawyer. He was also actively involved in Singapore's political scene. Originally a member of the SPP, he later resigned and joined the Singapore Socialist Party – one of the two parties that later came together to form the LF. In 1955, Marshall resigned from his legal career and won a seat in the Legislative Assembly election as a representative of the Cairnhill constituency. As leader of the LF, he also assumed the role of Chief Minister. Following the failure of the First Merdeka Talks, he resigned on 7 June 1956.

Marshall continued to be active in politics and founded the Workers' Party in 1957. From 1978, he served as Singapore's Ambassador to various countries such as France, Spain, Portugal and Switzerland, before finally retiring in 1993.



Glossary

The glossary explains keywords and vocabulary used.

Who Was

This feature gives you background information on key historical personalities introduced in the chapter.



Learn on the Go

Scan the QR code or use the link to access a relevant lesson on the Singapore Student Learning Space (SLS) to extend your learning.

- A nation-state refers to an independent country whose people share similarities, such as a common national identity, history and culture.

▼ *Ellenborough Market, 1960s*, by Lui Hock Seng, a local photographer.
Ellenborough Market was first built in 1845 and was located by the Singapore River.





▼Aerial view of the Singapore River and the surrounding Central Business District, 1971, by Kouo Shang-Wei, one of the pioneer photographers of Singapore



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UNIT

OVERVIEW

3

Singapore's Struggle for Independence (1942–1965)

In this unit, we will study how the fall of Singapore to Japanese forces in 1942 marked the start of a turbulent period in Singapore's history. The hardships and sufferings during the Japanese Occupation changed the people's attitudes towards British rule. Following the British return, unrest grew as people in Singapore began to question British rule and desire control over their own destinies. Wider global developments, especially the Cold War, influenced people's sentiments and the decisions and actions of the British. Decolonisation in other parts of Asia also spurred the people in Malaya and Singapore to fight for independence from the British.

1942



▲ Parade at the Padang during the Japanese Occupation

1950



▲ Scene near the Padang during the Maria Hertogh Riots

1945



▲ Admiral Louis Mountbatten inspecting the Royal Navy Guard of Honour at the Padang in front of the Municipal Building (former City Hall, one of the two buildings that make up the present-day National Gallery Singapore) where the Japanese surrender ceremony was held

1957



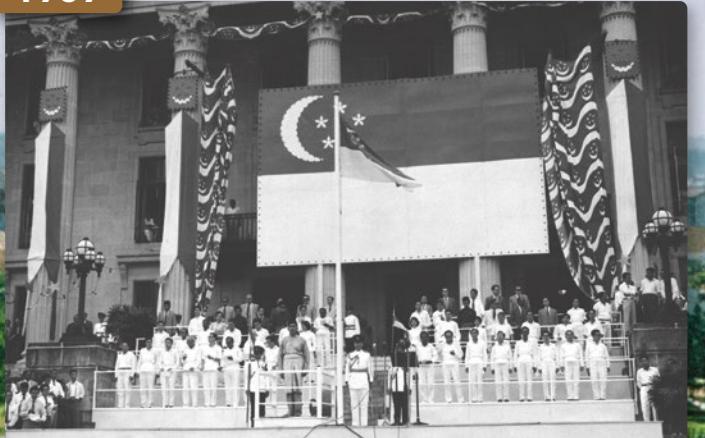
▲ Lee Kuan Yew delivering a speech at City Hall in front of the Padang during a welcome ceremony for the all-party delegation's return from London following the end of the Merdeka Talks

We will also explore how, on some occasions, the unrest flared into open confrontation and conflict with the authorities. Strikes, demonstrations and riots were a common sight during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The British realised that it was important to give the people more say in how they were ruled. Gradual constitutional shifts took place, and elections were held to allow people the chance to choose their leaders.

Eventually, Singapore attained full self-government in 1959. However, for Singapore's leaders at that time, this was not the final step. To finally free Singapore from British rule, they pursued merger with the newly independent Malaya. While the merger eventually became reality in the form of Malaysia, it did not last. In 1965, Singapore left Malaysia and became an independent country of its own.

Coincidentally, many of these significant events took place at or near the Padang. Which events do you have some knowledge of? Which events are you interested in learning more about?

1959



1965



1963



▲ Malaysia Day celebrations at City Hall

▲ Ceremonial parade at the Padang during the opening of the first Singapore Parliament



What Did the People in Singapore Experience During the Japanese Occupation?

Following the British surrender, the Japanese Occupation of Singapore began on 15 February 1942 and lasted until 12 September 1945. During that time, Singapore was renamed “Syonan-to” (Japanese for “Light of the South Island”). In order to standardise time across the territories in the Japanese Empire, clocks were moved forward one and a half hours to follow Tokyo time.

It was a period of great hardship for the majority of the population. Almost every aspect of life, such as food, education and labour, was heavily controlled and regulated by the Japanese. The people in Singapore lived in constant fear and hopelessness, and lacked even basic necessities. In this chapter, you will learn how the people lived through these tumultuous years.

▼ Street in Singapore during the Japanese Occupation, 1943



Chapter at a Glance

You will learn:

- What the people in Singapore experienced during the Japanese Occupation
- What problems the people faced immediately after the Japanese surrender





Timeline

Beyond Singapore



7 December

Japan attacks Pearl Harbor; start of World War II in the Asia Pacific and the United States' involvement in the war.

1941

◀ Battleship USS *Arizona* burning after the attack on Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941

3–6 June

Japan suffers heavy naval and air losses in the Battle of Midway against the United States. This severely affects its military capabilities throughout the remainder of the war.

1942

2 July

Subhas Chandra Bose arrives in Singapore to lead the Indian National Army (INA) movement.



▲ Sook Ching screening station at North Bridge Road, 1942

September

The first batch of 200 Chinese settlers leave Singapore for Endau, Malaya.

December

The first batch of Eurasian and Chinese Roman Catholic settlers leave Singapore for Bahau, Malaya.



▲ Settlers ploughing the ground in Bahau, c. 1944

In Singapore

Beyond Singapore

Singapore is renamed "Syonan-to" following the British surrender to the Japanese. Shortly after, Operation Sook Ching begins.

1943

September

The first batch of 200 Chinese settlers leave Singapore for Endau, Malaya.

December

The first batch of Eurasian and Chinese Roman Catholic settlers leave Singapore for Bahau, Malaya.

7 May

Germany formally surrenders to the Allies, who can now focus more resources on defeating Japan.

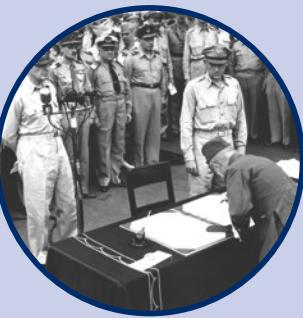
▼ Atomic cloud rising over Nagasaki, 9 August 1945



6 and 9 August

The Allies drop atomic bombs first on Hiroshima, then on Nagasaki.

Japanese General Umezu Yoshijiro signing the surrender documents on board the USS Missouri, 2 September 1945



15 August

Emperor Hirohito announces Japan's surrender to the Allies.

2 September
Japan formally surrenders to the Allies on the USS Missouri.

1944

The Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) joins other resistance groups such as Force 136.

1945

5 September

The British return to Singapore and set up the British Military Administration (BMA).

1946

31 March

The BMA hands over the administration of Singapore to the British civilian government.

12 September

The Japanese military signs a formal surrender document with Admiral Louis Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander of the South East Asia Command.



► Admiral Mountbatten announcing the Japanese surrender at City Hall, 12 September 1945



BE A YOUNG HISTORIAN: DIVERSITY

As you learnt in Chapter 4, when historians study the past, they look at diverse and sometimes opposing perspectives. They recognise that people might have had different experiences even though they lived in the same place during the same time. By studying **diverse perspectives**, historians can form a more complete picture of the past, which helps them understand historical events better.

In this chapter, you will look at how people's experiences during the Japanese Occupation differed depending on their circumstances. When taking the perspective of historical actors, you might want to think about how the historical actors thought and felt. You can make valid inferences about their beliefs, values and motivations based on evidence that you come across.



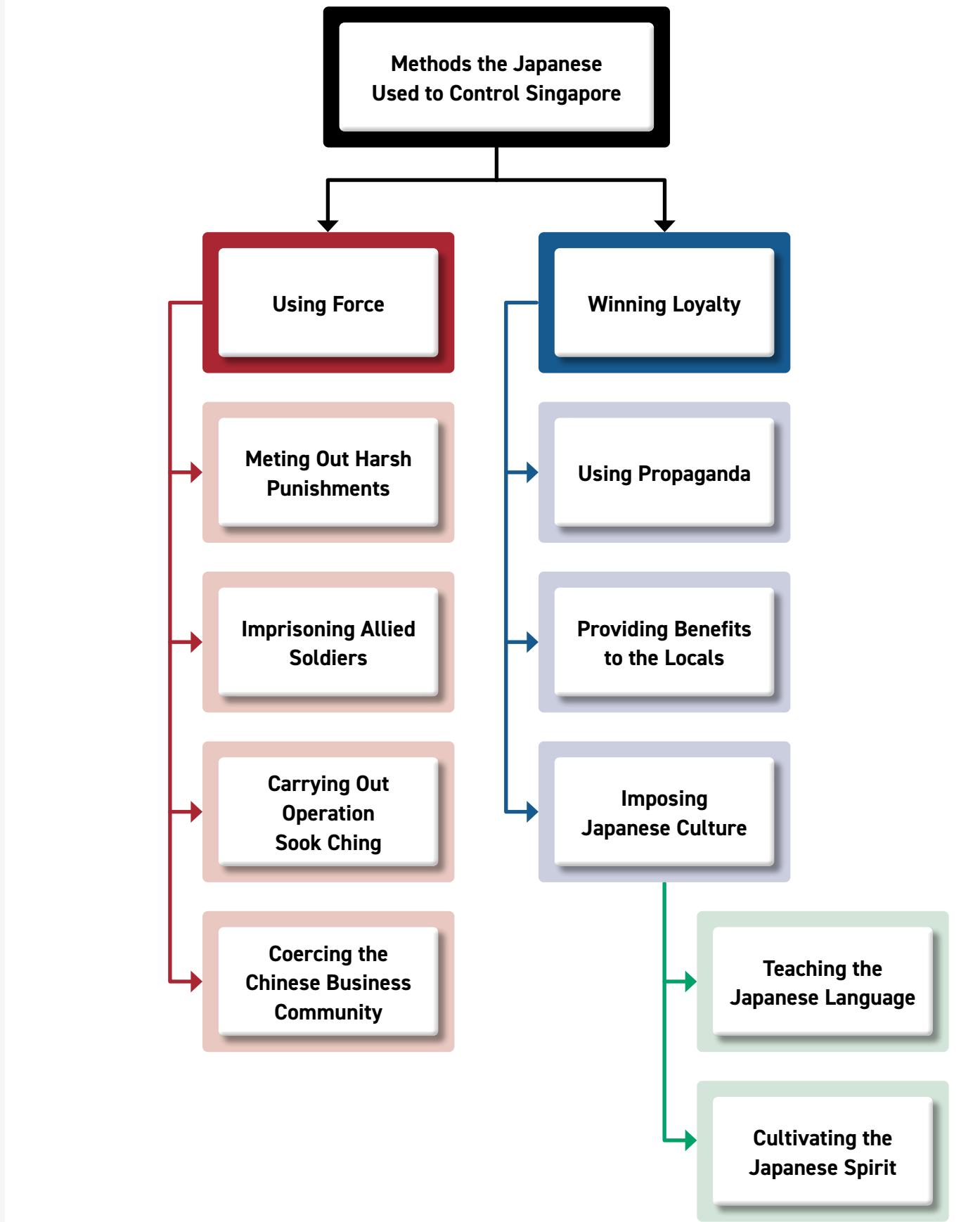
How Did the Japanese Establish Control in Singapore?

In the immediate aftermath of the British surrender, Singapore was in a state of disorder. Japanese bombings had resulted in casualties and damage to buildings. Looting was also rampant as people took advantage of the chaos to strip houses of everything valuable.



Buildings damaged by Japanese bombings, February 1942

The Japanese acted quickly to restore order. They employed a range of methods to make the people in Singapore submit to Japanese authority. These included using force and winning the loyalty of the locals (see Figure 6.1 on the next page).



▲ Figure 6.1: How the Japanese controlled Singapore

Using Force

Meting Out Harsh Punishments

Throughout the Japanese Occupation, harsh punishments were imposed on criminals and other people seen by the Japanese as their enemies. For example, to put an end to the looting that happened just after the British surrender, the Japanese executed those who were caught. The heads were displayed publicly in places such as the open area outside the Cathay Building, and on bridges across the Singapore River. Such harsh punishments created fear and served as severe warnings to the people about the potential consequences of going against the Japanese.

One group that many people feared above all was the Kempeitai, the Japanese military police. The Kempeitai arrested those who were suspected of being anti-Japanese. Food or cash rewards were offered to encourage people to inform the authorities of anyone they suspected of being involved in anti-Japanese activities. As a result, nobody knew whom to trust and people became suspicious of one another. Anti-Japanese suspects would be beaten or tortured until they revealed information that the Japanese wanted. In some cases, those suspected of anti-Japanese activities were imprisoned or executed. Over time, many people learnt to go about their business quietly and not appear disobedient in case they drew the unwanted attention of the Japanese authorities.

Imprisoning Allied Soldiers

When the Japanese took control of the island, they had plans to deal with the **Allied**¹ troops and the people in Singapore. One of the first things that the Japanese did was to imprison the British, Australians and Allied Europeans in Singapore, including women and children. The Allied prisoners of war (POWs) were forced to march in public from Bukit Timah Road to Changi Prison and the barracks nearby, where they would be imprisoned. Along the way, many civilians passed the POWs food and money, despite the risk of being punished by the Japanese.



▲ Sketch by Singaporean artist Liu Kang showing a Japanese soldier pulling out the nails of a detainee to get a confession

Think!

How do you think the locals viewed the British when they were captured as POWs?

◀ British POWs marching on the road to Changi Prison, 1942

¹ The Allies refers to the group of countries that fought against Germany and Japan during World War II. These included Australia, Britain, China, New Zealand, the Soviet Union and the United States.

Carrying Out Operation Sook Ching

Soon after taking control of Singapore, the Japanese forces carried out Operation Sook Ching (“Cleansing”) which aimed to identify and eliminate anti-Japanese elements among the local population. It was a brutal **purge**² of members of the Chinese community who were suspected of being anti-Japanese. The Kempeitai was placed in charge of this fearsome operation.

The Chinese population was targeted as they were viewed by the Japanese as a potential source of opposition and threat to their rule. This was because when the Japanese invaded China in 1937, they faced strong resistance from the Chinese, including Chinese communities living outside China. For instance, the Chinese community in Singapore called for a **boycott**³ of Japanese goods and contributed funds to China’s efforts against Japan. Some even returned to China to join in the fight against the Japanese.

The Japanese posted notices requiring all Chinese men aged 18 to 50 to assemble at mass screening centres to be examined by the Japanese. These screening centres were located all over the island, such as the former Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) building at Stamford Road, which was used as the headquarters of the Kempeitai East District Branch.

Japanese records estimate that 6,000 people were killed during the operation. However, other estimates show the figure to be between 25,000 and 50,000.

Read the illustrated story on the next page to find out how the Japanese forces carried out Operation Sook Ching.



▲ YMCA building at Stamford Road, 1930s



▲ Sook Ching screening station at North Bridge Road, 1942

² A purge is a sudden or violent removal of a group of people.

³ A boycott is the act of refusing to purchase items from and/or provide other forms of support to a country or organisation to protest against the actions of that country or organisation.

OPERATION SOOK CHING

One by one, the Chinese men went before a Japanese officer who sat at a table in a heavily guarded barbed wire enclosure.



Informants would identify people who were suspected of being anti-Japanese and pass on the information to the Kempeitai.

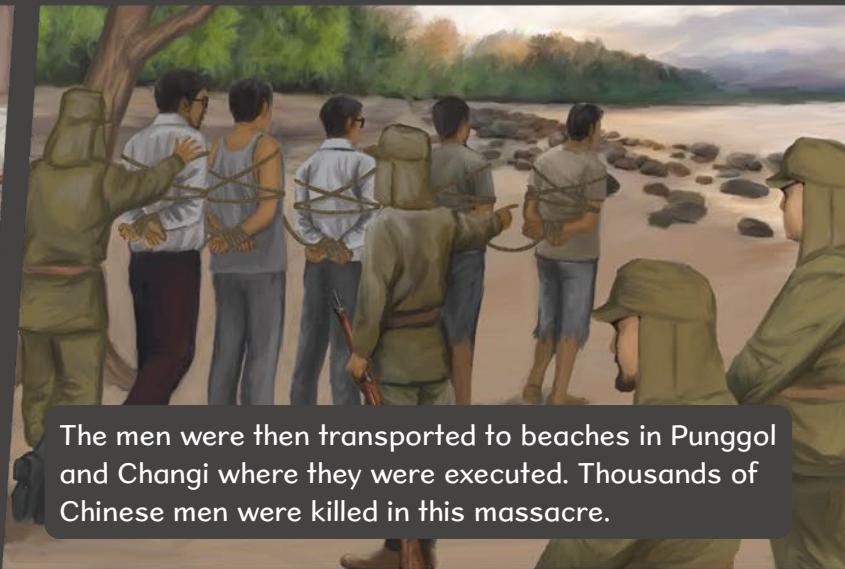


The informants were looking in particular for secret society members with tattoos, former Chinese civil servants and journalists. These people were thought to have stronger links with China and were seen to be resistant to the Japanese.



Upon inspection, those who were not identified as anti-Japanese were allowed to go home. They would receive a stamp (shown above) on a piece of paper, clothing, face, arm or shoulder, which meant they had been examined. This stamp became an important pass which allowed them to avoid further questioning by the Japanese.

However, those Chinese men who did not pass the screening would be stamped with a triangular mark, tied up and kept under guard.



The men were then transported to beaches in Punggol and Changi where they were executed. Thousands of Chinese men were killed in this massacre.



▲ Wartime relics belonging to victims of Operation Sook Ching: a wallet, a set of keychain and whistle, a pair of earrings and a stethoscope. These personal belongings were found together with human remains and items from other victims during an excavation conducted in 1963.



▲ *Persecution* by Singaporean artist Koeh Sia Yong, 1963, showing Chinese men being taken to the execution ground during Operation Sook Ching

▼ Civilian War Memorial, late 1960s.
The memorial, situated along Beach Road (near present-day Suntec City), was built to commemorate the civilian victims killed during the Japanese Occupation.



Coercing the Chinese Business Community

The Japanese also targeted the Chinese businessmen in Singapore because of their generous contributions to the China Relief Fund, which supported China's resistance against Japan. The Overseas Chinese Association (OCA) was created to act as a channel of communication between the Chinese community and the Japanese government. Dr Lim Boon Keng was appointed to head the OCA. The Japanese demanded that the OCA gift 50 million Straits dollars to the Japanese administration. This was to punish the Chinese community in Malaya and Singapore for supporting anti-Japanese war activities in China as well as British war efforts in Malaya and Singapore.

Winning Loyalty

Using Propaganda

In addition to using force to assert their authority, the Japanese also sought to win over the locals in order to establish control over Singapore. One way they did so was to use **propaganda**⁴ to influence the minds of the people in Singapore and gain their loyalty. The Japanese portrayed themselves as liberators who had come to free Asians from colonial rule. They tried to convince the locals to accept their vision of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in which Japan would free Asian nations from the control of Western colonial powers. This vision also pressed for a united Asia that would benefit from sharing resources collectively. These messages were spread through various channels, such as posters and radio broadcasts.



DID YOU KNOW?

One leader of the anti-Japanese movement in Malaya and Singapore was Tan Kah Kee. As Chairman of the China Relief Fund, set up in 1937, he organised local fundraising efforts to support China in the war against Japan. When the Japanese cut supply routes to China, he arranged for lorry drivers and mechanics from Singapore to transport supplies to China through Burma (present-day Myanmar). He also encouraged the boycott of Japanese goods in Malaya and Singapore.

Tan Kah Kee ▶



ミンナ ナカヨク ゲンキヨク!
東亞語 濟和諧之氣象
Vim, vigour, vitality and last, but not least, perfect harmony!
KASEHI, MESRA, MURNI DALAM PERSAUDARAAN
GADIS, ASIA RAYA.

▲ Propaganda poster with the caption "Vim, vigour, vitality and last, but not least, perfect harmony!". The poster shows a group of seven women in Japanese, Chinese, Malay and Indian attire playing *hanetsuki* (a traditional Japanese game played with racquets and a shuttlecock) and walking hand in hand, c. 1943

◀ Cathay Building (site of present-day The Cathay) on Handy Road, 1945, the Japanese propaganda office during the Japanese Occupation

⁴ Propaganda is information or ideas spread by a group or government to influence people's opinions, especially by not giving all the facts or by emphasising only one point of view.

The Japanese also tried to use propaganda to get the Indian community to look upon Japanese rule favourably. Aware that some Indian immigrants were influenced by the rise of anti-British sentiments, the Japanese promised to help free India from the British. The Indian National Army (INA) was thus formed with Japanese support to recruit Indians to fight against the British in India. It was led by Subhas Chandra Bose, a prominent Indian politician who campaigned for India's independence from British rule. His charismatic presence attracted many new recruits. However, not all Indians were allied with the Japanese; many of those who remained loyal to the British were imprisoned.



▲ Subhas Chandra Bose inspecting the guard of honour presented by women soldiers in the INA at Waterloo Street, 1943

Providing Benefits to the Locals

In their attempt to win local support, the Japanese provided certain benefits, such as schooling and accommodation, at no cost. For example, school textbooks were provided free of charge to 20,000 students in 1944.

The Japanese also appealed to some ethnic groups by giving them favourable treatment. The Malay nationalist organisation Kesatuan Melayu Muda (Union of Malay Youth or KMM) responded positively to Japanese propaganda that promised better lives for Malays under an Asian power. This resulted in Malays being treated less harshly by the Japanese. For instance, the Japanese distributed rice, sugar and salt to the less fortunate for Hari Raya Puasa. Malays and Indians were also charged lower fees than the Chinese to cross the Causeway.



LEARN A SKILL: INTERPRETING PROPAGANDA IMAGES

Propaganda images such as posters, photographs, postcards and illustrations provide details that you can use to understand the past. As the Japanese often used propaganda images to spread their messages to the people in Singapore, historians can study the posters and postcards created during the Syonan period to better understand Japanese aims then. So, what do propaganda images reveal about Japanese aims?

One way to examine propaganda images is to use the suggested layers of inference framework below. An example is provided below to guide you in your analysis.



◀ Poster distributed in Singapore during the Japanese Occupation celebrating the *tencho setsu* (birthday of the Meiji Emperor), c. 1943

1 ▶ What details do you see in the poster?

The poster shows the Japanese and local people of different ethnic groups wearing their traditional attires. They are standing side by side and seem to be happy.

2 ▶ What was the poster trying to convey about life in Singapore during the Japanese Occupation?

The poster was trying to convey that the various ethnic groups in Singapore were united and living in harmony.

3 ▶ What was the intention of the artist?

Which group of people do you think the poster was designed for?

As the poster was distributed in Singapore, it was intended for the people who lived in Singapore under Japanese rule.

What emotion(s) was the artist trying to make the audience feel?

By showing that people of different ethnic groups were happy with Japanese rule, the artist was trying to make the locals feel optimistic and hopeful about Japanese rule in Singapore.

What was the artist trying to get the audience to do?

The artist was trying to get the locals to accept and embrace Japanese rule in Singapore.

Now use the same set of questions to analyse the postcard below.



◀ Japanese postcard for occupied nations, c. 1943. Those who received the postcard were meant to draw in the facial expression of the Japanese soldier.

1 → What details do you see in the postcard?

2 → What was the postcard trying to convey about life in Singapore during the Japanese Occupation?

3 → What was the intention of the artist?

Which group of people do you think the postcard was designed for?

What emotion(s) was the artist trying to make the audience feel?

What was the artist trying to get the audience to do?

LEARN ON THE GO

Sharpen your propaganda interpretation skills @ go.gov.sg/lshc602.

Imposing Japanese Culture

The Japanese sought to win loyalty by immersing the locals in the traditions of Japan. Japanese culture was held up as a model for all to follow and was imposed in a few ways, such as making students and many adults learn the Japanese language and culture. In doing so, the Japanese authorities hoped to imbue the Singapore population with the Japanese spirit.



▲ Japanese language students with their Japanese teacher during the Japanese Occupation, 1942

Teaching the Japanese Language

One key way the Japanese promoted their culture was through the teaching of the Japanese language (Nippon-go). Students were taught to speak and write in Japanese in place of English. These lessons were conducted daily over the schools' broadcasting services. To help students learn the Japanese language, Japanese education authorities published a series of Nippon-go books for beginners. The books were full of praise for the beauty and greatness of Japan.

Apart from students, many adults also had to learn Nippon-go. For instance, teachers were required to attend language classes several times a week. Language lessons also became a regular feature in the newspapers. Competitions, awards, extra rations, salary increments and promotions were used to motivate people to learn the Japanese language.

▼ Japanese language learning during the Japanese Occupation was promoted in various ways. One way was through the use of picture charts, published in local newspapers, that taught basic Japanese terms and how to count. This picture chart was likely published between 1943 and 1944.

SYONAN SINBUN **NIPPON-GO LESSONS**

LESSON 22

VOCABULARY

へんじ	henji	answer	オーキ	okki	big
ヨフク	yofuku	clothes	アライ	arai	earse
ト	to	door	トト	toto	far
アメ	ame	rain	ナカイ	chikai	near
ニジ	niji	rainbow	シマツ	umazui	tasty
タク	kuruma	ricksaw: car	シマヅ	umazui	tasteless

EXERCISE

Nani o shite imashita ka?	What were you doing?
ナニ オ シテ イマシタ カ	I was waiting for a reply.
Henji o matte imashita	I was opening the door.
ヘンジ オ マッテ イマシタ	
To o akete imashita	I was folding the clothes.
ト オ アケテ イマシタ	
Yofuku o tattande imashita	I was sweeping the room.
ヨーフク オ タッタンド イマシタ	
Heya o haitte imashita	I was pulling the rickshaw.
ヘヤ オ ハイタ イマシタ	
Kurumawo o hitte imashita	
クルマヲ オ ヒッテ イマシタ	

▲ Nippon-go lessons published in the newspaper
Syonan Shimbun, 2 September 1943

Cultivating the Japanese Spirit

The introduction of the Japanese language went hand in hand with the promotion of Nippon *seishin* (Japanese spirit) to foster a sense of loyalty and identity. During morning assembly in schools, students had to sing “*Kimigayo*”, the Japanese national anthem, and bow before the picture of the Japanese Emperor before the day began. They were also taught to sing Japanese folk songs.

Additionally, daily mass exercises were introduced to the locals. These mass exercises were broadcast with instructions and rhythmic music on public radio. The Japanese emphasised physical education to instil discipline and promote fitness among the masses. Selected youths also received training in traditional Japanese martial arts such as kendo and judo to propagate the Japanese spirit in schools.



▲ Mass exercise in a school during the Japanese Occupation, c. 1940s



▲ The authorities promoted Japanese culture among the local people by making Japanese customs and culture a part of their daily routine. An example of this was the *Sakura Shimbun*, a newsletter published by the Gunseikanbu (Central Military Administration) for schoolchildren.

DID YOU KNOW?

Under Japanese rule, people in Singapore had to follow the Japanese calendar and celebrate festivals and anniversaries corresponding to those in Japan. These included the following:

- 11 February – National Foundation Day (the day the first Japanese Emperor ascended the throne), which also marked the day the Japanese conquered Bukit Timah
- 15 February – Day marking the surrender of the British (holiday celebrated only in Syonan-to)
- 10 March – Army Day marking Japan’s victory over the Russian army in 1905
- 27 May – Navy Day marking Japan’s victory over the Russian naval fleet in 1905
- 8 December – Day marking the start of Japan’s war with Britain and the United States

What Was Daily Life Like Under the Japanese?

Japanese rule in Singapore brought great hardship, and people lived in fear daily. Many people struggled for survival due to the shortage of food, the spread of diseases and the relocation to rural areas outside Singapore. However, amid times of hardship and suffering, there were some opportunities for leisure and entertainment.

Survival

Dealing with Shortages

The war had disrupted trade, which limited the import of goods into Singapore from overseas. Furthermore, most of the available resources were channelled to Japan's war efforts rather than to the people. As a result, there was a shortage of food and essential items.

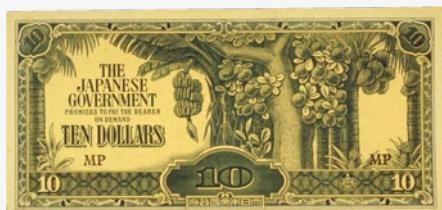
After the first few weeks of the Japanese Occupation, essential food items such as rice, salt and sugar were strictly rationed. The locals were limited to a fixed quantity of essential items that they could obtain using ration coupons.

The shortage of items drove prices up as shops did not have enough goods to cater to the needs of the people. The prices of essential goods increased rapidly over time, causing drastic **inflation**.⁵

As a result, the **black market**⁶ flourished. People had to pay extremely high prices for basic necessities. The Japanese government responded by printing more money (commonly known as "banana notes" because of the images of banana trees printed on 10-dollar notes), resulting in massive drops in the value of the banana notes. By the end of the Japanese Occupation, these notes had essentially become worthless.



▲ Rice purchasing card used to indicate the amount of rice each household could purchase in a week, c. 1942



▲ Banana notes used during the Japanese Occupation

⁵ Inflation refers to the rise in prices of most goods and services of daily or common use. This reduces the value of money as each dollar can now purchase fewer goods and services.

⁶ A black market refers to a situation in which goods are bought and sold illegally at unreasonably high prices.



DID YOU KNOW?

Towards the end of the Japanese Occupation, high inflation occurred due to more money being printed and an increased demand for a limited supply of essential items. It was common for people to bring bags of money to go shopping. Some also used goods to trade for what they wanted.

Item	Pre-1942 Price	1945 Price
Egg	\$0.03	\$15
Fish	\$0.20	\$320
Sugar	\$0.04	\$60

▲ Table showing the prices of various goods before and during the Japanese Occupation

LEARN ON THE GO

Learn more about how people coped with the economic situation in Singapore during the Japanese Occupation @ go.gov.sg/lshc603.



Read Sources 1 and 2 to find out more about the problems people faced during the Japanese Occupation and some of the ways they coped with these problems.

SOURCE 1

As an example, the price of [one] egg [was] 3 cents. [W]hen the Japanese came, [it] started to rise to \$3, then \$10 ... And if your salary was, say, \$100, if you have to pay \$10 for an egg, you can imagine how you are going to survive. So we used to sell our things. And the highest value was given for gold ornaments. ... So what my mother used to do, I remember, we survived because my mother sold her jewellery ... One earring set sold, with that money, she used to buy sugar, rice and keep in the [home], you know, in containers, old trunks and other things ...

- Adapted from a 1983 oral interview with Ronendra Karmakar on his family's experience during the Japanese Occupation

SOURCE 2

As the war dragged on, the shortage of rice became increasingly [severe]. Wheat flour was no longer obtainable. The entire supply had been [taken] by the Japanese authorities for their own use ... the loaves on sale to the public were now hard as bricks ... Beef, pork and poultry were so expensive that dogs and cats began to disappear from the streets! Once I saw rats in wire traps being sold at foodstalls in Waterloo Street.

The once despised tapioca root replaced rice as the staple food ... [we] would plant tapioca during our spare time, and after several months we had a sufficient supply for the family to supplement our meagre rice ration. Occasionally we longed for meat, but it was impossible on a [teacher]'s salary to buy beef or pork.

- Adapted from an account by Thio Chan Bee, a teacher in Singapore during the Japanese Occupation, published in 1977

- According to Sources 1 and 2, what were the problems faced by the people in Singapore during the Japanese Occupation?
- How did the people in Singapore cope with these problems?

Disease and Death

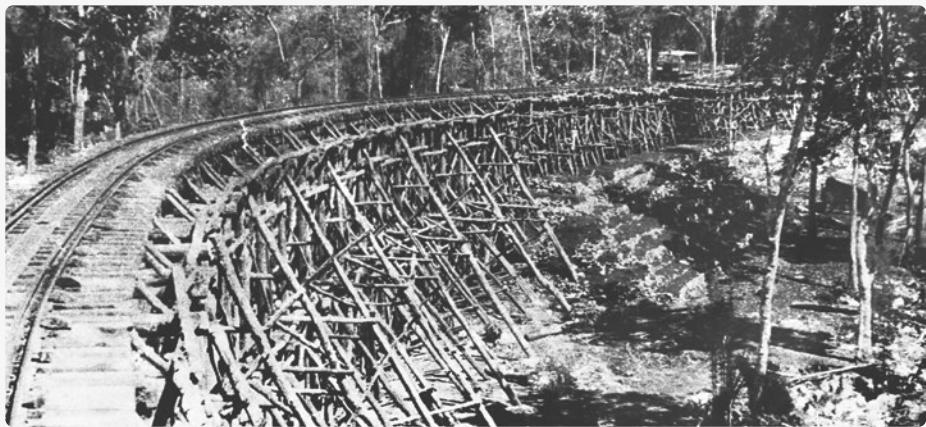
Healthcare and sanitation, which had hardly been a priority of the colonial authorities before the outbreak of war, worsened during the Japanese Occupation. Furthermore, the local population was weakened by food shortages. The death rate climbed as a result. Between 1942 and 1945, 130,000 deaths were officially recorded. This was more than double the number between 1937 and 1940. The primary causes of death were beriberi (a disease caused by a lack of vitamin B1), pneumonia (lung infection) and dysentery (intestinal inflammation).

One group that endured particularly harsh living conditions was the POWs and civilian prisoners. They faced continual shortages of food and medicine, and acute overcrowding. For instance, while Changi Prison was designed for 600 prisoners, it held up to 5,000. Such living conditions led to poor hygiene and the spread of diseases.



▲ Severely malnourished Australian soldiers in a hospital ward after being released from Changi Prison, September 1945

In addition, the Japanese used the POWs as forced labour. They were made to clear war damage, bury the dead and build Japanese memorial shrines. From May 1942, many POWs were sent to work on the Siam-Burma Railway, also known as the “Death Railway”, where about 16,000 died under horrific working conditions. The railway connected Burma (present-day Myanmar) and Siam (present-day Thailand).



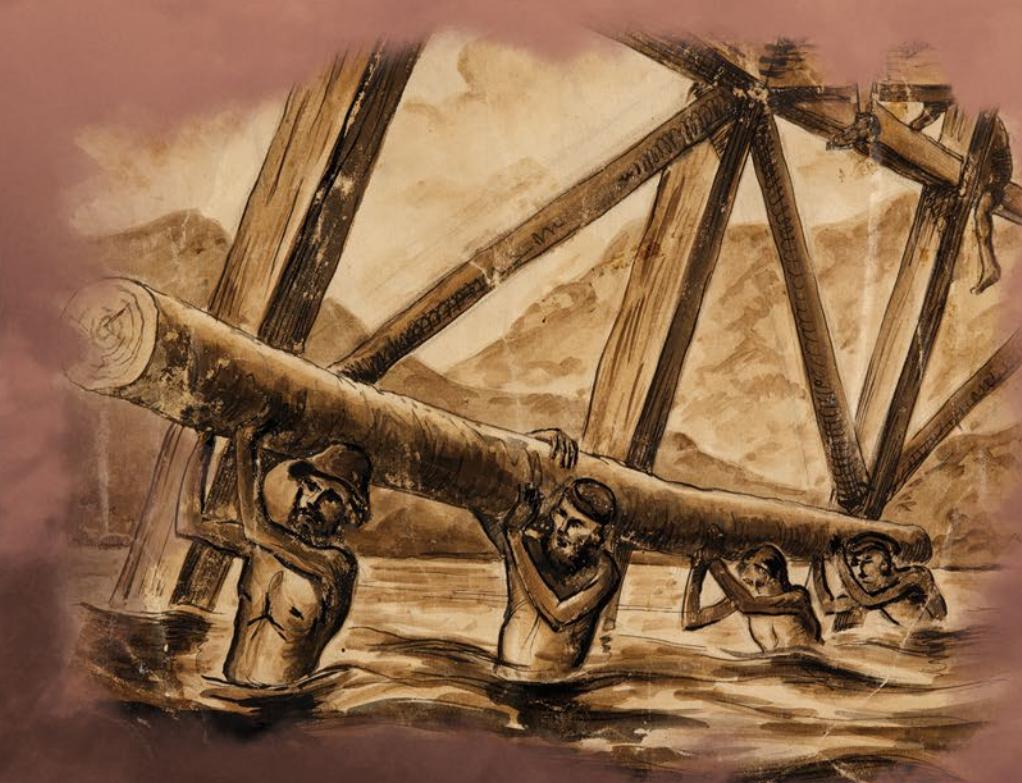
▲ Part of the Siam-Burma Railway, c. 1943



▲ POW in Changi Prison, 1945



▲ Drawing by Allied POW Murray Griffin of the interior of Changi Prison showing how every available space was used, 1945



▲ Bridge Over the River Kwai by Allied POW Leo Rawlings, 1943, showing four POWs, waist-deep in water, carrying a large log across the River Kwai in Siam (present-day Thailand) during the construction of the Siam-Burma Railway

DID YOU KNOW?

The living and working conditions on the “Death Railway” were very harsh. The POWs were given simple tools to fell huge trees and cut through rocks. Diseases were widespread, and the men were not given sufficient food and medical treatment. Besides the POWs, the Japanese also drafted local people to work on the railway. Many suffered and died.



▲ Allied POWs laying track in Ronsi, Burma, c. 1943

Relocations

During the Japanese Occupation, people were encouraged to strive for self-sufficiency by growing their own food, which included vegetables, tapioca and sweet potatoes. When this failed to ease the food shortage, the Japanese resorted to relocating people from Singapore to increase agricultural output. A Japanese government official, Mamoru Shinozaki, was tasked to oversee the resettlement projects to rural areas outside Singapore.

The Chinese were encouraged to move to the Endau settlement in Johor (see Map 6.1). The soil there was rich and the water supply ample, making it suitable for agriculture. The settlement was proclaimed a great success as it was self-sufficient. In addition, the settlement had street lights, a hospital, a small chapel, a bank and several coffee shops. However, attacks by bandits and anti-Japanese **guerrillas**⁷ later disrupted the peace in this settlement.

A few months after setting up Endau, the Japanese created the Bahau settlement (see Map 6.1) in Negeri Sembilan, another state in Malaya, for Eurasians and Chinese Roman Catholics. However, the land was too hilly and the soil too poor to support agriculture. Some people even resorted to eating rats and maggots, and many of them perished.



▲ Settlers clearing the jungle land in Bahau, c. 1943

Read Source 3 to learn more about life in Bahau during the Japanese Occupation.



▲ Mamoru Shinozaki



▲ Map 6.1: Map of the Malay Peninsula showing the locations of the Endau and Bahau settlements



▲ Settlers ploughing the ground in Bahau to prepare for crop planting, c. 1944

SOURCE 3

For the hardworking person, life in Bahau was manageable. But the constant malaria outbreaks made it unpleasant. Still, work provided food that sustained the individual and increased his chance of survival. At least one family succeeded in growing rice. ... Many farmers in the colony produced enough tapioca to barter it for rice, but the supply was not enough.

- Adapted from an account by Joseph Conceicao, published in 2004. Conceicao lived in Bahau in his 20s.

- According to Source 3, what was life like for people living in Bahau?

⁷ A guerrilla is a member of an armed group that fights against larger military forces, usually by harassing them through surprise raids and sabotaging communication and supply lines.

Leisure and Entertainment

To maintain the appearance of a harmonious and happy society, the Japanese authorities allowed some leisure activities and entertainment to continue. They introduced radio programmes consisting of Japanese songs, Malay music, and news in Hokkien and Cantonese; Japanese movies and documentaries at cinemas; and free open-air screenings of propaganda shows.

In addition, the Japanese officials encouraged sports and cultural activities to reduce the stress of wartime conditions on the local population. Notices of football, baseball, tennis and badminton matches appeared almost every day in the media. Boxing matches took place at Kim Seng Road, and the police band even performed at the Botanic Gardens.

Having to endure miserable living conditions, the POWs also tried to keep their spirits up by organising and participating in social, religious and sporting activities. These examples included publishing a newspaper, organising theatrical performances and church services, and painting murals at Changi Chapel.



▲ Football team of the Syonan Sports Association, c. 1942. The Syonan Sports Association selected players from different football league teams to form the Singapore team.



▲ Poster for the propaganda movie *The Fall of Singapore*, about the Japanese attack on Singapore, 1942. This movie was presented by Eiga Haikyusha (the film unit of the Japanese Imperial Army), which took full control of film distribution and all theatres in Singapore.

DID YOU KNOW?

William Haxworth (1906–1985) was a British civilian internee in Changi Prison and subsequently the Sime Road internment camp during the Japanese Occupation. During his internment, he secretly created over 300 paintings and sketches that portrayed the poor living conditions in the POW camps. Faced with a shortage of drawing materials, Haxworth resorted to using whatever alternative materials he could lay his hands on to produce a variety of watercolour paintings and sketches. Over time, his drawings captured the transformation of internees from well-built men to gaunt figures of skin and bones.



▲ Concert programme poster by Allied POW William Haxworth, 1942



▲ *The Road Sweeper* by Allied POW William Haxworth, 1945

How Did the Locals Respond to Japanese Rule?

There were varying responses to Japanese rule. The majority tried to avoid being noticed by the Japanese and simply get by from day to day. Some collaborated with the Japanese willingly while others were threatened or forced by circumstances to do so. Another group chose to actively resist.

Collaboration

The Japanese actively sought the support of the Malays in administering Japanese rule. Some of the duties given to the Malays included policing and being part of neighbourhood associations that would report on suspected hostile activity against the regime.

Other groups were also enlisted to assist the Japanese in establishing their authority. They included some Chinese who became informants for the Kempeitai during Operation Sook Ching, helping to root out those seen to be anti-Japanese.



▲ MPAJA leader Chin Peng receiving British campaign medals from Admiral Mountbatten, c. 1945

Resistance

However, not everyone was willing to cooperate or accept Japanese rule. For example, seven senior officers of the Malay Regiment refused to pledge loyalty to and fight for Japan. They were subsequently executed.

Others responded to the ill-treatment of the locals by taking up arms and joining resistance forces. Two prominent groups were the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) and Force 136. Both groups had the common goal of driving the Japanese out of Singapore and worked with the British to do so. Members of MPAJA would carry out sabotage attacks on Japanese officers and their men whenever they had the chance. As part of the resistance, they also aroused anti-Japanese sentiments among the people by distributing anti-Japanese newspapers and posters. Force 136, a secret organisation set up by the British, would gather information about the Japanese and also organise sabotage activities.



Members of Force 136, c. 1944 ▶

One notable figure in the resistance was Lim Bo Seng, a local businessman. When the war between Japan and China broke out in the 1930s, he organised anti-Japanese activities such as a boycott of Japanese goods. After the fall of Singapore, he was recruited as an agent of Force 136 and also linked up with local resistance organisations such as the Malayan Communist Party to fight against the Japanese through guerrilla tactics. Unfortunately, in March 1944, he was captured and tortured for information by the Japanese. Despite this, he did not reveal any information to his captors. Lim eventually died in prison on 29 June 1944.

Another prominent figure was Elizabeth Choy. During the Japanese Occupation, Choy worked as a canteen operator with her husband at the Mental Hospital (present-day Institute of Mental Health). They secretly delivered food, money, medicine and messages to British POWs. As a result, she was imprisoned and tortured by the Japanese at the Kempeitai headquarters on Stamford Road for close to 200 days. After the war, however, she did not name her torturers, saying that they had acted that way because of war circumstances. In recognition of her courage, Choy was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) and the Order of the Star of Sarawak.

Who was ELIZABETH CHOY?

Elizabeth Choy (1910–2006) was born in Kudat in North Borneo (present-day Sabah). During the Japanese Occupation, Elizabeth Choy was arrested by the Japanese for smuggling supplies and messages to British internees. Interrogated by the Kempeitai, she was released after enduring a period of starvation and torture. After the war, she was recognised as the only female local to have been imprisoned for such a long time.

While Choy is most well known for her bravery during the Japanese Occupation, she was also the only woman nominated into Singapore's Legislative Council in 1951. In 1956, she became the first principal of the Singapore School for the Blind.

From 1960 to 1974, Choy dedicated her time to teaching at St Andrew's Junior School. A committed and compassionate teacher, she was awarded the Pingat Bakti Setia (Long Service Medal) by the Government of Singapore in 1973 for her service to the profession.



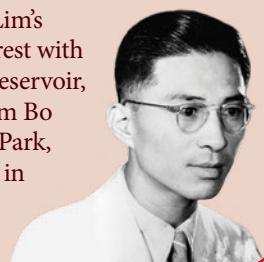
Who was LIM BO SENG?

Lim Bo Seng (1909–1944) was a prominent Hokkien businessman who undertook active leadership in anti-Japanese activities during World War II.

Lim came to Singapore from China at the age of 16. In the 1930s, he was involved in activities to help support China's war effort against Japan. As Japanese troops began to approach Singapore from Johor, he and his team helped to blow up the Causeway to impede the Japanese advance. Lim later escaped to India where he joined the British resistance group Force 136.

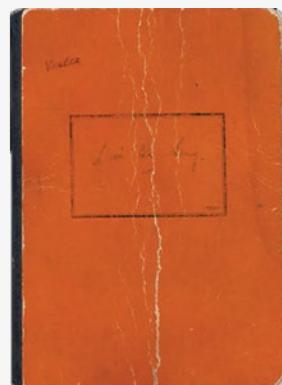
In 1943, Lim, together with the rest of the Force 136 members, set up an intelligence network in Malaya. However, in 1944, he was captured in Malaya by the Japanese and died shortly after in jail.

In January 1946, the British brought Lim's remains to Singapore. He was laid to rest with full military honours at MacRitchie Reservoir, where his grave still lies today. The Lim Bo Seng Memorial, located at Esplanade Park, was gazetted as a national monument in 2010. Bo Seng Avenue in Singapore is also named after him.



My duty and my honour would not permit me to look back. Every day, tens of thousands are dying for their countries. ... You must not grieve for me. On the other hand, you should take pride in my sacrifice and devote yourself to the upbringing of the children. Tell them what has happened to me and direct them along my footsteps.

▲ Extract from the farewell letter Lim Bo Seng wrote to his wife while in prison in 1944



▲ Lim Bo Seng's diary covering the period between 11 February and 4 April 1942. The diary traces his evacuation from Singapore to Calcutta, India.



◀ OBE medal awarded to Elizabeth Choy in 1946

DID YOU KNOW?

With news of the impending surrender, more than 300 Japanese officers and men killed themselves at Raffles Hotel after a farewell party in August 1945. There were also some Japanese soldiers who escaped to Indonesia to fight together with Indonesian pro-independence forces against the return of the Dutch. Others retreated to a prison camp in Jurong with their belongings, leaving only a few officers to hand over to the incoming British administration.

What Problems Did the People Face Immediately After the Japanese Surrender?

In spite of its early dominance in Southeast Asia, Japan was eventually defeated in World War II. As the war dragged on, Japan experienced an increasing number of defeats by the Allies, such as in the Battle of Midway. The sea battles in particular helped to stall Japan's advance throughout Southeast Asia. In 1945, Germany surrendered to the Allies, who then focused their resources on defeating Japan.

On 6 and 9 August, the Allies dropped an atomic bomb each on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki respectively. The estimated total death toll was 214,000. The bombs also caused massive damage in both cities. On 15 August 1945, Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's surrender to the Allies. On 2 September 1945, the formal surrender of Japan took place on board an American battleship, the USS *Missouri*, in Tokyo Bay.

▼ US Navy planes in a massive formation over the battleship USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay, where the Japanese surrender took place, 2 September 1945



Upon their surrender, the Japanese were stripped of their swords and ranks. As they approached City Hall, huge crowds jeered loudly at them. The returning British, on the other hand, were welcomed with cheers.



▲ Admiral Mountbatten announcing the Japanese surrender at City Hall, 12 September 1945

With the end of the war, the MPAJA took revenge on those who had actively collaborated with the Japanese. These included the Chinese who served as informants and assisted in Operation Sook Ching, and Malays who served as police for the Japanese. The different ways in which the Japanese had treated the various groups were to cause ill feelings for a long time to come. Read Source 4 to find out more.



▲ Children in Singapore cheering British troops as they entered Singapore at the end of World War II, 1945



▲ British flag flying above a cheering crowd during the arrival of the British in Singapore, 1945

SOURCE 4

I think the Force 136, ... the guerrillas, ... [kept] on going [to the houses of] those people who ... tortured [others during Japanese rule], [rounded them up and shot] them all. ... I saw quite a lot [of dead people] floating in the Rochor River [and] Rochor Canal. ... After the Japanese surrender, ... everyone [took] their revenge. [There] were informers [and] police detectives, they [were hunted down and] killed by [the guerrillas].

- Adapted from a 1983 oral interview with Soh Guan Bee, who worked at the Naval Base Workshop during the Japanese Occupation

1. According to Source 4, how were the pro-Japanese collaborators treated?
2. Why were the pro-Japanese collaborators treated in this manner?

The British Military Administration (BMA) was established and took over the administration of Singapore and Malaya from 5 September 1945 to 31 March 1946. The BMA was made up of professional soldiers and former European civil servants who had joined the army during the war. It aimed to maintain law and order and help with reconstruction in the immediate post-war years. However, it faced a host of problems as Singapore was in disarray. For instance, food and water were in short supply and the railway system did not work properly.

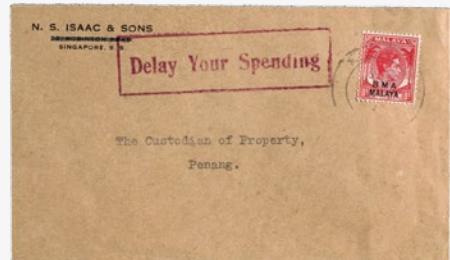


▲ Present-day Hotel Fort Canning, the former headquarters of the BMA

Food Shortages

The most urgent issue was the shortage of food. This was due to wartime and post-war disruptions of production and shipping. Rice-producing countries such as Thailand were unable to produce enough rice to sell overseas. Furthermore, it was difficult for rice that was produced to even reach and be distributed in Singapore, as the war had destroyed a large number of merchant ships. In addition, sunken ships blocked the harbour and few warehouses were available for storage.

The BMA dealt with the problem gradually by clearing the harbour so that ships could enter the port. It also controlled the prices of essential supplies such as sugar, salt, fresh fish and vegetables, and provided free meals for children under six years old.



▲ Envelope stamped with the BMA postmark "Delay Your Spending", c. 1945. Food rationing continued during the BMA period, and many envelopes used during this time were stamped with this postmark to encourage people to remain prudent.

Economic Difficulties

On 7 September 1945, the BMA declared that banana notes were no longer the official currency of Singapore. This meant that those who had not kept the Straits dollar had to borrow from others to survive.

To ease the situation, the BMA issued special grants to the locals. However, the grants were often not sufficient for large families to make ends meet.

Schooling Disruptions

Despite Japanese promises of greater educational opportunities, the war had disrupted the schooling of many people in Singapore. To ensure the continuation of education, the BMA reopened schools quickly in October 1945 for children of school age as well as overaged children who had received little education during the Japanese Occupation. They also provided grants and waived school fees for children from needy families. By March 1946, 62,000 students were enrolled in schools.



▲ First post-war staff and students of Sin Sheng School at Kampong Kembangan, 1940s. The school was closed in 1972.

Read Source 5 on the next page to find out more about the situation in schools after the British returned.

SOURCE 5

After the British returned, the Malay schools were in a mess ... there were many shortages, many books (Malay textbooks) were destroyed during the Occupation. There were no proper blackboards, no textbooks. So the Department of Education formed a department out of about ten people and our task was to produce emergency teaching materials for the schools until proper textbooks were ready. We had to produce the materials as fast as we could, they were like in pamphlet form. We would print them and then distribute them to students.

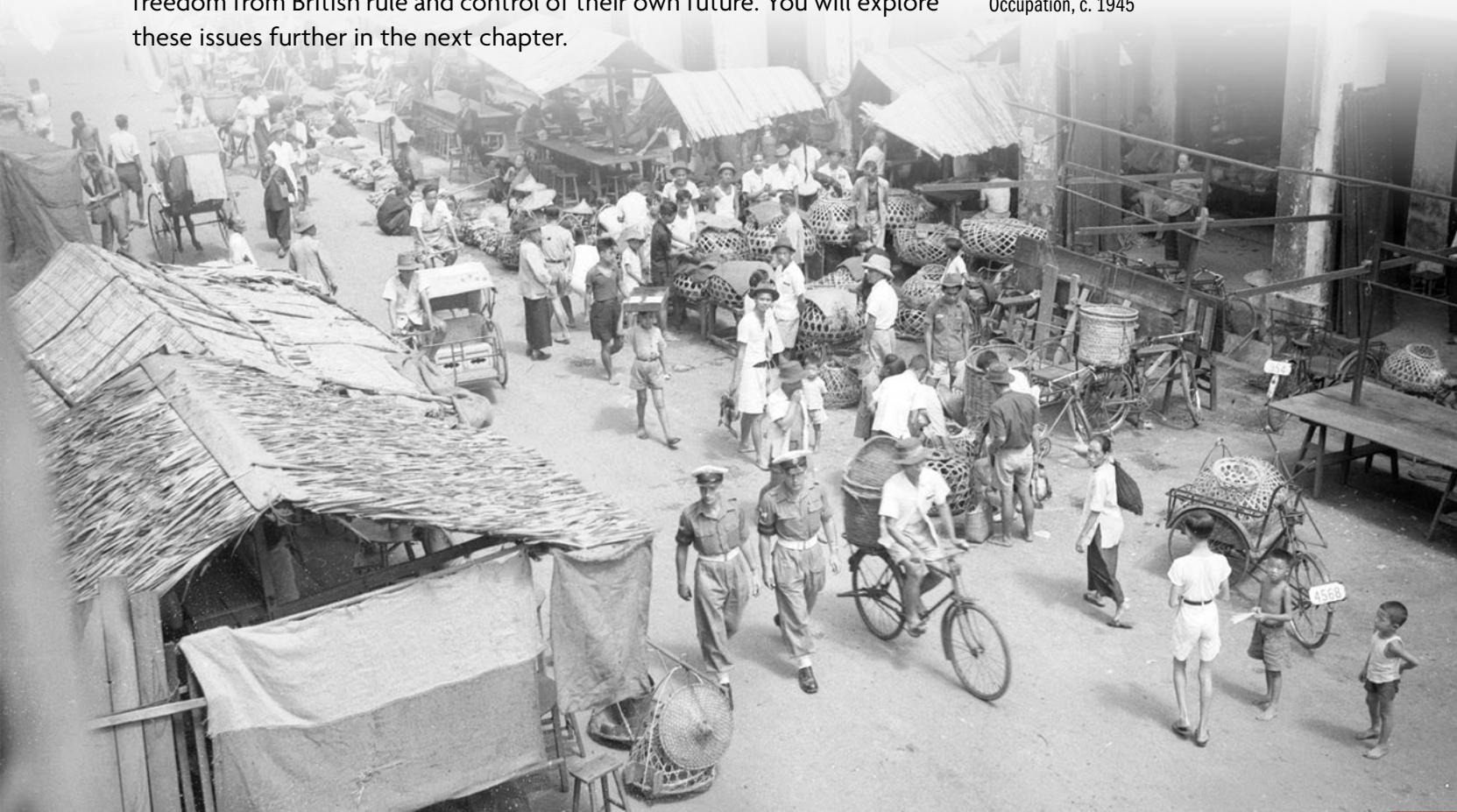
*- An account of the situation in schools after the British return by Haji Yusof bin Lana,
a teacher from Telok Kurau Primary School, published in 1995*

1. According to Source 5, what problems did schools face at the end of the war?
2. How were these problems overcome?

Conclusion

With the return of the British, people expected their lives to improve. However, this did not happen immediately. While the BMA did act to deal with the post-war problems, the measures took time to implement and take effect. This led to growing discontent among the local population, which sparked off social disturbances in the 1950s. As the post-war problems dragged on, desire also grew among the local population to have freedom from British rule and control of their own future. You will explore these issues further in the next chapter.

▼ Street scene in Singapore after the Japanese Occupation, c. 1945





LET'S REVIEW

In this chapter, you learnt that the experiences of the people in Singapore were not all the same during the Japanese Occupation. Imagine you were **one** of the following individuals during the Japanese Occupation:

- a Chinese businessman;
- a Malay student learning Japanese in school; or
- an Indian soldier thinking about joining the anti-British INA.

What would you have experienced between February 1942 and September 1945? Write it down in the diary on the next page.

In your diary entries, use what you learnt in this chapter to write about **two different types of experiences that you would have encountered during the Japanese Occupation**. Remember to also highlight significant events you might have witnessed and emotions you might have felt.

You may use the following **types of experiences** to help you complete the diary entries:

- survival
- leisure and entertainment
- collaboration
- resistance

An example has been provided based on the character of a POW in Changi Prison.

Diary of Private Joseph Chapman

Experience 1: Survival

Date: 24 February 1942

Dear Diary,

Alas! Singapore, the impregnable fortress, has fallen to the Japanese!

We were forced to march for a long time to Changi Prison. The other Allied POWs are also being kept here. Every day, we lack food and are hungry. We have to work long hours and are not given enough to eat. We even have to plant our own vegetables and add talcum powder to our rice porridge in order to have a fuller meal.

Experience 2: Leisure and Entertainment

Date: 15 June 1945

Dear Diary,

On certain days, we try to keep our spirits high by organising activities and events. Sometimes we have the opportunity to attend plays and variety shows. Some of my fellow prisoners are so talented at theatrical performances! We also smuggle in paints and brushes for painting on the walls of the chapel. In tough times, we do all that we can to keep sane and make the hardship more bearable. If only we could be liberated ...

Write your diary entries in the spaces provided below.

Diary of _____

Experience 1:

Date:

Dear Diary,

Experience 2:

Date:

Dear Diary,



CASE INVESTIGATION

What key propaganda messages were used by the Japanese to convince the locals to support their rule during the Japanese Occupation?

One of the priorities of the Japanese was to remove all traces of Western colonial influence and to firmly establish Japanese authority over the locals. In addition to using force to ensure the submission of the locals, the Japanese used propaganda to win over local support for their rule. They used channels such as posters, newspaper articles and speeches to communicate their messages. In this Case Investigation, you will explore how the Japanese used the various forms of propaganda and examine the messages they sought to convey to the locals.

SOURCE A

We ... hope that we sweep away the arrogant and unrighteous British elements and share pain and rejoicing with all concerned peoples in a spirit of "give and take" and also hope to promote the social developments by ... giving all content to the respective race and individual according to their talents ... Nippon army will drastically expel and punish those who ... indulge themselves in private interests and wants, those who act against humanity or disturb the public order and peace and those who are against the orders and disturb the military action of Nippon army.

– Adapted from a speech by General Yamashita from The Syonan Jit Poh, a Chinese language version of The Syonan Times, published on 20 February 1942

SOURCE B

Every family must have its protector to ensure safety and security for its members for without such protection its progress is impossible ... In Nippon, the Asian family of nations has found a protector from among themselves, a protector brave enough and strong enough to ensure its safety and security ... They must cooperate with their only liberator, Nippon, one of their own flesh and blood, one who shares their mighty civilisation, one whose heart beats in unison with theirs in their aims and aspirations ... [Nippon is the] one whose ... bravest and best sons in their thousands and tens of thousands have dared, suffered and died for Asians to make that splendid vision of a united, free, prosperous and happy Asia a reality.

– Adapted from an extract from The Syonan Times, published in March 1942

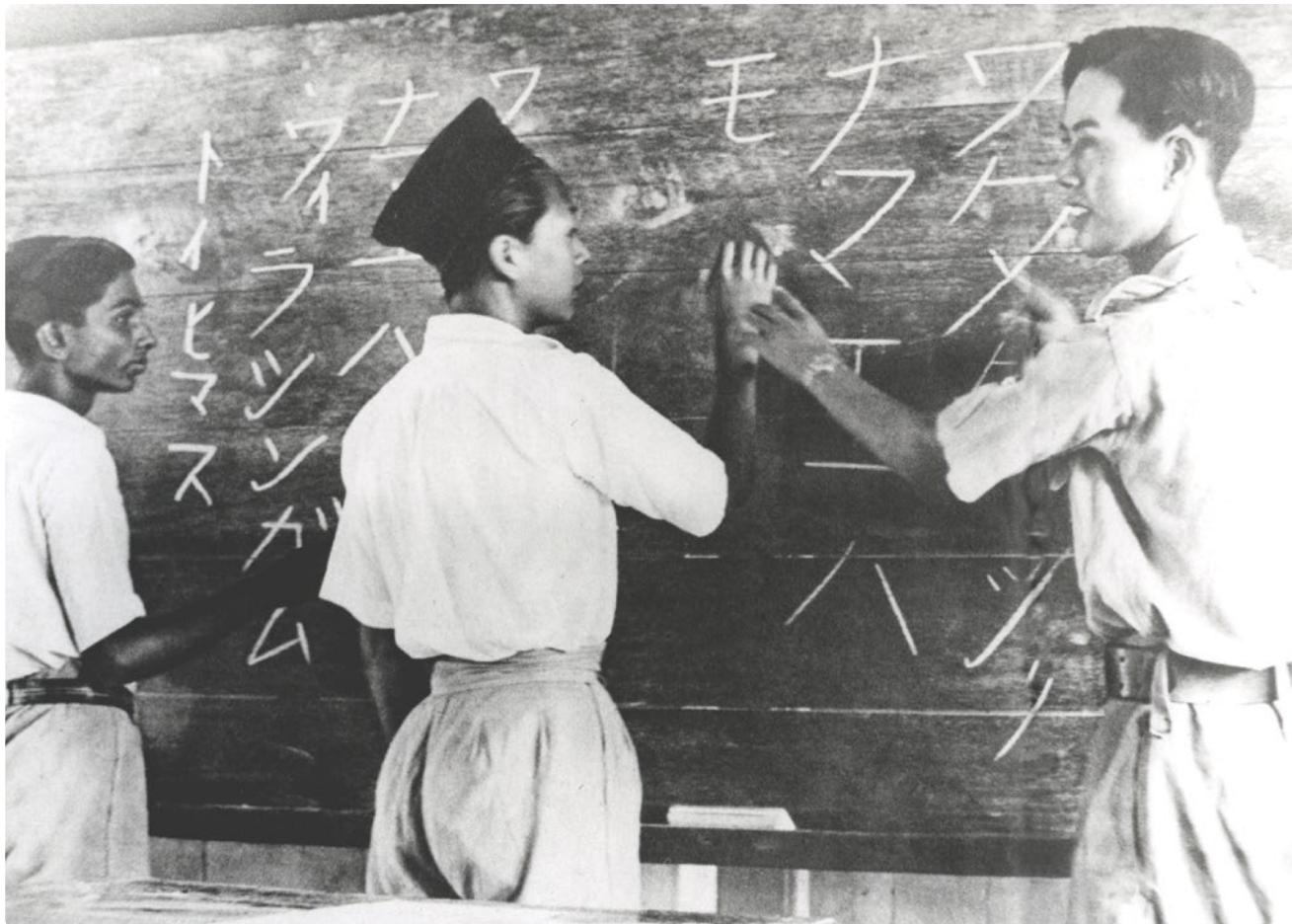
SOURCE C



- Cover of a magazine on the **Manifesto*** for Greater East Asian Cooperation, published in 1942

* A manifesto is a written statement by a political party publicly stating its intentions, motives or view.

SOURCE D



- Photograph of local students learning Japanese in school, published in a Japanese newspaper on 22 July 1942

INVESTIGATE!

1. Read **Source A**. What does the speech tell you about how the Japanese saw themselves as rulers of Singapore?
2. Study **Sources B** and **C**. What do these sources tell you about Japan's vision or goals for Asia?
3. Study **Source D**. Why did the Japanese publish this photograph in the newspaper?

REPORT!

Having studied the sources, what can you conclude about the key messages of Japanese propaganda during the Japanese Occupation?

Summarise your conclusions below. Remember to use evidence from the sources to support your ideas. An example has been provided for your reference.

What Were the Key Messages of Japanese Propaganda During the Japanese Occupation?		
Source	Key Point	Supporting Evidence from Source(s)
A	The Japanese were fair and just rulers.	It states that the Japanese sought to “giv[e] all content to the respective race and individual according to their talents”.
B		
C		
D		
Based on the sources above, I can conclude that the key messages of Japanese propaganda during the Japanese Occupation were ...		



7

How Did the People in Singapore Respond to British Rule After World War II?

The Japanese Occupation left a deep impression on those who lived through it. While happy cries greeted the return of British rule, the people in Singapore no longer viewed their colonial masters in the same way as before. The swift fall of the supposedly “impregnable fortress” (see Chapter 5) and the subsequent hardship during the Japanese Occupation (see Chapter 6) had led many to question Britain’s right to rule Singapore. Events that occurred beyond Singapore after the war also influenced the way people viewed colonial rule.

In this chapter, you will learn about British actions and the people’s aspirations in the post-war years, and how these led to Singapore achieving internal self-government in 1959.

▼ Chinese middle school students gathering at the foot of King George V Park (present-day Fort Canning Park) for a march to Government House (present-day Istana) to petition against the National Service Ordinance passed by the British, 13 May 1954



Chapter at a Glance

You will learn:

- How external developments in the post-war period affected Singapore
- How the British dealt with post-war problems in Singapore
- How the locals responded to British rule in the post-war period
- How Singapore eventually attained full internal self-government in 1959





Timeline

Beyond Singapore

The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union begins.

▼ Japanese General Umezu Yoshijiro signing the surrender documents on board the USS *Missouri*, 2 September 1945



World War II ends.



◀ British troops arriving in Singapore at the start of the Malayan Emergency, 1948

The Malayan Emergency is declared.

India gains independence from Britain.

1945

1946

1947

1948

1949

1950

1951

The Communist Party of China emerges victorious in the Chinese Civil War.

Indonesia gains independence from the Netherlands.

In Singapore

The British return to Singapore and set up the British Military Administration (BMA).



▲ Admiral Mountbatten announcing the Japanese surrender at City Hall, 12 September 1945

The BMA comes to an end.

Singapore holds its first-ever election, as six members of the Legislative Council are chosen by voters.



▲ Members of the Legislative Council, 1948

The Maria Hertogh Riots break out.



▲ Car overturned and set on fire during the Maria Hertogh Riots, December 1950

▼ Vietnamese defeat the French in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu, resulting in negotiations for French withdrawal from Vietnam, 1954



Talks begin to discuss French withdrawal from Vietnam.

▼ Malayan Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman proclaiming independence for Malaya, 31 August 1957



Malaya gains independence from Britain.

1953

1954

1955

1956

1957

1959

The Rendel Commission is set up.

The Anti-National Service Riots break out.



▲ Clash between Chinese middle school students and the police, May 1954

The Labour Front wins the 1955 election.

The Hock Lee Bus Riots break out.

The First Merdeka Talks are held.

The Chinese Middle School Student Riots break out.

The Second Merdeka Talks are held.

The Citizenship Ordinance is passed.

The PAP wins the 1959 election.

Singapore achieves full internal self-government.

Yusof bin Ishak is sworn in as Singapore's Head of State, the Yang di-Pertuan Negara.



▲ Yusof bin Ishak being sworn in as the Yang di-Pertuan Negara, 3 December 1959

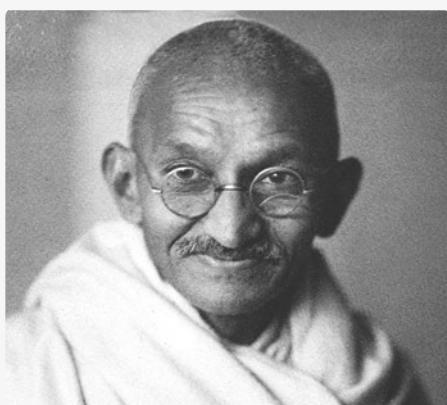
How Did External Developments Influence the People's Responses to British Rule After World War II?

The changes that took place in Singapore after World War II occurred against the backdrop of several external developments. These developments were important in influencing the people's responses to British rule, and also in shaping the thinking and actions of the British. Let us now learn more about them.

Weakening of Colonial Rule

Even before World War II, anti-colonial sentiments had arisen in many places due to the suffering caused by European colonial rule. The defeat of European forces by an Asian power, the Japanese Empire, and the subsequent Japanese Occupation further accelerated the growth of anti-colonial feelings.

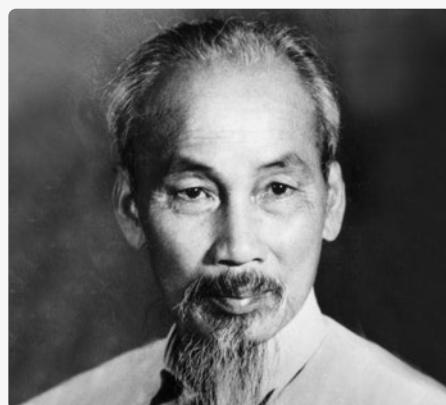
After the Japanese surrender, people in different places saw the chance to rise up against their European colonial rulers and take control of their own destinies. India, the most populous British colony, gained independence in 1947. Two years later, Indonesia gained independence from the Dutch. In 1954, the Vietnamese overthrew their French colonial masters. Colonial rule in Asia appeared to be weakening. As news of these events travelled, they encouraged those who had long wished to be free from British rule.



▲ Mohandas K. Gandhi, leader of the Indian independence movement



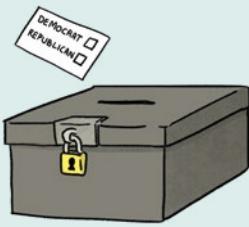
▲ Sukarno, leader of the Indonesian independence movement



▲ Ho Chi Minh, leader of the Vietnamese independence movement

Growing Influence of Communism

A new kind of conflict emerged at the end of World War II. This conflict became known as the **Cold War**.¹ It was a conflict between two very powerful countries: the United States and the Soviet Union (officially the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or USSR). Both had large populations, strong militaries and rich resources. Although they had been allies during World War II, their differences in **ideology**² made continued cooperation after the war unsustainable. Let us look at some of these differences in ideology and how they contributed to tensions after World War II.

	United States	Soviet Union
Ideology	Democracy/Capitalism	Communism
Who should have control in the country?	Democracy  <p>Believed in free elections which could be contested by more than one political party</p>	Dictatorship*  <p>Upheld one-party rule: only the Communist Party was allowed</p> <p>* A dictatorship is a form of government in which a person or a small group rules with almost unlimited power.</p>
	Private Ownership  <p>Upheld private enterprise and property ownership: people could own businesses, and buy and sell goods</p>	Government Ownership  <p>Believed goods should be allocated to people according to their needs. Thus, the government would control all resources needed to produce these goods, such as factories and farms</p>
	Individual Before Community  <p>Valued individual freedom</p>	Community Before Individual  <p>Regarded individual freedom as less important than the benefit of society</p>

▲ Figure 7.1: Differences in ideology between the United States and the Soviet Union

¹ A cold war refers to a state of tension between two people or groups without open or violent confrontation.

² An ideology is a set of ideas. In this case, they are ideas about how a country should be run. They attempt to answer questions such as:

- i Who should have control in the country?
- ii How should wealth in the country be created and shared?
- iii How important are people's individual interests compared to society's overall interests?

The RISE of COMMUNISM and the SOVIET UNION



Communist ideas appealed to many who felt unfairly treated by those who governed them. In Europe during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the idea of a more equal society was attractive to those who suffered exploitation by powerful rulers or wealthy land and business owners.



In 1917, communists in Russia* tried to overthrow the country's leaders and take control.

* Before 1917, Russia was a vast empire extending from Eastern Europe to the Pacific Ocean. After the formation of the Soviet Union, Russia became one of the territories in the Soviet Union.

After a violent civil war, the Russian communists succeeded in establishing the Soviet Union. In their efforts to create a communist system, however, they established a dictatorship to give themselves more power to shape society according to their goals.



Under the communist dictatorship of the Soviet Union, political freedom was severely limited. The government seized property previously owned by individuals, such as private farms, and placed them under the state's control. Many who opposed the government were arrested or killed.

Communism opposed colonial rule for its exploitation of people. Thus it found many supporters in European colonies such as Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaya before they had gained independence. As an ally of the United States in the Cold War, Britain was concerned that its colonies, such as Malaya and Singapore, would fall under communist control in their fight for independence. In Singapore, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) had considerable popular support. Many people, especially those in the Chinese community, remembered how the MCP had helped in the resistance against the Japanese during World War II.

Now that the war was over, the MCP turned its attention to ending British rule and establishing communist governments in Malaya and Singapore. In Singapore, amid post-war economic difficulties, the MCP worked to influence **trade unions**³ and Chinese-medium schools, stirring up anti-colonial feelings among the workers and students. It also attacked rubber plantations and tin mines in Malaya, many of which were owned and managed by the British. The MCP's actions further heightened British fears.

When three European rubber planters in Malaya were murdered in June 1948, the British took action against the MCP. A State of Emergency was declared throughout Malaya, and in the following month, the MCP was declared illegal. The Malayan Emergency lasted from 1948 to 1960. By the time it ended, the conflict had killed or wounded several thousand civilians and military personnel.



▲ British troops patrolling in Malaya during the Malayan Emergency, 1957

▼ Front page of the newspaper *The Singapore Free Press*, 16 June 1948

3 planters shot dead near Ipoh

Three European planters were shot dead this morning by armed Chinese on an estate twenty miles from Ipoh. The victims are:—Mr. A. E. Walker (Elphil Estate), Mr. J. M. Allison and Mr. Christian.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1950, the MCP attempted to assassinate the Governor of Singapore, Sir Franklin Gimson. This was among the numerous acts of violence and sabotage carried out by the MCP during the Emergency. One year later, the MCP succeeded in assassinating Sir Henry Gurney, the High Commissioner of Malaya.



▲ Road to Fraser's Hill in present-day Malaysia, where Henry Gurney was assassinated in 1951

³ A trade union is an organisation formed by workers to protect their rights and interests. It often looks into issues such as salaries and working conditions.

Read Source 1 below to find out more about why the MCP felt it had to resort to violence.

SOURCE 1

It became very obvious to all of us that not only would such a law restrict trade union powers, it would also take away the [MCP]'s right to lead the trade union movement. The next step would have been the outright banning of our party. We would have to be prepared. If the banning took place, we would have no option but to fight. Subsequently, the law was passed ... It was within this context and in this mood that we went on to accept we had no option now but to wage war for our principles.

– Adapted from an account by MCP leader Chin Peng from his memoir, *My Side of History*, published in 2003. Leading MCP members had been handed a stolen document containing details of a proposed law that would restrict trade union powers (see page 49).

1. According to Source 1, why did the MCP begin taking violent measures to achieve its objectives?

British concerns over the growing influence of communism deepened after 1949 with the victory of the Communist Party of China (CPC), led by Mao Zedong, in the Chinese Civil War. China, the world's most populous country, had entered the communist **bloc**.⁴ Given the sizeable Chinese immigrant population in Malaya and Singapore and their traditionally close ties to China, the British feared that the appeal of communist ideas would grow among them. Read Source 2 to find out more.



▲ Mao Zedong, leader of the CPC

SOURCE 2

[The Japanese Occupation contributed to a] political awakening in Singapore. Perhaps it was because the Japanese conquerors were harsh taskmasters; perhaps it was because the all-powerful Europeans were humiliated into defeat by Asian **five-footers***; perhaps it was the awakening of India's century-old struggle to free herself from British [control]; perhaps it was Mao's struggle [in China] ... Perhaps it was a combination of all these factors that led Malayans and Singaporeans to ... act. From then on the target was independence.

– Rajabali Jumabhoy reflecting on the post-war attitudes of the people, adapted from a 1981 oral interview. Jumabhoy was 47 years old when the Japanese Occupation came to an end.

* "Five-footers" refer to people who are around 5 feet (approximately 1.52 metres) tall.

1. According to Source 2, what factors contributed to the "political awakening" in Singapore during the post-war period?
2. Why do you think a "political awakening" was important to Singapore in its path to independence?

Britain wanted to reassert its rule over Malaya and Singapore after World War II and had drawn up plans for this. However, the British failed to recognise how their surrender to the Japanese during World War II had changed people's attitudes towards them, and there was fierce resistance to the British plans to reassert colonial rule. The British thus had to adapt their plans by addressing the people's concerns and winning their support.

⁴ A bloc is an alliance or group of states that share common interests, values or beliefs.

How Did the British Attempt to Win Local Support?

Although the people in Singapore were relieved and overjoyed when the war ended, they soon realised the post-war period was not without problems. Living conditions, for instance, did not seem to improve as much or as quickly as many had hoped. The British needed to address these problems if they were to win the people's support.

Meeting Housing Challenges

One problem was the shortage of housing. Much housing had been destroyed or become run-down during wartime. Furthermore, Singapore's population was rapidly growing as it experienced a post-war **baby boom⁵** and had one of the highest birth rates in the world in the 1940s and 1950s. As a result, many people lived in increasingly overcrowded conditions. A significant portion of the population lived in **slums⁶**.

Read Source 3 to find out more.



▲ Interior of a slum dwelling in Bukit Ho Swee Estate, 1947

SOURCE 3

Today, Chinatown is ... over-congested ... [Large masses of people] are crammed into it. Chinatown is full – but more are coming into it ... "Almost inhuman" was the description given by a [health officer] to the conditions under which a large part of the city's cubicle dwellers existed. The situation is worse today. Where formerly a tiny cubicle in Chinatown housed a man, his wife and [their] growing family, today, in many instances, it holds a portion of some other family as well.

– *Newspaper report from The Singapore Free Press, published on 16 May 1946*

- According to Source 3, what were the living conditions like in Chinatown?

⁵ A baby boom is a period marked by a substantial increase in birth rate. Singapore's first baby boom started in 1946, which saw 38,654 live births, a 58% increase from 24,441 in 1945. This baby boom lasted for almost two decades.

⁶ A slum is an overcrowded, dirty and run-down city area, usually inhabited by the very poor.

To address the problem, the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT) accelerated its building programme. The SIT had been established in 1927 by the British to provide low-cost housing. Between 1947 and 1959, it built 20,907 housing and shop units. This worked out to an average of 1,742 units per year, which was far below the estimated 10,000 units per year required to meet the growing population's housing needs. Despite the SIT's efforts, housing shortages persisted and many continued to live in cramped conditions throughout the 1950s.



▲ SIT flats in Tiong Bahru Estate, c. 1953

Addressing Food Shortages

Food was also in short supply, a problem made worse by the growing population. The war had disrupted shipping, affecting the flow of food supplies into Singapore. Besides, neighbouring rice-producing countries did not have enough rice to export to Singapore. Wartime food rationing continued. Malnutrition was widespread and wages could not keep up with the rising food prices.

The British were worried that the food shortages would lead to widespread unrest. To avoid this, they established People's Restaurants to provide affordable meals. By the end of 1946, there were 10 People's Restaurants in Singapore.



◀ Workers having lunch at a People's Restaurant, c. 1946

Read Source 4 to learn about the first People's Restaurant.

SOURCE 4

[The Social Welfare Department] started the People's Restaurant. The first one was in Telok Ayer. ... They built an attap [house] with a barbed wire fencing right round it and they got cooks to cook. And for 35 cents [equivalent to around \$5 today] which was very cheap, they [would] get rice, vegetables, a piece of meat or a piece of fish and a cup of black tea thrown in ... Between 12 and 2 o'clock [in the afternoon] we served about two, three thousand meals.

- Adapted from a 1984 oral interview with Tan Beng Neo, who worked at the Social Welfare Department, a government department, from 1947 to 1969

- According to Source 4, how well did the People's Restaurants meet the people's need for food?

Managing Industrial Unrest

Unsatisfactory working conditions, together with the housing and food shortages, led to a wave of **strikes**⁷ during the post-war period. Thousands of workers from various industries took part in these strikes. In 1947 alone, known as “The Year of Strikes”, there were over 300 strikes in Singapore, involving almost 70,000 workers. Some of these strikes lasted for weeks.



▲ Members of the Singapore Harbour Board Staff Association at a meeting to plan for a strike for higher pay and better working conditions, 1953

Many workers who took part in the strikes were members of trade unions. The trade unions, whose members also included English-educated men such as Devan Nair, Jamit Singh and Sidney Woodhull, were concerned with improving workers' conditions. Many trade union members wanted immediate change to their working conditions and went on strike to secure their demands.

British officials suspected that communists working within the trade unions were stirring up anti-colonial feelings and instigating the strikes. Thus, laws were passed in an attempt to control the trade unions. From 1947, all unions had to register with the government. This enabled the government to monitor their membership. The unions were also no longer allowed to use their funds to organise strikes and protests against the government. Nevertheless, trade unions continued to be active and industrial unrest remained an issue in the 1950s.

Who was DEVAN NAIR?

Devan Nair (1923–2005) was born in 1923 near Melaka, Malaya, and moved to Singapore with his family when he was 10. Influenced by family members who supported the Indian independence movement, he developed anti-British sentiments in his youth. After the Japanese Occupation, he worked as a teacher, becoming a prominent member of the Singapore Teachers' Union and fighting for workers' rights. In 1951, he was arrested by the British for his participation in anti-colonial activities.

Nair joined the PAP in 1954 but was again detained for his role in anti-colonial activities in 1956. He was released in 1959 when the PAP came to power and played a leading role in the establishment of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) two years later. He won a parliamentary seat representing the Anson constituency in 1979, the same year he became President of the NTUC. In 1981, he became the third President of Singapore and continued to champion workers' rights. He resigned in 1985 due to health reasons.



⁷ A strike occurs when workers refuse to work as a way to get their employers to agree to their demands, such as higher pay or better working conditions.

Rebuilding the Economy

Economic recovery was crucial to improving the lives of people in Singapore. Without the revival of trade and industry, people would not have jobs and the government would not have sufficient tax revenues to pay for programmes that improved people's welfare.

The British thus repaired the ports that had been damaged during the war, restoring Singapore's status as an important trading centre. This was a significant move as worldwide demand for tin and rubber was growing. The volume of trade eventually surpassed pre-war levels. This expansion of trade, together with greater control of trade union activities and abundant food harvests in 1948, ended the worst shortages and hardships in Singapore.

As a port city, Singapore continued to survive through the 1950s on its entrepôt trade, as it did in the 19th century. It also processed and exported raw materials from Malaya and Indonesia, such as oil, tin, rubber and timber.

▼ Coolies transporting goods along the Singapore River, 1948



Allowing Local Political Participation

In another bid to win local support, the British held an election in 1948. For the first time, the people in Singapore were given a say in who would represent them in the Legislative Council.

The election was based on the British model. See Figure 7.2 on the next page to learn more about the election process in Singapore.

The Election Process in Singapore

People who have similar ideas on how a country should be run form a group, called a political party.



Some candidates also contest elections as independents. This means that they do not belong to any political party.

In the lead-up to the elections, parties and candidates hold campaigns to share their ideas and win support.



2



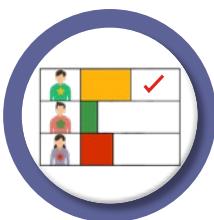
A political party can only implement its ideas by forming the government, either by itself or together with another party. To do so, it contests elections.

3



On polling day, voters vote for the candidate(s) whose ideas they most agree with.

4



The candidate with the most votes in an area is elected as the representative of that area in the government.

5



The party with the most elected candidates wins the election and gets to form the government.*

* The 1948 election was limited to electing six representatives in the Legislative Council. They did not form the government, which was still controlled by the British (see Figure 7.4 on pages 72–73).

▲ Figure 7.2: Election process in Singapore

The 1948 election was the first step towards democracy. However, participation among the people was very low. Many recent immigrants were not allowed to vote as they were not born in Britain or in the British colonies. In the end, only about 22,000 people were registered to vote, and only 14,000 voters actually turned up. This was a small fraction of the total population, which numbered around 960,000.

DID YOU KNOW?

Out of the 22,395 people registered to vote in 1948, 10,141 were Indians and 5,627 were Chinese. These are shocking figures, since the Indians numbered 71,928 while the Chinese numbered 747,817 (out of a total population of 961,856)!

Composition of Registered Voters in 1948		
Ethnic Groups	No. of Voters	% of Total Voters
Chinese	5,627	25
Indians	10,141	45
Malays	3,146	14
Others	3,481	16
Total	22,395	100

▲ Taken from Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore, 1945–1955*, published in 1973



Only one party, the Singapore Progressive Party (SPP), contested the election, making it the first political party to do so in Singapore. The SPP won three out of the six elected seats. The remaining three were won by independent candidates.



SINGAPORE PROGRESSIVE PARTY (SPP)



Founded in
August 1947

The SPP was led by Tan Chye Cheng (C. C. Tan), John Laycock and Nazir Ahmad Mallal. Its members were mostly English-speaking professionals.

The party believed in gradual self-government and worked closely with the British. It championed equal treatment for local and European civil servants, and fought to provide financial security for workers in their retirement.

C. C. Tan accepting his victory at the 1948 election ►



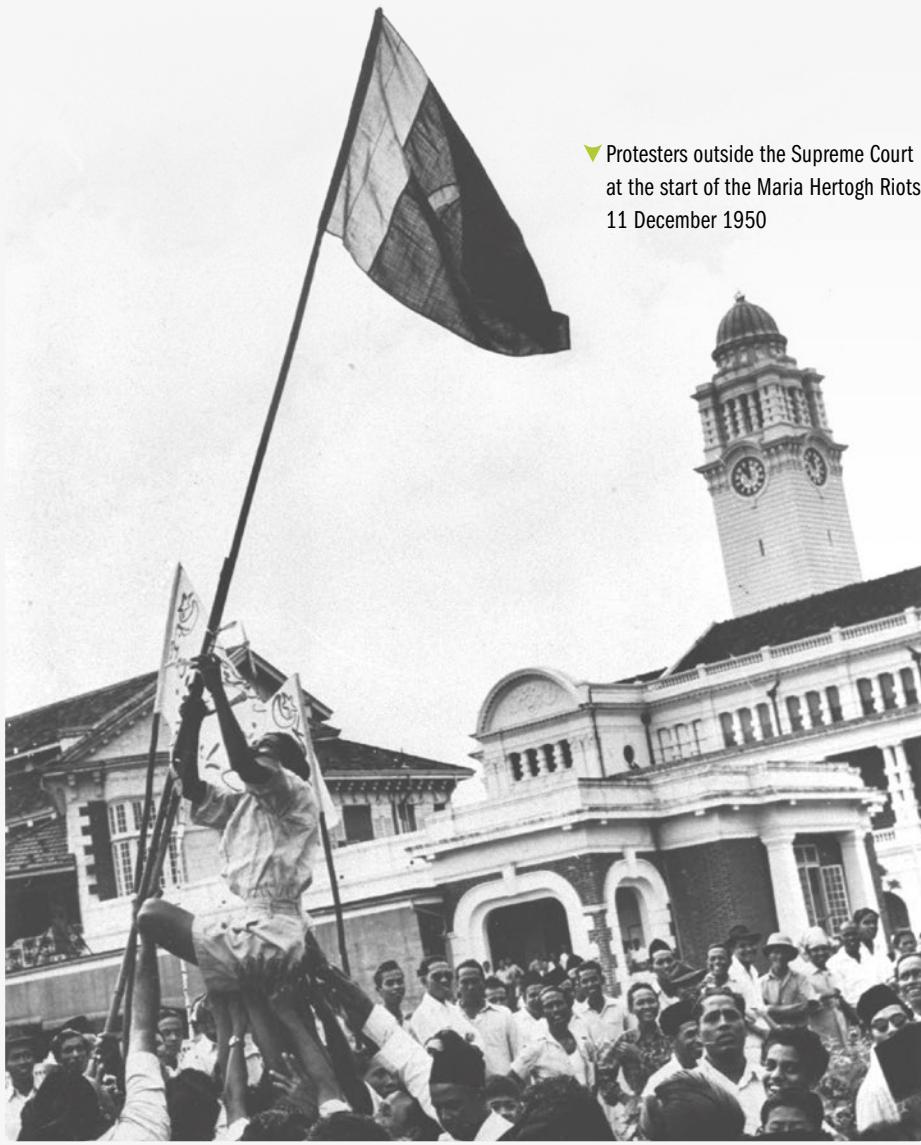
► Members of the Legislative Council, 1948

Why Were There Riots in the Early 1950s?

Despite British attempts to improve living conditions and grant more political participation, sources of discontent remained. Major riots broke out in the first half of the 1950s, making it a turbulent period in Singapore's history.

Maria Hertogh Riots

The first of the riots took place in late 1950, when a **custody**⁸ battle over a 13-year-old girl caught the public's attention. The girl's name was Maria Hertogh. Read the illustrated story on the next page to find out more.



▼ Protesters outside the Supreme Court at the start of the Maria Hertogh Riots, 11 December 1950



▲ Maria and her foster mother, Che Aminah, 1950



▲ Maria (centre) leaving the court after the hearing of her case, with Che Aminah on her left, 24 November 1950



▲ Che Aminah (centre) leaving the Supreme Court after her appeal was rejected, 11 December 1950

⁸ Custody is the legal right or duty to provide protection and care for someone.

The MARIA HERTOOGH RIOTS

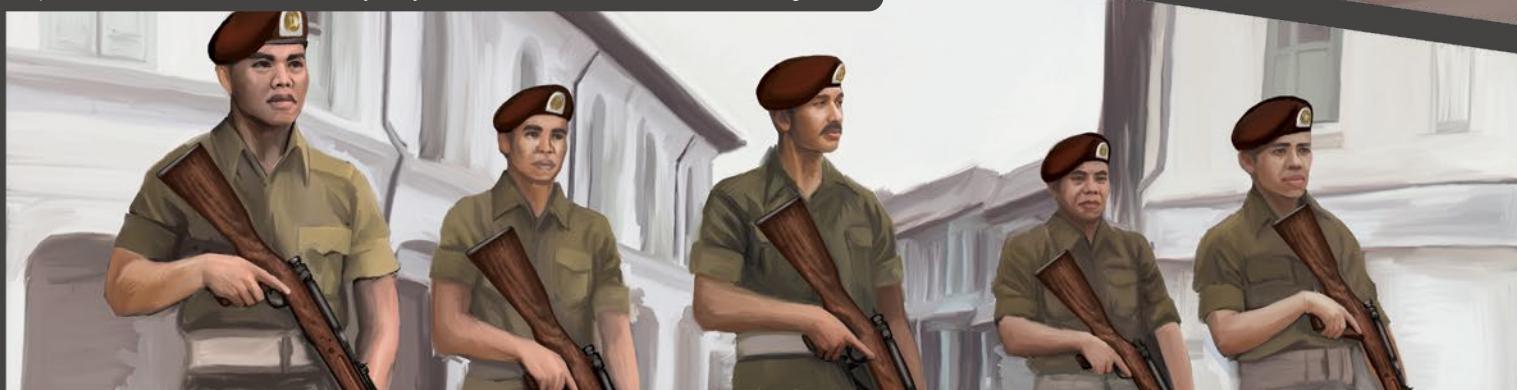
Maria was born in Java in 1937 to Dutch Catholic parents. When Maria's father was imprisoned in 1942 during the Japanese Occupation, Maria's mother, Adeline Hertogh, left her in the care of a local family friend, Che Aminah. Maria was renamed Nadra binte Ma'arof and raised in the Muslim faith. After the war, Maria and her foster family moved to Malaya.



While the case was under appeal, some newspapers published sensationalised stories about Maria's life in the convent. The case was also portrayed as a religious issue between Islam and Christianity. Many Muslims were upset as they felt that their religion was being disrespected.



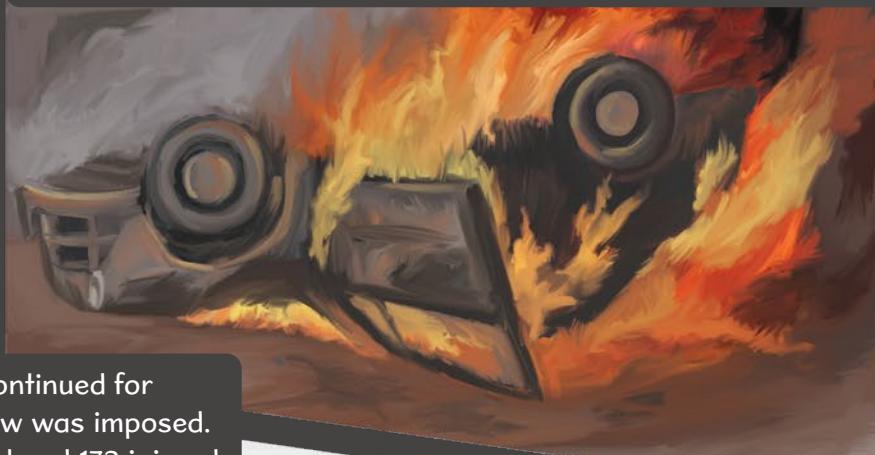
Troops were sent to the scenes, but the riots continued for three days. In response to the violence, a curfew was imposed. By the end of the riots, 18 people had been killed and 173 injured.



In 1950, Adeline tried to reclaim her daughter by making a case to the court in Singapore. The British judge ruled that Maria be returned to her natural parents. Adeline placed Maria in a Catholic convent while waiting to return to the Netherlands. In response, Che Aminah appealed against the judge's decision.



The judge eventually rejected Che Aminah's appeal. Feeling that the British had sided unfairly with the Dutch, Che Aminah's supporters reacted angrily. They overturned cars on the streets and set them on fire. They also attacked any Europeans and Eurasians in sight.



Anti-National Service Riots

The Anti-National Service Riots of 1954, like the Maria Hertogh Riots, were an expression of anti-colonial feelings. The post-war British government felt that the responsibility of defending Singapore should be spread more evenly among the population. The Emergency also increased the urgency of improving the defence of Singapore. With these in mind, the National Service Ordinance was passed in 1953, requiring all males aged between 18 and 20 to register for National Service by May 1954. Those who failed to do so would be jailed or fined.

The announcement was deeply unpopular among secondary students from Chinese-medium schools. Many of them were old enough to qualify for National Service as the war had disrupted their education. If they were to register for National Service, their studies would be disrupted again.

Moreover, the students felt that the British discriminated against Chinese education while favouring English-medium schools. As you learnt in Chapter 3, the British provided little support to Chinese-medium schools. The students were thus unwilling to register for National Service to defend a foreign government that did not seem to give them anything in return.

To show their unhappiness, about 500 students held a protest march on 13 May 1954. In response, the British deployed riot police equipped with batons and shields. The initially peaceful **demonstration**⁹ turned violent as the students clashed with the police, leaving 26 injured.

The British ordered the closure of all Chinese-medium schools across Singapore the following day, but this only escalated the unrest. On 22 May, thousands of students locked themselves in classrooms at Chung Cheng High School in protest. They sang songs, held their own lessons and even went on a hunger strike. As a result of the protests, the British government decided to postpone the registration for National Service.

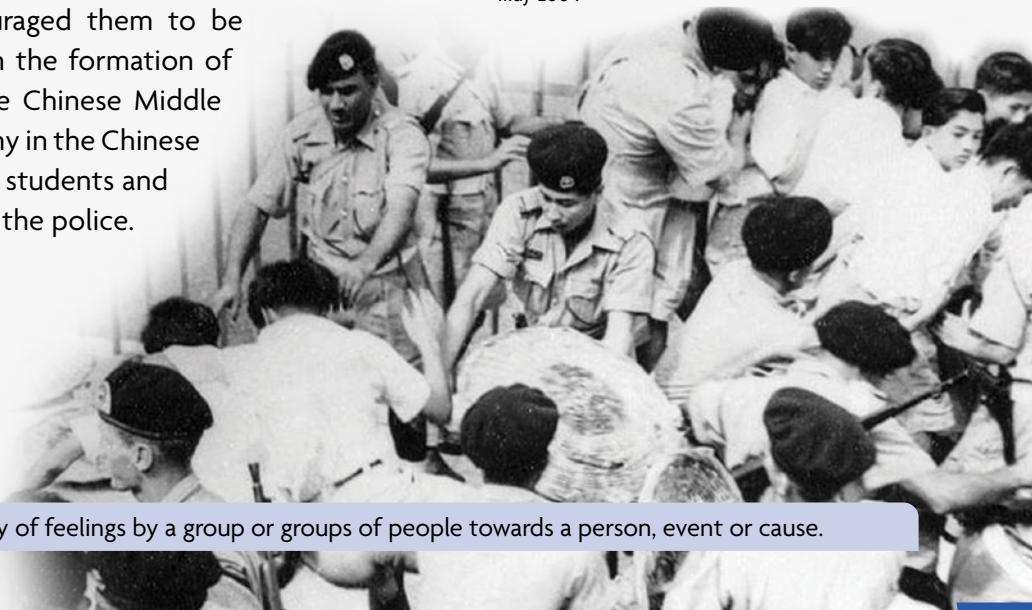
The incident boosted the morale and strength of the Chinese-educated students. It encouraged them to be more politically active and resulted in the formation of student groups such as the Singapore Chinese Middle School Students' Union (SCMSSU). Many in the Chinese community also sympathised with the students and disapproved of the use of violence by the police.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1950, 80% of the government's education budget went to English-medium schools while only 6% was allocated to Chinese-medium schools.



▲ Police trying to control the crowd of students, May 1954



Clash between the students and the police, May 1954 ►

⁹ A demonstration refers to a public display of feelings by a group or groups of people towards a person, event or cause.

How Did the British Respond to the Changing Attitudes of the Locals?

With the unrest of the early 1950s, the British knew things had to change. They saw the locals' discontent and their anti-British sentiments, and recognised that the old system of government was no longer adequate. The locals had to be granted more political power.

Read Source 5 to learn more about the British decision to transfer more power to the people.

SOURCE 5

Now, this time ... we were trying to make people proud of belonging to a city. ... We were really trying to get people away from the feeling that they had no participation in the running of Singapore. In the old days, ... [the British] arranged everything and [the locals did not] have to do anything. All [the locals had] to do [was] to go to school and take a job and live [their] lives ... This was ... disappearing. The feeling was: ... [the] people in Singapore ... must run Singapore [themselves]. Well, [one] way of building [this feeling] up was to make them feel [like] citizens in a big, important city and [Singapore was] being recognised as such [a place].

– Adapted from a 1982 oral interview with Sir Percy McNeice, a senior British official in Singapore during the late 1940s and 1950s

1. According to Source 5, why did the British decide to give the people in Singapore more opportunities to participate in the running of Singapore?



▲ Arch in front of the Supreme Court (one of the two buildings that make up the present-day National Gallery Singapore) commemorating Singapore being conferred city status on 22 September 1951. This meant that Singapore was given additional rights and privileges, like those of cities in Britain.



▲ School exhibition to commemorate City Day, 22 September 1951

The Rendel Constitution

The British thus formed a **commission¹⁰** in July 1953 to review the **constitution¹¹** of Singapore. It was chaired by Sir George Rendel, a high-ranking British official. The Rendel Commission's task was to find out how local people could play a more active role in the government.

The commission submitted its report in 1954, recommending limited self-government for Singapore. This meant the people would be able to elect locals to control certain areas of the government. As a result of the report, the Rendel Constitution was introduced in 1955. There would now be a Council of Ministers headed by the Governor, and comprising the Chief Minister and five other local ministers, and three British ministers (see Figure 7.4 on pages 72–73). The Legislative Council would also be renamed the Legislative Assembly.

The six local ministers would be given control over education, health, housing, and trade and industry. However, the three British ministers would control areas deemed more important by the British government: law, finance, external affairs, external defence and internal security.

Although the changes it introduced were limited, the Rendel Constitution proved to be an important step in Singapore's journey towards self-government. For one thing, the new constitution meant an election was to be held in April 1955.

▼ The Rendel Commission meeting at Victoria Memorial Hall (part of present-day Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall), 1953. George Rendel is standing fifth from the right.



¹⁰ A commission is a group of people appointed to perform a specific task, for example, to conduct an investigation and write a report.

¹¹ A constitution is a set of laws that a government must follow. The Constitution of Singapore determines the limits within which the Singapore government has to work.

1955 Election

While the election in 1948 and the subsequent one in 1951 had met with lukewarm response from the local population, the 1955 election aroused far greater interest and generated much political activity.

The people were encouraged by the greater degree of self-government promised in the Rendel Constitution. In addition, eligible voters were automatically registered instead of having to register themselves, making it easier to vote. Those eager to press for change held discussions, and more political parties emerged as a result.

Two political parties that gained prominence in the mid-1950s were the Labour Front (LF) and the People's Action Party (PAP).



▲ Election van, with a sign that reads "The vote is secret", being driven around Singapore to inform people of the 1955 election

LABOUR FRONT (LF)



Founded in
July 1954

The LF was led by David Marshall, and its key members included Lim Yew Hock and Francis Thomas. It was a multiracial party and comprised mostly low-income and English-educated members of trade unions.

The LF supported immediate independence for Singapore. The party prioritised the improvement of workers' rights and working conditions. It also fought to extend Singapore citizenship to China-born immigrants, which led many Chinese-speaking people to support the party.

David Marshall addressing a crowd at Empress Place, 1955 ►



PEOPLE'S ACTION PARTY (PAP)



Founded in
November 1954

The PAP was co-founded by Lee Kuan Yew, Dr Goh Keng Swee, Dr Toh Chin Chye, S. Rajaratnam and Kenneth Michael Byrne. Among its ranks were mainly English-educated lawyers, journalists and trade unionists.

Like the LF, the PAP was a multiracial party that opposed British rule and wanted immediate independence for Singapore. It sought to win the support of workers, trade unions and students in Chinese-medium schools.

Lee Kuan Yew campaigning at Farrer Park, 1955 ►



The parties campaigned hard to raise political awareness among the locals and to win their support. They visited houses, distributed newspapers and pamphlets, held rallies, and gave speeches to crowds hungry for change. The campaigns focused on anti-colonialism, and many voters found themselves drawn to the anti-colonial attacks delivered by parties like the LF and the PAP.

The LF and the PAP convinced many that they could bring an end to British rule and gained the support of the people, unlike the SPP (see page 52). David Marshall, the leader of the LF, was a lawyer by profession and he spoke about the need for self-rule. He was deeply critical of the SPP's inability to push effectively for self-government. The LF and the PAP also attracted much support among voters by promising to improve workers' welfare if they were elected.

Read Source 6 to find out how the 1955 election changed the political mood in Singapore.

SOURCE 6

I got the crowds with me. I had a lot of fun. I created a lot of excitement. I was happy with having achieved what I set out to do. And that's to awaken us to the fact, "Hey, we are human beings! Hey, we have got the right to vote! Hey, we have got a right to elect our own [leaders]. We've got a right to, a voice in how we are to live." Now, that is something you don't understand today. But that was [a] very, very [important change] at that time. You know, it's like a four-legged animal suddenly finding himself standing straight and looking upwards instead of looking to the ground. It really was a [major] change ... "Hey, we are standing on two legs."

- David Marshall reflecting on the 1955 election, adapted from a 1984 oral interview

- According to David Marshall, why was the 1955 election so important for the people in Singapore?

The 1955 election was a lively political contest, with a level of excitement not seen before. A total of 79 candidates contested the 25 elected seats in the Legislative Assembly. That was about five times the number of candidates in 1948. About 160,000 people (slightly above 50 per cent of those eligible) turned up to vote.

On the night of 2 April 1955, over 5,000 people gathered at Empress Place to await the election results. When they were announced, the crowd roared in jubilation. The SPP had lost and the LF emerged as the biggest winner, clinching 10 out of the 25 seats.

The results shocked the colonial authorities as they had expected the SPP to win. It was clearer than ever that the people wished to be freed from British rule.

1955 Election Results	
Party	No. of Seats
Labour Front	10
Singapore Progressive Party	4
Alliance Party	3
People's Action Party	3
Democratic Party	2
Independents	3



▲ Article in *The Straits Times*, 4 April 1955, showing David Marshall thanking the voters after the LF's victory in the Legislative Assembly election

◀ Figure 7.3: Results of the 1955 election

How Did Singapore Achieve Internal Self-Government?

Having won the most seats, the LF formed a **coalition**¹² to head the government. David Marshall became Singapore's first Chief Minister and worked under the Governor.

The Governor and his British officials saw Marshall as a leader only in name and did not offer him full support. They were not eager to cooperate with the LF government, which was anchored by a party committed to ending colonial rule.

One example of the lack of British support for Marshall was the delay in giving him a proper office to work in. Read Source 7 to learn how Marshall responded to the way he was treated.

SOURCE 7

I blasted out. I said, "You won't give me an office, right? Will you give me a chair and a table under the old apple tree? You won't give me that? I'll supply them. You just supply me with a telephone."

... Bill Goode [Acting Governor of Singapore] came up to me [and] said, "Do nothing drastic. I promise you an office by Monday morning."

- David Marshall recounting his early days as Chief Minister, adapted from a 1984 oral interview

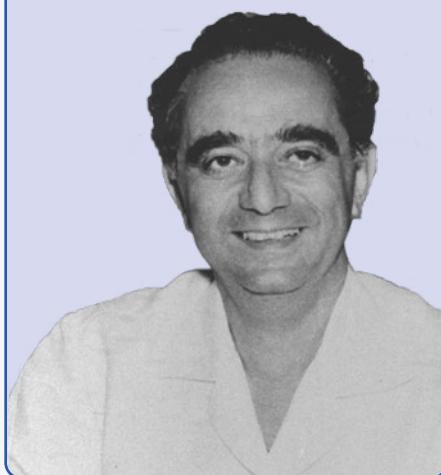
1. What does this incident suggest about how the British saw Marshall's role as the first Chief Minister of Singapore?

Who was DAVID MARSHALL?

David Marshall (1908–1995) was born in Singapore into a Jewish family from Baghdad (in present-day Iraq). During World War II, he joined local volunteer forces to fight against the Japanese, but was captured and sent to various prison camps overseas.

After his return to Singapore in 1946, Marshall enjoyed a successful career as a lawyer. He was also actively involved in Singapore's political scene. Originally a member of the SPP, he later resigned and joined the Singapore Socialist Party – one of the two parties that later came together to form the LF. In 1955, Marshall resigned from his legal career and won a seat in the Legislative Assembly election as a representative of the Cairnhill constituency. As leader of the LF, he also assumed the role of Chief Minister. Following the failure of the First Merdeka Talks, he resigned on 7 June 1956.

Marshall continued to be active in politics and founded the Workers' Party in 1957. From 1978, he served as Singapore's Ambassador to various countries such as France, Spain, Portugal and Switzerland, before finally retiring in 1993.



Hock Lee Bus Riots

A month after the LF won the 1955 election, the Hock Lee Bus Strike broke out. While industrial strikes and disputes were not uncommon then, the Hock Lee Bus Strike was one that turned violent.

The incident presented a major challenge to the LF government. In the eyes of the British, it also tested the new government's ability to deal effectively with what were seen to be communist influences. Read the following illustrated story to find out what happened.

¹² A coalition is an alliance between two or more political parties. It occurs when no party has a majority of the seats and an effective government can only be formed through an alliance.

The HOCK LEE BUS RIOTS

The Hock Lee Amalgamated Bus Company was a small company in Singapore. Some of its workers belonged to the Singapore Bus Workers' Union (SBWU) while some joined the Hock Lee Bus Employees' Union.



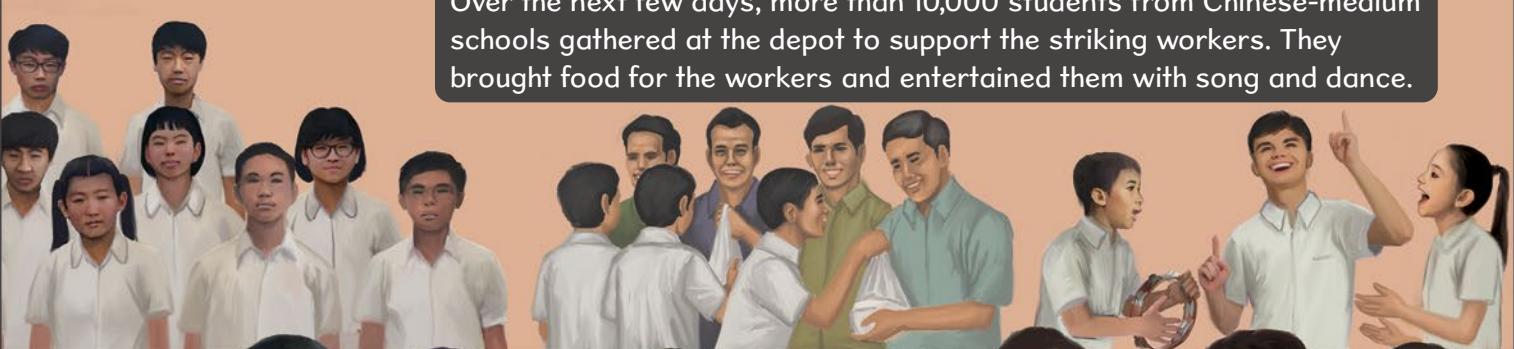
In late April 1955, workers from the SBWU, led by Fong Swee Suan, went on strike over what they felt was unfair treatment. For instance, they were not granted leave to attend union meetings. They also felt that workers from the Hock Lee Bus Employees' Union were given better treatment.

The bus company responded by dismissing 229 workers. The dismissed workers went on a hunger strike and sat in front of the gates of the bus depot, preventing buses from leaving.

The police were called in to intervene, but to no avail. On 27 April, the strikers continued to block the gate and began to hurl stones at the police.



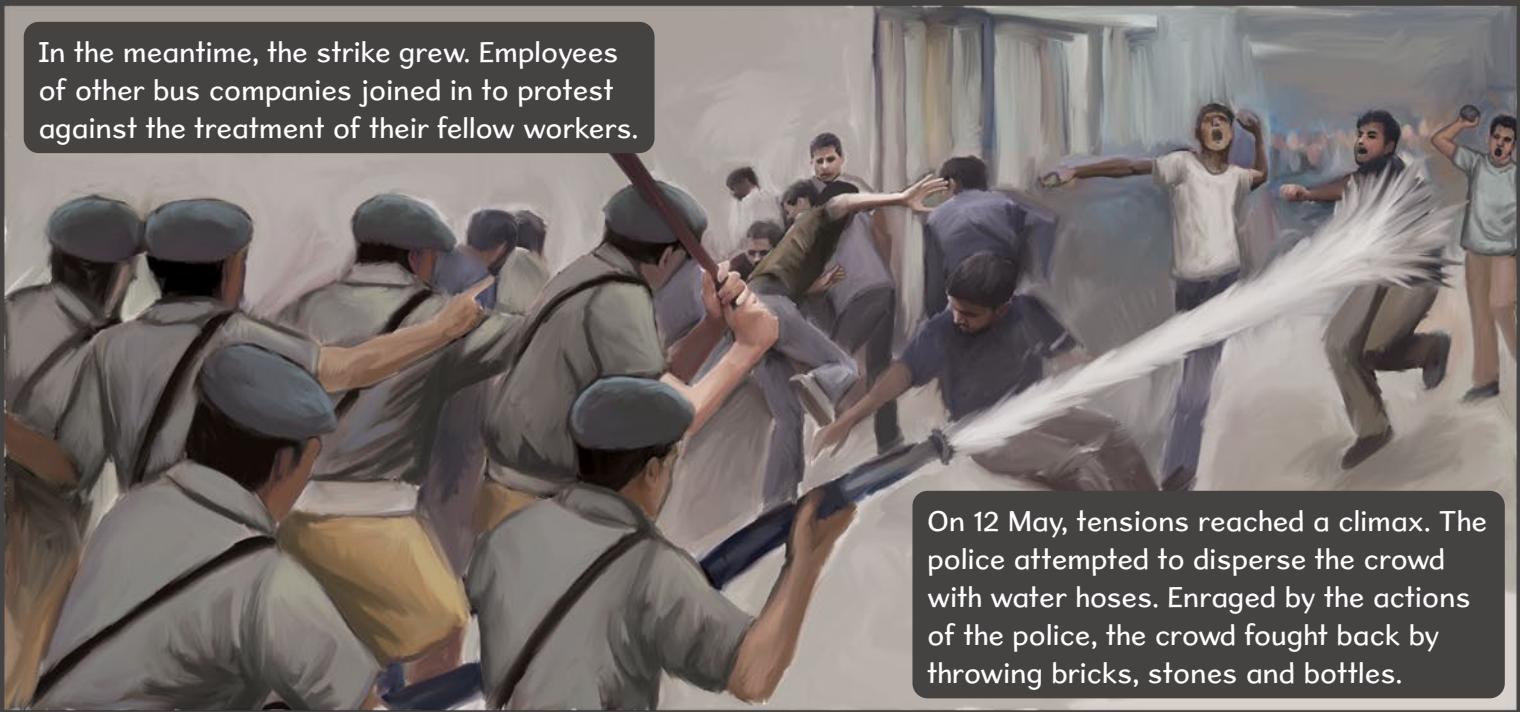
Over the next few days, more than 10,000 students from Chinese-medium schools gathered at the depot to support the striking workers. They brought food for the workers and entertained them with song and dance.



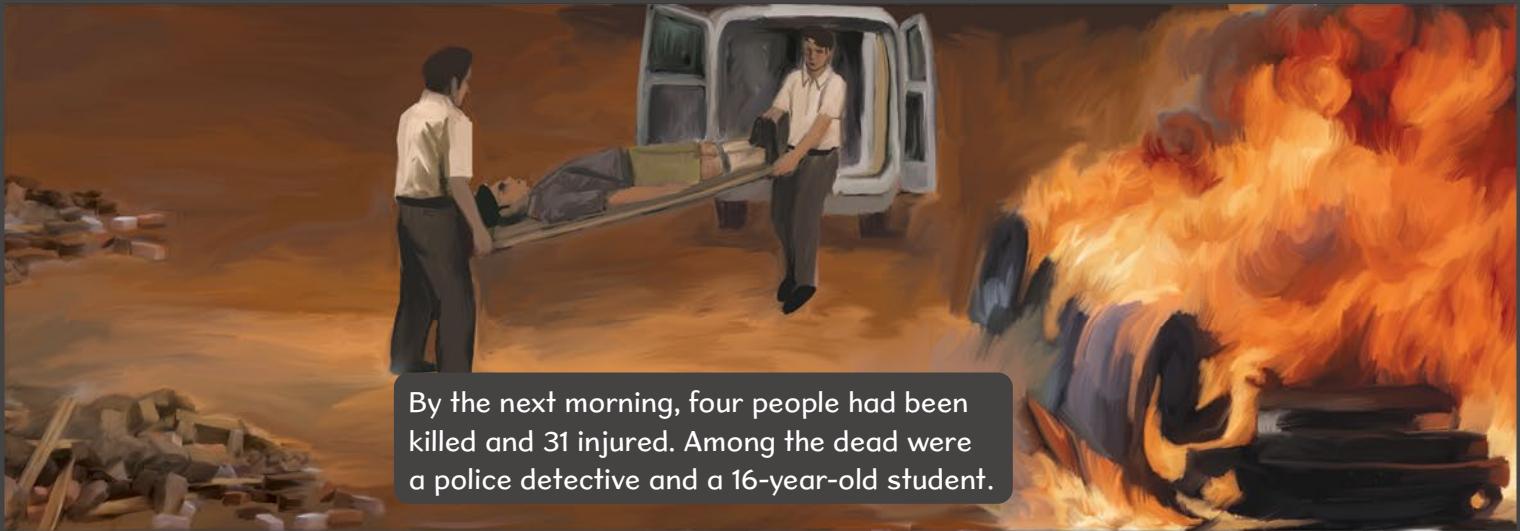
Chief Minister David Marshall tried to settle the dispute between the bus company and the SBWU. But the two parties could not reach an agreement.



In the meantime, the strike grew. Employees of other bus companies joined in to protest against the treatment of their fellow workers.



On 12 May, tensions reached a climax. The police attempted to disperse the crowd with water hoses. Enraged by the actions of the police, the crowd fought back by throwing bricks, stones and bottles.

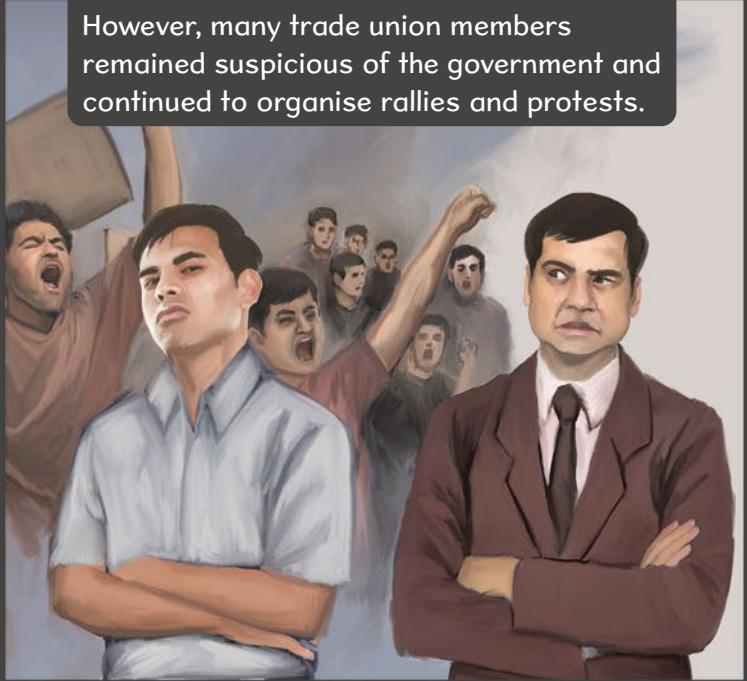


By the next morning, four people had been killed and 31 injured. Among the dead were a police detective and a 16-year-old student.

On 14 May 1955, the Hock Lee Bus Riots ended after the government helped to negotiate an agreement between the unions and the Hock Lee Bus Company. The dismissed workers got their jobs back.



However, many trade union members remained suspicious of the government and continued to organise rallies and protests.



The British were not impressed with Marshall's handling of the Hock Lee Bus Riots. He had refused to call in British troops to handle the riots as he did not want to appear to be siding with the British. To the British, the LF government seemed weak due to Marshall's reluctance to take stronger action against those involved in the riots and his willingness to negotiate instead. This was to have an impact on the First Merdeka Talks held in 1956.

The First Merdeka Talks (1956)

In April 1956, David Marshall led a mission to London to press for Singapore's self-government. These negotiations were known as the Merdeka (Freedom) Talks.

In London, Marshall demanded full internal self-government for Singapore by 1957. He was determined to have greater local control over defence and external affairs. He had vowed to resign as Chief Minister if the negotiations did not succeed.

The talks did not go well. After the Hock Lee Bus Riots, the British doubted the LF government's ability to maintain law and order and to deal with the communist threat. The British wanted a strong and stable government in Singapore to protect British economic and defence interests, and to keep it from becoming communist.

As a result, Marshall and his delegation returned to Singapore empty-handed. True to his promise, he stepped down as Chief Minister, and Lim Yew Hock took over. Singapore's hopes of independence had suffered a setback.

▼ Negotiations between British colonial authorities and the Singapore all-party delegation led by David Marshall (sixth from right) during the First Merdeka Talks in London, 1956



Who was LIM YEW HOCK?

Lim Yew Hock (1914–1984) was born in Singapore into a Chinese family from Malaya. He started out as a clerk and later became involved in union activities. His easy-going personality, sense of humour and ability to connect with people from all walks of life won him the support of the masses. In 1947, he became Secretary-General of the Singapore Clerical and Administrative Workers' Union and later its President. In 1948, he represented trade unions as a non-official member of the Legislative Council.

Though initially reluctant to take up prominent leadership positions, Lim became Singapore's second Chief Minister in the LF government in 1956 after David Marshall's resignation. In the 1959 election, he won a seat as a representative of the Singapore People's Alliance (SPA).

Lim did not contest the 1963 election, but was appointed Malaysia's High Commissioner to Australia the following year. He later became a Malaysian citizen and worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Malaysia until his retirement in 1968.





LEARN A SKILL: STUDYING PAINTINGS

Artwork can serve as historical sources. By studying a piece of art, you can find out more about the time and place in which it was produced. It can give you an idea of:

- what things looked like;
- what people did and how they did them; and
- how people saw themselves or were seen by others.

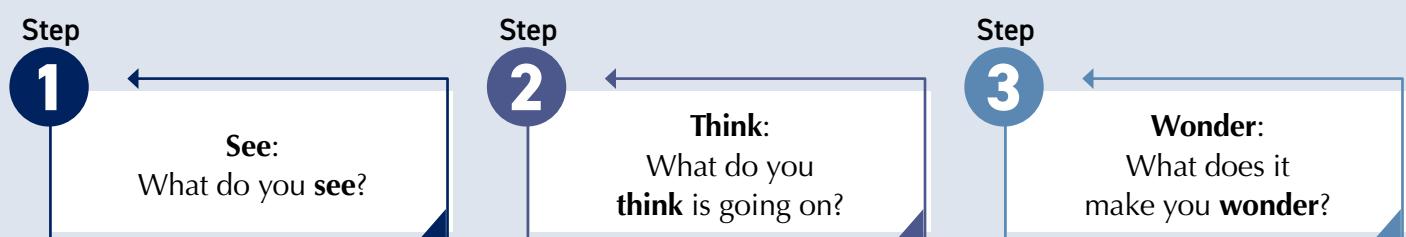
When studying an artwork, you need to know its context. This means learning about the artist and the period in which the artwork was produced. Knowing the context allows you to better understand the messages embedded within the artwork. It also directs you to think about why the artwork was produced.

Look at the painting below. Titled *On Strike*, it was completed in 1955 by artist Tan Tee Chie. Tan was born in China in 1928 and studied at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in Singapore, from which he graduated in 1951. He is known for his series of works depicting the plight and hardships faced by people in post-war Singapore.



◀ Tan Tee Chie
On Strike
1955
Oil on canvas, 66 x 86.5 cm
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

In Chapter 4, you learnt how to examine images using the process of **See-Think-Wonder**:



Examine Tan Tee Chie's painting on the previous page using these steps. To deepen your understanding of the artwork and the period in which it was produced, you should add a fourth step: What is the **purpose** of the artwork?

1 What do you see?	2 What do you think is going on?	3 What does it make you wonder?
What details do you see in the painting?	What do you think might be going on in the painting? (You may tap your contextual knowledge about this topic.)	What additional questions or thoughts do you have regarding this painting?
<i>I see ...</i>	<i>I think ...</i>	<i>I wonder ...</i>

4 What is the **purpose** of the artwork?

Based on what you know about the historical context (e.g., period and circumstances) in which the painting was produced, what do you think might have influenced the artist to paint this?

What message(s) do you think the artist was trying to convey through the painting?

Who do you think the target audience was?

What emotions do you think the artist was trying to evoke in the audience?

What response do you think the artist hoped to get from the audience?

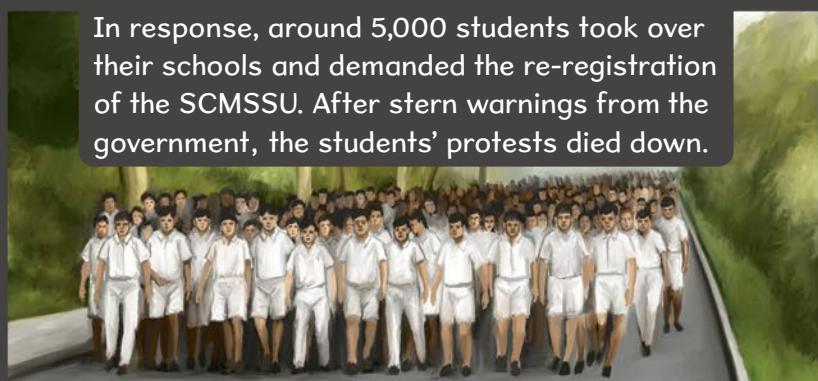
Chinese Middle School Student Riots

Lim Yew Hock wanted to succeed where David Marshall had failed. He understood that the British were concerned about the communist threat in Singapore. Thus, his government needed to show its ability to control the communists, which would help convince the British that Singapore was ready to take greater charge of its own affairs. This can be seen in the way he handled the Chinese Middle School Student Riots in 1956.

CHINESE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT RIOTS



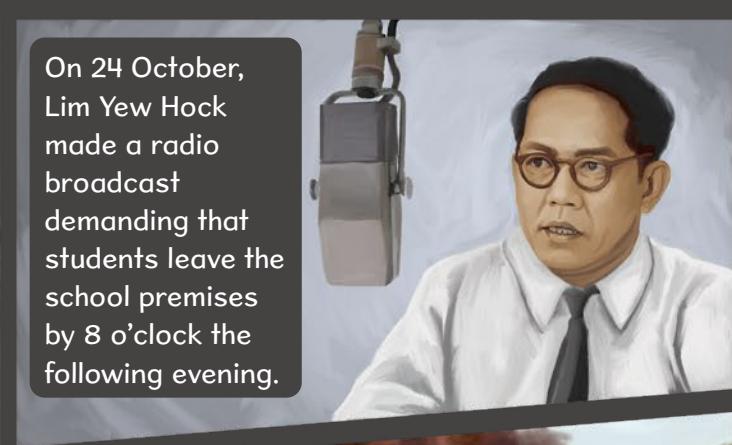
In September 1956, Lim Yew Hock's government banned the Singapore Chinese Middle School Students' Union (SCMSSU) because of its supposed communist activities.



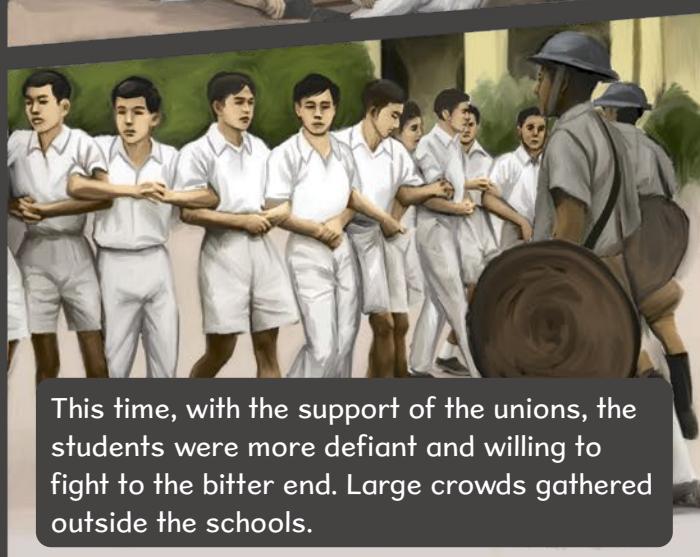
In response, around 5,000 students took over their schools and demanded the re-registration of the SCMSSU. After stern warnings from the government, the students' protests died down.



Two weeks later, the government ordered the expulsion of 142 students from several schools, such as Chung Cheng High School and The Chinese High School, on suspicion of anti-government activities. Students camped at both schools in protest.



On 24 October, Lim Yew Hock made a radio broadcast demanding that students leave the school premises by 8 o'clock the following evening.



This time, with the support of the unions, the students were more defiant and willing to fight to the bitter end. Large crowds gathered outside the schools.



The demonstrations turned violent when a mob outside Chung Cheng High School confronted the police. The ensuing riots spread across the island and continued for three days. Troops from Malaya were called in to restore order.

Who was LIM CHIN SIONG?



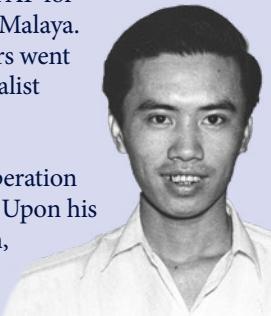
Lim Chin Siong (1933–1996) was born in Singapore. As a student at The Chinese High School, he was an active member of the Singapore Students' Anti-British League (SSABL), set up by the MCP. After leading an examination boycott in 1951, he was expelled.

Active in trade union activities, Lim was appointed Secretary of the Singapore Bus Workers' Union (SBWU) in 1954 and later assumed leadership of the Singapore Factory and Shop Workers' Union (SFSWU).

Lim joined the PAP in 1954 and was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1955. However, he was arrested the following year for anti-British activities and detained until 1959.

In 1961, Lim was expelled from the PAP for opposing the proposed merger with Malaya. He and other expelled party members went on to form the Barisan Sosialis (Socialist Front) party.

In 1963, Lim was arrested during Operation Coldstore (see Chapter 8, page 100). Upon his release in 1969, he moved to London, only returning to Singapore in 1979.



By the time order was restored on 28 October, 13 people had died and more than 120 had been injured. Lim Chin Siong, Fong Swee Suan and other union leaders were swiftly detained by the police in the aftermath of the unrest.

On the whole, the British were pleased with Lim Yew Hock's decisive handling of the riots. This strengthened his position when he travelled to London in 1957 to renew discussions about self-government. However, Lim's tough actions made his LF government appear to be “running dogs”¹³ of the British in the eyes of some locals.

Who was FONG SWEE SUAN?



Born in Johor, Malaya, Fong Swee Suan (1931–2017) moved to Singapore in 1950 to attend The Chinese High School, where he was classmates with Lim Chin Siong. Like Lim, he was expelled for boycotting an examination in 1951. Fong then became a bus ticket seller and member of the SBWU, actively promoting workers' rights. In 1953, he was elected its Secretary-General.

In 1954, Fong joined the PAP, but his involvement in anti-colonial activities led to his arrest in 1955 and 1956. After his release in 1959, he served under the PAP government as the Political Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Law.

Fong's opposition to the proposed merger with Malaya led to his expulsion from the PAP in 1961, after which he helped to form the Barisan Sosialis. In 1963, he was arrested during Operation Coldstore and detained in Malaysia until 1967. Banned from re-entering Singapore, he lived in Malaysia until 1990, when the ban was lifted.



▼ Students and police at Chung Cheng High School during the Chinese Middle School Student Riots, 1956



¹³ “Running dogs” is a negative term used to refer to followers who are overly eager to serve or please their masters.

Maria Hertogh Riots (1950)

FIVE DEAD, 100 HURT IN RIOTS
Mob Rule In S'pore Streets
Cars, Buses Burned:
Troops Called Out

Major Riots in Singapore

Anti-National Service Riots (1954)

SCHOOLBOYS BATTLE POLICE
26 injured in street clashes

Girls join in protest on call-up

UNDRED Chinese sch
tration gains

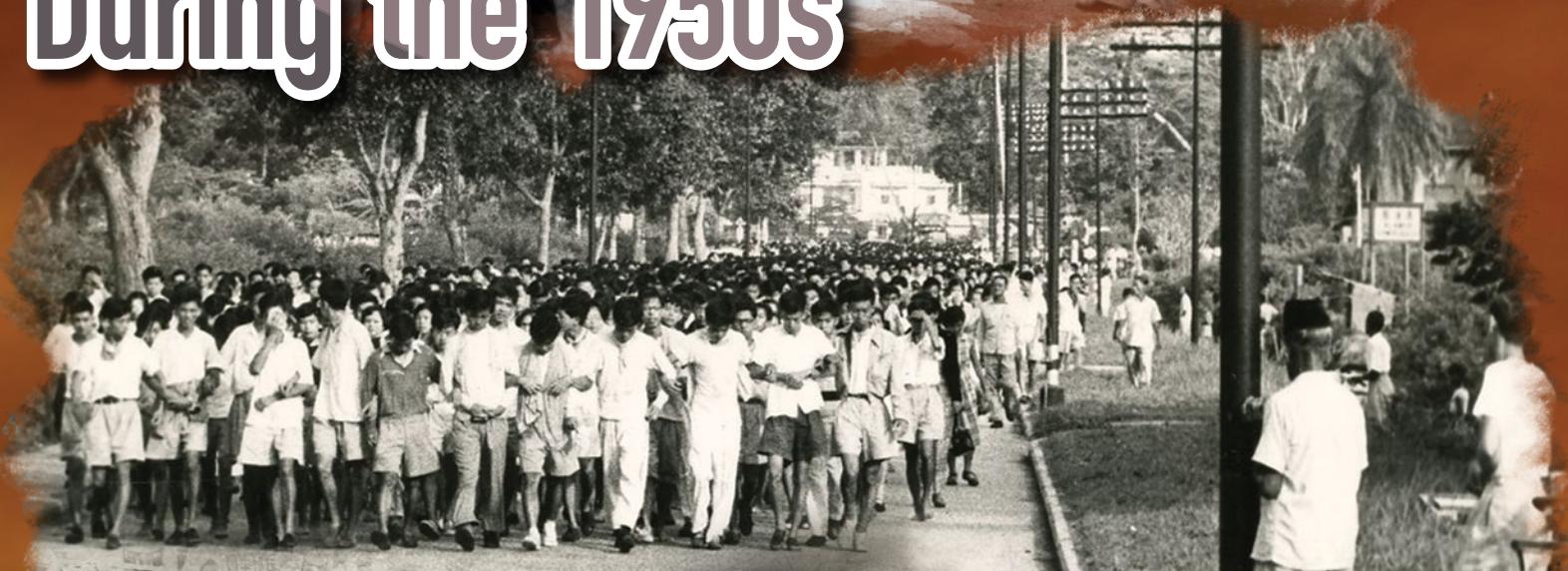
Hock Lee Bus Riots (1955)

LEARN ON THE GO

Learn more about
the riots in 1950s
Singapore @
go.gov.sg/lshc702



During the 1950s



Chinese Middle School Student Riots (1956)

ISLAND-WIDE CURFEW AS
MOBS ATTACK POLICE
Thugs join student riots—Troops stand by

**50 injured,
armoured
cars out**
TWO CARS GO UP IN FLAMES

A CURFEW was imposed over
the whole of Singap

The Second Merdeka Talks (1957)

In 1957, Lim Yew Hock led another delegation to London to renegotiate for full internal self-government. Like David Marshall, he wanted to gain control over all internal matters of government, including internal security. On this last matter, however, Lim showed a willingness to compromise. He recognised that the British reluctance to surrender full control of internal security was due to their concerns about the communist threat. The delegation also agreed to leave external affairs and external defence in the hands of the British.

In this way, the second round of the Merdeka Talks succeeded in securing full internal self-government for Singapore. A concluding round of talks was held in London in 1958 to finalise the details of the agreement. A new constitution was drawn up in the same year, with the British Parliament passing a State of Singapore Act that converted the colony into a state with control over all domestic issues except for **internal security**.¹⁴

Under the new constitution, Singapore would be known as the State of Singapore. A Head of State, or Yang di-Pertuan Negara, would replace the British Governor. To bring this new constitution into force, an election was to be held in 1959.



▲ Lim Yew Hock on his return from the Second Merdeka Talks in London, 1957



BE A YOUNG HISTORIAN: HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In the study of past events or developments, historians make judgements about their **significance**. This historical significance is not a fixed property. It varies depending on who makes these judgements and the criteria they use.

Here are two of the criteria that historians may apply to assess whether something is historically significant:

1. It **resulted in change** that had or still has far-reaching consequences for society.
2. It is **remembered**; the event or development was or remains memorable for a group of people.

As you read on, think about how significant the 1959 election was.



¹⁴ After the 1959 election, an Internal Security Council (ISC) was set up to deal with Singapore's internal security matters. The ISC comprised representatives from Britain and Malaya, as well as local members.

1959 Election

For the election, Singapore was divided into 51 **constituencies**.¹⁵ Voters in each constituency would elect a representative. For the first time, the people could elect representatives to all the seats in the Legislative Assembly.

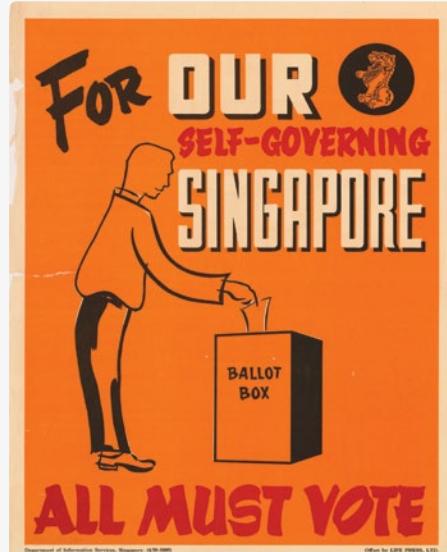
A total of 13 political parties took part and 194 candidates stood for election. Since the elected government would have almost full internal powers to carry out its programmes, the stakes were high.

The parties worked hard to convince people that they were capable of leading a self-governing Singapore. They used radio broadcasts, newspapers and pamphlets to spread their ideas. Vehicles with loudspeakers broadcasting party slogans were a common sight. Candidates also held election rallies, which were attended by large crowds.

Compared to the 1955 election, people showed an even greater interest as it was an opportunity for them to decide who was most suited to the task of governing Singapore. This increased interest was partly due to the Citizenship Ordinance of 1957, which enabled some 320,000 residents to become Singapore citizens and thus gave them the right to vote. This included a large proportion of the 220,000 foreign-born Chinese residents.

Compulsory voting was also introduced to ensure that people took responsibility in choosing their own government. As a result, about 525,000 voters turned up, more than three times the number in the 1955 election.

The election results were announced in the early hours of 31 May. The LF, renamed the Singapore People's Alliance (SPA) in 1958, performed poorly, winning only 4 out of the 39 seats they had contested. One reason for the SPA's loss was the unhappiness of many Chinese voters over how Lim Yew Hock had handled the Chinese Middle School Student Riots in 1956. On the other hand, the PAP scored a landslide victory, winning 43 out of the 51 seats they had contested.



▲ Colourful poster encouraging voters to vote, 1959



▲ Voters lining up at one of the polling stations, 30 May 1959

DID YOU KNOW?

Singapore citizens aged 21 and above have a responsibility to participate in their government by voting in elections to determine who governs Singapore. It is important for eligible voters to keep themselves well informed of the candidates, their parties and the ideas they represent before deciding who to vote for.

LEE KUAN YEW

'The verdict of the people is a terrifying thing...it's a victory of right over wrong'

LIM YEW HOCK

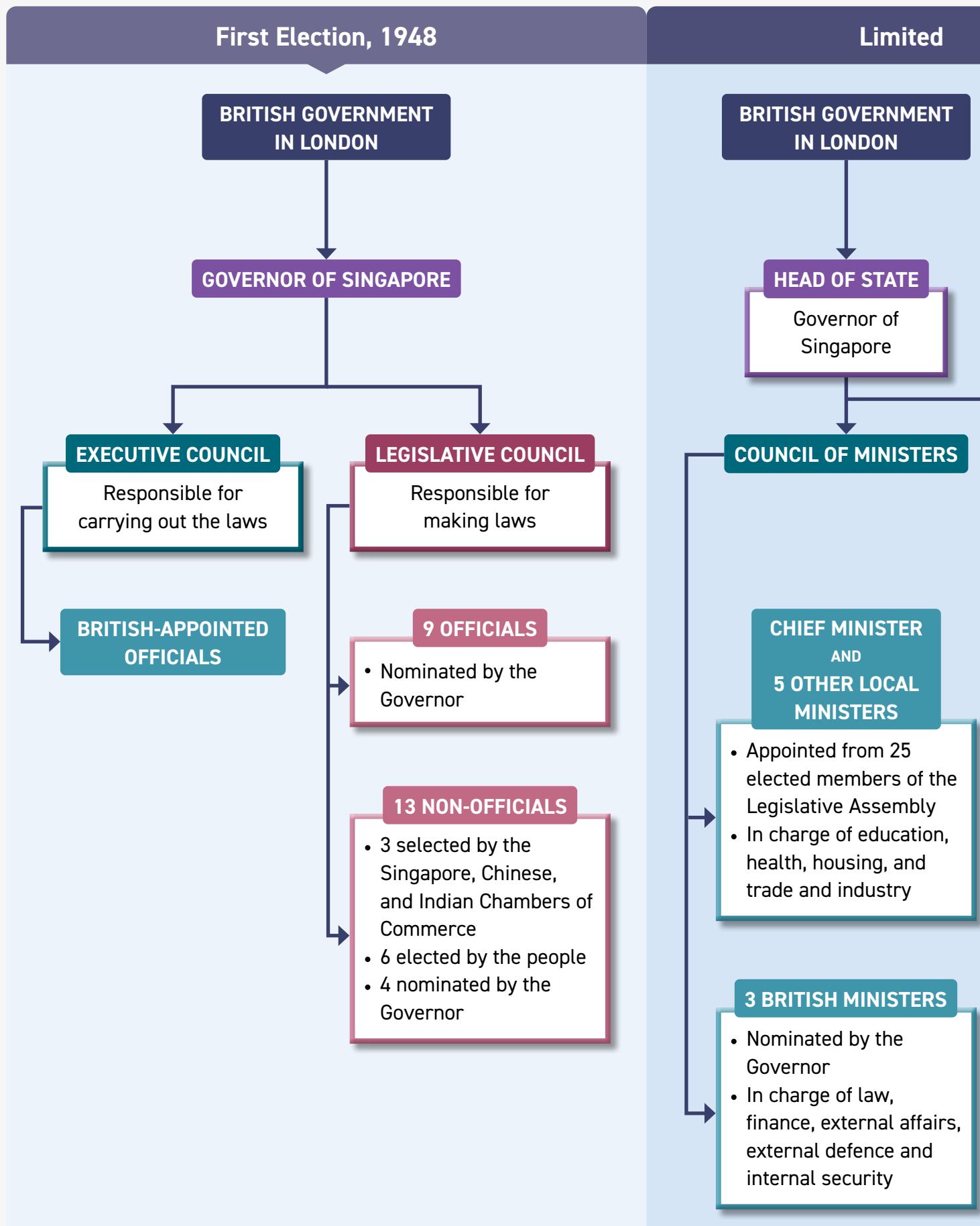
'The PAP have made certain promises...We congratulate them and wish them luck'

2.45 a.m.—PAP ROMPS HOME WITH LANDSLIDE VICTORY

▲ Headline in *The Straits Times*, 31 May 1959

¹⁵ A constituency is an area in which voters elect a representative to parliament or government.

Progress Towards Internal

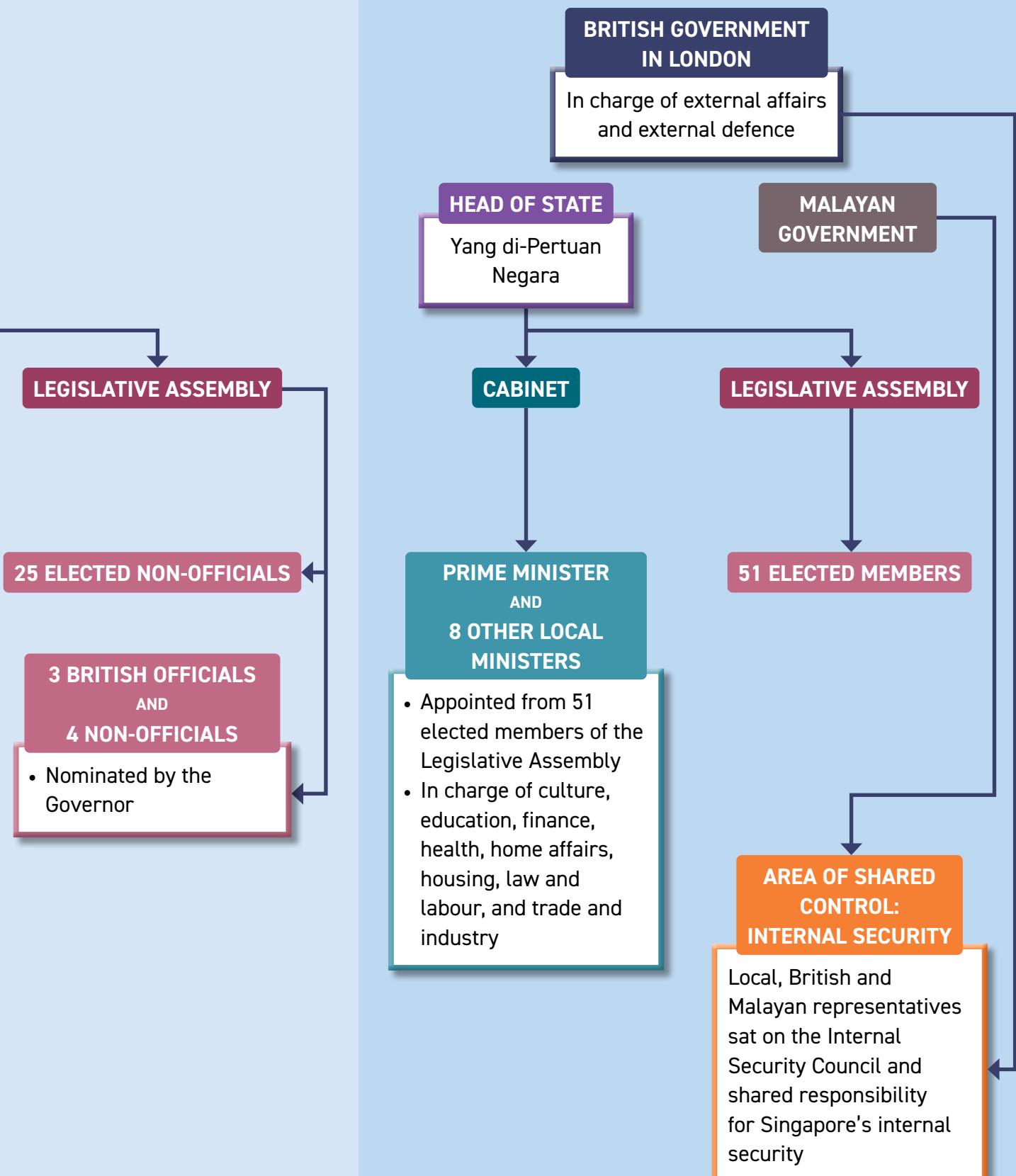


▲ Figure 7.4: Progress towards internal self-government from 1948 to 1959

Self-Government, 1948–1959

Self-Government, 1955

Full Internal Self-Government, 1959



On the evening of 3 June 1959, a crowd of 50,000 assembled at the Padang in front of City Hall. They greeted the start of Singapore's internal self-government with loud cheers. Speaking from a rostrum on the steps of City Hall, PAP leader Lee Kuan Yew rallied the people, sounding a message of unity and hope:

Let us work together as a more united people towards a brighter and a better future. May the next five years be happy, peaceful and prosperous years for all of us!





◀▼ PAP's rally in front of City Hall (left) and the crowd at the Padang (bottom), 3 June 1959

Who was LEE KUAN YEW?



Lee Kuan Yew (1923–2015) was born in Singapore into a Peranakan Chinese family. Having studied law at Cambridge University, he began work as a lawyer at the law firm of SPP leader John Laycock. His role as an election agent for Laycock in 1951 gave him his first experience of politics. Lee also worked as a legal advisor to several trade unions and clan associations. In 1954, he represented the Chinese middle school students who appealed against a conviction for their role in the Anti-National Service Riots.

One of the founding members of the PAP, Lee was elected in 1955 to represent the Tanjong Pagar constituency in the Legislative Assembly. He became Singapore's first Prime Minister after the PAP's victory in the 1959 election. He served in this capacity till 1990, leading Singapore through the years of merger and separation with Malaysia, and through the challenges Singapore faced as an independent nation. After stepping down, he continued to serve in the Singapore government as Senior Minister (1990–2004) and later, as Minister Mentor (2004–2011).



1959 proved to be a momentous year. Singapore successfully achieved full internal self-government. Yusof bin Ishak was sworn in as the new Head of State, the Yang di-Pertuan Negara, on 3 December. At his swearing in, Singapore's State Flag, State Crest and State National Anthem were unveiled. The State Flag replaced the Union Jack, which had flown over Singapore for most of the past 140 years. The State National Anthem, "Majulah Singapura", replaced Britain's "God Save the Queen".



▲ State Flag



▲ State Crest



▲ Original score of "Majulah Singapura" by Zubir Said

▼ Yusof bin Ishak being sworn in as the Yang di-Pertuan Negara, 3 December 1959

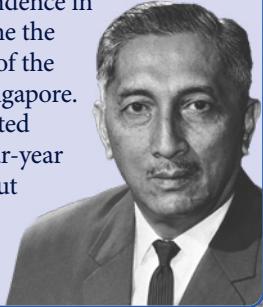


Who was YUSOF BIN ISHAK?



Yusof bin Ishak (1910–1970), commonly known as Yusof Ishak, was born in Perak, Malaya, but moved to Singapore in 1923. He attended Victoria Bridge School (present-day Victoria School) and Raffles Institution, where he was the only Malay to be admitted into the Queen's Scholarship class. After leaving school in 1929, he joined *Warta Malaya*, a prominent Malay newspaper. He later started the Malay newspaper *Utusan Melayu* and enjoyed an illustrious career in journalism.

In 1959, Yusof became Chairman of the Public Service Commission. Later that year, he was appointed Yang di-Pertuan Negara. When Singapore gained independence in 1965, he became the first President of the Republic of Singapore. He was appointed for another four-year term in 1967 but passed away in office in 1970.

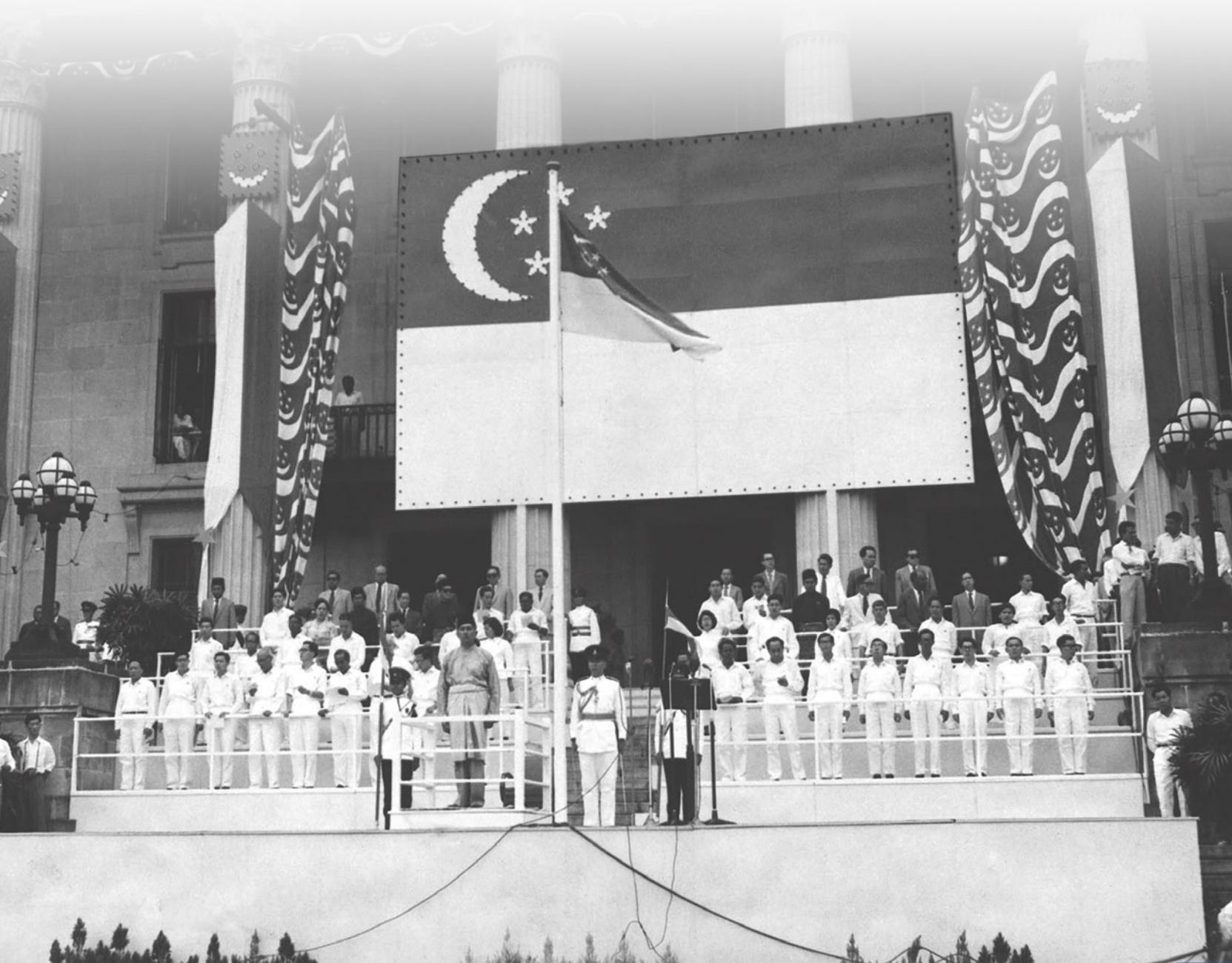


Conclusion

The post-war period in Singapore saw locals becoming more discontented with British rule as a result of external influences and the hardships they had suffered. The increasing anti-colonial sentiments led to strikes and riots, but also to greater political participation as the people's desire for self-government grew.

In 1959, 14 years after the war ended, Singapore attained full internal self-government, ushering in a new phase in its history. However, it was still not an independent nation. In the next chapter, you will find out how the new PAP government worked towards that goal.

▼ The Yang di-Pertuan Negara, members of the Cabinet and the Legislative Assembly at the steps of City Hall, 3 December 1959





LET'S REVIEW

Recall the events that occurred on Singapore's road to full internal self-government. What happened at each event? What role did each event play in Singapore's progress towards self-government? In the corresponding boxes below, write down what you know about each event and your reflections about them. An example has been done for you.

End of World War II (1945)



1948 Election

- This was the first time locals had the chance to vote for people to represent them in the Legislative Council.
- It was a first step towards democracy.
- However, limited participation and the small number of seats put up for election meant that this event was only a small step towards self-government.



Maria Hertogh Riots (1950)



Full Internal Self-Government (1959)

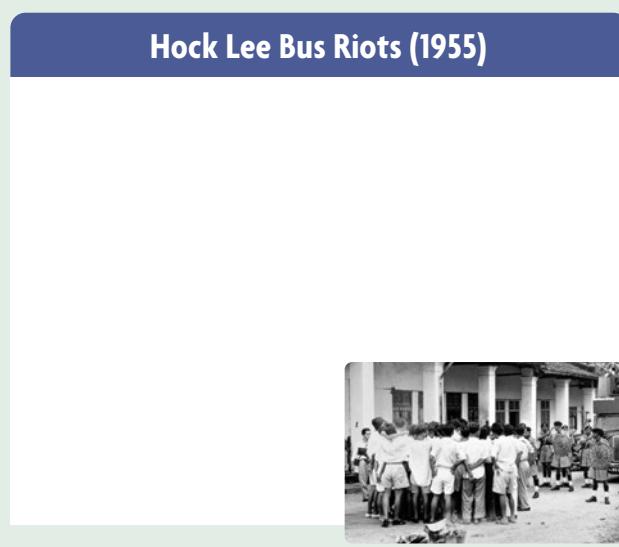
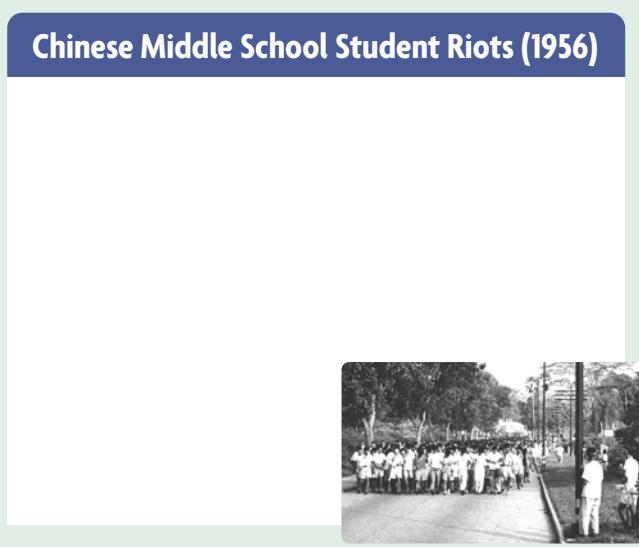
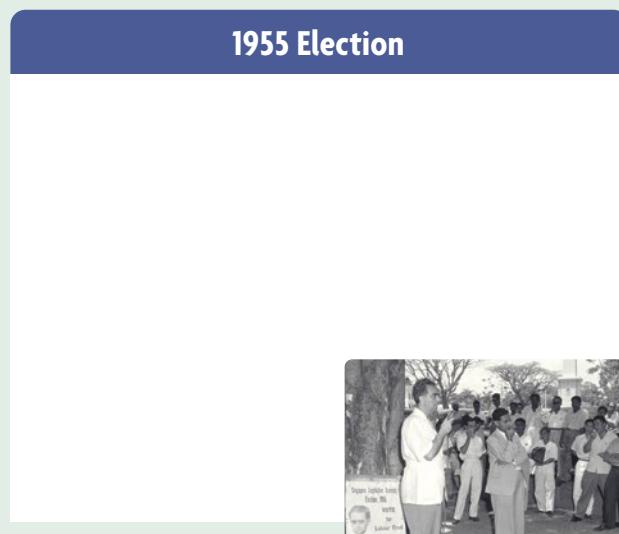
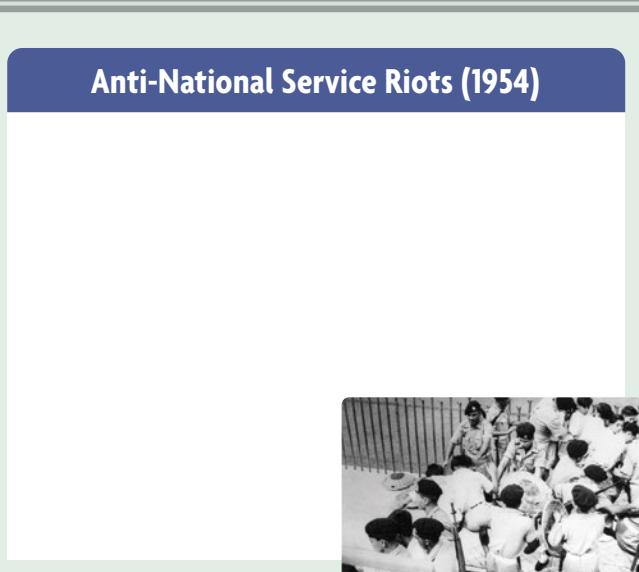


1959 Election



Second Merdeka Talks (1957)







In what ways could the 1959 election be considered significant?

Although Singapore did not achieve full independence in 1959, that year has long been regarded by many in Singapore as a significant one. Scenes of large crowds at the Padang celebrating the formation of the PAP government, victorious at the 1959 election, remain vividly etched in the minds of many who lived through the period. Fifty years later, an article in *The Straits Times* commemorating the 1959 election indicated that the election and its outcome marked the time a “new Singapore came into being”. You looked at the concept of historical significance earlier in this chapter (see page 70). Why might the 1959 election be considered a significant event in Singapore’s history? Study the sources and answer the questions that follow.

SOURCE A

Electoral Progress in Singapore, 1948–1959			
	1948	1955	1959
Total Number of Seats in the Legislative Council/Assembly	22	32	51
Number of Elected Seats	6	25	51
Number of Contesting Parties	1	6	13
Number of Candidates	15	79	194
Number of Registered Voters	22,395	300,292	587,797
% of Eligible Voters Who Voted	62	53	89

▲ Table showing details of the 1948, 1955 and 1959 elections

SOURCE B

The 1959 election campaign ... [was] unlike the present type of campaigning. Basically, the candidates usually [went] to the homes of the voters and they also [held] mass rallies not only during the night but also during the day. There [were] no restrictions on the [sites] for usage as mass rallies ... You would be surprised to know that mass rallies were also held at back lanes of homes and nooks and corners of small places where [candidates expected] the voters to go and hear them.

– Adapted from a 2002 oral interview with Chan Pitt Thong, an officer who worked at the Elections Department in 1959

SOURCE C



▲ PAP election rally at Hong Lim Park, 1 April 1959

SOURCE D



▲ Photograph depicting a scene from Polling Day, 30 May 1959

SOURCE E

Everybody went forward to vote quite willingly without much grumbling. [T]he fear of [losing their] citizenship was in the mind of [some people]. My mother for example, ... thought that she must vote or she would lose her citizenship ... I thought she was representative of the other [people]. They got citizenship – the carpenters, construction workers and all these people. They went to vote and these were the people who really supported us.

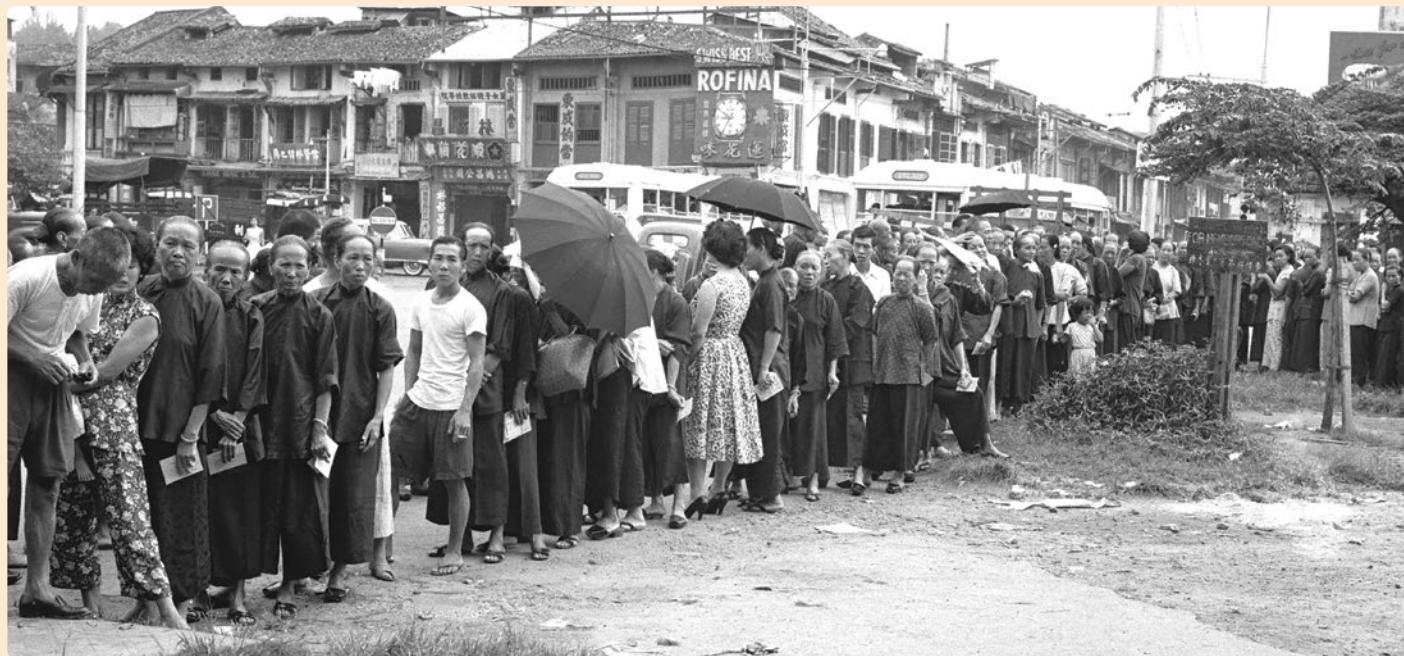
[Some of the more well-to-do people had doubts about] us. I remember in my street, [there] was a father and son team. The father was against the PAP, the son used to quarrel with him. That was the situation. The significance was that everybody exercised his [right to] vote ... and they thought it was the right thing to do.

– Adapted from a 1980 oral interview with Fong Sip Chee, a PAP member who helped out during the 1959 election campaign

SOURCE F

[The 1959 election] marked the close of a successful chapter in the anti-colonial struggle [where Singapore gained full] internal self-government. [After the election, the next step for Singapore was to] fight to attain complete independence through merger with Malaya. It is significant that it was through [the 1959 election] that the PAP first came into power. The PAP used this mandate to build up its strength and image and laid the foundation for victories in three subsequent general elections in 1963, 1968 and 1972. Hence, the 1959 election decisively influenced subsequent events.

– Adapted from an account of the 1959 election by Dr Ong Chit Chung, a Singaporean historian, published in 1975



▲ People in Singapore waiting to cast their votes, 30 May 1959

INVESTIGATE!

1. Study **Source A**. Identify four ways in which the 1959 election was on a larger scale compared to previous elections.
2. Read **Source B**. What does it tell you about how political parties reached out to the people in 1959?
3. Study **Sources C** and **D**. What can you conclude from these sources about how people responded to the 1959 election?
4. Read **Source E**. What reason(s) does it give to explain the increase in the number of people who voted in the 1959 election?
5. Read **Source F**. What are the two main reasons it gives for describing the 1959 election as “significant”?

REPORT!

Having studied the sources, in what ways do you think the 1959 election could be considered significant? Complete the table below based on the sources and what you have read in the chapter. Provide a short explanation for each criterion met. Some examples have been done for you.

In What Ways Could the 1959 Election Be Considered Significant?	
Criterion	Explanation
Resulted in change: what long-lasting or far-reaching change did the 1959 election bring to Singapore?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The 1959 election marked Singapore’s successful move to full internal self-government (Source F).
Remembered: what made the 1959 election memorable to the people who experienced or lived through it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The election rallies in the 1959 election were unusual and reached out to many people (Sources B and C).



8

How Did Singapore Become an Independent Nation?

The attainment of full internal self-government in 1959 marked a new chapter in Singapore's history. To the new PAP government, independence from the British was the next step. To achieve this, it successfully pursued a merger of Singapore with Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak, forming the **Federation¹** of Malaysia. This merger, however, was short-lived. Less than two years later, Singapore separated from Malaysia and found itself facing an uncertain future alone.

In this chapter, you will learn why Singapore sought to merge with Malaya and how it did so. You will also learn why the merger did not work out and how that resulted in Singapore's separation from Malaysia to become an independent and **sovereign²** nation.

▼ Headline in *The Straits Times*, 16 September 1963, proclaiming the merger of Singapore with Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak



Chapter at a Glance

You will learn:

- Why Singapore wanted to merge with Malaya in 1963
- Why there was opposition to the merger
- How Singapore successfully pursued merger with Malaya
- What led to Singapore's separation from Malaysia in 1965

AVERAGE DAILY CERTIFIED SALE EXCEEDS 125,000

The Straits Times

Engagement Rings
SET WITH FLAWLESS DIAMONDS
IN PLATINUM AND GOLD ARE
MARVELS OF TECHNIQUE AND
ARE WELL WORTH YOUR INSPECTION

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Midnight—and the new nation is born

MALAYSIA DAY SPECIAL BEGINS IN PAGE 5

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS IN 14 STATES STAY UP LATE TO USHER IN NEW DAY WITH CRACKERS: TENGKU SPENDS QUIET EVENING IN RESIDENCY

The day we've all waited for—by the Tengku Page 10

¹ A federation is a group of states led by a central government but with each state retaining a degree of control over their own internal affairs.

² A sovereign nation refers to a nation that is not subject to the rule or control of another nation.



Timeline

Beyond Singapore

▼ Malayan Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman proclaiming independence for Malaya, 31 August 1957



Malaya gains independence from Britain.

▼ Tunku Abdul Rahman delivering a speech in Singapore that sets in motion the plans for the formation of Malaysia, 27 May 1961



Tunku Abdul Rahman announces proposals for a merger of Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo, Brunei and Sarawak.

▼ Members of the Cobbold Commission, with Lord Cameron Cobbold seated in the middle, 1962



The Cobbold Commission finds that two-thirds of the people in North Borneo and Sarawak are in favour of the merger.

1957

1959

1961

1962

The PAP wins the 1959 election.



▲ Lee Kuan Yew being carried by supporters after winning the 1959 election

The Hong Lim by-election is held.



▲ Independent candidate Ong Eng Guan (seen with garlands of flowers), winner of the 1961 Hong Lim by-election

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew rallies the people in Singapore to vote for merger in a series of radio talks known as *The Battle for Merger*.



◀ Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew giving one of his speeches advocating merger at Radio Singapore, 1961

In Singapore

Konfrontasi
(Confrontation)
begins when
Indonesia opposes
the formation of the
Federation of Malaysia.

1963

Operation Coldstore
is launched by the
Internal Security
Council.

Singapore merges
with Malaya, Sabah
and Sarawak to form
the Federation of
Malaysia.



▲ Malaysia Day celebrations at City Hall,
16 September 1963

The PAP emerges victorious
in the 1963 election.

1964

Clashes on Prophet
Muhammad's birthday
spark riots across
Singapore.



▲ Roadblock set up by police
and soldiers in the North
Bridge Road area following
the outbreak of riots three
days earlier, 24 July 1964

▼ PAP's Devan Nair being carried
by supporters after winning a
seat in the Bangsar constituency
in the 1964 federal election



The PAP takes part in
the 1964 federal election
but wins only one seat.

1965

The Malaysian
Solidarity Convention
is formed to push for
a “Malaysian Malaysia”.

Singapore attains
independence.



▲ Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew
announcing the separation,
9 August 1965

Why Did the PAP Government Pursue a Merger with Malaya?

The PAP's 1959 election promise included achieving independence for Singapore through merger with Malaya. The idea of a merger was not new as many people in Singapore had advocated a merger with Malaya since 1948. Singapore's fate was thought to be inseparable from that of Malaya. Why was this so?

Political Independence

Merger with Malaya was deemed necessary for Singapore to achieve political independence as it was the only way the British would let go of control over Singapore. During the Cold War, Britain feared that Southeast Asia would fall under communist control, especially given influences from communist China and rising communist movements in nearby Indonesia and Vietnam. To safeguard Singapore and the Borneo territories (North Borneo and Sarawak) from the spread of communism, the British sought to provide greater political stability through the formation of a new federation comprising Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo (later known as Sabah), Sarawak and Brunei. See Map 8.1 below.



▲ Map 8.1: Map highlighting (in orange) the territories the British had envisioned forming a new federation

Economic Survival

Another reason for the PAP to pursue merger was the belief that Singapore could not survive economically in the long term without a merger. Read Source 1 to find out more.

SOURCE 1

Everyone knows the reasons why the Federation [of Malaya] is important to Singapore. It is the hinterland which produces the rubber and tin that keep our shop-window economy going. It is the base that made Singapore the **capital city**.* Without this economic base Singapore would not survive.

Without merger, without a reunification of our two governments and an integration of our two economies, our economic position will slowly and steadily get worse.

- Adapted from one of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's The Battle for Merger radio talks delivered in 1961

* "Capital city" in this context refers to an important city.

1. According to Source 1, what were the reasons given by Prime Minister Lee for Malaya's economic importance to Singapore?

▼ View of the Causeway connecting Singapore (top) to Malaya (bottom), 1952



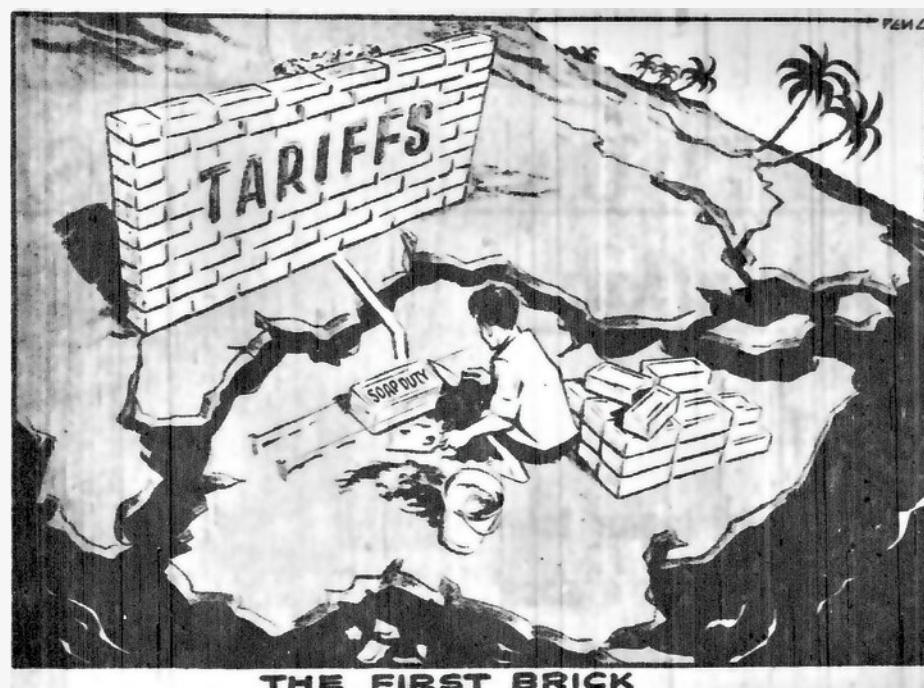
Singapore did not appear to have a promising economic future if left on its own. It lacked natural resources and had a rapidly growing population in need of jobs. It was also facing a declining entrepôt trade. As its neighbours became independent, they wanted to direct their exports through their own ports, reducing Singapore's importance as a regional trading port.

Moreover, the Malayan government had introduced **tariffs³** in the 1950s on goods traded with Singapore. The tariffs made goods entering Malaya from Singapore more expensive and thus less desirable to customers in Malaya (see an example in Figure 8.1 below). This reduced the amount of trade between Malaya and Singapore.



▲ Figure 8.1: An example of how tariffs work

Thus, a merger seemed necessary for Singapore's economic survival. If a **common market⁴** could be established through the merger, the Malayan hinterland would create a larger demand for Singapore's manufactured goods. Trade would increase and more jobs could be created for the people.



◀ Cartoon from *The Straits Times* showing the impact of tariffs on trade between Singapore and Malaya, 24 September 1960. In September 1960, the Singapore government imposed a tariff on imported soap. As a result, prices of Malayan-made and other imported soap became more expensive. Subsequently, the Malayan government imposed a tariff that made soap from Singapore more expensive in Malaya.

³ A tariff is a tax imposed by a government on goods entering or leaving the country. This increases the price of such goods.

⁴ A common market is an agreement between territories allowing goods produced in one territory to enter another territory without tariffs or restrictions.



Who was TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN?

Tunku Abdul Rahman (1903–1990) was born in Kedah, Malaya, the seventh son of the Sultan of Kedah. He studied Law and History at Cambridge University, graduating in 1925. After his return, he joined the Kedah Civil Service and later became a Deputy Public Prosecutor in 1949.

In 1951, the Tunku became President of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and effected the alliance of UMNO with the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC).

In 1955, Tunku Abdul Rahman became Chief Minister of the Federation of Malaya after his party won an overwhelming majority in the 1955 election. As Chief Minister, he supervised the independence process that led to Malaya's independence on 31 August 1957. He was Malaya's first Prime Minister from 1957 to 1970.



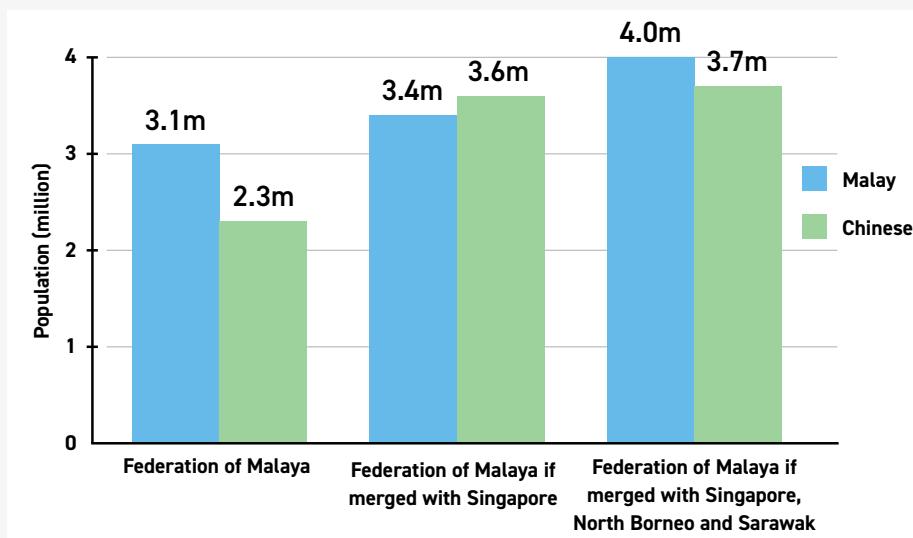
What Was Malaya's Response to a Possible Merger?

There was initial hesitation in Malaya towards the merger. However, it eventually turned around and accepted the possibility of a merger despite the doubts.

Malaya's Initial Response

Across the Causeway, the Malayan Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, initially thought a merger with Singapore spelt trouble. He saw stark differences in outlook between the people in Singapore and Malaya. He was concerned that the predominantly Chinese population in Singapore might be reluctant to accept a Malay Sultan as their Head of State, use Malay as the national language or accept Islam as the state religion.

Furthermore, he was concerned about changes to the racial makeup in a new federation. A merger with Singapore alone meant the combined Chinese population would outnumber the Malays (see Figure 8.2 below).



▲ Figure 8.2: Chart showing the estimated numbers of Malay and Chinese in 1960

The Tunku also suspected that many Chinese in Singapore had sympathies for the communists, given that many of them had led and supported the strikes of the 1950s. He was worried that such attitudes would spread to the rest of the new federation.

However, by the middle of 1961, he began to support the idea of a merger.

Fear of an Independent, Communist-Influenced Singapore

As you learnt in Chapter 7 (see footnote on page 70), Malaya had a representative on Singapore's Internal Security Council. The Tunku was concerned that if Singapore became an independent state, separate from the Federation, Malaya would no longer have a representative on the Internal Security Council and thus lose influence over security matters in Singapore. That, together with the absence of a colonial government, could make the threat of communism in Singapore harder to contain.

Besides, the Tunku was concerned that the PAP might be taken over by members who were sympathetic towards communism. In his eyes, that would result in a Singapore government less willing to consider a merger on terms acceptable to Malaya.

He also realised that Singapore would probably be less dangerous once it became part of Malaysia as the communist elements in Singapore could then be controlled by the government in Malaysia. Having fought the communists during the Malayan Emergency (1948–1960), the Tunku feared that if Singapore became an independent country that turned communist, it could influence others to consider a communist government as an alternative.

Hong Lim By-Election

The Hong Lim **by-election⁵** in April 1961 further fuelled the Tunku's fears and led him to support the idea of a merger. The Hong Lim area had been represented by the PAP's Ong Eng Guan who served as Mayor of Singapore's City Council. After winning a seat in the Legislative Assembly in the 1959 election, he was appointed Minister for National Development. By 1960, Ong had started to fall out of favour within the PAP because his actions as Minister were not in line with the party's directions.

In June 1960, when Ong openly challenged the PAP leadership at one of its party conferences, he was suspended as Minister. He was later expelled from the party and made to resign his seat in the Legislative Assembly. This triggered the Hong Lim by-election. Contesting as an independent candidate, Ong defeated the PAP's candidate with 73.3 per cent of the vote.

The by-election worried the Tunku as it pointed to the increasing divide within the PAP. One group had moderate views and wanted to bring about political change gradually through elections. The other group, which included Ong, had radical views and pushed for drastic changes. They were seen to be willing to take more forceful measures to achieve their aims.



▲ Ong Eng Guan attending a press conference, 1960



▲ Independent candidate Ong Eng Guan (seen with garlands of flowers), winner of the 1961 Hong Lim by-election

⁵ A by-election is an election held to fill a seat that becomes empty between general elections. This could occur when the representative occupying the seat is expelled from the party, resigns or passes away.

With Ong's win, it seemed to the Tunku that the moderate group was losing its influence in the PAP. This increased his fear that the radical group would gain control of the party. He was worried by the prospect of a more radical PAP that wanted to free Singapore from British colonial rule by establishing a communist government through forceful means. He was also concerned that Singapore would be used as a base to spread communist ideas in Malaya.

Agreement on Proposed Merger

The Tunku signalled his change of heart in a speech on 27 May 1961, a month after the Hong Lim by-election. In this momentous speech, with Singapore ministers in the audience, he highlighted the prospect of a merger between Malaya and Singapore as part of the formation of a new federation including other territories such as Brunei, North Borneo and Sarawak. Bringing in these territories would help to offset Singapore's Chinese majority (see Figure 8.2 on page 91).

Shortly after, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew declared his support for the Tunku's suggestion. They began discussions on a merger that would lead to the formation of the Federation of Malaysia. However, the radical group within the PAP objected to merger as they felt that once Singapore became independent through merger, they would be put down by the federal government in Malaya, who controlled internal security. The radical group within the PAP decided to sabotage the PAP by asking voters to support the opposition candidates instead. This resulted in the PAP candidate losing the Anson by-election on 15 July 1961, which sealed the Tunku's commitment to the formation of Malaysia.

On 24 August 1961, Prime Minister Lee and the Tunku came to an agreement on the broad terms of merger. According to the agreement, Singapore would have a special status in Malaysia. The key points were outlined in a government report in November 1961 (see Figure 8.3 on the next page).

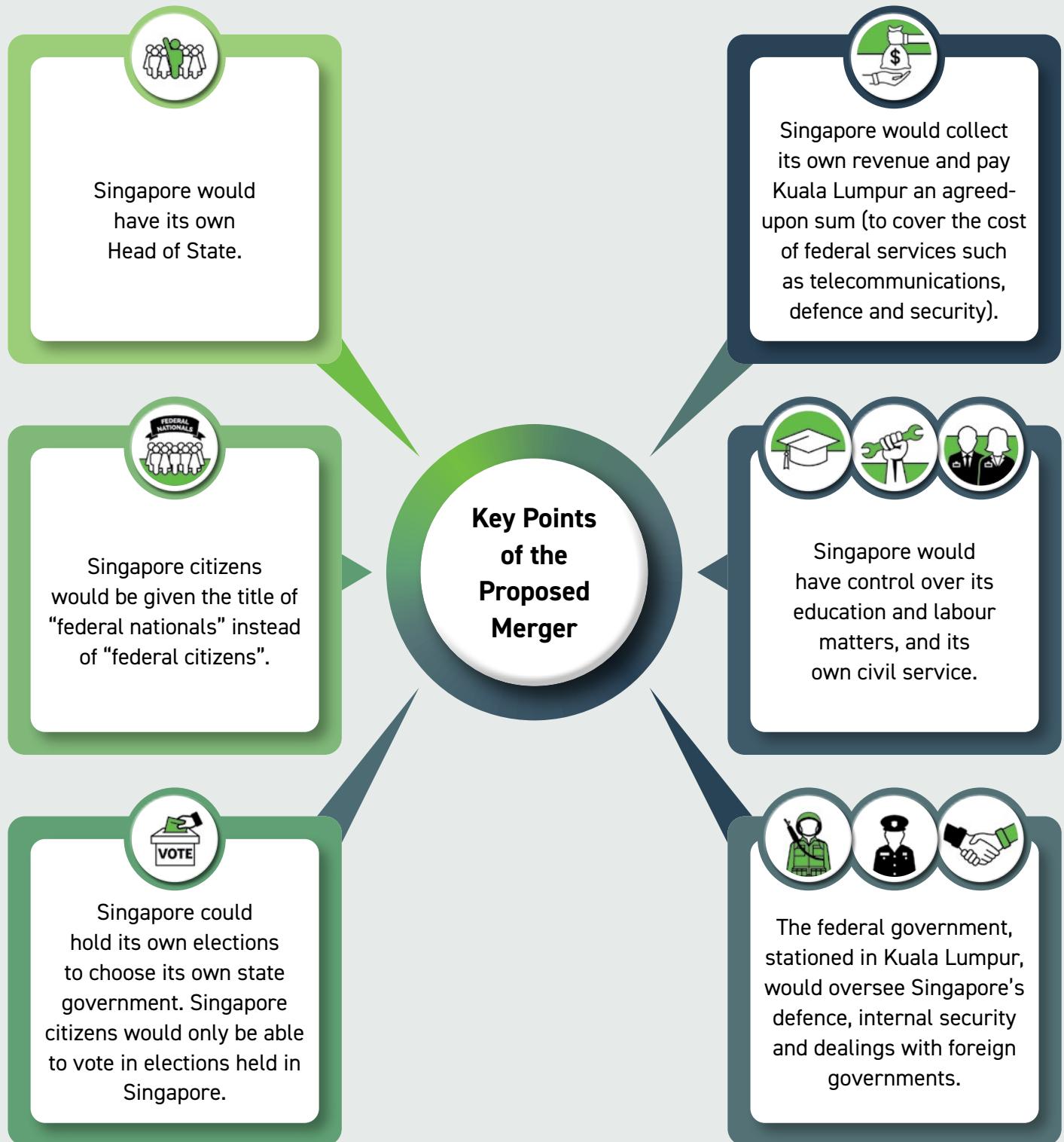


▲ Headline in *The Sunday Times*, 28 May 1961, after Tunku Abdul Rahman proposed a union between Malaya and Singapore and the creation of a new federation



▲ Tunku Abdul Rahman with Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, 16 November 1961

◀ Cartoon in *The Straits Times* showing Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Tunku Abdul Rahman making plans for a merger between Singapore and Malaya, 29 July 1961



▲ **Figure 8.3:** Key points of the proposed merger as outlined by a Singapore government report in November 1961



Who was DR LEE SIEW CHOH?

Dr Lee Siew Choh (1917–2002) was born in Kuala Lumpur, Malaya. He came to Singapore in 1934 to study at the King Edward VII College of Medicine and worked at the Kandang Kerbau (KK) Hospital after graduating.

A fervent anti-colonialist, Dr Lee joined the PAP in 1958, and a year later was elected to the Legislative Assembly. In 1961, he was dismissed from the PAP and formed the Barisan Sosialis. After Singapore's separation from Malaysia, he led the Barisan Members of Parliament to boycott the country's first parliamentary session.

In 1988, the Barisan Sosialis merged with the Workers' Party (WP), and Dr Lee contested the Eunos Group Representation Constituency as a WP candidate. He lost by a small margin but was appointed a Non-Constituency Member of Parliament (NCMP) from 1989 to 1991. In 1993, he retired from politics.



What Was the Result of the “Battle for Merger”?

The British agreed to the broad terms of merger. However, the proposed merger met with fierce opposition from some groups within Singapore.

Opposition from Barisan Sosialis

While most PAP leaders were in favour of the proposed merger, some within the party, such as Lim Chin Siong and Fong Swee Suan, strongly opposed it. They felt that the terms were unfavourable to the people in Singapore, and tried to get support from other PAP members to challenge Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's leadership. However, they did not succeed and were later expelled from the PAP. The expelled members subsequently established a new party: the Barisan Sosialis Singapura (Socialist Front of Singapore). Dr Lee Siew Choh became Chairman of the party while Lim was its Secretary-General.



▲ Dr Lee Siew Choh speaking at a Barisan Sosialis mass rally in Geylang Serai, 1962. The posters in the photograph display anti-colonialist messages.

The Barisan Sosialis opposed the proposed merger for several reasons. One issue was the status of the Singapore population within the new federation. The Barisan Sosialis members were concerned that citizenship would not be automatically granted to Singapore citizens. Singapore citizens would only be known as “federal nationals” and could vote only in Singapore elections.

Read Source 2 to find out why the issue of citizenship was of such concern to the Barisan Sosialis.

SOURCE 2

Will Singapore citizens be able to move freely or enter or leave the Federation without restriction? ... Will the workers of Singapore be able to apply for jobs in the Federation on an equal footing with Federal citizens [after merger]? ... Will the businessmen in Singapore have equal rights and opportunities as Federation businessmen ...? ... [Or] will their lack of Federation citizenship be a discriminating factor ...? ... Let the Government answer all these questions.

- Adapted from a speech by Dr Lee Siew Choh in Parliament, delivered on 21 November 1961. During the parliamentary debates, Dr Lee highlighted the reasons for his party's opposition to merger.

1. According to Source 2, why was the issue of citizenship a concern to the Barisan Sosialis?

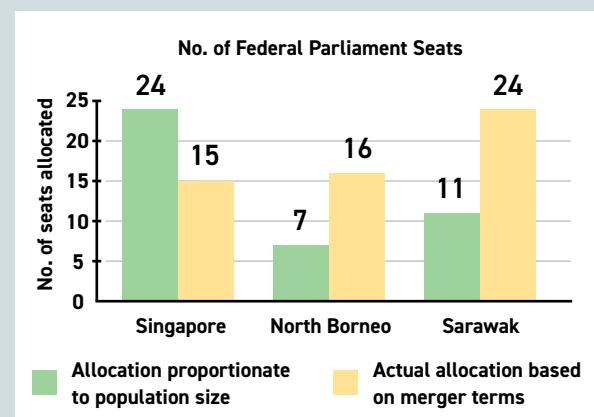
Another issue was the allocation of seats in the federal parliament. In exchange for having control over its education and labour, Singapore would have had only 15 seats, while North Borneo and Sarawak were given more seats despite their smaller population. The Barisan Sosialis felt that the under-representation of Singapore in the Malaysian Parliament was a sign of its second-class status.

In September 1961, the Barisan Sosialis started a campaign to oppose the proposed merger. They organised student demonstrations and labour strikes. Several party leaders also participated in radio forums to debate issues surrounding the proposed merger.



DID YOU KNOW?

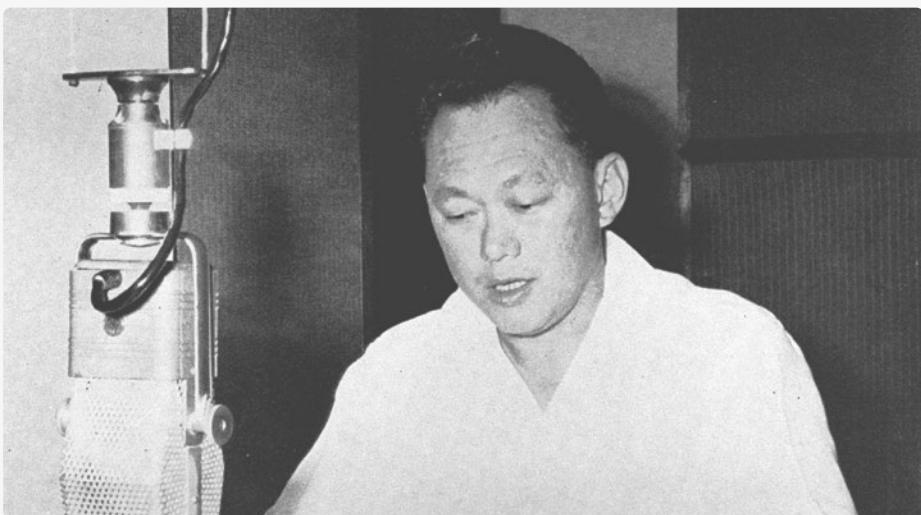
Based on population size, Singapore should have been allocated about 24 seats in the federal parliament, while North Borneo and Sarawak should have been allocated 7 and 11 seats respectively. However, the merger terms gave Singapore 15 seats, while North Borneo and Sarawak had 16 and 24 seats respectively.



Participants discussing the merger in a Radio Singapore forum held on 12 June 1962. From left to right: Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Dr Goh Keng Swee from the PAP, John Duclos (Head of Broadcasting Department, Radio Singapore, and Chairman of the forum), Ong Eng Guan from the United People's Party, David Marshall from the Workers' Party, and Dr Lee Siew Choh from the Barisan Sosialis.

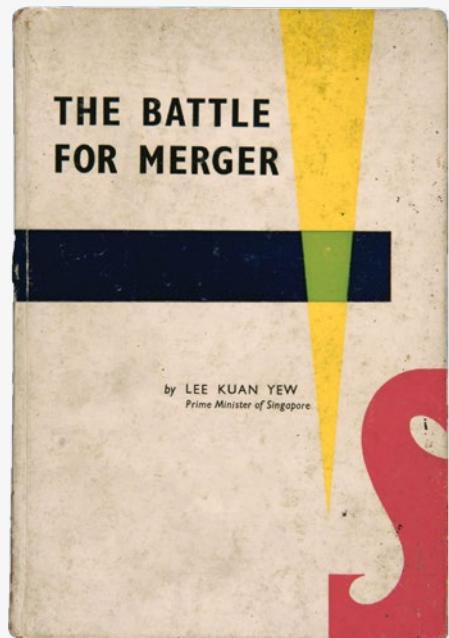
The PAP's Campaign

At the same time, the PAP embarked on a year-long campaign to convince the people of the need to merge with Malaya. From September to October 1961, Prime Minister Lee gave a series of radio talks called *The Battle for Merger*. Broadcast on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, they were delivered in the three main languages on the same evening – Mandarin at 6.45 p.m., English at 7.30 p.m. and Malay at 9.00 p.m. The talks were later re-broadcast in Tamil, Hokkien and Cantonese. These radio broadcasts allowed Prime Minister Lee's talks to reach people in Singapore, Brunei, Malaya, North Borneo and Sarawak. They were an important feature of a keenly contested battle for the hearts and minds of the people.



▲ Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew giving one of his talks at Radio Singapore, 1961

Besides radio talks, the PAP also used exhibitions to highlight the benefits of a merger. A notable example was the Malaysia Exhibition that was part of Malaysia Week in early 1962. Held at the Victoria Memorial Hall (present-day Victoria Concert Hall), it was jointly organised by the governments of the territories that were to form the new federation. The exhibition aimed to showcase the close cultural and social ties among the territories. It exposed visitors to the lives and cultures of the people, as well as the trade and commerce of the territories.



▲ Book titled *The Battle for Merger* containing Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's radio speeches, published in 1961

◀ Deputy Prime Minister Dr Toh Chin Chye touring the Malaysia Exhibition, accompanied by Minister for Culture S. Rajaratnam, 1962

YOUR RIGHTS AND BENEFITS BEFORE AND AFTER MERGER

ITEMS	BEFORE MERGER	AFTER MERGER
Colonial Status	Yes	No
Independent Status	No	Yes
Singapore Citizenship	Yes	Yes
British Subject	Yes	No
Federal Nationality	No	Yes
Right to vote and stand for elections for Singapore Assembly	Yes	Yes
Right to vote and stand for elections for Central Parliament	No	Yes
British Colonial passport	Yes	No
Passport of independent Malaya	No	Yes
Equal job opportunities in public service in Singapore	Yes	Yes
Job opportunities in Federal public service	No	Yes
Free port status for Singapore	Yes	Yes
Self-determination for Singapore in education	Yes	Yes
Self-determination for Singapore in labour matters	Yes	Yes
Freedom of movement between Singapore and Federation	Yes	Yes

இணப்புக்கு முன்பும் பின்பும்
உங்கள் உரிமைகளும் தகுதிகளும்

இணப்பு	இணப்புக்கு முன்	இணப்புக்கு பின்	
ஊழியர் தலை	உ.வர் (ட)	இ.உரை
உத்தரவர் தலை	இ.உரை	உ.வர் (ட)
சிவப்பிரச் சுடுபிரிவம்	...	உ.வர் (ட)	உ.வர் (ட)
பிரிட்டிஷ் குடுவாள்	உ.வர் (ட)	இ.உரை
கட்டுரை உதவை உ.வீரம்	...	இ.உரை	உ.வர் (ட)
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A Ministry of Culture Publication, Singapore (1/62)

Printed at the Government Printing Office, Singapore

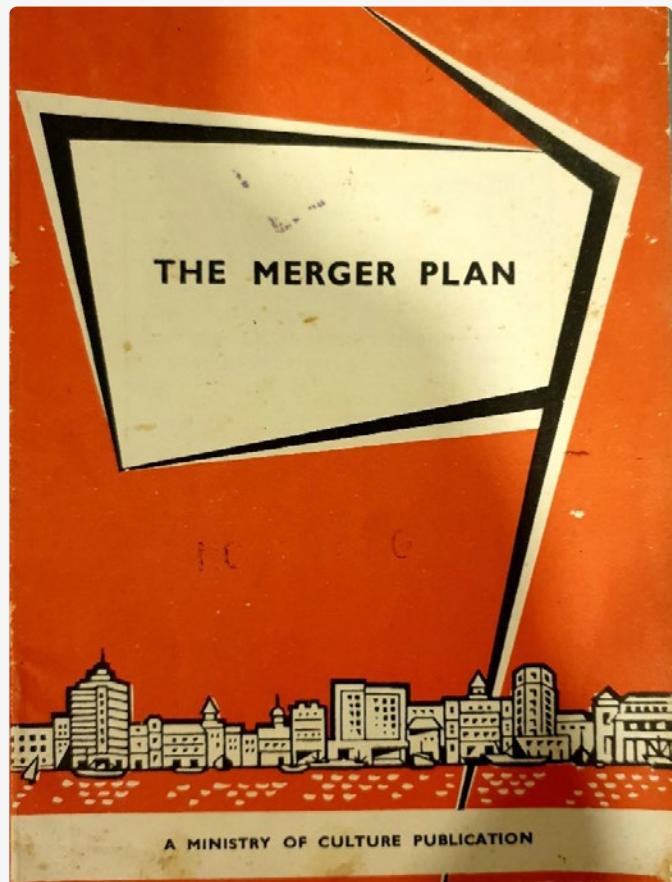
**PERCHANTUMAN
DAN MASA
HADAPAN AWAK**

合併
和你的前途

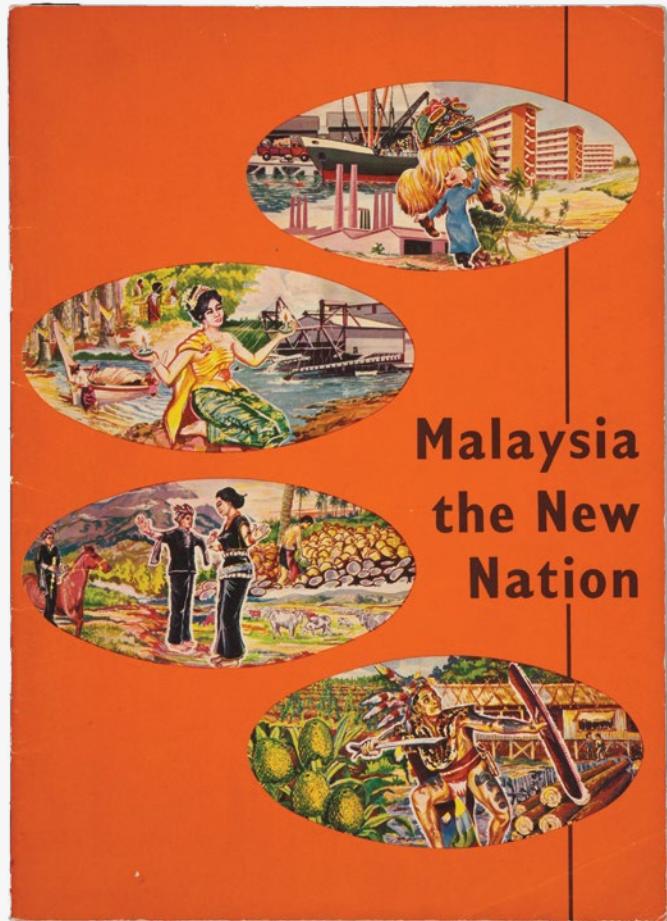
**MERGER AND
YOUR FUTURE**

இணப்பும் உங்கள்
எதிர்காலமும்

▲ Flyer published in all four official languages by the Singapore government to convince people of the benefits of merger, 1961



▲ Booklet setting out the details of the agreement between the Singapore and Malayan governments on the proposed merger, published by the Singapore Ministry of Culture, c. 1961

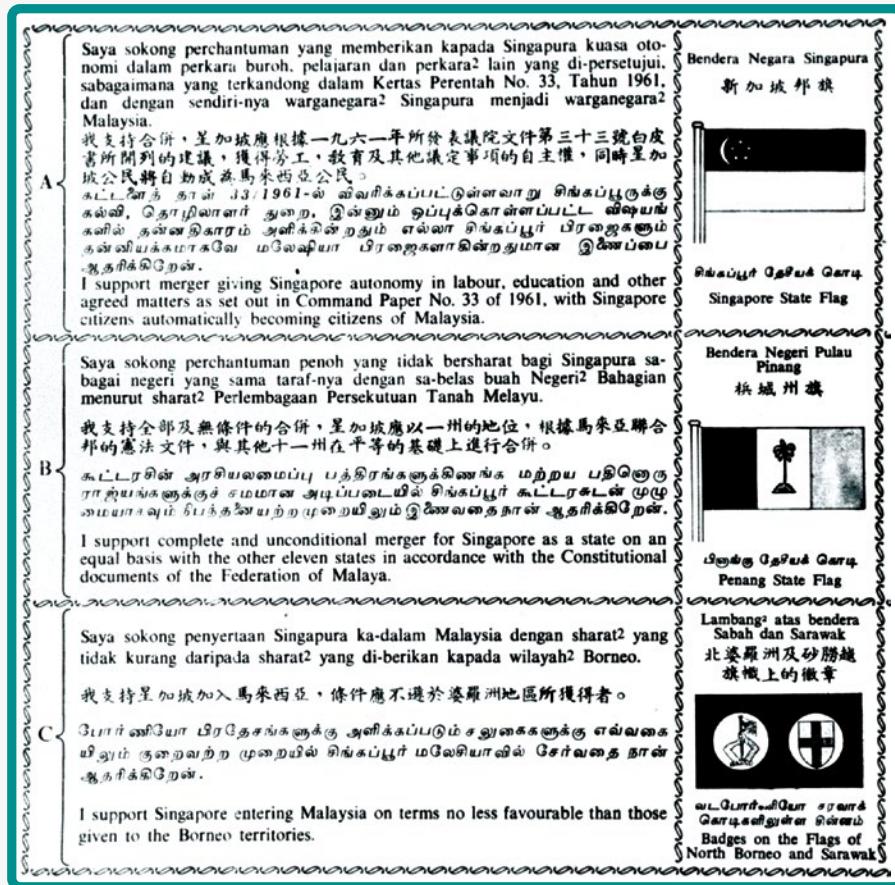


▲ Book published by the Singapore Ministry of Culture, likely as part of the PAP's wider campaign to inform the people in Singapore about the benefits of gaining independence through merger, 1963

Referendum

A **referendum⁶** was held on 1 September 1962 following the end of these campaigns. The purpose of the referendum was to find out what type of merger the people in Singapore wanted. Voters were given three options, each proposing a different form of merger (see image below).

PAP's preferred option was Option A while the Barisan Sosialis opposed all three options and urged the people to cast blank votes.



▲ Part of a flyer showing the options offered in the 1962 referendum



▲ Diorama at the National Museum of Singapore depicting the people in Singapore discussing the issue of merger with Malaya

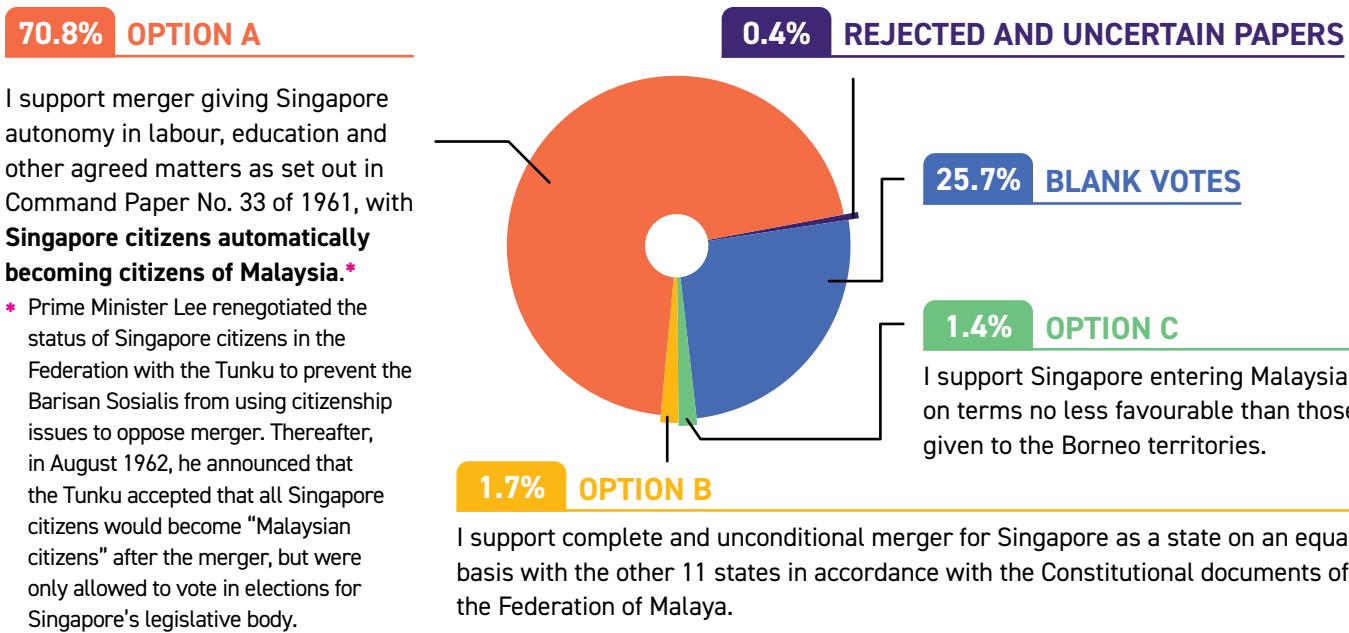


▲ Two men studying the options for the 1962 referendum

Think!

Why do you think the Barisan Sosialis urged the people to cast blank votes?

⁶ A referendum is a direct vote by the people on a specific issue.



▲ Figure 8.4: Results of the 1962 referendum

The results of the referendum were a clear indication of the people's support for the government's position: almost 71 per cent of the votes were in favour of Option A, while blank votes made up almost 26 per cent. Most voters had rejected the Barisan Sosialis' call to cast blank votes during the referendum.



▲ Counting of ballot papers at the Singapore Badminton Hall counting centre during the 1962 referendum



▲ Sealing of ballot boxes with sealing wax during the 1962 referendum

Weakening of the Barisan Sosialis

On 2 February 1963, the Internal Security Council detained more than 100 people, including Lim Chin Siong and 23 other Barisan Sosialis members. They were accused of attempting to sabotage the formation of Malaysia, and planning to launch an uprising in Singapore. The series of arrests was code-named Operation Coldstore.

The Barisan Sosialis, weakened by the arrests of its leaders during Operation Coldstore, suffered defeat in the subsequent 1963 election. The PAP won 37 out of 51 seats, while the Barisan Sosialis managed to win only 13 seats.

Reactions to the Formation of Malaysia Outside of Singapore and Malaya



Let us look at the different reactions to the formation of Malaysia outside Singapore and Malaya.

Brunei

- Decided against joining Malaysia
- Gained independence from Britain in 1984

The Philippines

- Did not recognise Malaysia, insisting it had a rightful claim to North Borneo
- Broke off relations with Malaysia in 1963

MALAYA

SINGAPORE

INDONESIA

BRUNEI NORTH BORNEO

SARAWAK

Indonesia

- Opposed the merger as it felt that it would give the British continued control over the territories in the new federation and that North Borneo and Sarawak should come under its influence
- Broke off diplomatic and trade relations with Malaysia in 1963
- Launched a policy of Konfrontasi (Confrontation) in January 1963, which involved military attacks, bombings and other acts aimed at causing instability in the states that were to form the Federation (see Chapter 9, pages 129–130)

North Borneo and Sarawak

- Agreed to join Malaysia after findings from the **Cobbold Commission*** (1962) indicated that two-thirds of the people in North Borneo and Sarawak wanted to join Malaysia

* The Cobbold Commission was set up in January 1962 to inquire about the views of the people of North Borneo and Sarawak towards the formation of Malaysia. The findings were endorsed by a United Nations Commission (1963).

Legend

Proposed territory for the Federation of Malaysia

Map 8.2: Map showing the proposed Malaysian territory and the reactions of countries to its formation

The Formation of Malaysia

Despite opposition from the different groups, the merger went ahead. On 9 July 1963, the Malaysia Agreement was signed in London by Britain, Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak. The Federation of Malaysia came into being on 16 September 1963. As Singapore was now one of the Federation's 14 member states, control of its foreign affairs and defence would be transferred to Malaysia.



◀ Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew waving to supporters on his return from signing the Malaysia Agreement in London, July 1963

Some of the initial terms of merger remained the same. For instance, Singapore citizens would not be entitled to all the same rights as other Malaysian citizens, such as the right to vote in Malaysian elections outside of Singapore. However, other terms of merger were modified. One important modification was that Singapore citizens would automatically become citizens of the Federation of Malaysia. It was also agreed that the Malaysian common market would be established in stages.

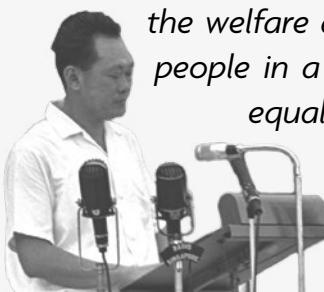
To celebrate the establishment of the Federation, festivities were held throughout the island.

▼ Malaysia Day celebrations at City Hall, 16 September 1963



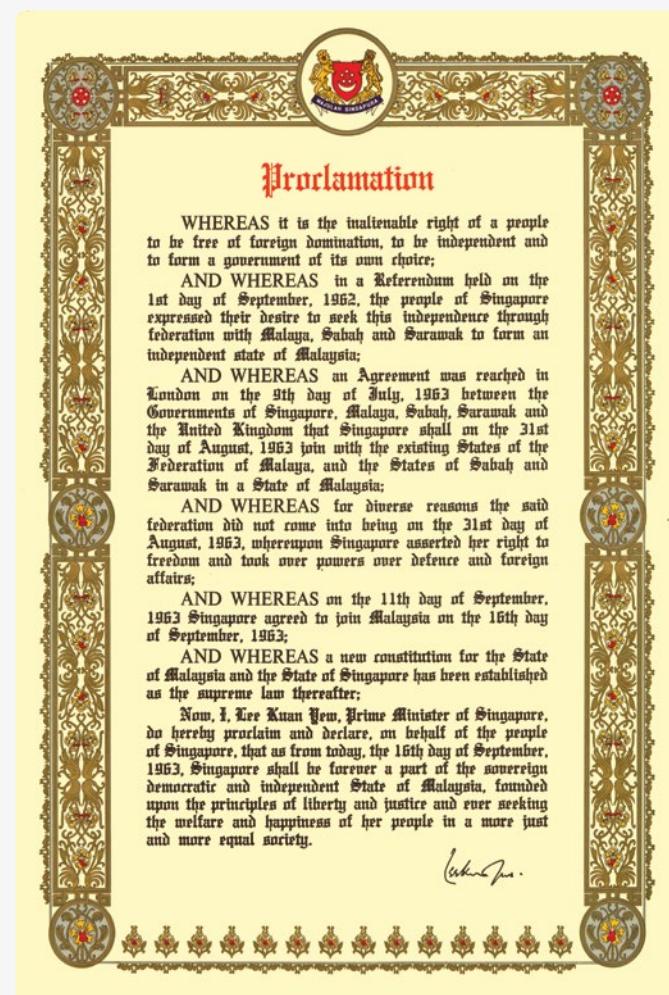
On 16 September 1963, during the Malaysia Day celebrations, Prime Minister Lee jubilantly proclaimed the formation of Malaysia from the steps of City Hall:

Now, I, Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore, do hereby proclaim and declare, on behalf of the people of Singapore, that as from today, the 16th day of September, 1963, Singapore shall be forever a part of the sovereign democratic and independent State of Malaysia, founded upon the principles of liberty and justice and ever seeking the welfare and happiness of her people in a more just and more equal society.



◀ Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew speaking at the Malaysia Day celebrations at City Hall, 16 September 1963

Less than two years later, Singapore left the Federation of Malaysia. Why did the merger, which had begun with such promise, fail and lead to separation?



▲ Proclamation of Singapore's Merger with Malaysia (in English), 1963



BE A YOUNG HISTORIAN: CAUSATION

In Chapter 5, you learnt how three types of factors – context, circumstances and the actions of historical actors – interact to contribute to a historical event or outcome. In examining causation, remember that the actions of historical actors can have unintended consequences. This is because historical actors cannot always accurately predict or control the following:

- the consequences of their actions;
- the broader societal, political and economic conditions or opposing forces that will prevent them from achieving their desired outcomes; and
- the reactions of others to their actions.

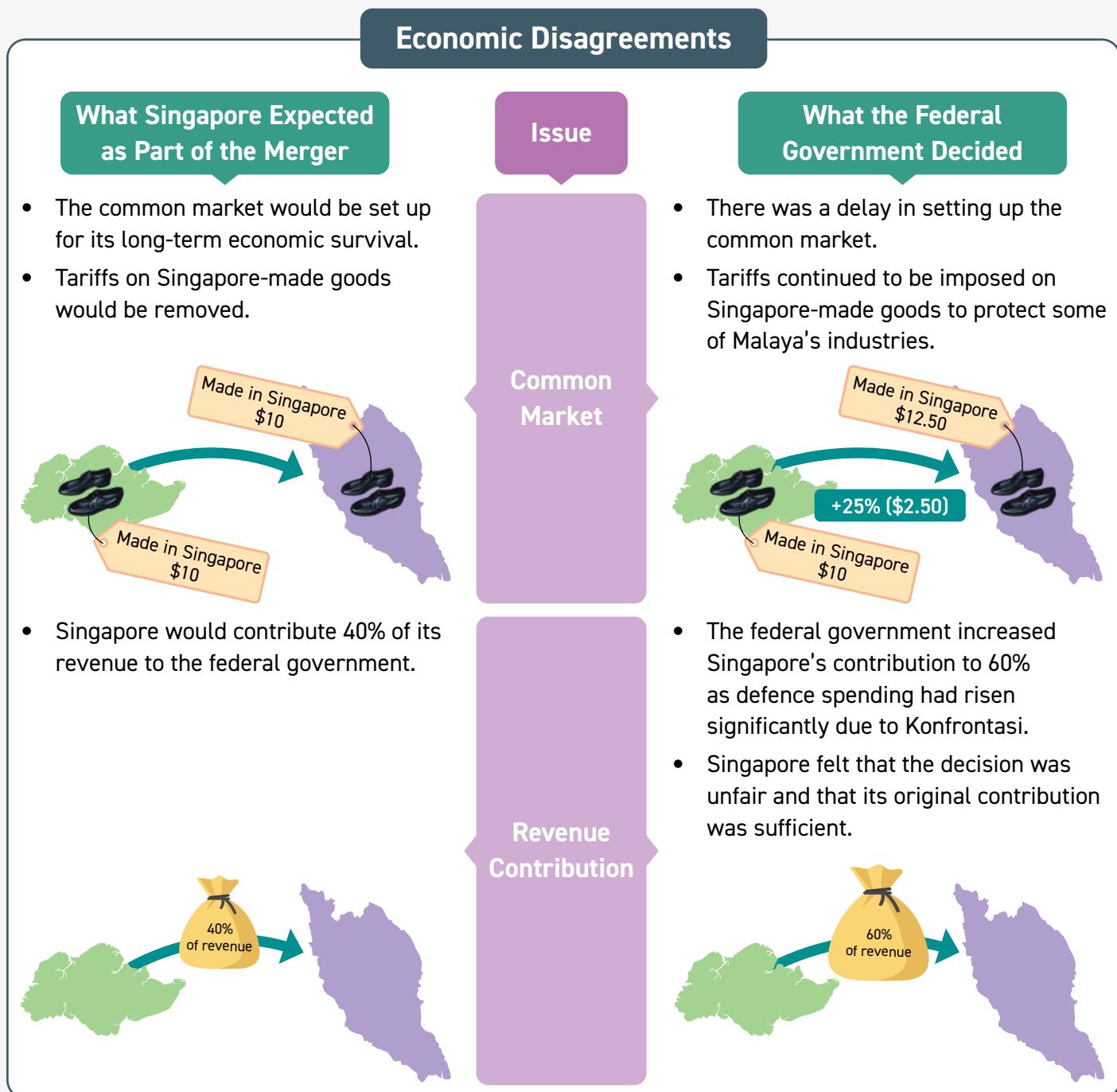
As you learn more about Singapore's separation from the Federation of Malaysia, think about the following question: To what extent was the separation a result of unintended consequences?

LEARN ON THE GO

Find out more about how the actions of historical actors can have unintended consequences @ go.gov.sg/lshc801.

Why Did Singapore Separate from Malaysia?

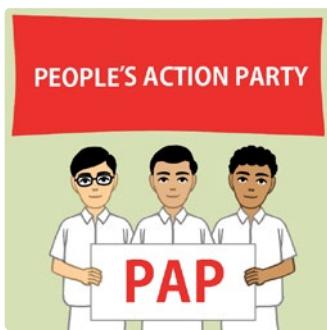
A lot of effort was put in by the various parties to create Malaysia. Yet, Singapore was part of it for less than two years. Both economic disagreements and political differences (see Figure 8.5 below) strained relations between the federal government in Malaysia and the state government of Singapore, resulting in the separation of Singapore from Malaysia on 9 August 1965.



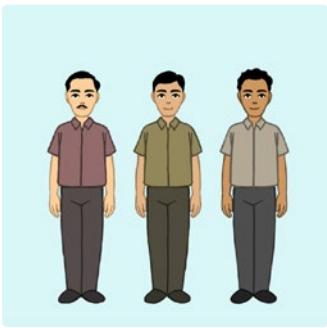
Political Differences

Singapore

- Singapore's major political parties, such as the governing PAP, were multiracial and sought to represent the interests of all communities.



- Singapore's government felt that everyone, regardless of race, should be given an equal opportunity to succeed.
- It believed that the best way of enabling Malays to gain better employment opportunities was by providing free education.



Issue

Composition of Political Parties

- The federal government was formed by the Alliance Party, which comprised three communal (race-based) parties: the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and Malayan Indian Congress (MIC).
- These parties sought to look after the interests of their respective ethnic communities.



- Special privileges in employment, business and education were given to the Malays with the aim of improving their economic and social position. For instance, a certain number of jobs in the government were reserved for Malays.

Treatment of Races



▲ **Figure 8.5:** Reasons for Singapore's separation from Malaysia

Over time, these differences in views would strain the relationship between the two governments. Let us see how events over the next two years increased tensions.

Federal Government of Malaysia

Events Leading to the SEPARATION

Rising Tensions, 1963–1964

In September 1963, a state election was held in Singapore. The Singapore branches of UMNO, MCA and MIC joined forces with the Singapore People's Alliance (SPA) to form the Singapore Alliance Party (SAP).

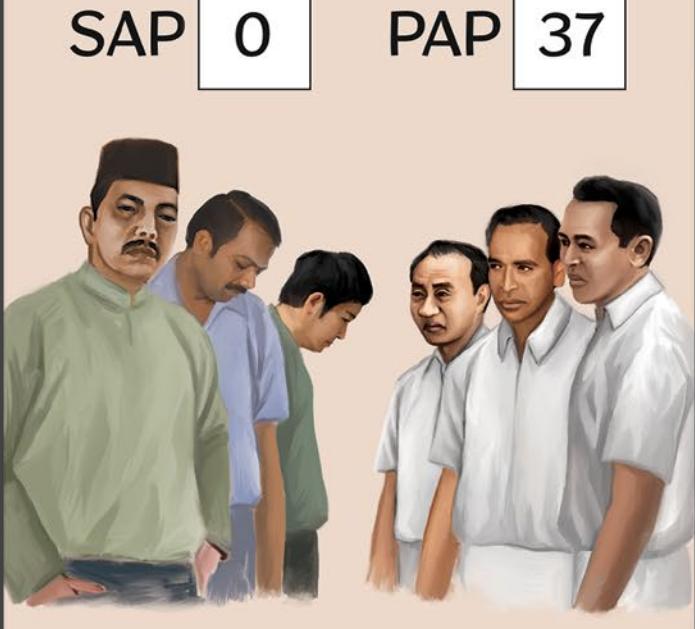


With the backing of the Alliance Party in Kuala Lumpur, the SAP contested the election and sought to win more seats in the Singapore Legislative Assembly.

However, the SAP performed poorly and failed to win a single seat. In contrast, the PAP won 37 out of the 51 seats contested.

From the Alliance's perspective, the result of the election was deeply disappointing. Every one of the seven seats previously held by the SPA and UMNO-Singapore had been lost to a PAP candidate. Moreover, Malay candidates from the SAP in three constituencies with Malay majorities had lost their seats to Malay PAP candidates.

SAP 0 PAP 37

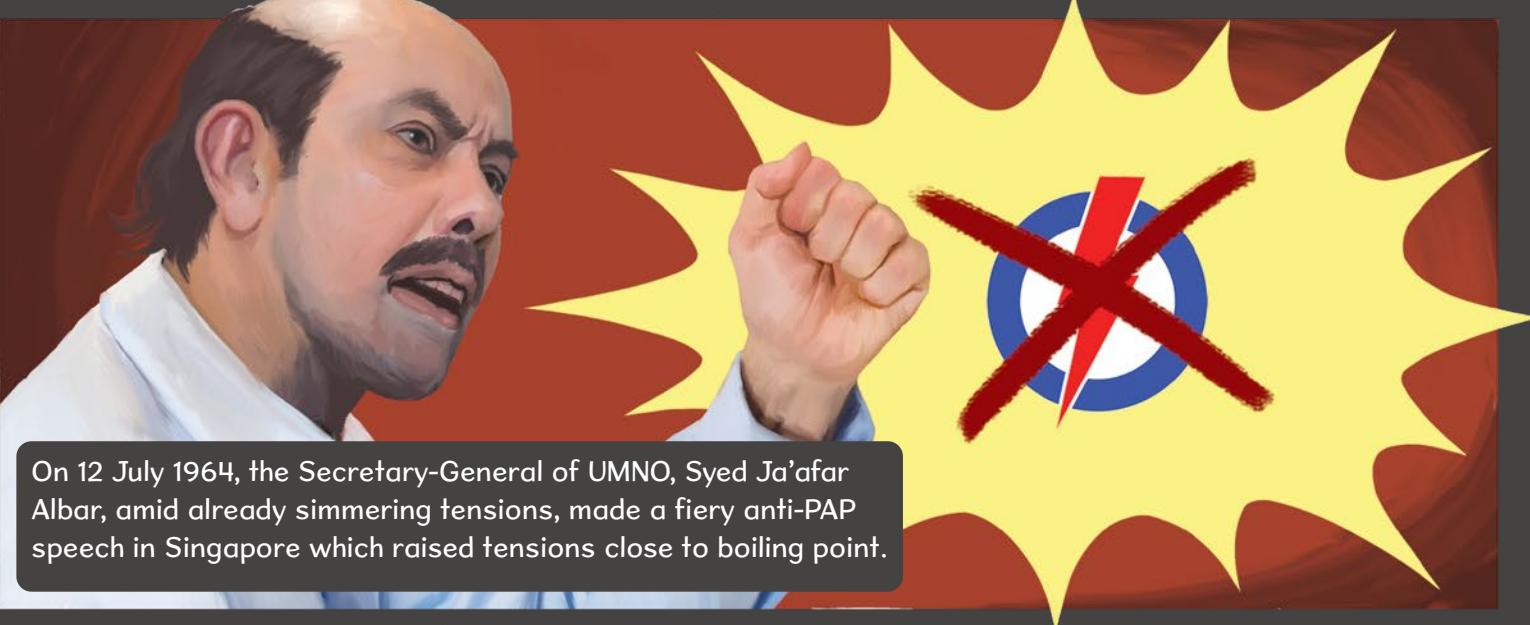


The PAP's decision to participate in the 1964 federal election further strained the relationship between the PAP and the Alliance Party in Kuala Lumpur. During the election campaign, the PAP questioned the way the Alliance Party governed Malaysia and promised to build a Malaysia that would not be governed along racial lines. Though the Alliance won the election with the PAP winning one seat, the Alliance leaders were upset with the PAP for contesting the election.

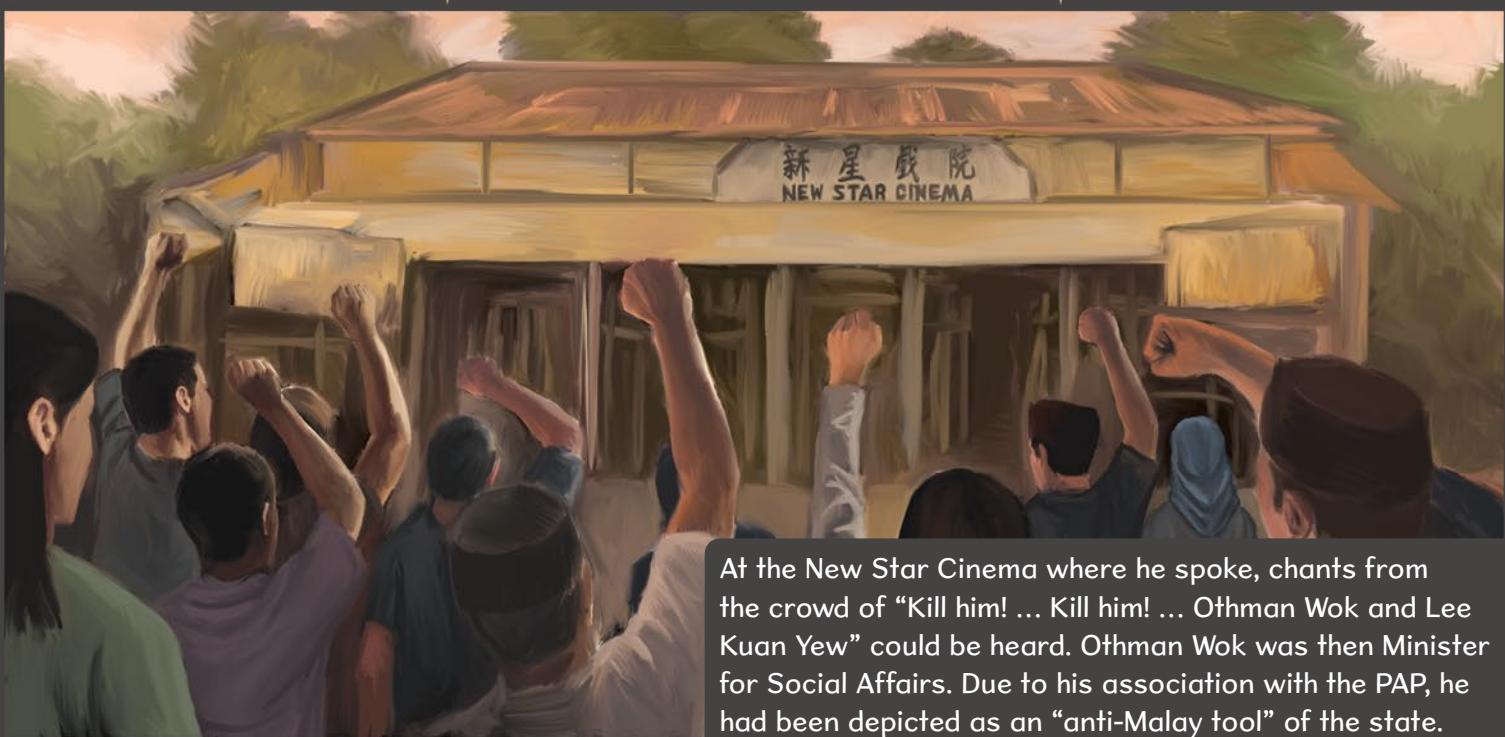
After the Alliance's victory in the federal election, UMNO decided to focus on winning back the Malay vote in Singapore. There was already considerable discontent within the Malay community in Singapore, especially among those who saw little improvement in their economic position.



Some UMNO leaders accused the PAP government of neglecting Malay interests in Singapore. Through the Malay press, especially the widely read *Utusan Melayu*, anti-PAP sentiments were spread. Allegations that the PAP was treating Singapore Malays as second-class citizens flew fast and furious. *Utusan Melayu* also accused the PAP of placing greater emphasis on Chinese education at the expense of Malay education.



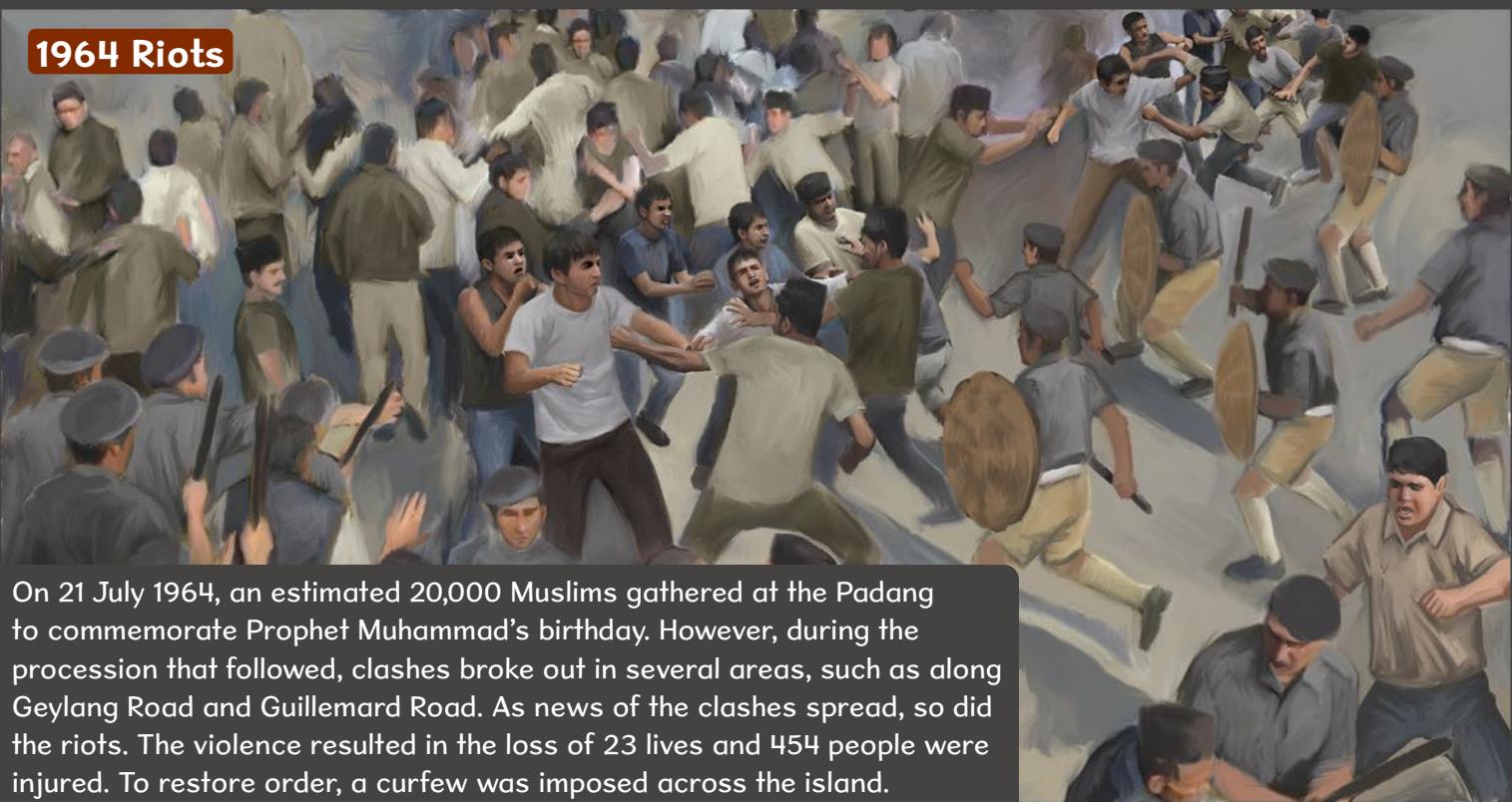
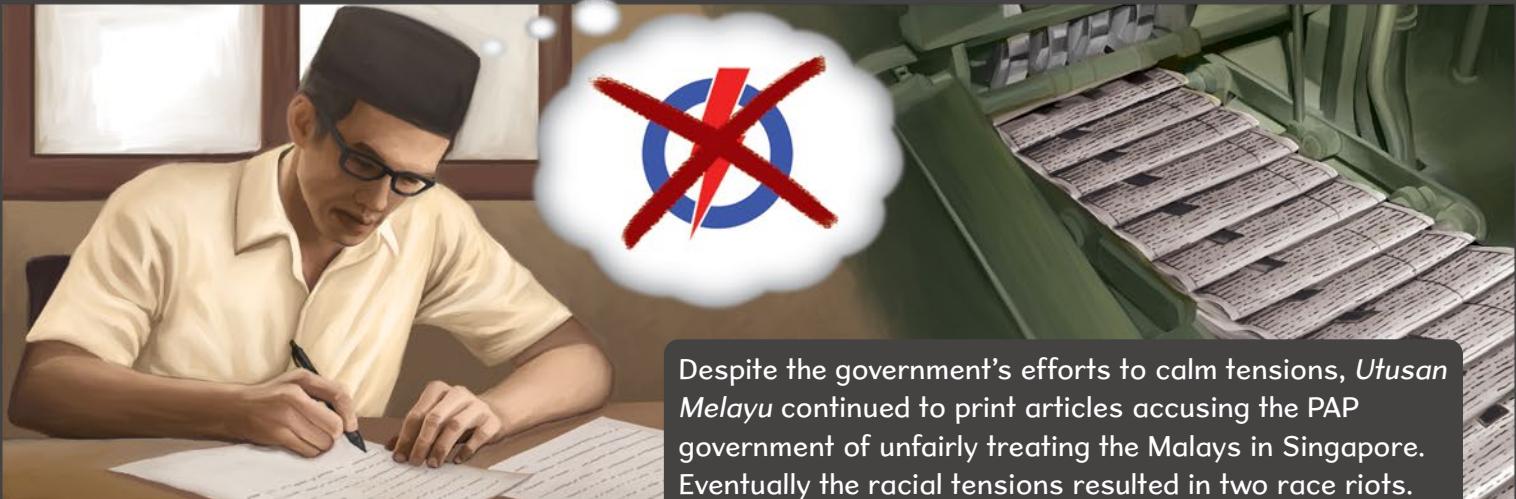
On 12 July 1964, the Secretary-General of UMNO, Syed Ja'afar Albar, amid already simmering tensions, made a fiery anti-PAP speech in Singapore which raised tensions close to boiling point.



At the New Star Cinema where he spoke, chants from the crowd of “Kill him! ... Kill him! ... Othman Wok and Lee Kuan Yew” could be heard. Othman Wok was then Minister for Social Affairs. Due to his association with the PAP, he had been depicted as an “anti-Malay tool” of the state.



In an attempt to ease tensions, Prime Minister Lee and Othman organised a meeting with over 100 non-political Malay organisations on 19 July 1964. They assured the 900 Malay representatives present that the Singapore government would do its utmost to help the Malays in the areas of education, employment and housing. Prime Minister Lee reiterated that all Singaporeans had equal rights, regardless of race.



After the riots, Goodwill Committees, comprising community leaders from the various racial groups, were formed to calm tensions and restore harmonious relations among the different races.



However, tensions did not disappear. About six weeks later, riots broke out, triggered by the murder of a Malay trishaw rider on 2 September 1964. An islandwide curfew was imposed again. By the time it was lifted, 13 people had died and 106 were injured.



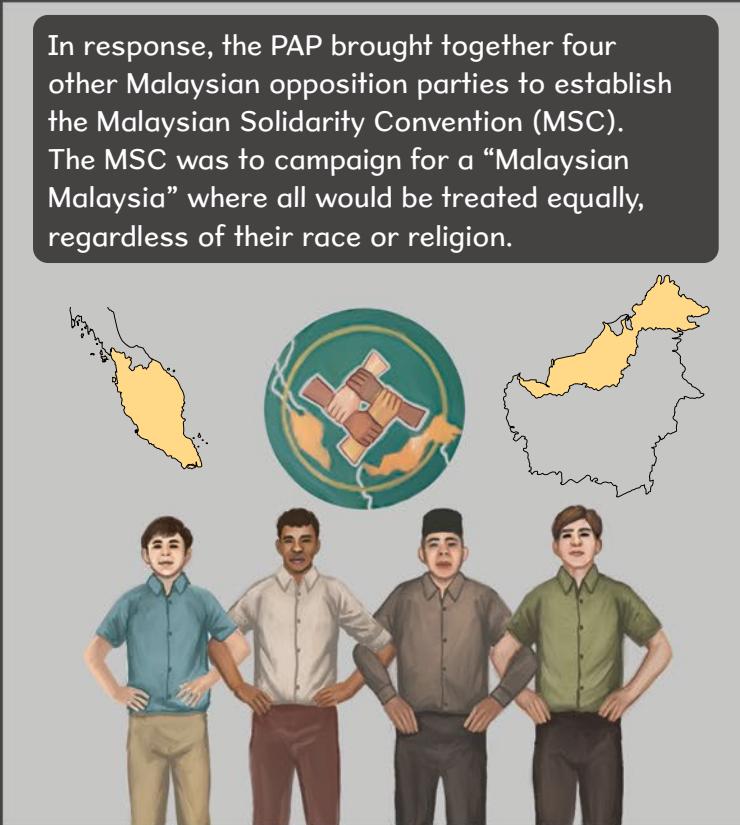
This latest wave of violence prompted the Alliance Party in Kuala Lumpur and the PAP to agree not to raise any matters that were racial in nature. Both also agreed not to challenge each other in elections for the next two years.



The agreement did not last long. In October 1964, the SAP announced that the party would be reorganised with the intention of contesting and winning the next election. The announcement served as a direct political challenge to the PAP.



In response, the PAP brought together four other Malaysian opposition parties to establish the Malaysian Solidarity Convention (MSC). The MSC was to campaign for a “Malaysian Malaysia” where all would be treated equally, regardless of their race or religion.



The campaign upset the Alliance leaders and deepened their mistrust of the PAP government. They felt that the idea of a “Malaysian Malaysia” threatened the special rights enjoyed by the Malays. Some UMNO leaders even called for Prime Minister Lee’s arrest.

UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance





LEARN A SKILL: USING EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

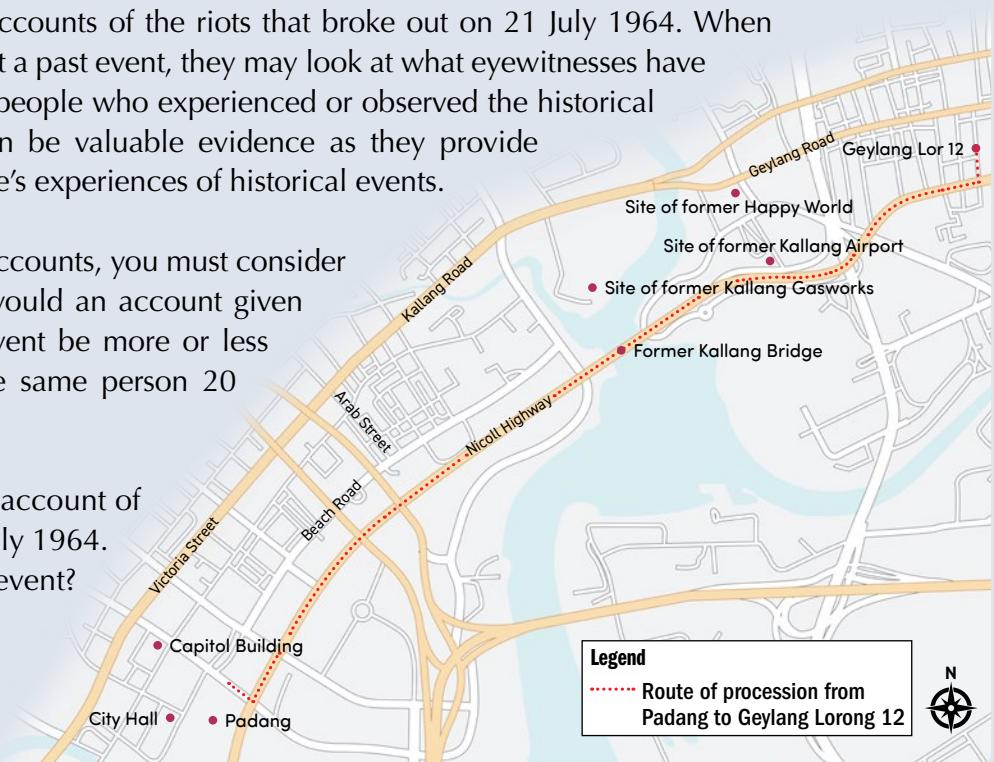
There are varying eyewitness accounts of the riots that broke out on 21 July 1964. When historians want to find out about a past event, they may look at what eyewitnesses have said about it. Eyewitnesses are people who experienced or observed the historical event. Eyewitness accounts can be valuable evidence as they provide first-hand information on people's experiences of historical events.

However, in using eyewitness accounts, you must consider their reliability. For example, would an account given by a person shortly after an event be more or less reliable than one given by the same person 20 years later?

Read the following eyewitness account of the riots that broke out on 21 July 1964.

What does it tell you about the event?

Map 8.3: Map showing the locations of some of the places mentioned in Othman Wok's and Seah Chiang Nee's accounts of the riots of 21 July 1964



The following account is adapted from an oral interview with Othman Wok, who was then PAP's Minister for Social Affairs. When the riot broke out, he was leading a PAP contingent of Malay-Muslim youths in a procession from the Padang, where a mass celebration of Prophet Muhammad's birthday had taken place, to Geylang Serai. The interview was conducted with the National Museum of Singapore and was recorded in 2006.

As our contingent passed [along Beach Road and into Arab Street], there were people following us in the five-foot way ... And somewhere down there, a group of Malay youth, who shouted in Malay when they saw the PAP flags, "Hidup Cina!" That means: "long live the Chinese". "Mati Melayu!": "death to the Malays". The idea was to belittle the PAP and the PAP government, to make a division with the Malays on one side and the Chinese on the other side. ...

[When the contingent was at Kallang Bridge (present-day Merdeka Bridge)] I looked back, I saw a couple of participants from other contingents **break rank**.* And there were uniformed policemen following the procession and they stopped them from breaking rank. I think the people, the participants, were quite tired and hot, because it was a very, very hot day. They wanted to find shelter in the five-foot way. So when they were asked to go back, they became very angry. They started chasing the policemen. ...

I told my contingent, "We break rank here." So I led them into the Kallang Airport, which was empty at that time. ... I closed the gates. Outside we could see people running around, chasing each other – sounds of people trying to help, sounds of people being beaten up.

* To break ranks is to move away from the group.

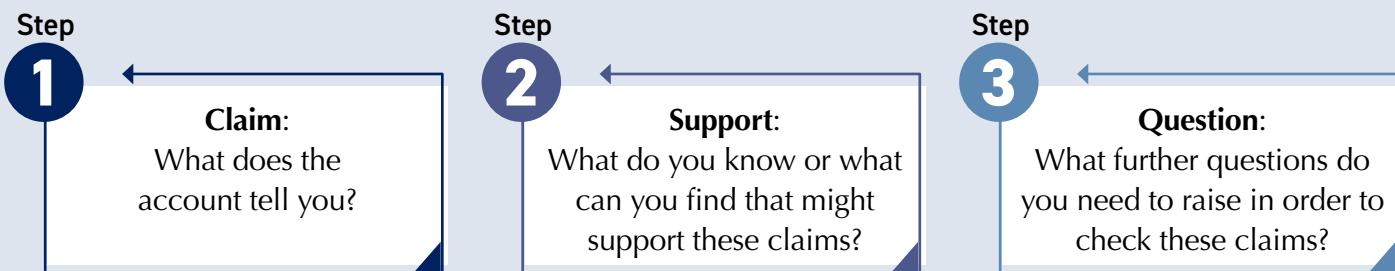
Who was OTHMAN WOK?

Othman Wok (1924–2017) was born in Singapore. In 1950, Othman pursued his diploma in journalism in London on a scholarship. After his studies in London, he began work with the Malay newspaper *Utusan Melayu* and later became its deputy editor.

In 1963, Othman was elected as the representative for Pasir Panjang constituency. He was appointed Director of the Malay Affairs Bureau in 1963 and Minister for Culture and Social Affairs in 1965. From June 1977 to 1980, he was the Ambassador to Indonesia. Othman retired from politics in 1981 and was awarded the Order of Nila Utama (Second Class) in 1990.



One way of approaching eyewitness accounts is to use the Claim-Support-Question framework to think about how they could improve your understanding of particular historical events. Look at the steps below.



Let us now look at how this framework might be applied to Othman's account.

1	Claim	2	Support	3	Question
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A group of Malay youths shouted words that reflected negative feelings between the Chinese and Malays, which could have contributed to the outbreak of the riots.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Based on Othman's eyewitness account, the riots were in part due to some participants who broke rank and the dispute they had with the policemen. The Malay youths seem to be fanning the chaos and contributing to the violence.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">What do other accounts tell you about why the riots broke out?What might have been left out by this account about why the riots broke out?

This approach is a reminder that when reading eyewitness accounts, you need to think about their limitations. Other questions you could ask include: Who was the person witnessing the event? Was the account recorded shortly after the event or many years later?

While the account above paints a clear picture of Othman's experience of the riots, it comes from a single point of view. For a more complete understanding of people's experiences of the event, you need to consider other accounts, including official reports or secondary accounts by people who may not be eyewitnesses to the event. Here is another eyewitness account of the riots.

The following account is adapted from an oral interview with Seah Chiang Nee, who was working for the news agency Reuters when the riots broke out. The interview was recorded in 2002.

[My New Zealander colleague and I] left ... in an old broken [car] and we drove to Geylang. As we drove past the gasworks [present-day Kallang Riverside Park], we [drove] along Happy World, we already saw that things were not quite right; a lot of smoke was blowing in from the other end of Geylang. As we [went] a little further, we saw burnt cars, overturned cars. The crowd had totally disappeared. When we [drove] farther, we saw [in a] distance, [a big group] of people making noise, running around ... Most of them were Malays.

We just [drove] past them. ... We didn't know that it was a racial riot. When we got near, we saw that this guy was yelling at us, shouting at us. Suddenly I looked. They were all Malays and then the cars were burning ...

There [were] no police, so we did a U-turn and one bottle came crashing down on the windscreen and a second one hit the top of the car. We just turned and drove out of there! We went around, driving around the centre of town ... The shops had all closed. We passed Capitol Building and we saw one Malay cowering behind some signboards, those boards. [When] he saw that [our car was being driven by] a European ... he came out quickly, frantically. He stopped our car ... and came in. His face was all white and shivering.



▲ Seah Chiang Nee

LEARN ON THE GO

Find out more about how eyewitness accounts can help provide first-hand information on people's experiences of historical events @ go.gov.sg/lshc802.



With your knowledge of how the riots broke out and having read Seah's account, fill in the table below:

1	Claim	2	Support	3	Question

Now that you have read two eyewitness accounts of the riots, consider these questions:

- **In what ways do the accounts differ?**
- **Why do they differ?**
- **How do they improve your understanding of the event?**

Although eyewitness accounts are valuable pieces of evidence that help historians study past events, they have their limitations. This is why historians do not rely only on one type of evidence, such as accounts narrated or written by people who may have experienced events as an eyewitness. From what you have learnt so far, what other types of evidence would you use to help you understand the riots of 21 July 1964?

The Call for Separation

By mid-1965, Tunku Abdul Rahman was convinced that the differences between the federal government and the state government of Singapore could not be resolved. He saw the 1964 racial clashes as a sign of the disorder that would spread throughout the Federation if these differences persisted. He felt that it would be best for Singapore to leave Malaysia. In fact, a few PAP leaders also thought that separation would, perhaps, help bring an end to the problems. By July 1965, secret negotiations on Singapore's exit from the Federation had begun.

Within a few weeks, the Independence of Singapore Agreement was signed and Singapore was no longer a part of Malaysia. On 9 August 1965, an emotional Prime Minister Lee announced Singapore's separation from the Federation in a live televised press conference:

Everytime we look back to the moment we signed this document it is for us a moment of anguish. ... All my life, my whole adult life, I have believed in merger and the unity of the two territories. We are connected by geography, economics and ties of kinship. It broke everything we stood for.

— Adapted from The Straits Times, 10 August 1965

▼ Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew announcing the separation of Singapore from Malaysia, 9 August 1965





PRIME MINISTER,
SINGAPORE.

PROCLAMATION OF SINGAPORE

WHEREAS it is the inalienable right of a people to be free and independent;

AND WHEREAS Malaysia was established on the 16th day of September, 1963, by a federation of the existing states of the Federation of Malaya and the States of Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore into one independent and sovereign nation;

AND WHEREAS by an Agreement made on the seventh day of August in the year one thousand nine hundred and sixty-five between the Government of Malaysia of the one part and the Government of Singapore of the other part it was agreed that Singapore should cease to be a state of Malaysia and should thereupon become an independent and sovereign state and nation separate from and independent of Malaysia;

AND WHEREAS it was also agreed by the parties to the said Agreement that, upon the separation of Singapore from Malaysia, the Government of Malaysia shall relinquish its sovereignty and jurisdiction in respect of Singapore so that the said sovereignty and jurisdiction shall on such relinquishment vest in the Government of Singapore;

AND WHEREAS by a Proclamation dated the ninth day of August in the year one thousand nine hundred and sixty-

PM 4-W 3629



PRIME MINISTER,
SINGAPORE.

- 2 -

five The Prime Minister of Malaysia Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj Ibni Almarhum Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah did proclaim and declare that Singapore shall on the ninth day of August in the year one thousand nine hundred and sixty-five cease to be a state of Malaysia and shall become an independent and sovereign state and nation separate from and independent of Malaysia and recognised as such by the Government of Malaysia.

Now I LEE KUAN YEW Prime Minister of Singapore, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM AND DECLARE on behalf of the people and the Government of Singapore that as from today the ninth day of August in the year one thousand nine hundred and sixty-five Singapore shall be forever a sovereign democratic and independent nation, founded upon the principles of liberty and justice and ever seeking the welfare and happiness of her people in a more just and equal society.

Dated the 9th day of August, 1965.

▲ Proclamation of Singapore, 9 August 1965

The Proclamation of Singapore, drafted by Minister for Law E. W. Barker, was signed by Prime Minister Lee on 9 August 1965. It formally declared that Singapore was no longer “a state of Malaysia and shall become an independent and sovereign state and nation separate from and independent of Malaysia”.

The next day, newspapers in Singapore carried the news of separation on their front pages. With its departure from the Federation, Singapore was now an independent nation. It became a **republic⁷** with Yusof bin Ishak as its first President.

Who was E. W. BARKER?



Edmund William Barker (1920–2001), commonly known as E. W. Barker, was born in Singapore. Excelling in both sports and academics, he won a Queen's Scholarship to study law at Cambridge University. He went on to practise law from 1952 to 1964.

Initially hesitant to enter politics, Barker successfully contested the Tanglin seat under the PAP banner in 1963 and was re-elected unopposed six times. He held several ministerial positions including Minister for Law (1964–1988), and other prominent positions, such as the first President of the Singapore National Olympic Council (1970–1990). Barker retired from politics in 1988 and was awarded the Order of Nila Utama (First Class) in 1990.



LEARN ON THE GO

Find out what the Proclamation of Singapore reveals about Singapore's separation from Malaysia @ go.gov.sg/lshc803.

⁷ A republic is a country without a king or queen, usually governed by elected representatives of the people and a president.

Conclusion

Singapore's separation from Malaysia on 9 August 1965 was greeted with mixed responses. Many raised concerns over Singapore's ability to survive on its own. In the next two chapters, you will learn about the steps Singapore took to cope with the challenges it faced as an independent nation and what it did to ensure its survival in the long term.

A "Quick Shine" in Quick Time with RE-PO AUTO POLISH and CLEANER

AVERAGE DAILY CERTIFIED SALE EXCEEDS 150,000

The Straits Times

PAGE ONE LEADER

Now look to the future

THE first reaction to the decision of the Malaysian and Singapore Governments to go separate ways is one of initial shock and profound regret.

There had been talk of "separate constitutional arrangements" earlier on in the "Malaysian Malaysia" controversy, but it had a distinctly speculative character.

In recent events, there had been nothing to prepare the public for yesterday's tragic news.

Rather, it had been hoped that Tengku Abdul Rahman and Mr. Lee Kuan Yew would succeed in putting an end to public acrimony.

Separation was the last thing the public expected.

What has happened is sad beyond words. It was plain from the first that making Malaysia work would be a challenge.

It was still plainer—in 1961-63—that the problems of partnership were to be preferred over the dangers that the continued separation of Singapore from Malaya would involve for both territories.

Bitter battle

The right to form Malaysia was won in a bitter and prolonged battle in which the leaders of Singapore and the Federation joined forces against common enemies within and without.

What has happened to the spirit of those early days? The dangers of separation have not vanished. The positive economic advantages of integration have not grown less. It is a thousand pities that the clock has been thus set back.

The split has already been formalised. Singapore became a separate nation at 10 a.m. yesterday. It is too late for appeals to reconsider.

Let there be no mistake, however, that the destinies of Malaysia and Singapore remain intertwined.

The two countries must make up their minds to live as good neighbours, even though they have decided they cannot live together as mem-

Tengku pledges support for admission to Commonwealth and United Nations

At a Press conference this evening, Tengku Abdul Rahman announced that Malaysia would sponsor Singapore's admission into the United Nations and as a member of the Commonwealth.

At his own conference in Singapore, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew called on his people to remain firm and calm. His eyes brimming with tears, he declared: "What has happened has happened. Everybody will have a place in Singapore and will continue helping the Malays in competition with Umno."

Secret signing

Today's dramatic turn follows the secret signing of the Independence of Singapore Agreement last Saturday by leaders of the two Governments.

What it means—at a glance

- ALL Singapore citizens cease to be Malaysian citizens.
- ALL civil servants, including police and armed forces personnel, courts and judiciary, who became employees of the Malaysian Government on Malaysia Day, come under the Singapore Government once again.
- ALL civil servants employed by Federal departments in Singapore after Malaysia Day become forthwith employees of the Singapore Government.
- ALL properties taken over by the Malaysian Government on Malaysia Day are now properties of the Singapore Government.
- NO more Common Market arrangements as provided by Annex J of Malaysian Constitution.
- FULL control by Singapore Government over broadcasting and television.
- Unchanged are Singapore's water supply from Johore and maintenance by Central Government of military bases in Singapore.
- BANK of China reverts to status quo.

SINGAPORE today separated from Malaysia, following an amendment to the Constitution approved unanimously by both Houses of Parliament under a certificate of urgency.

Simultaneously with the passing of the amending Bill to allow Singapore to leave Malaysia and become an independent and sovereign State — a proclamation to this effect was gazetted.

At a Press conference this evening, Tengku Abdul Rahman announced that Malaysia would sponsor Singapore's admission into the United Nations and as a member of the Commonwealth.

At his own conference in Singapore, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew called on his people to remain firm and calm. His eyes brimming with tears, he declared: "What has happened has happened. Everybody will have a place in Singapore and will continue helping the Malays in competition with Umno."

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon.—

Tengku Abdul Rahman confirmed tonight that it was his idea that Singapore should withdraw from Malaysia and become independent. Otherwise, he said at a special Press conference, "there was no hope for peace."

He confirmed, too, that only he and a "few" of his Cabinet colleagues were aware of the separation move.

INSIDE

PAGE 10: Tengku's speech to Parliament
PAGE 11: The debate in Parliament
PAGE 12: Mr. Lee Kuan Yew's press conference
PAGE 13: The debate in the Senate
PAGE 15: Stock market reaction
PAGE 20: Independence Bill details

THE TENGKU: No hope for peace unless Singapore withdrew from Malaysia.

▲ Headline in *The Straits Times*, 10 August 1965, proclaiming the separation of Singapore from Malaysia



LET'S REVIEW

In this chapter, you learnt about Singapore's merger with Malaya in 1963 and the eventual separation in 1965. Based on what you have read in this chapter, write down the reasons which brought about merger and separation in the tables below. Consider how these reasons contributed to the outcomes. An example has been done for you.

Reasons for Merger

Area	Reason	How Did It Contribute to the Merger?
Economic	Establishment of a common market	A common market established through merger would help in Singapore's economic survival. This is because Singapore would have a bigger market to sell its manufactured goods. Trade would then increase and more jobs would be created for the people.
Political		

Reasons for Separation

Area	Reason	How Did It Contribute to the Separation?
Economic		
Political		



CASE INVESTIGATION

Was Singapore's separation from Malaysia unexpected?

When Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew announced Singapore's separation from the Federation of Malaysia on 9 August 1965, he referred to it as "a moment of anguish".

Various people responded differently to the news of Singapore's departure from the Federation. Was Singapore's separation from Malaysia really unexpected? Read the following sources to find out more.

SOURCE A

No, far from it. That was what I had in mind all the time ... it was necessary for us to have [Singapore] before we could have the other two states in Borneo [Sabah and Sarawak]. So I agreed to what Lee Kuan Yew wanted ... Anyway, I didn't intend to keep Singapore all the time.

- Tunku Abdul Rahman's response when asked if he regretted Singapore's departure from the Federation of Malaysia, adapted from a 1985 interview

SOURCE B

I felt that perhaps there were a lot of overreactions on both sides, that eventually led to the rush, pushing through Malaysia. There is a Chinese saying, "If one rushes to do something, one could hardly accomplish one's aim." Malaysia was finally pushed through ... However, in the meantime, differences between the Alliance and PAP leadership seemed to widen and the situation or relations between the two deteriorated.

- Adapted from a 1995 oral interview with Lim Chin Siong, former Barisan Sosialis Secretary-General

SOURCE C

Crestfallen! It was totally unexpected! Although of course the situation was getting more tense, day by day. But the breakup was unexpected. It was a great disappointment. We had been fighting for Malaysia all along, since we started the PAP. I campaigned so hard for merger during the Referendum. It was very, very disappointing.

- Adapted from an account by Ong Pang Boon, who was Singapore's Education Minister when Singapore left the Federation of Malaysia, published in 1996

SOURCE D

We were determined to get out. I think they [the federal government] were just as determined that we should go ... There were no second thoughts ... I never understood why we joined [Malaysia]. There were reasons, I suppose, but these reasons didn't convince me. What have we got to do with the Borneo states [Sabah and Sarawak]? Except for the British currency, what connection or relationship [was] there between Sabah and Sarawak and Singapore? ... Malaya of course is closer. But I didn't agree. So I thought that separation would be in our best interest.

- Adapted from a 1982 oral interview with E. W. Barker, former Law Minister of Singapore, who was involved in drafting the Separation Agreement

SOURCE E

It is to be noted that Singapore ministers did make statements ... which indicated that the PAP was not all thinking of [separation] ... On 6 June 1965, [Lee Kuan Yew] declared that "Malaysia will be a nation that will survive for hundreds of years as a separate identity in Southeast Asia". On 15 July, he stated that the initiative now rested with the Tunku to "resolve this [conflict between the federal government and the PAP] quietly and go on with economic development". On 25 July 1965, Lee declared that he was confident that the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia would be accepted by people in ten years' time.

- Adapted from an account by Mohamed Noordin Sopiee, a Malaysian academic, originally published in 1976

SOURCE F

I think a number of Malaysians [were] disappointed [when Singapore left the Federation] as much as a number of Singaporeans were disappointed, and particularly the UMNO Singapore, [were] disappointed because there [was] no Referendum. I do not know [why, even] now; nobody has ever stated why there should be no Referendum ... But the people of Singapore and Malaysia thought that [when] we [wanted] Malaysia, [when] we [went] into Malaysia, there was a Referendum. Then suddenly, when we [wanted] to leave Malaysia, there [was] no Referendum. And we believe that if there had been a Referendum, Singapore will be still in Malaysia.

- Adapted from a 1984 oral interview with Tan Sri Syed Esa Almenoar, formerly a prominent member of Singapore UMNO

INVESTIGATE!

1. Read **Source A**. What does this source suggest about the Tunku's reasons for agreeing to the merger in the first place?
2. Read **Source B**. Does it support the idea that separation was unexpected? What reason does it give?
3. Read **Sources C** and **D**. Based on the accounts of Ong Pang Boon and E. W. Barker, why did members of the PAP government have differing responses to the separation?
4. Read **Sources E** and **F**. Do the sources suggest that separation was unexpected? What might be the reasons for the feelings expressed towards separation?

REPORT!

Use the sources above to complete the following table. An example has been done for you.

Source	Was the Separation Expected or Unexpected?	Explanation with Details from the Source
Source A	Expected	In Source A, the Tunku said he expected the separation to happen after achieving his goal of merging the Borneo territories with the Federation of Malaya. He had only agreed to the merger with Singapore so that he could incorporate the Borneo territories and did not expect Singapore to remain within the Federation.
Source B		
Source C		
Source D		
Source E		
Source F		
Based on the points you have written down, what do you think were the reasons that determined whether the various parties found the separation unexpected?		

Singapore's First Post-Independence Cabinet

LEE KUAN YEW



Lee Kuan Yew (pictured centre) was Singapore's first Prime Minister (1959–1990) and played an important role in transforming Singapore into the modern nation-state it is today. He was appointed Senior Minister in 1990, and later Minister Mentor in 2004.

DR TOH CHIN CHYE



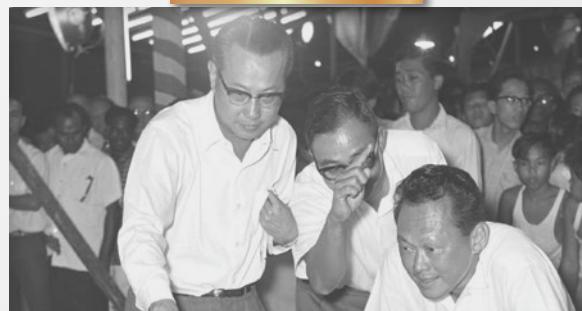
Dr Toh Chin Chye (pictured centre) was Singapore's first Deputy Prime Minister (1959–1968) and played a key role in the development of Singapore's technological, scientific and educational institutions.

DR GOH KENG SWEE



Dr Goh Keng Swee (pictured centre) was the first Minister of Interior and Defence (1965–1967) and played a key role in forming the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) and implementing compulsory National Service. He was also known as Singapore's "economic architect" and headed other ministries such as finance and education.

LIM KIM SAN



Lim Kim San (pictured front left) was the first Chairman of the Housing & Development Board (HDB; 1960–1963), where he led the development of Singapore's successful public housing programme. He was the first Minister for Finance (1965–1967) and also helmed other ministries such as defence.

S. RAJARATNAM



S. Rajaratnam (pictured left) was Singapore's first Foreign Minister (1965–1980) and played a vital role in building up Singapore's status in the international community. He was involved in drafting the National Pledge. He served as Singapore's second Deputy Prime Minister and also headed the labour and culture ministries.

ONG PANG BOON



Ong Pang Boon (pictured centre) was Singapore's Minister for Education (1963–1970) and was crucial in the transformation of Singapore's education system. He also held ministerial portfolios for labour, environment and communications.

OTHMAN WOK



Othman Wok (pictured centre) was Singapore's first Minister for Social Affairs (1963–1977) and played a key role in improving the quality of social welfare services in Singapore. He also served in the Ministry for Culture.

YONG NYUK LIN



Yong Nyuk Lin (pictured front left) served as Minister for Health (1963–1968) and also took on the communications portfolio. He made substantial contributions to the reorganisation of Singapore's hospital services and was involved in key projects such as the creation of Singapore Airlines and the early studies of the feasibility of the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system.

E. W. BARKER



E. W. Barker (pictured with garland) was Singapore's first Minister for Law (1964–1988) and played a significant role in drawing up the agreement for Singapore's separation from Malaysia in 1965. He also helmed the national development, environment, science and technology, and home affairs ministries.

JEK YEUN THONG



Jek Yeun Thong (pictured centre) served as Minister for Labour (1963–1968), and also held ministerial portfolios for culture, and science and technology. He was a strong advocate of building a Singaporean identity and was instrumental in laying the groundwork for good labour relations.

UNIT OVERVIEW

4

Surviving as an Independent Nation-State (1965–Late 1970s)

In this unit, we will examine Singapore's status as an independent nation-state – a status that was not easily attained or expected, by many of its leaders and its people. Little more than a city, Singapore had to survive in a global and regional environment that was fraught with challenges during that period. Through enterprise and perseverance, Singapore not only managed to resolve and overcome many challenges but also became a thriving nation-state by the end of the 1970s.

From the pictures on these two pages, what do you think were the challenges faced by Singapore in the post-independence years? How did Singapore overcome these challenges?







9

How Did Singapore Safeguard Its Independence After 1965?

In Chapter 8, you learnt about the hopes Singapore carried into the merger and how they were dashed when it left the Federation of Malaysia and became a **nation-state**.¹ For many, it was unthinkable that Singapore could survive on its own, without Britain or Malaysia. Yet this was the situation it faced on 9 August 1965.

To make things more difficult, Singapore became independent in a time of international tensions and regional conflicts. Many Singaporeans wondered how this young country would be able to make its way safely in an uncertain world.

In this chapter, you will learn about the security challenges Singapore faced after gaining independence in 1965. You will also learn how it overcame these challenges, creating the conditions for Singaporeans to enjoy better lives.



Chapter at a Glance

You will learn:

- What security challenges Singapore faced after it gained independence in 1965
- How Singapore overcame these challenges

▼ Young men reporting for National Service,
7 May 1968



¹ A nation-state refers to an independent country whose people share similarities, such as a common national identity, history and culture.



Timeline

Beyond Singapore

In Singapore

▼ The Vietnam War pitted the communist government of North Vietnam against the government of South Vietnam and its main ally, the United States.



The Vietnam War begins.

▼ US troops landing at Red Beach in Saigon (present-day Ho Chi Minh City) to defend a nearby airbase, 10 April 1965



Konfrontasi (Confrontation) begins when Indonesia opposes the formation of the Federation of Malaysia.

1954

1963

1965

1966

MacDonald House is bombed during Konfrontasi.



▲ Scene just after the MacDonald House bombing, 10 March 1965

Singapore attains independence.

Singapore joins the United Nations (UN), and its status as an independent state is internationally recognised.

▼ Founding members of ASEAN in Bangkok, 8 August 1967



The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is formed.

The British announce the withdrawal of their defence forces from Asia, including Singapore.

1967

National Service (NS) is introduced.



▲ First batch of national servicemen taking the Oath of Allegiance, August 1967

The Chartered Industries of Singapore (CIS) is established to manufacture ammunition and weapons for the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF).

The Five Power Defence Arrangements (FDPA)

between Singapore, Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Britain is established.

The United States and North Vietnam reach a peace agreement that brings an end to direct US involvement in the war.

The majority of British forces withdraw from Singapore.

1971

1973

1974

1975

▼ People fleeing by boat shortly before Saigon (capital of South Vietnam) fell to advancing North Vietnamese troops, 1975



South Vietnam falls to North Vietnam, resulting in the reunification of the country.

The ferry boat *Laju* is hijacked by terrorists.



▲ The ferry boat *Laju*, hijacked in 1974

What Security Challenges Did Singapore Face in 1965?

Safeguarding the independence of the country is a priority for all governments, and Singapore was no exception. To do so, it had to enhance internal security and build a strong defence force. These were important for ensuring peace and stability, which would help attract foreign investors to set up factories and businesses in Singapore, contributing to the development of the economy and the creation of jobs. Therefore, the government decided to bolster the security of Singapore quickly.

Read Source 1 to find out more about Singapore's priorities after gaining independence.

SOURCE 1

- ARTHUR COOK: You have in the past told me – in fact, I think you've told practically every journalist – you cannot do without the [British military] bases.
- LEE KUAN YEW: Yes.
- ARTHUR COOK: But you want them there [the bases here] to feed your people?
- LEE KUAN YEW: I want them there [here] first, to protect my people because we have not got the wherewithal [means to do so ourselves]. We have got two battalions, 5,000 police and two or three reserve units with arms.
- ARTHUR COOK: But I understood from you the first thing to think of was the economic side.
- LEE KUAN YEW: No, no, no. The first thing to think of is physical survival ...

– Adapted from an interview with Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew by journalist Arthur Cook of the Daily Mail at the studio of Television Singapore, 30 August 1965

- According to Source 1, what were Prime Minister Lee's priorities for Singapore after it became independent in 1965?

In Chapter 7, you learnt about the Cold War and how the worldwide struggle between communist and non-communist blocs affected Singapore and Malaya. The Singapore government was concerned that by the 1960s, the Cold War had intensified, threatening stability in parts of Southeast Asia. At the same time, it was believed that ongoing tensions in the region might contribute to Singapore's security challenges.

Konfrontasi

One source of regional tensions was Konfrontasi (Confrontation), a policy Indonesia pursued against the formation of the Federation of Malaysia, which Singapore was a part of from 16 September 1963 to 9 August 1965. Indonesian President Sukarno opposed the Federation of Malaysia as he believed it would give the British continued control of the territories in the Federation. Sukarno also had ambitions of uniting the Malay Archipelago under his leadership.

During Konfrontasi from 1963 to 1966, there was fighting between the Indonesian, Malaysian and Commonwealth² forces along the long land border that Malaysia shared with Indonesia (see Map 9.1). Indonesia also carried out acts of sabotage in Malaysia. Many soldiers, including a number from Singapore, spent months patrolling the border.



▲ Map 9.1: Map showing the long land border (highlighted in red) between Malaysia and Indonesia

▼ Australian troops boarding a helicopter in Sarawak, 1965. Many troops from the British Commonwealth were deployed to monitor the long border that Malaysia shared with Indonesia.



² The Commonwealth is an association of former British colonies. Its member countries cooperate informally in many areas such as defence, education and culture.

Konfrontasi posed a serious security threat to Singapore even before its separation from Malaysia. As many as 42 bombings were carried out by Indonesian saboteurs in Singapore during the conflict. Initially, they targeted military facilities and public utilities, but these were often heavily guarded and difficult to attack. Thus, the saboteurs began setting off bombs in public places to terrorise the population and disrupt life in Singapore.

In response to the bombings, the Singapore government introduced several measures. Singaporeans were advised to stay on high alert and to avoid handling suspicious-looking parcels in buildings and along streets. A volunteer force was deployed to patrol neighbourhoods, and schools carried out emergency drills.

The deadliest incident during Konfrontasi occurred on 10 March 1965 when a bomb exploded along Orchard Road at MacDonald House (which housed the headquarters of a British-owned bank at the time). It killed three people and injured 33, and damaged nearby buildings and cars.

Two Indonesian soldiers were arrested for the MacDonald House bombing. They were charged with murder, found guilty and hanged on 17 October 1968. This triggered an angry response among Indonesian students, who attacked the Singapore embassy and homes of Singaporean diplomats in Jakarta.

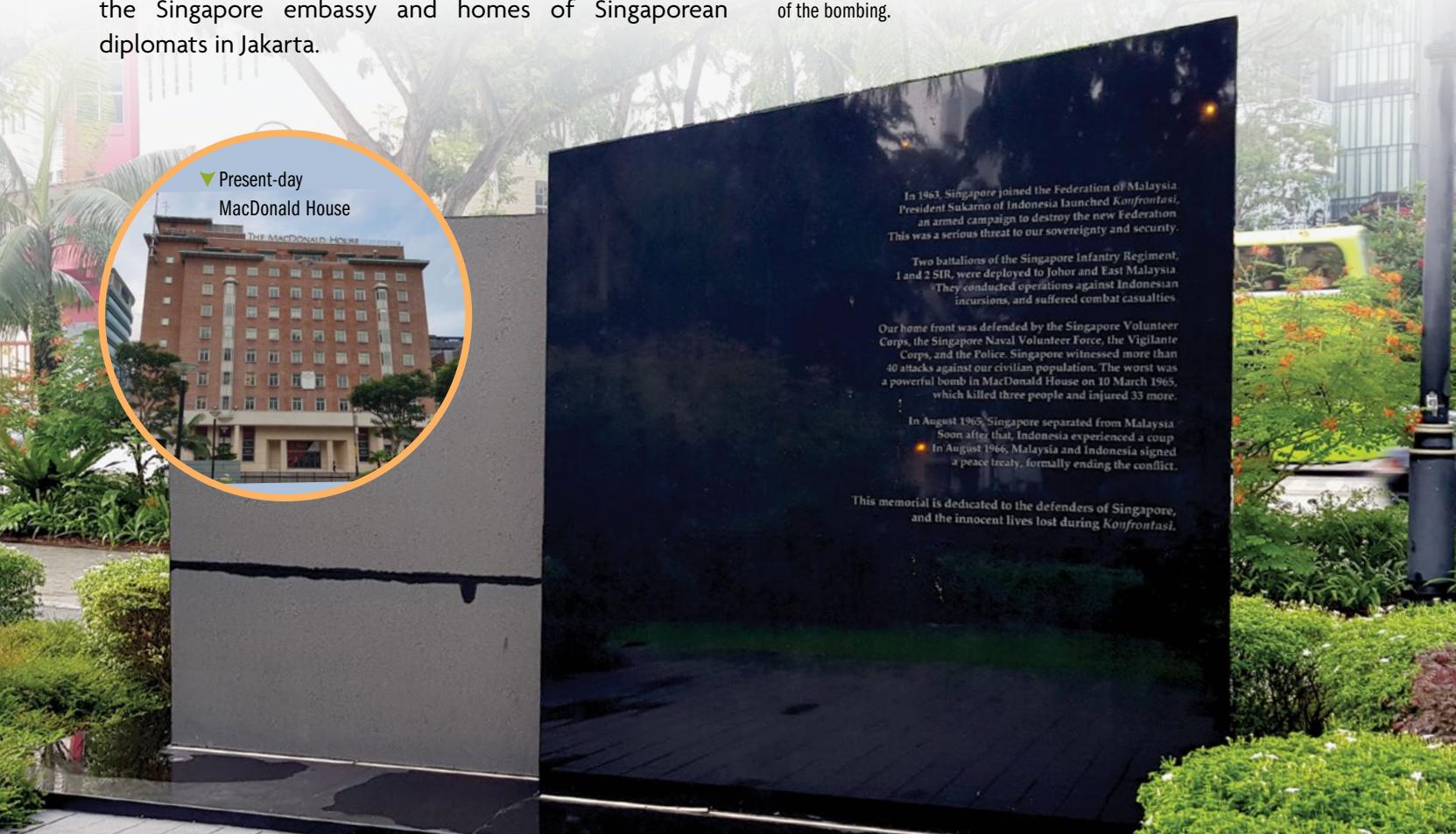


▲ Aftermath of the MacDonald House bombing, 10 March 1965



▲ Impact of the bombing on the interior of MacDonald House, 10 March 1965

▼ A memorial was built near MacDonald House to honour those who had lost their lives and those who had fought during Konfrontasi. The memorial was unveiled on 10 March 2015. Since then, an annual wreath-laying ceremony has been held at the memorial on the anniversary of the bombing.



Communist Terrorism

Singapore also had to guard itself against attacks by communist groups. As you learnt in Chapter 7, the threat posed by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) led to a state of emergency being declared. Although the danger of a communist takeover had lessened and the British declared the Emergency over in 1960, acts of terrorism by communist groups continued.

By the 1970s, the MCP had split into smaller groups. While they were no longer a formidable unified force, the communists still posed a danger to the internal security of Singapore. Police raids against these groups uncovered large quantities of weapons such as pistols and grenades. During this decade, the communists carried out acts of violence that included the killing of a seven-year-old girl in Changi in 1970, the explosion of a bomb in Katong in 1974 and the attempted assassination of Singapore's Commissioner of Police in 1976.



©Singapore Press Holdings Ltd

▲ Aftermath of the car bomb explosion at the junction of Still Road and East Coast Road in Katong, 1974

International Terrorism

Independent Singapore experienced its first encounter with international terrorism on 31 January 1974 when foreign terrorists hijacked the ferry boat *Laju* and held crew members hostage. The terrorists had earlier attacked the Shell oil refinery on Pulau Bukom in an attempt to disrupt the oil supply from Singapore to South Vietnam. After several days of negotiation, the hijackers finally agreed to release the hostages in exchange for safe passage from Singapore to Kuwait, a country in the Middle East.



► Police talking to hijackers on board the ferry boat *Laju*, 1974

DID YOU KNOW?

To ensure safe passage of the hijackers of the *Laju* from Singapore to Kuwait, a group of Singapore government officials, led by S. R. Nathan, accompanied the hijackers on their flight. Nathan (leaning forward in the image below) was then Director of the Security and Intelligence Division at the Ministry of Defence, and would later go on to serve as President of Singapore. The Singapore team comprised Nathan, eight government officials and four Singapore Armed Forces commandos.



▲ The 13 Singaporean officials upon returning to Singapore from Kuwait on 9 February 1974

The Vietnam War

At the same time, a large-scale conflict in Vietnam was threatening the stability of Southeast Asian countries, including Singapore. Read the illustrated story on the next page to learn more about the Vietnam War (1954–1975).

US helicopter setting down soldiers in the Ia Drang Valley, Vietnam, 14 November 1965. The Battle of Ia Drang ► was the first major battle between US troops and North Vietnamese forces.



The VIETNAM WAR

Vietnam became a French colony in the 19th century. It was occupied by the Japanese during World War II.



After the Japanese surrender in 1945, a communist movement in Vietnam fought against the return of French rule.

A peace agreement in 1954 ended the conflict between France and Vietnam, and resulted in the division of the country into two independent states: communist North Vietnam and non-communist South Vietnam. The French left Vietnam in 1956 and this marked the end of French colonial rule in the country.

Despite the peace agreement, the fighting continued as the governments of both North and South Vietnam were determined to reunify the country under their own rule. This conflict became known as the Vietnam War.



The conflict in Vietnam became a great concern to the United States and non-communist countries in Asia. (See Figure 7.1 on page 43 for more information on the ideological differences between democracy/capitalism and communism.) They believed that if North Vietnam won, communism would spread to neighbouring countries and eventually the whole region. This fear was heightened by the presence of communist movements in other Southeast Asian countries such as Malaya, the Philippines and Laos during the 1950s and 1960s.

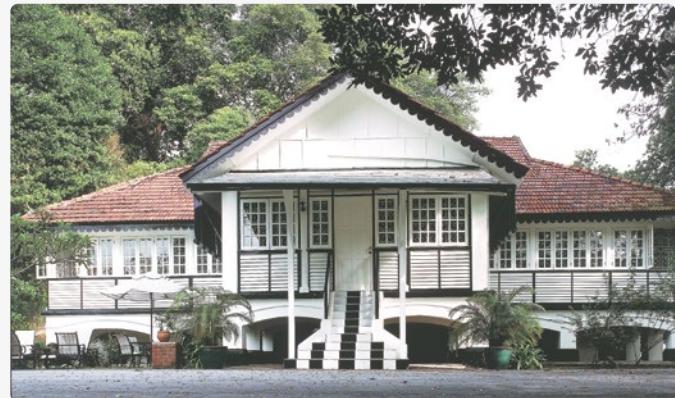


To prevent a communist victory, the United States committed vast military resources to support South Vietnam in the war. It was around this time, as the Vietnam War was escalating, that Singapore gained independence. Like the other non-communist governments in Southeast Asian countries, the Singapore government feared that the fighting would spread to the rest of the region and destabilise Singapore. South Vietnam eventually fell to North Vietnam in 1975, bringing an end to the Vietnam War.

British Military Withdrawal from Singapore

Aside from the regional and international conflicts, Singapore also had to address the challenge posed by the withdrawal of British forces. Since 1819, Singapore had relied on the British Empire to defend it against external threats, with the majority of the troops coming from Britain, India and Australia. Although local volunteer troops had been recruited and trained from the 19th century onwards, they were small in number.

In Chapter 5, you learnt about British plans to develop Singapore as a major naval base in the 1920s and 1930s to better protect British interests in Asia. This remained central to the British defence strategy after World War II, and Singapore's role as a military base expanded in the 1950s. British warships were stationed in Singapore's naval base and modern airbases were created. Thousands of British and Commonwealth servicemen were also stationed in Singapore.



▲ Present-day photograph of a house on the former military estate of Alexandra Park built in the mid-1930s to accommodate British military staff and their families

▼ Military aircraft at Royal Air Force (RAF) Changi, 1962, an important British airbase in the 1950s and 1960s. Part of the airbase was later converted into Changi Airport.



However, by the 1960s, the British had a different view of their military involvement in Asia. Although Britain saw the importance of maintaining its military presence in the region, it could no longer afford the large amount of money and resources to maintain this military commitment. It needed to focus on rebuilding its economy at home. Thus, the British government announced in 1967 that it would withdraw its defence forces from Singapore. By 1971, the majority of British forces had left, and the withdrawal was completed in 1976.

The announcement of the withdrawal added to the defence challenges facing a newly independent Singapore. It would be left practically undefended. In addition, the British bases generated employment for many locals who provided goods and services to the British military. You will learn more about how the withdrawal of British forces worsened unemployment in Singapore in Chapter 10.

At the point of independence, Singapore had only two battalions of **regular³** infantry of 50 officers and about 1,000 men each. This was hardly enough to defend Singapore against external threats. The British had failed to defend against the Japanese invasion in 1942 with approximately 90,000 men. About 50,000 British servicemen had been stationed in the region to defend against the threat from Indonesia during Konfrontasi. How could Singapore hope to cope with only 2,000 men?

No accord—so Premier will fly to London to continue talks

Pull-out: Lee to meet Wilson

By JACKIE SAM: SINGAPORE, Tuesday

M. R. Lee Kuan Yew will leave this weekend for talks with Mr. Harold Wilson, on new proposals for withdrawal of British forces here.

The talks will be held at Chequers, the home of the British Prime Minister.

Mr. Wilson's invitation to Singapore's prime minister to continue talks on Britain's withdrawal was passed on by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, Mr. George Thomas, after a three-hour discussion at City Hall this afternoon.

Mr. Lee is expected to leave for London on Friday.

After the City Hall discussions, Mr. Lee met Singapore Ministers and high officials of both sides, Mr. Lee told

u press conference in the Cabinet room that there had been disagreement on "the impact or the consequential reactions of the proposals that have been made."

According to London reports, Britain may negotiate a quick withdrawal — possibly with all troops out by 1971 — as part of a massive follow-up programme to the revaluation of sterling.

'We need time'

Mr. Lee stressed at the press conference that Singapore intended to build up Singapore's military strength. Its programme had been planned in the hours of a withdrawal of the main bulk.

He also disclosed that Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand and Thailand were setting up a Nato-type defence arrangement. This, too, needed time, he said.



AT YESTERDAY'S City Hall talks, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew (facing Mr. Harold Wilson, back to camera, right). To Mr. Lee's left are Dr. Goh Keng Swee, the Finance Minister, and Mr. Lim Yew Hock, the Defence Minister. (A full view of the conference table in Page 3).

▲ Headline in *The Straits Times* announcing Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's meeting with British Prime Minister Harold Wilson to discuss the withdrawal of British troops from Singapore, 10 January 1968

▼ Dr Goh Keng Swee (third from left) reviewing a sea parade of 16 Royal Navy warships, 31 October 1971



³ A regular, or professional, soldier is one who joins the military as a career. In contrast, conscripts are required by law to serve full-time for a specified period. Volunteers serve on a part-time basis.

How Did Singapore Overcome Its Security Challenges?

Singapore approached its security challenges in two ways. The first was through **deterrence**⁴ by building a credible defence force that would make any potential enemies think twice before attacking. If deterrence failed and war broke out, this defence force also had to be capable of defeating the enemy swiftly and decisively.

The second was through **diplomacy**,⁵ that is, by establishing and developing strong relationships with governments and defence forces around the world. In this way, Singapore could train with and learn from more advanced militaries elsewhere, have access to advanced technologies, and ensure that others would have a stake in preserving Singapore's peace and stability.



BE A YOUNG HISTORIAN: HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In Chapter 7, you were introduced to the concept of historical significance. To make judgements about the significance of events or developments, historians ask various questions. One question relates to the idea of change: did the event or development result in change that had, or still has, far-reaching consequences for society?

One of the topics you will encounter in this chapter is the introduction of National Service (NS) in 1967. This is considered a significant policy by those who lived through this period and by historians writing about Singapore's history. Why is this so?

As you go through this chapter, use the following questions to help you understand why the introduction of NS was of significance to Singapore:

- How many people in Singapore were affected by this change?
- How much did their lives change?
- How long did this change last? Were many generations of Singaporeans affected by it?



⁴ Deterrence refers to the creation and maintenance of a defence force that is powerful enough to convince potential enemies not to launch an attack, as it would either fail or be very costly.

⁵ Diplomacy is the establishment and maintenance of official government relations between countries. Countries typically set up embassies in foreign capitals, where their diplomats would represent their interests.

Building a Defence Force

Introducing National Service

You learnt in Chapter 7 that the British government introduced the National Service Ordinance in 1954, which allowed the government to conscript young men to serve in the military. The unpopularity of and resistance towards the 1954 National Service Ordinance highlighted the difficulty of introducing conscription in Singapore. As a result, this was never carried out while the British ruled Singapore.

Despite this, the Singapore government deemed that conscription was the only way Singapore could raise a credible defence force after independence. It therefore introduced National Service (NS) in 1967, which rapidly expanded the defence force, known as the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF). Thousands of men were conscripted for at least two years of full-time NS. Upon completing NS, they would be liable for reservist duties, which meant they would continue to receive occasional military training and take up arms in times of emergency. Read Source 2 to find out more.

SOURCE 2

Our army is to be engaged in the defence of the country and our people against external aggression. This task we are unable to do today by ourselves. It is no use pretending that without the British military presence in Singapore today, the island cannot be easily over-run by any neighbouring country within a radius of 1,000 miles, if any of them cared to do so. ...

British military protection today has made quite a number of our citizens complacent about the need to conduct our own defence preparations. These people assume that this protection will be permanent. I regard it as the **height of folly*** to plan our future on this assumption ... Nobody, neither we nor the British, can say when **this^t** will be. It may be five, ten, fifteen years; maybe more, maybe less. Whatever the time may be, it would be useless then to think about building up your defence forces. The time to do so is now.

- Adapted from a speech by Dr Goh Keng Swee to Parliament, 23 December 1965

* If something is the height of folly, it is extremely foolish.

^t "This" refers to the British withdrawal of their defence forces.

- According to Source 2, why did Singapore's leaders feel it was important to build up our defence forces?



▲ Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew (third from left) at a sending-off dinner in Tanjong Pagar Community Centre for national servicemen from Tanjong Pagar constituency, 23 March 1968



▲ Families bidding farewell to their sons departing for NS at Pek Kio Community Centre, 3 September 1967

By the end of the 1970s, the SAF had grown into a sizeable defence force with an army, an air force and a navy. It was supplemented by the People's Defence Force (PDF), which was formed entirely by part-time volunteers. Ministers such as Dr Goh Keng Swee and Jek Yeun Thong, Members of Parliament and senior civil servants were among those who volunteered to join the PDF. Together, these forces gave Singapore a large pool of manpower to meet its defence needs.

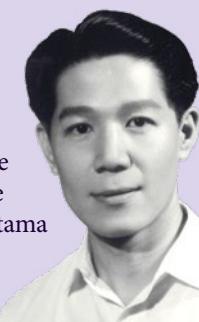


▲ Defence Minister Dr Goh Keng Swee (centre) inspecting the PDF volunteers, with Labour Minister Jek Yeun Thong on the extreme left, 29 November 1966

Who was JEK YEUN THONG?

Jek Yeun Thong (1930–2018) was born in Singapore. Before entering politics, he worked as a journalist for a Chinese newspaper. He served as Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's Political Secretary from 1959 to 1963 and was responsible for writing his speeches in Chinese. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1963 and served the Queenstown constituency until his retirement from politics in 1988.

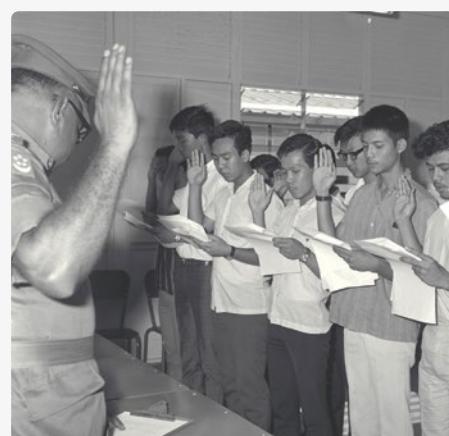
Jek took on various political appointments including Minister for Labour (1963–1968). He was one of the politicians who joined the PDF in 1966. He was appointed High Commissioner to the United Kingdom in 1977, and Denmark in 1978. In 1990, he was awarded the Order of Nila Utama (Second Class).



▲ Female officers registering the first batch of national servicemen, March 1967



▲ Recruit undergoing medical examination, March 1967



▲ First batch of national servicemen taking the Oath of Allegiance, August 1967

At first, NS was received with some anxiety and uncertainty by many young men and their families. Men, especially those from less well-to-do families, were expected to find a job quickly upon leaving school and contribute to the household income. But with NS, their entry into the workforce would be delayed and their families would lose the income they could have earned. Read the following sources to find out more.

SOURCE 3

I have to be honest – I tried all tricks and ways to get out [of National Service], even begging on my knees. Because I knew if I went in and served National Service, I would get \$60. That was a problem [as] there would be a drastic change in [my] remuneration [as a construction site supervisor compared to the allowance I would get]. ...

I started working at a young age ... to help my family live better. ... [I] was unsure if [my] family could manage financially without [my] contribution. ...

I knew that I could not escape from NS, so I was ready to just get on with it. It was a very sad moment for me actually. In the three-tonner [army truck], we NS boys were trying to talk to each other, trying to forget. And as the three-tonner moved off, ... it became clear to me that I was entering a new era, and I needed to do something, rather than get worried. ...

When I pick up my weapon, I know it is for my family. Similarly, every one of us, when we pick up our weapons, it's for everyone in our families. And ultimately it's for the nation.

*– Adapted from an account by Gungadaran, a construction site supervisor before he enlisted into NS in 1969.
He eventually went on to serve a long career with the SAF.*

SOURCE 4

"So why National Service?" This is a routine question. If you have NS, [you] are no longer easy meat, no longer walkovers. It is also an indirect show of force. To each his own, but to us, it is just practising our ability to defend our country's sovereignty. It makes me feel proud.

– Adapted from an account by Derrick Yeo, who enlisted in 1977, published in 2007

SOURCE 5

I honestly feel that when we started NS, the threat to the country's security was imminent. I saw Singapore as a growing nation and I felt that NS was very necessary. I did not have a problem with NS at all, even if it disrupted my studies or affected my entry into the job market later.

*– Adapted from an account by Dr Lionel Lee, who enlisted in 1971.
He went on to become an army medical officer in the SAF in 1976.*

- According to Sources 3, 4 and 5, what were some of the feelings of the young men who were called up for NS? Why did they feel this way?

Furthermore, life in the military was unfamiliar to the majority of Singaporeans. Before NS was introduced, only a small number had experienced military life as regulars or as part-time volunteers with the colonial forces. Among them was Winston Choo, who became Singapore's first Chief of Defence Force.

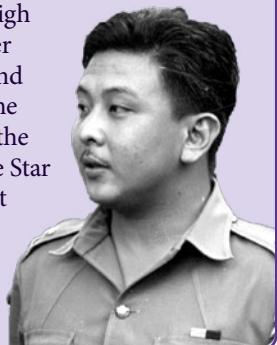
For many of the conscripted men, NS was a big change and they had to adapt to the disciplined lifestyle of the military. Training was physically tough, and they had to manage their anxieties being away from their homes and families. In turn, many families were anxious about the well-being of their sons when they were conscripted into the SAF.



Who was WINSTON CHOO?

Winston Choo (b. 1941) was born in Singapore. He enlisted in the Singapore Military Forces in 1959 and was commissioned as Second Lieutenant in 1961. His first overseas military stint occurred during Konfrontasi when he was deployed to the land border between Malaysia and Indonesia from 1963 to 1964.

Choo became the first professional soldier to attain the rank of Major-General and later Lieutenant-General. He became the first Chief of Defence Force in 1990 and retired from the SAF in 1992. After that, Choo took on diplomatic appointments such as Singapore's High Commissioner to Australia and Fiji. In 2009, he was awarded the Public Service Star for his work at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



◀ Soldiers getting ready for inspection during a field camp, 1960s



◀ Soldiers practising how to safely evacuate an injured teammate, 1970s

The first generation of national servicemen stepped up to the task of defending Singapore despite having to make sacrifices. They knew their country faced genuine threats to its defence and security.



▲ Soldiers eating combat rations during a field camp, 1970s. Combat rations are pre-packaged meals usually eaten by soldiers during extended military exercises.

Because of NS, Singapore today has a sizeable force that can be mobilised to defend the country. National servicemen form the bulk of the SAF's fighting force, contributing to Singapore's peace and stability. NS, as the foundation of Singapore's national defence, remains critical to Singapore's continued survival and success. It also creates a common experience, bringing together people of different races, religions and backgrounds.

Establishing a Home-Grown Defence Industry

With NS, Singapore now had the manpower to defend itself – but how would it equip the men? Soldiers need a whole range of equipment to train and fight wars, from basic items such as uniforms and boots, to sophisticated weapons such as tanks and airplanes.

Even though the SAF had inherited equipment from the British, it was mostly obsolete and inadequate for the growing demands of the SAF. Over time, it acquired equipment from other countries, such as the United States and France. However, Singapore was aware that relying on foreign countries for all its military equipment was a potential weakness.

DID YOU KNOW?

Women have played a role in the SAF since its earliest days. Some served as regular personnel, while many others volunteered as part-time military personnel. Initially taking on supply, clerical and signalling roles, women in the SAF can now serve in roles such as tank commanders and fighter pilots. Today, there are more than 1,500 women serving as regular personnel in the SAF.

Women also serve as volunteers in the SAF Volunteer Corps that started in 2015.



▲ Female SAF personnel training with pistols, 1966



Thus, Defence Minister Dr Goh Keng Swee decided to develop Singapore's defence industry to provide the SAF with locally made equipment and supplies. This would enable the SAF to continue operating even if foreign sources were cut off. In 1967, the Chartered Industries of Singapore (CIS) was established to produce ammunition and weapons for the SAF. One of the earliest weapons it supplied was the M16S1 rifle, which was an American design but produced in Singapore and issued to almost every soldier. Singapore also trained defence engineers and scientists who designed and created new technology that was suitable for Singapore's defence needs.



▲ President Dr Benjamin Sheares (third from right) touring the CIS during a visit to Jurong Industrial Estate, 1971

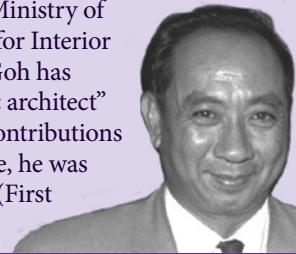


▲ Female workers at a CIS factory producing small arms ammunition for the SAF, 1970s

Who was DR GOH KENG SWEE?

Dr Goh Keng Swee (1918–2010) was born in Melaka, Malaya. He worked in the colonial civil service and earned a scholarship to study at the London School of Economics in 1948. After his studies, he returned to Singapore to rejoin the colonial civil service. Despite his achievements in the colonial civil service, Dr Goh was fuelled by anti-colonial sentiments. Thus, he eventually resigned and joined the PAP.

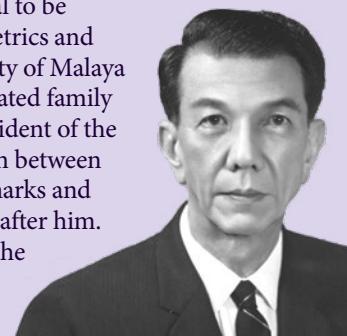
During his time at the different ministries, Dr Goh dealt with various pressing problems. A far-sighted leader, he established the SAF under the Ministry of Defence when he was Minister for Interior and Defence (1965–1967). Dr Goh has often been called the “economic architect” of Singapore’s success. For his contributions to the development of Singapore, he was awarded the Order of Temasek (First Class) in 1985.



Who was BENJAMIN SHEARES?

Dr Benjamin Henry Sheares (1907–1981) was born in Singapore. He was the second President of Singapore and served three presidential terms. Dr Sheares started his medical career in 1929 at the Sepoy Lines General Hospital (present-day Singapore General Hospital). He began his career in obstetrics and gynaecology in 1931 and was the first Singaporean doctor to specialise in this medical field. He was thus known as Singapore’s “father of modern obstetrics and gynaecology”.

Dr Sheares was the first local to be appointed professor of obstetrics and gynaecology at the University of Malaya in Singapore. He also advocated family planning and served as president of the Family Planning Association between 1960 and 1963. Local landmarks and buildings have been named after him. One prominent example is the Benjamin Sheares Bridge.



Strengthening Military Cooperation with Other Countries

To further strengthen its defence, Singapore built on its existing relations with Commonwealth countries such as Britain, Australia and Malaysia, and established new ties with countries such as the United States. This was essential as friendly relations with other countries would allow the SAF to buy equipment from them, and train with and learn from other more experienced armed forces.

In 1971, Singapore, Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Britain established the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) which committed the five members to consult one another in the event of an armed attack on Singapore or Malaysia. These five countries shared a close history as parts of the former British Empire and members of the Commonwealth, and had common interests in the region. The FPDA has facilitated regular combined military exercises among the five countries and has provided a platform for them to enhance defence cooperation. The latter was particularly critical in the 1970s and 1980s, when various armed conflicts were raging across parts of Southeast Asia. Today, the FPDA remains a relevant and defensive arrangement that contributes to regional peace and stability.



◀ Lieutenant Leo Tin Boon, pictured here in 1970 at Seletar Airbase. Leo was among the pioneer batch of Singaporean officer cadets sent to France to be trained as pilots.

DID YOU KNOW?

The SAF has contributed to peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts overseas. Its humanitarian aid efforts started in 1970 when a team of 47 was sent to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) after the country was hit by a deadly cyclone.

Since then, the SAF has provided assistance to various countries affected by conflict or natural disasters, such as Cambodia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Indonesia.



▲ SAF personnel providing medical assistance to people in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, after the tsunami in December 2004

▼ Officials attending the FPDA talks at the Ministry of National Development building, 7 January 1971



Strengthening Relations with the World

Establishing Diplomatic Relations with Other Countries

Besides pursuing military cooperation, Singapore also developed diplomatic relations with countries around the world. This was important as it could not take for granted that other countries would recognise its independence. Without this recognition, hostile countries could claim that Singapore had no right to exist, and could threaten, coerce and even invade it. Developing diplomatic relations would ensure that Singapore had friends that recognised its independence and had an interest in keeping it safe and secure.

Growing Bilateral Relationships

At the point of independence, Singapore already had close ties with many Commonwealth countries, such as Australia, Britain and Malaysia. Now it needed to establish new relationships with other influential countries in the region and the world. The relationship between two individual countries is known as bilateral relations. Singapore built good relations with the United States, one of the most economically and militarily important countries with an interest in Asia. Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew made his first visit to China in 1976, beginning a process of engagement with Chinese leaders as China's ties with Southeast Asia were expanding.

At the same time, Singapore needed to cultivate friendships with as many countries as possible, even those that did not have direct interests in the region, or were located far away. These included countries in all parts of the world, regardless of their stance in the Cold War.



▲ President Yusof bin Ishak and his wife, Puan Noor Aishah, welcoming Governor-General of New Zealand Sir Bernard Fergusson and his wife, Lady Fergusson, to the Istana in Singapore, 24 October 1967

▼ Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew (in white jacket) and his wife, Madam Kwa Geok Choo (bottom left), at the Great Wall of China during a visit to China in 1976



Singapore also sought to improve ties with countries it had tensions with, such as Indonesia. Earlier you learnt about Indonesia's policy of Konfrontasi and how bilateral ties were further strained after Singapore executed the Indonesian soldiers who had carried out the bombing of MacDonald House in 1968. Tensions between both countries eased only in 1973 when Prime Minister Lee visited Jakarta and scattered flowers on the graves of the two soldiers, allowing both countries to move on from the incident.

LEARN ON THE GO

Learn more about how Singapore cultivated stronger relationships with countries around the world @ go.gov.sg/lshc902.



▼ Artist's impression of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew scattering flowers on the graves of the executed Indonesian soldiers during a visit to Jakarta, 1973



Joining International and Regional Organisations

In addition, it was important for Singapore to join international organisations that would recognise its existence as an independent country. Membership in these organisations would also allow Singapore to participate actively in international and regional matters, and have its voice heard by the world. Singapore became the 117th member of the United Nations (UN) on 21 September 1965, just over a month after separation from Malaysia. The UN is an international organisation that tries to get all countries to work together in maintaining peace and dealing with international problems.



▲ UN logo



▲ ASEAN logo

In 1967, Singapore became a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): a regional organisation formed to prevent the spread of communism during the Cold War and to promote economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the Southeast Asian region through **multilateral⁶** cooperation. For instance, ASEAN has introduced measures to increase trade among its members. It also aims to maintain peace and stability among member states and external partners. For example, when Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1978, ASEAN worked with the UN and major countries like the United States and China to get Vietnam to withdraw its forces.

▼ Founding members of ASEAN in Bangkok, Thailand, 1967. From left: Foreign Ministers Thanat Khoman of Thailand, Narciso R. Ramos of the Philippines, S. Rajaratnam of Singapore, Tun Abdul Razak of Malaysia and Adam Malik of Indonesia.

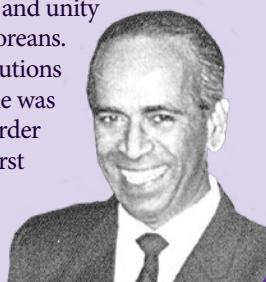


⁶ Multilateral means involving several countries or groups.

Who was S. RAJARATNAM?

Sinnathamby Rajaratnam (1915–2006), better known as S. Rajaratnam, was born in Sri Lanka. He moved to Malaya at a young age and furthered his studies in Singapore. While pursuing law at King's College London, he developed an interest in politics. He became a journalist and wrote articles which openly opposed British colonial rule. This caught the attention of other founding members of the PAP, who approached him to co-form the PAP in 1954.

In 1959, Rajaratnam was elected as the representative for Kampong Glam constituency in the Legislative Assembly and was appointed as the Minister for Culture. After Singapore's independence, he became the first Foreign Minister and established Singapore's status in the international community. He played a prominent role in the drafting of the National Pledge, which reflects his firm belief in multiracialism and unity among Singaporeans. For his contributions to Singapore, he was awarded the Order of Temasek (First Class) in 1990.



Think!

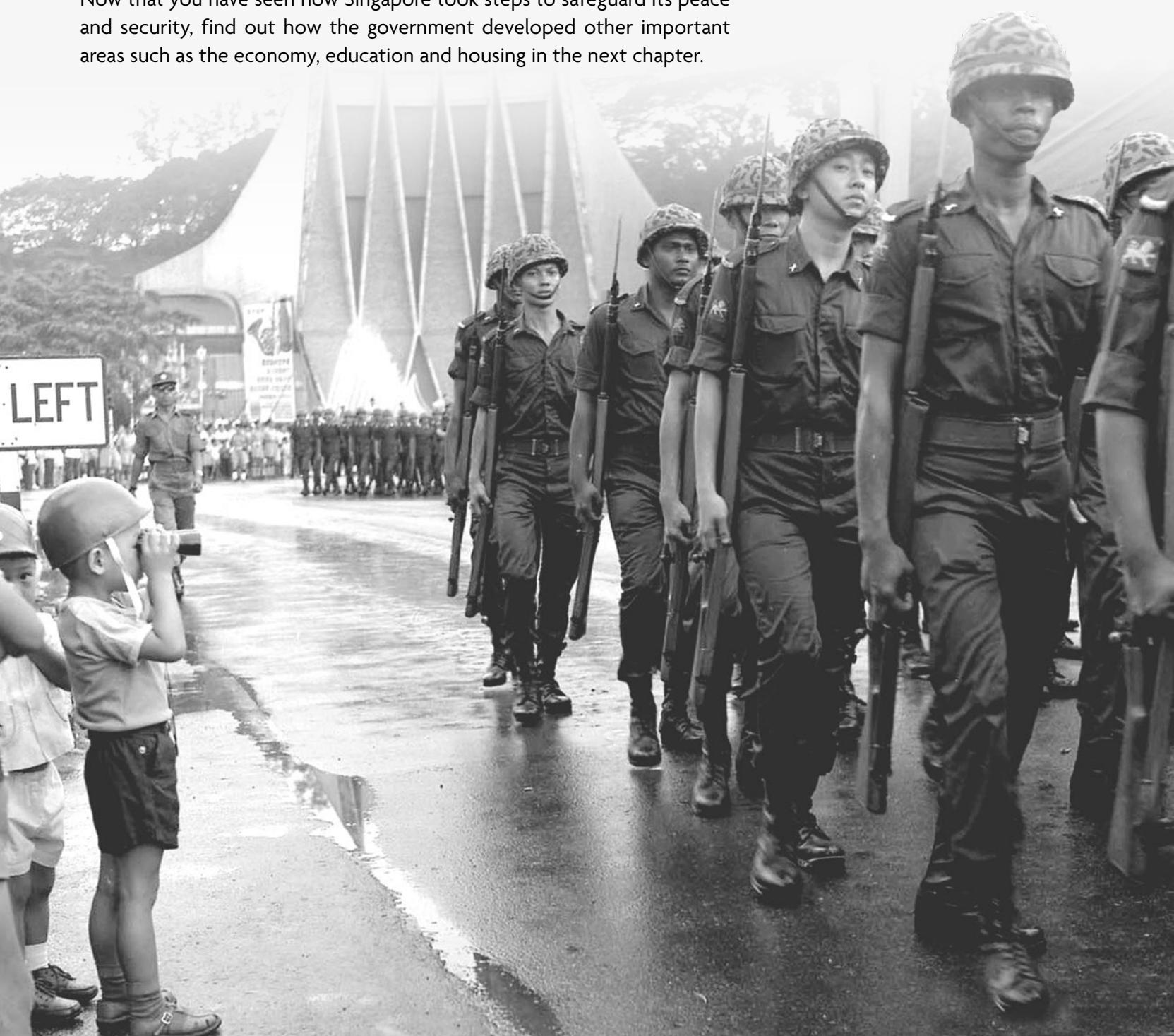
What are other benefits of building relationships with individual countries or joining international organisations?

Conclusion

After independence in 1965, Singapore faced various security challenges from the region and internally. To overcome these challenges, Singapore adopted a two-pronged approach: deterrence and diplomacy. To deter attacks, it established a credible defence force. At the same time, it established diplomatic and military relations with countries around the world. This ensured that other countries had an interest in keeping Singapore safe and secure.

Now that you have seen how Singapore took steps to safeguard its peace and security, find out how the government developed other important areas such as the economy, education and housing in the next chapter.

▼ SAF soldiers marching in front of the National Theatre (building in the background, demolished in 1986) at River Valley on National Day, 1968

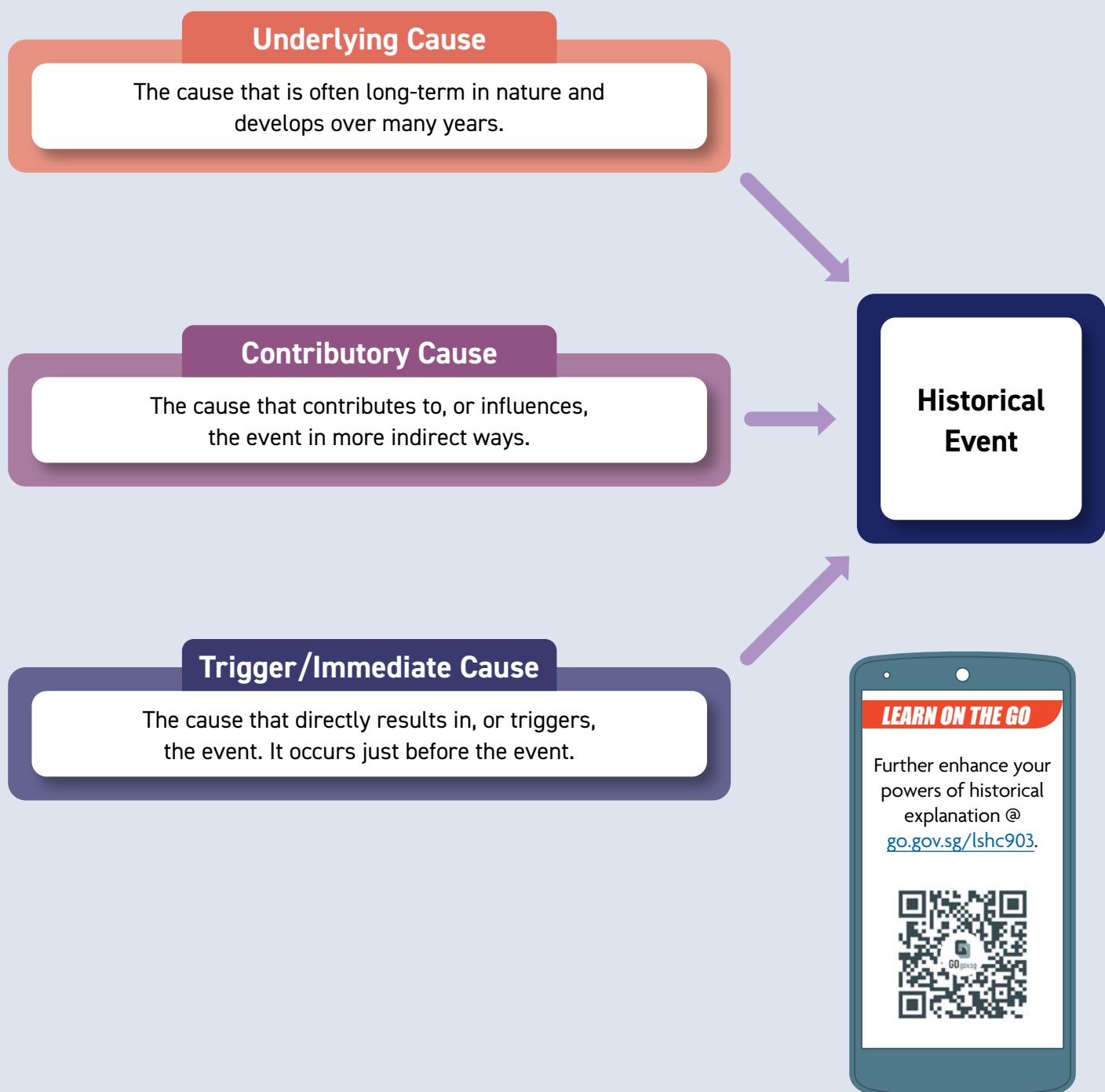




LEARN A SKILL: EXPLAINING THE CAUSES OF HISTORICAL EVENTS

In Chapter 5, you learnt that in order to fully understand how a historical event came about, historians have to examine the possible causes from different angles. It is also useful for historians to look at how different causes of a historical event might have interacted with one another.

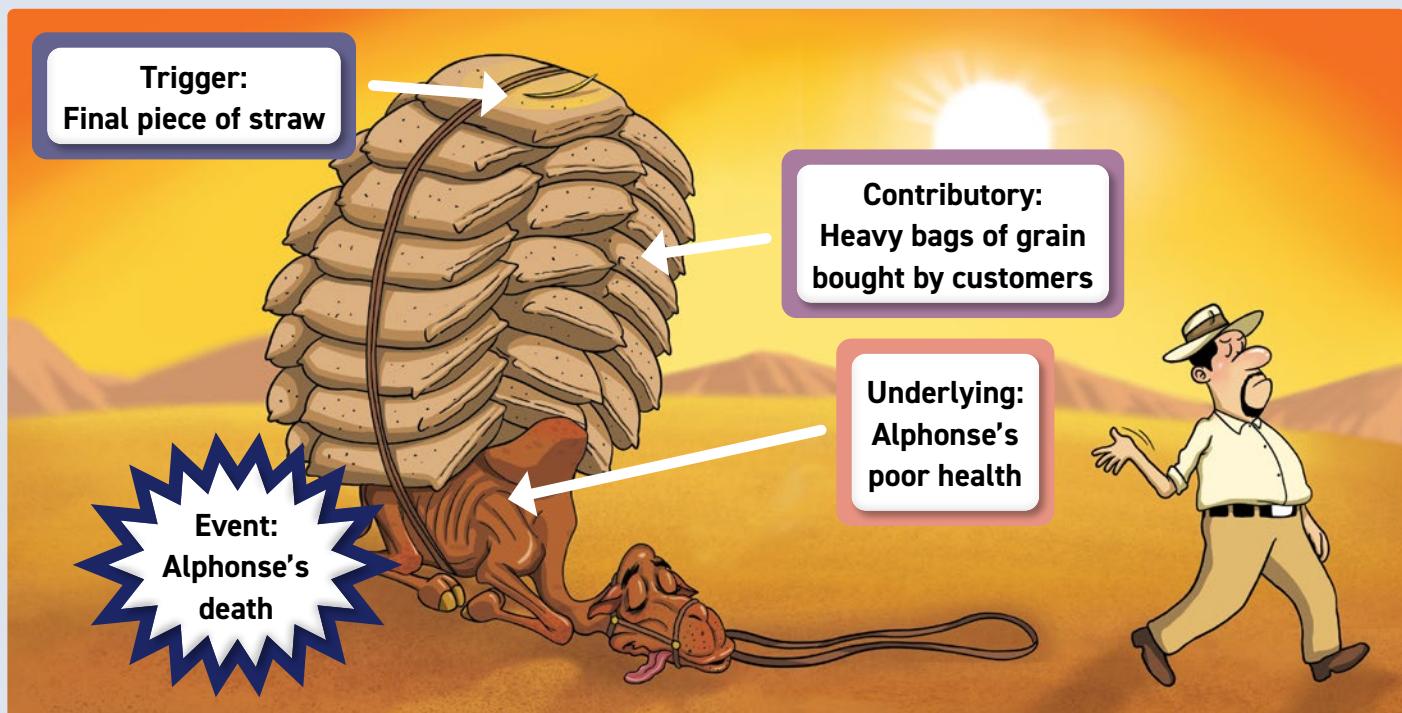
Let us think about the ways in which an event can be explained by different causes. The following diagram tells you more about the different types of causes.



Read the following story about a camel called Alphonse and think about the possible causes of Alphonse's death.

Alphonse was a camel who had a cruel and uncaring master. Alphonse was born with severe back problems. Despite that, his master would still load heavy bags of grain onto Alphonse. Poor Alphonse would transport them over a long and difficult route to a market where these bags of grain would be bought by customers. Under the strain of these journeys, Alphonse's health gradually suffered. One day, Alphonse was once again burdened with several heavy bags of grain. When a tiny straw accidentally landed on top of these bags, the weight was finally too much for Alphonse – he collapsed and died.

These are some possible causes of Alphonse's death.



Type of Cause	Explanation
Underlying Cause	Alphonse's poor health meant that he was unable to carry a heavy weight over long distances. Alphonse's uncaring master, who forced him to constantly carry heavy bags of grain, aggravated his poor health condition and he gradually became weaker and frailer.
Contributory Cause	Remember those customers who bought the grain which Alphonse carried? They contributed to Alphonse's death since it was their demand for grain that led Alphonse's master to make the camel carry all those heavy bags of grain over long distances to the market.
Trigger/Immediate Cause	It was the final piece of straw that made the weight on Alphonse unbearable. This caused the already weakened camel to collapse.

Now, can you try explaining what led to the introduction of NS in 1967? Some possible causes are provided below.

- British military withdrawal from Singapore
- Konfrontasi
- Vietnam War
- Terrorism by communists
- Need to safeguard independence

Complete the following table based on what you have read in the chapter using these causes. An example has been done for you.

Cause	Type of Cause	Explanation
Need to safeguard independence	Underlying Cause	After independence, Singapore had only two battalions of regular infantry soldiers. This was hardly enough to defend the newly independent country against external threats. Furthermore, Singapore faced security challenges from the region in the form of Konfrontasi and the Vietnam War. There was thus a vital need to build a strong and credible defence force to safeguard Singapore's independence. Therefore, this was the underlying cause for the introduction of NS in 1967.
	Contributory Cause	
	Trigger/ Immediate Cause	

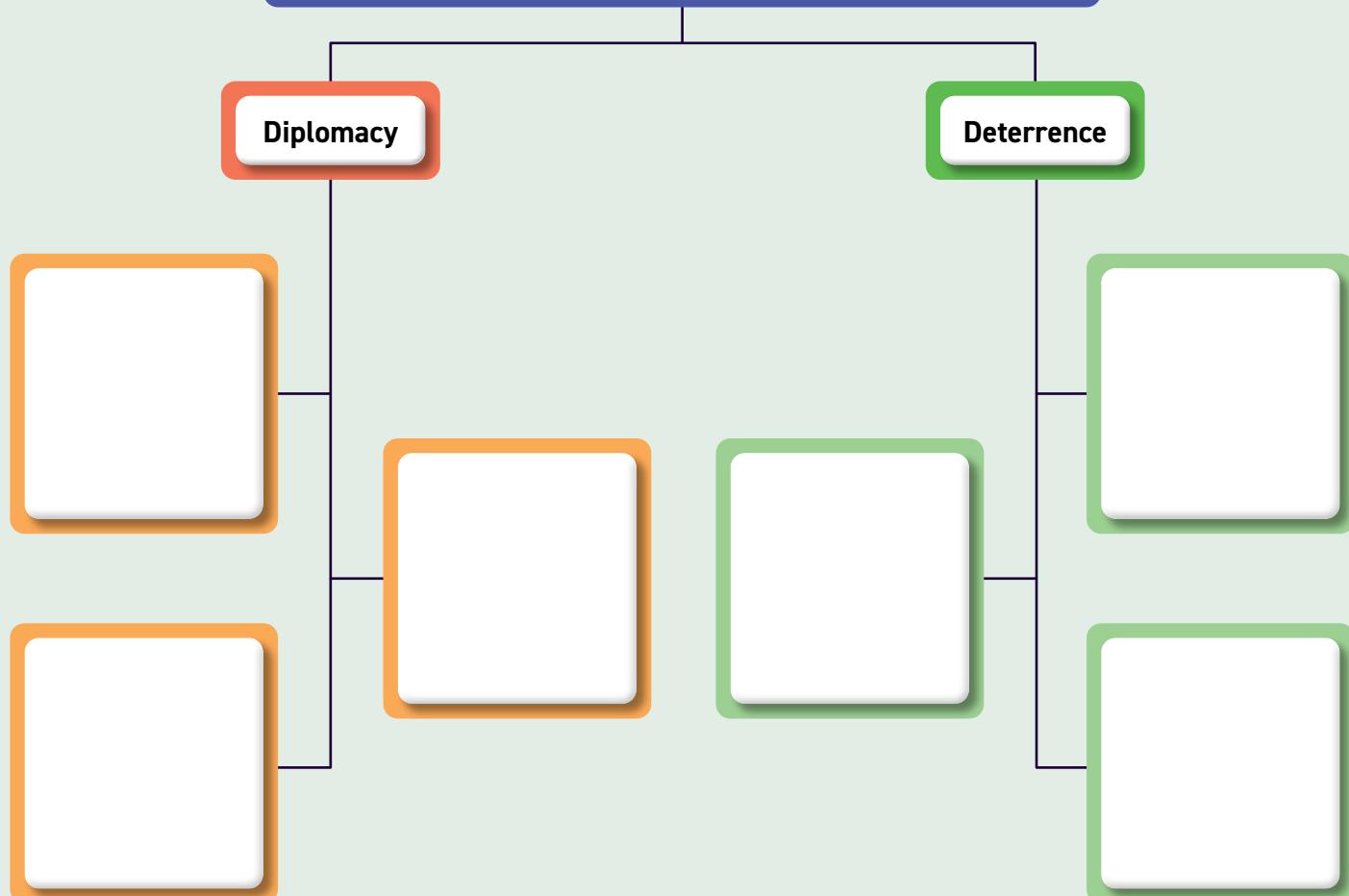


LET'S REVIEW

In this chapter, you looked at the security challenges Singapore faced after independence and how it overcame them. Complete the graphic organiser below to summarise what you have learnt. An example has been done for you.



How Did Singapore Overcome These Challenges?





CASE INVESTIGATION

How did Singapore's early diplomats help to defend and promote Singapore's interests?

Singapore's diplomats, as official representatives to other countries, were responsible for building relationships with these countries. In doing so, they played an important role in defending and promoting the nation's interests during the post-independence years.

Read the sources below to find out more about Singapore's approach to diplomacy in the early years.

SOURCE A

I [was present to record the discussions] when [our leaders] met many important foreign leaders ... in Singapore. Through these conversations, I realised that our leaders were alerting foreign governments ... of our situation and the [challenges] confronting Singapore's ... security and survival. ... They were getting friendly nations to understand our situation and hopefully maintain a continuing interest in Singapore. ... From that experience, I was better able to grasp and handle ... many politically sensitive matters that needed addressing in the Ministry's day-to-day work.

– Adapted from an account by former President S. R. Nathan of his early years in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, published in 2005

SOURCE B

While each potential foreign **mission*** was carefully [considered by Singapore's diplomats], the initial choices were relatively obvious. ... Priority was given to Britain, Australia and New Zealand. Active partners in the Commonwealth and among the first countries to recognise independent Singapore, they also maintained military forces in the region. Equally important were missions to key **non-aligned states†** such as India, Egypt and Cambodia, which would ensure broad-based support. Economic considerations, at least in part, underscored the need for missions in Washington, Tokyo and Bangkok.

– An account of the establishment of diplomatic missions in the early years of Singapore's independence, published in 2005

* A mission refers to a facility used by diplomats working in a foreign country, e.g., an embassy or a consulate.

† Non-aligned states were those that chose to remain neutral and not align themselves with either the United States or the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

SOURCE C

I would be going to the biggest and closest neighbour, the largest country in the Southeast Asian region ... which [could] do a great deal of harm to Singapore if relations between the two countries were bad. Very few people in Singapore knew much about Indonesia. It would be an advantage for Singapore and for myself if I could go there to understand the country and people better.

- Adapted from an account by Lee Khoon Choy, Singapore's first ambassador to Indonesia, published in 1993

SOURCE D

My first overseas posting was to Moscow ... in December 1971 to assist Mr P. S. Raman, our Ambassador to the Soviet Union. It was hard to set up a mission from scratch, with many obstacles such as not knowing the language and local customs. It was really sink or swim, but we learnt from our setbacks.

I enjoyed showing people what Singapore was about, what we stood for. Even in those days, people could see that we were different. We were from a tiny country, still very young, with many different races working together, and all proud to be Singaporeans.

- An account by Phang Tai Chee, who joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1970, published in 2015

INVESTIGATE!

1. Read **Source A**. According to the source, what did Singapore's leaders and diplomats try to communicate to foreign leaders about Singapore's situation after its independence?
2. Read **Source B**. What were the different reasons given in the source for building relations with other countries?
3. Read **Source C**. Based on Lee Khoon Choy's account, why was it important to maintain good relations with the larger neighbouring countries?
4. Read **Source D**. As mentioned in this source, what were some problems caused by the language barrier and cultural differences? Why do you think it was important for Singapore's diplomats to "[show] what Singapore was about, what we stood for"?

REPORT!

How did Singapore's early diplomats help to defend and promote Singapore's interests? Complete the following table based on the sources. An example has been done for you.

How did Singapore's early diplomats help to defend and promote Singapore's interests?	
What Were the Different Approaches Adopted by the Diplomats?	Examples from Sources
Communicating Singapore's concerns and interests to other countries	Source A: "our leaders were alerting foreign governments ... of our situation and the [challenges] confronting Singapore's ... security and survival."

LUCKY SILK STORE

DEALERS IN : RADIOS · SHAVERS · CAMERAS
TAPE RECORDER · T V · SEWING MACHINES
CAR · STEREOS · BINOCULARS & HOME APPLIANCES

JONG SING
TAILOR

CHEN HOE
WATCH DEALERS



10 To What Extent Did People's Lives Change After Independence?

In Chapter 9, you learnt about the security challenges that put Singapore's future as an independent nation-state in doubt. Apart from that, Singapore's survival was also threatened by other challenges that needed urgent attention during its early post-independence years.

To address these challenges, the government built upon efforts that had been started by the colonial government. As a result, life in Singapore had changed in many ways by the end of the 1970s.

In this chapter, you will learn about the measures taken to deal with challenges to Singapore's economy, national identity and society. You will also learn about the impact these challenges had on the lives of the people and how they responded to the changes that took place.



Chapter at a Glance

You will learn:

- What economic and social challenges Singapore faced after it gained independence in 1965
- How Singapore overcame these challenges
- How people's lives had changed by the end of the 1970s

▼ Central Business District, 1977. The early stages of reclamation work on Marina South (site of present-day Marina Bay Sands) can be seen in the foreground.





Timeline

Beyond Singapore



Headline in *The Straits Times*, 17 January 1968

The British announce the withdrawal of their defence forces from Asia, including Singapore. They later confirm that withdrawal would be completed by 1971.

1959

1960

1961

1965

1966

1967

The Housing & Development Board (HDB) is established.



HDB flats in Queenstown, 1962

The Economic Development Board (EDB) is established.

Singapore attains independence.

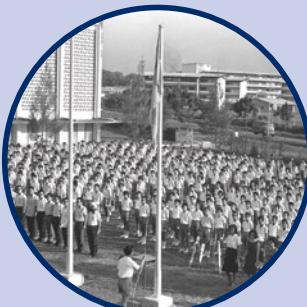
Registration for Singapore identity cards begins.



Identity card registration at one of the registration centres, 1966

Singapore attains full internal self-government.

The State Flag, State Crest and State National Anthem are introduced.



Flag-raising ceremony, 30 August 1966

The National Pledge is introduced. Daily flag-raising, flag-lowering and pledge-taking ceremonies are introduced in schools.

In Singapore



► Newspaper in the United States announcing gas rationing system, January 1974. In the background, a sign at a petrol station states that no gasoline is available. (“Gas” and “gasoline” refer to petrol.)

The 1973 oil crisis starts, affecting economies around the world, including that of Singapore.

1968

1970

1971

1973

1979

Plans are announced for all hawkers to be relocated from the streets to hawker centres.



▲ Jurong Town Hawker Centre, 1975

The Jurong Town Corporation (JTC) is established.



▲ Jurong Town Hall, the headquarters of the JTC, officially opened in 1975

The Goh Report is released, suggesting ways for Singapore’s education system to better cater to the needs of all students.

The majority of British forces withdraw from Singapore.

How Did Singapore Address Its Economic Challenges?

As you learnt in Chapter 8, many of the economic benefits Singapore expected from the merger did not materialise due to disagreements between the Singapore government and the Malaysian federal government. With the separation from Malaysia, Singapore found itself having to deal with significant economic challenges as a newly independent nation-state.

Let us find out more about these challenges and the steps taken to overcome them.

Economic Vulnerability

Limited Access to the Malaysian Hinterland

After Singapore gained independence, Malaysia remained its main trading partner. However, without a common market and direct access to the Malaysian hinterland, trade between the two countries was limited. Read the illustrated story below to learn more.

Impact of LIMITED TRADE WITH MALAYSIA after Singapore's independence

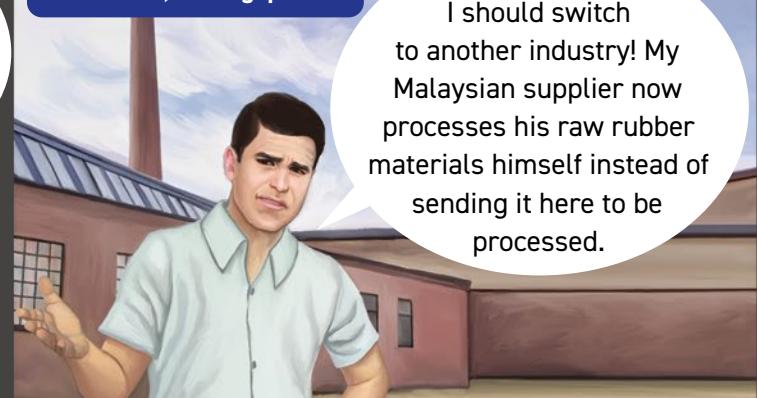
In Malaysia

These
shoes from
Singapore are so
expensive
now!



Let's buy
these instead.
They are made here
in Malaysia and are
cheaper too!

Meanwhile, in Singapore ...



Maybe I should switch to another industry! My Malaysian supplier now processes his raw rubber materials himself instead of sending it here to be processed.

To limit competition to its own industries, Malaysia increased tariffs on Singapore's exports, thus raising their prices. This lowered the demand for Singapore-made goods in Malaysia, as Malaysian-made goods became more affordable in comparison.

Malaysia also reduced the volume of its exports, such as raw tin and rubber, to Singapore. Previously, these were often stored or processed in Singapore before being re-exported worldwide. But Malaysia now sought to process and export them directly from its own ports.

Threat of Unemployment

Another economic concern was the need to provide sufficient jobs to cater to Singapore's rapidly growing population. In 1965, there were already more than 70,000 unemployed persons out of a total **labour force¹** of over 700,000. Additionally, there were a large number of young people about to finish their schooling who would soon be joining the labour force. If no jobs were available to them, Singapore's unemployment problem would grow even more severe.

To make matters worse, the entrepôt trade, which had been the lifeline of Singapore's economy for more than a century, had been declining since World War II. This was amid growing competition from other ports in the region. Thus, its importance as a source of job creation was diminishing.

Britain's announcement in 1967 of the closure of its military bases added to the problems affecting Singapore's economy. These bases were a major source of employment for Singaporeans, with the livelihoods of over 40,000 people dependent on supplying goods and services to British servicemen stationed here.

To address the challenges of unemployment and the declining entrepôt trade, the government had to diversify the economy. This meant finding new and varied sources of economic growth instead of being overly dependent on any one source. This would make it more likely for the economy to grow steadily and ensure there were sufficient jobs available for the people.

Economic Diversification

Development of Export-Oriented Industrialisation

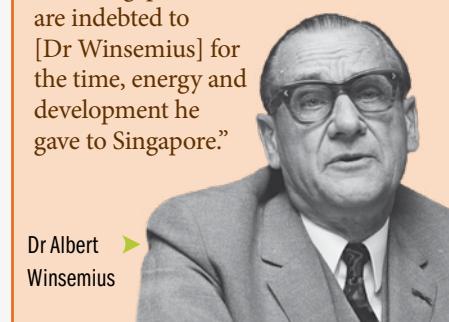
Even before merger and independence, the government believed **industrialisation²** was key to diversifying Singapore's economy. In 1961, Finance Minister Dr Goh Keng Swee announced the establishment of the Economic Development Board (EDB). Its task was to promote industrial development in Singapore, for example, by attracting **multinational corporations (MNCs)³** to set up factories here. Goods produced in these factories were meant to be sold mainly in Singapore and the Malaysian hinterland. However, this became impractical after independence. Thus, Singapore adopted an export-oriented economic policy. The majority of goods produced would instead be exported worldwide.



▲ Shops in Changi Village, 1972. These shops were set up to cater to the British forces stationed nearby and suffered from poor business following the British pull-out.

DID YOU KNOW?

Dr Albert Winsemius, a Dutch economist, played a key role in Singapore's early industrialisation efforts. He headed a UN study that recommended an industrialisation programme for Singapore, and later served as the chief economic adviser to the Singapore government from 1961 to 1984. Following his passing in 1996, Lee Kuan Yew wrote in a letter of condolence to Dr Winsemius' family that "Singapore and [Lee] ... are indebted to [Dr Winsemius] for the time, energy and development he gave to Singapore."



Dr Albert Winsemius

- ¹ A labour force consists of all the people in a country who are either working or looking for work. Generally, the higher the percentage of a country's labour force who are working, the better its economy is considered to be doing.
- ² Industrialisation is the process of developing manufacturing in an economy on a large scale, usually through the adoption of technology and machinery.
- ³ An MNC is a company that operates in more than one country.

Hundreds of MNCs from countries such as the Netherlands, Britain, Japan and the United States set up operations in Singapore. The MNCs included Shell, Seiko and Hewlett-Packard. Refer to Figure 10.1 on the next page to find out what attracted the MNCs to Singapore and what effects they had on the economy.



▲ Shell oil refinery on Pulau Bukom, 1970s



▲ Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew at the opening of a factory in Marsiling set up by Seiko to manufacture watch components, 1976



▲ Employees at Hewlett-Packard's plant manufacturing electronic equipment at Depot Road, 1979



BE A YOUNG HISTORIAN: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

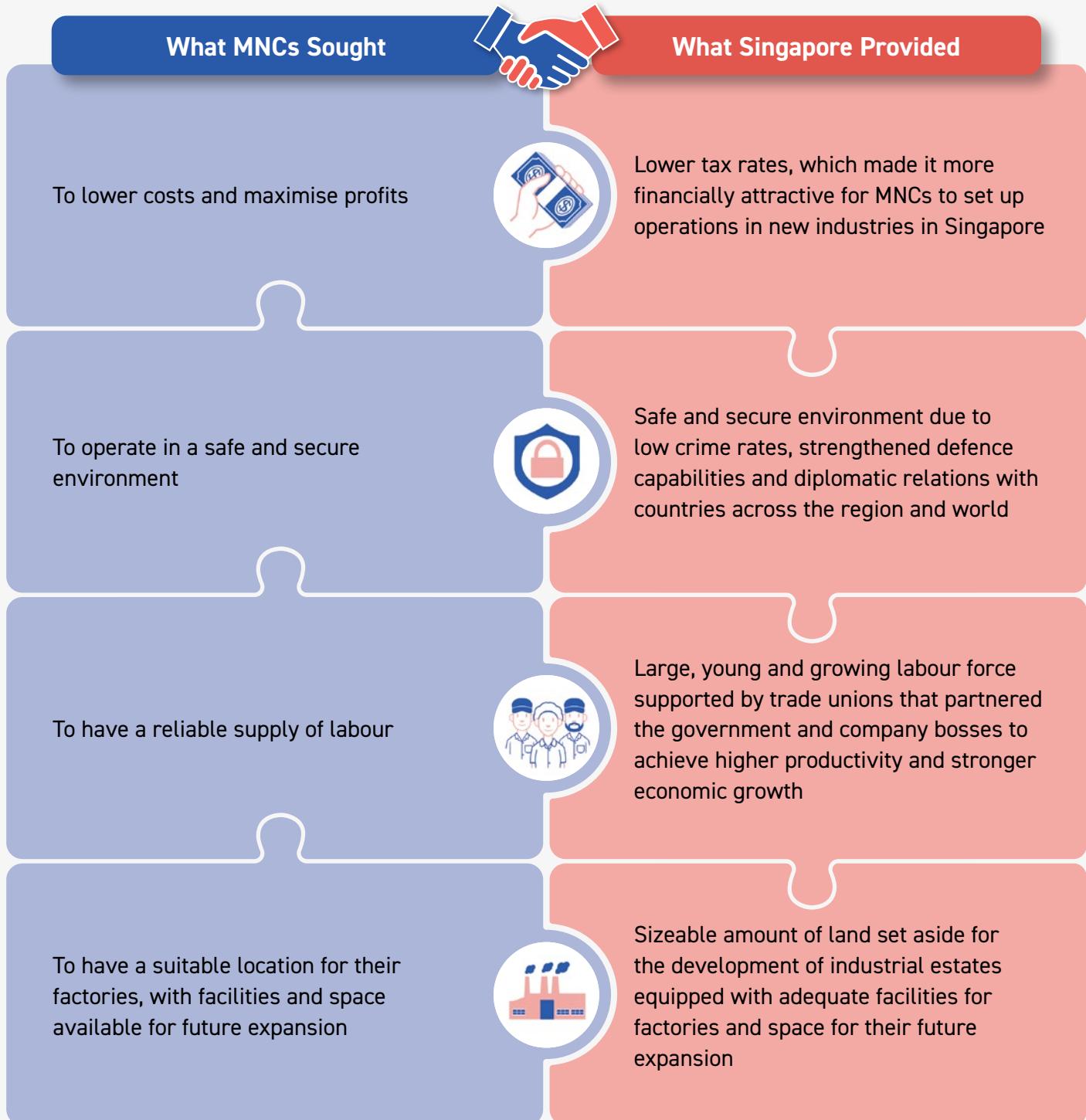
In Chapter 3, you learnt how historians use the terms “change” and “continuity” to describe or compare developments over time. In your study of Singapore’s history, you will have seen that while many things changed, others remained the same. For example, although Singapore’s rulers changed several times over the centuries, external developments continued to influence Singapore regardless of who the rulers were.

Additionally, the **pace** at which change happens may not be constant. It may **accelerate** or **slow down** significantly as a result of certain events or developments.

One such event is Singapore gaining independence on 9 August 1965. While some changes had taken place prior to independence, this day marked the start of a period of accelerated change in areas such as economic and social development. As you continue to learn about the developments in post-independence Singapore, bear the following questions in mind:

- In what ways did changes take place?
 - **How quickly** did these changes take place?
 - **How great** were the changes?
 - **How did people react** to the changes?
- In what ways was there **continuity**?
- In what ways did **change and continuity** take place **at the same time**?





How Singapore Benefitted from MNCs Setting Up Operations Here

- Employment for thousands of people
- Valuable technical training and work experience for the local workforce, which helped to build up local expertise that would eventually fill job vacancies previously filled by foreigners
- Greater access to modern technology to help keep Singapore competitive globally
- Increased exports of locally manufactured goods to more overseas markets

▲ **Figure 10.1:** Why MNCs were attracted to Singapore and their importance to the economy

In 1961, the EDB transformed almost 70 square kilometres of land in Jurong into Singapore's first industrial estate. Following this, plots of land across the country were set aside for development into industrial estates (see Map 10.1 below).

As Singapore grew more industrialised, the task of managing industrial estates became more challenging. Thus, in 1968, the Jurong Town Corporation (JTC) was set up to take over the task of building and managing industrial estates. This allowed the EDB to focus on attracting foreign investment.



DID YOU KNOW?

Apart from industrial development, the JTC was also responsible for developing facilities to improve the quality of life of the people who worked and lived in the industrial estates. In Jurong, the JTC oversaw the development of places such as the Jurong Bird Park, Chinese Gardens, Japanese Gardens and even a drive-in cinema.



▲ Opening day of Jurong Drive-in cinema,
14 July 1971

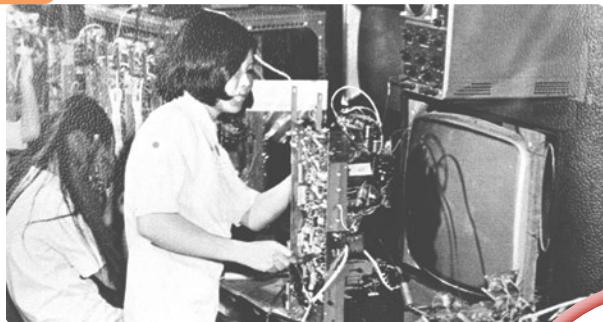
◀ EDB Chairman Hon Sui Sen (extreme left) briefing Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik (second from left) on plans for Jurong Industrial Estate, 19 March 1968



▲ Map 10.1: Map showing the location of JTC industrial estates in Singapore in 1976



Electronics



▲ Factory workers assembling televisions in an electronics factory, late 1960s

Petroleum Refining



▲ Oil refinery at Jurong Industrial Estate, 1966



Ship Building and Repair



▲ Oil tanker undergoing repairs at Sembawang Shipyard, 1978

Some of the Key Industries That Developed in Singapore

Garments and Textiles



▲ Workers at a textile factory, 1975

▲ Figure 10.2: Some key industries in Singapore

These efforts to diversify the economy paid off, as manufacturing activity in Singapore increased significantly (see Figure 10.2 for some of the key industries that developed in Singapore). Almost 150,000 jobs were created between 1967 and 1973 alone. By the early 1970s, unemployment was a thing of the past. In fact, there was a shortage of labour, such that foreign workers had to be recruited to fill jobs. Singapore's economy, which had seemed vulnerable upon independence, grew remarkably. Up until 1973, its economic growth rates, measured in terms of **gross domestic product (GDP)**,⁴ exceeded 10 per cent every year. Refer to Source 1 on page 166 to find out more.

Development of Infrastructure

To support the diversification of the economy, the government also developed the proper infrastructure in Singapore. This would not only help to attract MNCs and other foreign investors, but also facilitate the growth of Singapore's manufacturing industries. See Figure 10.3 on the next two pages to learn what some of these developments were.

⁴ GDP measures the total value of goods and services produced in a country in a year. The higher the annual percentage increase in GDP, the greater the economic growth.

Telecommunications

To boost connectivity among industries and households, the telecommunications system was improved. The Singapore Telephone Board installed new telephones at a rapid pace. While it had taken 85 years to install the first 100,000 telephones, it took just five years from 1967 to 1972 to double the network size to 200,000.



▲ Telephone operators at work, 1970

Banking and Finance

Banking and financial services were expanded to meet the needs of MNCs and other companies in Singapore. For example, the Development Bank of Singapore (DBS) was established in 1968 to finance industrialisation and other development projects. Many foreign banks also set up operations here.

Italian bank chief: Why we chose to open office in S'pore

▲ *The Straits Times*, 19 October 1972

MORE FOREIGN BANKS TAKE TO SINGAPORE

▲ *New Nation*, 30 April 1974

Banco do Brasil opens in style

▲ *The Business Times*, 28 June 1978

Fuji Bank sets up shop

▲ *The Straits Times*, 16 October 1972

▲ Newspaper headlines from the 1970s announcing the opening of branches of foreign banks in Singapore

Public Utilities

The Public Utilities Board (PUB) was set up in 1963. It was responsible for providing public utilities such as water, electricity and gas to industries and households. It continued its work after Singapore's independence. This improved both the operating conditions of industries and people's living conditions.



▲ Newly built Pasir Panjang Power Station extension, 1965

▲ Figure 10.3: Development of infrastructure

Paya Lebar airport to handle a plane a minute



▲ (Top image) Headline in the *New Nation*, 13 December 1972;
(bottom image) Concorde aircraft at Paya Lebar Airport, 1972



▲ PSA container terminal at Keppel Harbour, 1972



▲ Thomson Road flyover, 1971

Transport Facilities

Air Transport

Paya Lebar Airport was expanded in the 1960s and 1970s so it could handle more passenger and cargo traffic. However, there was insufficient space for future expansion.

Thus, the government decided in 1975 to replace it with a larger airport. Changi Airport was opened in 1981.

Sea Transport

The Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) was formed in 1964 to manage port operations. To cater to the rise in cargo traffic, it set up port facilities in Jurong, Sembawang, Tanjong Pagar and Pasir Panjang.

Land Transport

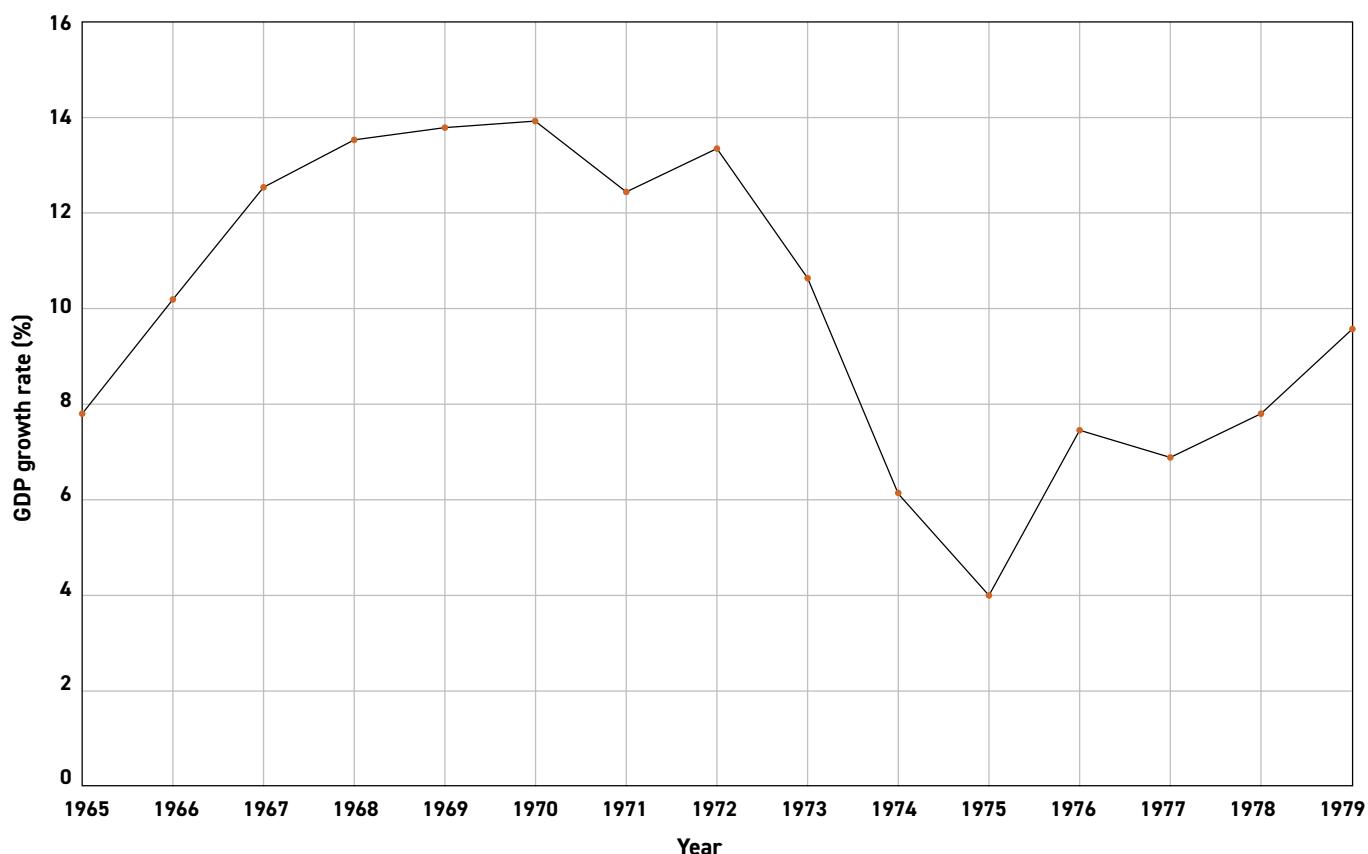
Roads were constructed to connect industrial areas to housing estates. An expressway system was built to reduce the time needed to travel around the island.

Impact of the 1973 Oil Crisis

Despite the government's efforts, Singapore did not enjoy continuous economic progress, but remained vulnerable to developments beyond its shores due to its success being deeply tied to that of the global economy. In late 1973, a conflict in the Middle East, a major oil exporting region, caused a shortage in global oil supply and oil prices jumped by almost four times in less than three months. This had a significant impact on Singapore as it imported all its oil, which was needed for its economy to run smoothly. Refer to Figure 10.4 on the next page to learn more.

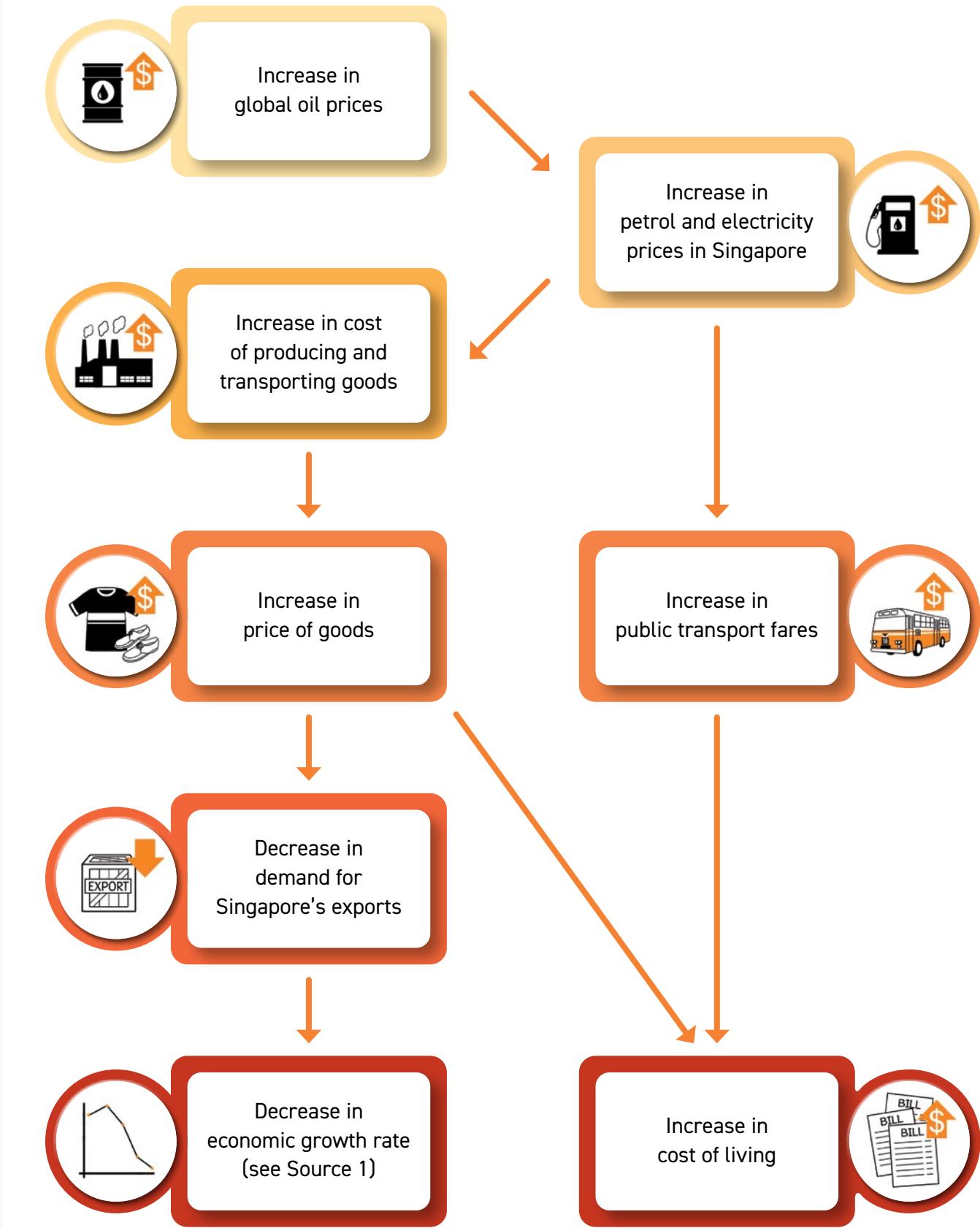
Several measures were implemented to help the people deal with the effects of the oil crisis. For example, the government took the lead in increasing workers' wages to help them cope with inflation. While Singapore recovered by 1976, this crisis served as a reminder that its economy was vulnerable to external developments beyond its control. Study Source 1 to see Singapore's growth rate following independence.

SOURCE 1



- Graph showing Singapore's economic growth rate in terms of GDP (1965–1979), adapted from World Bank data

- According to Source 1, how did the oil crisis of 1973 affect Singapore's economy?



▲ Figure 10.4: Impact of the increase in global oil prices on Singapore (1973-1976)

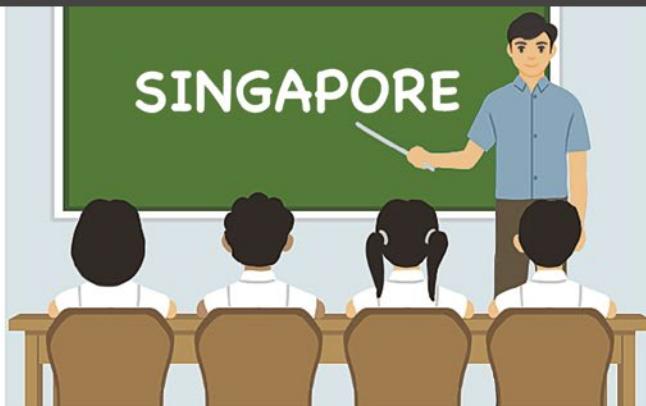
How Did Singapore Build a National Identity?

People in Singapore came from diverse ethnic, language, religious and economic backgrounds. Mostly, they did not see themselves as belonging to a country called Singapore. In order for the country to move forward and succeed following independence, the government had to build a sense of national identity among all its people.

The need for a SINGAPOREAN IDENTITY

Even before independence, the government had tried to build greater cohesion and a sense of belonging among the diverse population. This was challenging, as many tended to associate with those who shared their ethnicity, language or religion.

Furthermore, the education system inherited from the British was not conducive to fostering cohesion among the young. The majority of students went to schools where they were chiefly taught in their own vernacular languages, while a smaller number went to English-language schools. Hence, most students had limited opportunities to interact with those from different backgrounds.

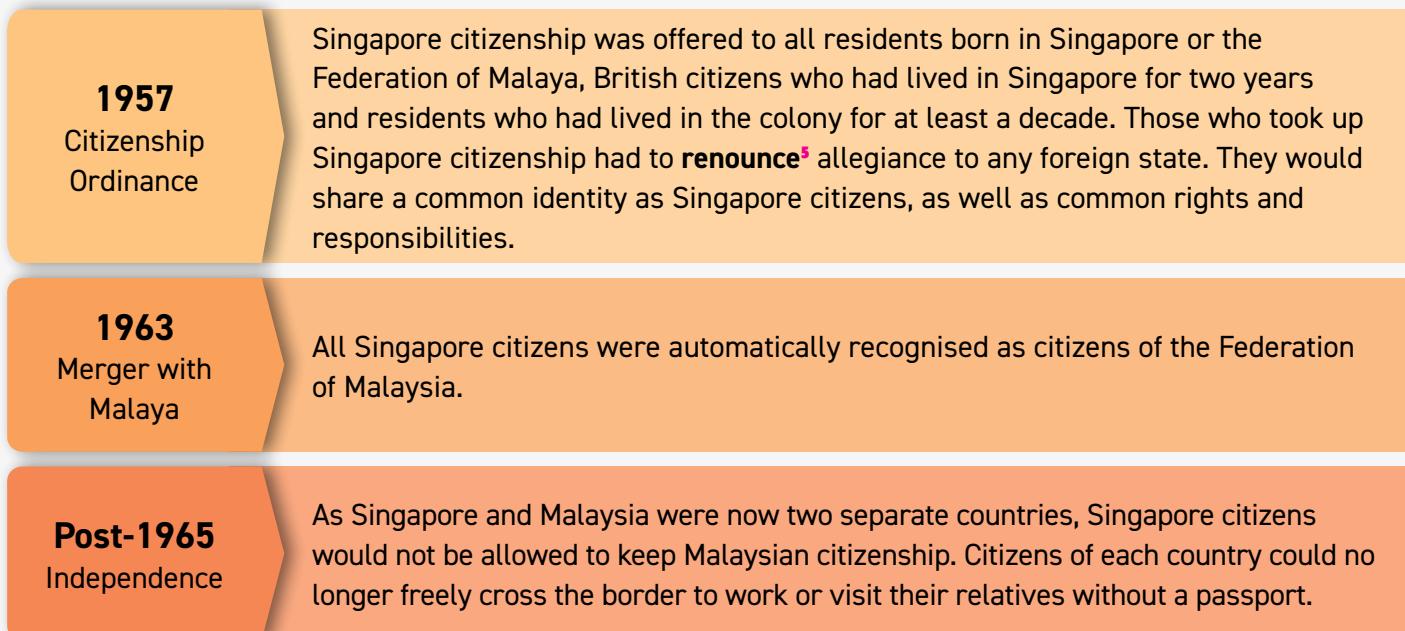


With independence, it became even more critical to unite the people by fostering a stronger sense of belonging and identity among them as Singaporeans.

Building Social Cohesion and Sense of Belonging

Introduction and Evolution of Citizenship

In Chapter 7, you learnt about the introduction of Singapore citizenship with the Citizenship Ordinance of 1957. Refer to Figure 10.5 below to find out how the concept of being a Singaporean citizen evolved over the years, starting from 1957.



▲ Figure 10.5: Evolution of Singapore citizenship

After Singapore became independent, the National Registration Act of 1965 came into effect on 5 May 1966. All Singaporeans above 12 years old and those with existing identity cards issued under the Registration of Persons Ordinance 1955 were required to re-register. Singapore citizens received a pink identity card, which served as a physical symbol of their identity as Singaporeans. It entitled them to the rights and privileges of citizenship, such as voting, priority in receiving employment opportunities over non-citizens, and access to social services such as education and healthcare.



▲ Pink identity card for Singapore citizens



◀ Identity card registration at Raffles Institution (one of the registration centres), 1966

⁵ To renounce something is to formally reject it or give it up.

Creation of National Symbols

In 1959, after Singapore attained full internal self-government, Deputy Prime Minister Dr Toh Chin Chye coordinated efforts to create the State Flag and the State Crest, and adopt the State National Anthem, "Majulah Singapura" (see page 76). During the years of merger, Singapore kept the first two state symbols but adopted the Malaysian National Anthem, "Negaraku". When Singapore gained independence, the State Flag and "Majulah Singapura" were adopted as the National Flag and National Anthem respectively.

Forging of National Identity in Schools

After independence, the National Pledge was introduced in schools to foster a greater sense of belonging and rootedness among students. It reflected the ideals for building a united Singapore. Originally written in English, the National Pledge was translated into Singapore's three other official languages.

Daily flag-raising and flag-lowering ceremonies, accompanied by the singing of the National Anthem and the recitation of the pledge, were introduced in schools from August 1966. This practice still takes place in schools and at National Day observance ceremonies today. Read Source 2 on the next page to learn more about the introduction of the pledge-taking ceremony.

▼ Flag-raising ceremony, 30 August 1966



Who was DR TOH CHIN CHYE?

Dr Toh Chin Chye (1921–2012) was born in Perak, Malaya. He was motivated to enter politics after witnessing the injustices and lack of equality in colonial society and during the Japanese Occupation.

When Dr Toh returned to Singapore in 1953 after obtaining a doctorate in Physiology at London's National Institute for Medical Research, he engaged in regular political discussions with a group that met at Lee Kuan Yew's house at 38 Oxley Road. This group eventually became the People's Action Party, and Dr Toh became its founding Chairman.

In 1959, Dr Toh was elected as the representative for Rochore constituency in the Legislative Assembly. As Deputy Prime Minister (1959–1968), he played a key role in shaping the identity of Singapore's people. Later on, he assumed other ministerial positions, including Health and Education. Dr Toh continued serving as a Member of Parliament (MP) until 1988, when he retired from politics. He was awarded the Order of Nila Utama (First Class) in 1990, in recognition of his contributions to Singapore.

SOURCE 2

Many of [the students] would think [reciting the pledge was] unnecessary and they would never take it seriously ... [From] the way they used to stand[, you could tell] they were quite bored ... So we had to show them the seriousness of [reciting the pledge]. On rainy days, when we couldn't meet at assembly, we had to do it in the classroom. We had to put up the flag near the blackboard, pinned it up there and everyone would stand in the classroom and say it. That was a good time for us to hear the pledge really being said [in] a smaller group and that [was] a time that we could correct them and [make them] see the seriousness of it.

– Adapted from a 2004 oral interview with Christabelle Alvis, a teacher when the pledge-taking ceremony was introduced in the 1960s

1. According to Source 2, how did students respond to the introduction of pledge-taking in the 1960s?
2. Why do you think the teacher emphasised the importance of reciting the pledge?

DID YOU KNOW?

In October 1965, a suggestion was made in the Ministry of Education to compose a pledge reflecting the ideals for building a united Singapore. Ong Pang Boon, the Minister for Education, supported the idea and worked with officers to draft the pledge. The draft was then revised by S. Rajaratnam, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to emphasise the need to bridge the divide among the different races. The finalised National Pledge was introduced in 1966.

When pledge-taking was first introduced, students recited the pledge with their right hands raised. The current way of reciting the pledge was only introduced in 1988. The clenched fist over the heart symbolises loyalty to the nation.



Observe the difference in the placement of the right hand during pledge-taking at the National Day Parades in 1986 (top image) and 1988 (bottom image).



LEARN A SKILL: ANALYSING SPEECHES

In your study of post-war Singapore, one type of source you have encountered is the speech. In delivering a speech, a speaker is typically aware of the profile of the audience and seeks to share his or her views in a manner that would appeal to them. The speaker may also wish to influence the audience's views. In previous chapters, for example, you saw how members of political parties gave speeches during election campaigns to persuade the public to vote for them.

After Singapore attained full internal self-government, members of the PAP government often used public speeches to communicate their policies and the reasons behind them. These policies played a key role in shaping Singapore's development from the self-government and merger years through to independence. Thus, it is important to learn to analyse speeches, as they can help you learn more about Singapore's history.

When analysing a speech as a historical source, it is important to consider the following:

1. Who was the **speaker**? What **role or position** did he or she hold?
2. Who were the **audience**? (This may not always be limited to the people physically present when the speech was given but may also include those who viewed, listened to or read the speech when it was broadcast or reported by the press.)
3. (a) What was the **context** of the speech?
 - What was the occasion at which the speech was given?
 - What other events or developments were taking place immediately before or at the same time as this speech?(b) What was **significant** about this context?
4. What were the **key points** of the speech?
5. What was the speaker's **intention** in giving this speech (e.g., in terms of how the audience would feel or act in response)?

With these questions in mind, look at the excerpt on the next page. It is adapted from a speech delivered by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew to residents of Queenstown at a National Day celebration on 10 August 1966.



► Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew delivering his speech at a National Day celebration on 10 August 1966

It is the young that will determine what happens to this society. And it is we and what we do now that determines what they can be.

It depends on the education we give them; the training they receive; the values that they are taught – what is good, what is bad; what should be done; what should not be done ...

Seven years ago, ... we were building primary schools just to give the boys and girls a place in school. But we are now building secondary schools and no more primary schools because we have enough of them [primary schools]. ... [F]ortunately, the population is not increasing as rapidly as it used to. So, we improve! ... [T]o every primary school and every secondary school we add a school hall, a school gymnasium. Because we must have a generation that is not only good at scoring on paper.

... And you have to throw up a whole generation capable of ... leadership, conscious of its responsibilities, jealous of its rights, not allowing anyone to bully it and push it around, prepared to stand up and fight and die. That kind of a generation will endure till the end of time. And that is what we can do and will do.

Now analyse the speech using the guiding questions. Suggested answers are provided on the next page.

1. Who was the speaker ? What role or position did he or she hold?
2. Who were the audience ?
3. (a) What was the context of the speech? - What was the occasion at which the speech was given? - What other events or developments were taking place immediately before or at the same time as this speech?
(b) What was significant about this context?
4. What were the key points of the speech?
5. What was the speaker's intention in giving this speech (e.g., in terms of how the audience would feel or act in response)?

Suggested Answers

1. Who was the speaker? What role or position did he or she hold?
The speaker was the Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew.
2. Who were the audience?
The audience were the residents of Queenstown. The audience also included those who read, listened to or viewed press reports or broadcasts of the speech.
3. (a) What was the context of the speech? - What was the occasion at which the speech was given? - What other events or developments were taking place immediately before or at the same time as this speech?
This speech was given at a National Day celebration marking Singapore's first year of independence. Singapore was still in the midst of overcoming the various challenges it faced with its independence.
(b) What was significant about this context?
This was an opportunity for Prime Minister Lee to remind the people that even as they celebrated Singapore's independence, their help was needed to overcome the challenges that Singapore still faced.
4. What were the key points of the speech?
Education was important, and there was a need to improve education in Singapore so that a new generation of responsible leaders would emerge.
5. What was the speaker's intention in giving this speech (e.g., in terms of how the audience would feel or act in response)?
He hoped to get their support for future government measures taken to improve the education system.

When you next encounter a speech as a historical source, it is important that you ask yourselves these questions. This will give you a clearer sense of its purpose and how it fits into the context of the historical period you are studying. Look at the images below of two prominent Singaporeans giving speeches. What was the context of these speeches?



▲ Foreign Affairs Minister S. Rajaratnam delivering a speech at the **commissioning ceremony*** of RSS Sovereignty, a Republic of Singapore Navy fast patrol boat, 1971

* At a commissioning ceremony, a new ship is officially placed in active duty.



▲ Finance Minister Hon Sui Sen speaking at the opening of the Singapore branch of Hitachi Consumer Products Pte Ltd, 1974

LEARN ON THE GO

Find out more about how to analyse a speech @ go.gov.sg/lshc1002.

How Did Singapore Address Its Social Challenges?

Aside from dealing with economic challenges and building a national identity, the government also tackled the social challenges that threatened the newly independent nation. In particular, the government took measures to improve housing, education and healthcare. These measures had a direct and significant impact on the lives of the people.

Providing Public Housing

As you learnt in Chapter 7, Singapore experienced rapid population growth and a shortage of affordable housing in the early post-war years. As a result, many lived in unhygienic and overcrowded conditions in kampongs and shophouses, which often lacked basic facilities such as running water, flush toilets and electricity.

Furthermore, the SIT had made little progress in meeting the growing demand for low-cost housing (see Chapter 7, page 48). On average, the SIT was only able to construct one new flat for every 150 families per year. Urgent action was needed to improve the living conditions of the population.



▲ Shophouses along a street in Chinatown, c. 1970

▼ Blocks of flats in Tanglin Halt in 1962. These were among the earliest generation of HDB flats, built to address the housing shortage.



In 1960, the Housing & Development Board (HDB) was set up to take over the SIT's task of providing housing for the population. Its immediate goal was to build blocks of flats as quickly as possible and at affordable prices.

By the end of 1962, under the leadership of its first Chairman, Lim Kim San, the HDB had built more flats than the SIT had managed in its entire span of operation. By 1965, it had constructed 54,000 flats, enough to house 25 per cent of Singapore's population.

The HDB's resourcefulness was tested when a fire swept through the **squatter settlement**⁶ in Bukit Ho Swee on 25 May 1961. The fire left four dead and around 16,000 homeless. The very next day, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew announced plans to find new homes for the victims within a year. In less than a year, all who had lost their homes in the fire had found accommodation. Many were housed in low-cost emergency flats rapidly constructed by the HDB.



▲ Evacuated Bukit Ho Swee residents looking at the fire destroying their homes, 25 May 1961

Who was LIM KIM SAN?

Lim Kim San (1916–2006) was born in Singapore. At a very young age, he acquired business skills by helping his family's businesses. In 1939, he graduated from Raffles College with a Diploma in Arts (Economics).

In 1960, Lim was appointed Chairman of the HDB. He joined the PAP in 1963, and was later elected MP for Cairnhill constituency.

Lim held various ministerial positions during his political career, including National Development and Finance. He is, however, best remembered as "Mr HDB" because of his contributions in providing low-cost housing for the people in the 1960s, and was awarded the Order of Temasek in 1962 for his achievements. He retired from politics in 1981.



LEARN ON THE GO

Find out more about the experiences of new HDB residents in the 1960s @ go.gov.sg/lshc1003.



⁶ A squatter settlement is an area where people live that has not been approved for residential purposes by the authorities.

For most of the new HDB residents, the flats were a significant change from their previous homes. For the first time, they had access to amenities such as electricity, drinkable tap water, waste disposal services and toilet facilities in their own homes. They now lived in far greater comfort and security. The newly built estates were located in areas such as Queenstown and Toa Payoh, which were further from the city. This helped to reduce the overcrowding in central areas such as Chinatown. However, not everyone responded positively to being rehoused. Read Source 3 to find out more.

SOURCE 3

Although many families [view being rehoused positively], there are those who find it hard to ... adjust to the changed environment, and thus lag behind the others in attaining a new standard of living. ... Some had been residing where they were since childhood, and felt much at home in the familiar atmosphere. However poor and dilapidated the house may have been, [they were] reluctant to leave. ... Some are afraid to use the lifts, for they consider them to be crowded and dangerous, and prefer to use the stairs. Those who live on the 14th floor, for instance, would find it very tedious to use the stairs even as little as twice per day. As a result, many lock themselves up within their four walls, and greatly miss the carefree kampong life.

- Adapted from an article in local newspaper New Nation, titled "Adjusting to Highrise Living", 15 July 1971

- According to Source 3, why did some residents have a negative view of being resettled in HDB flats?

Initially, those who moved into HDB flats could only rent them at a subsidised rate. However, Prime Minister Lee wanted to encourage people to own their homes, as he felt this would foster a greater sense of belonging and rootedness. Thus, the HDB home ownership scheme was launched in 1964, to allow families to purchase HDB flats.



► Balloting ceremony in Queenstown for flats under the HDB home ownership scheme, 1965

At first, not many people took part in the scheme. Even though the cost of buying a flat was subsidised, many families still could not afford one. Hence, in 1968, the government allowed them to use the savings in their **Central Provident Fund (CPF)**⁷ accounts to help fund the purchase of HDB flats. This increased the popularity of the scheme. By the mid-1970s, more than 40,000 families, most of whom had never owned their own homes before, were owners of their HDB flats. Read Source 4 to learn about a homeowner's experience.

SOURCE 4

It was a big thing to get an HDB flat then. ... [It was] quite a big change. [Our old house was] low-lying and flood[ed] often. ... Sanitary condition[s] were poor. [We still used] the bucket system [and] had to use well water sometimes. There was no proper tap water. And when we went over to [the flat in Toa Payoh], it was on [the] 16th floor. ... I think we all felt much ... happier, [but also better] in terms of health condition[s]. Fresh air, clean surrounding[s] and beautiful views. ... In terms of sleeping area and all that, it [was] definitely cleaner. Not so much of the cockroaches and centipede[s] that [we had in the old place]. And so I think it was a tremendous improvement in terms of lifestyle, and it [made us feel good] that we were staying in a proper place of our own.

- Adapted from a 2011 oral interview with Koh Boon Long, who moved with his family to an HDB flat in 1970

1. According to Source 4, what impact did moving to HDB flats have on residents such as Koh?

After the HDB had achieved its initial goal of providing sufficient housing for the population, it gradually introduced four- and five-room flats to meet the growing demand for larger homes. It also developed amenities such as markets, hawker centres, shops, clinics and schools in HDB estates, which made life more convenient for residents. By 1976, HDB flats housed more than half the population, a figure that continued to grow as the years went by. As household incomes rose, more Singaporeans were able to afford larger homes, with the percentage of HDB flats with three or more rooms increasing from 40 per cent in 1966 to 55 per cent in 1977.



▲ New generation of flats under construction in Marine Parade, 1973



▲ HDB neighbourhood in Eunos, with apartment blocks (background) located next to shops, a wet market and a hawker centre (foreground), 1977

⁷ Under the CPF scheme, which was first set up in 1955, it was compulsory for employees to have a percentage of their monthly salaries set aside in their CPF accounts. This ensured they would have savings to use upon retirement.

Toa Payoh: Singapore's First HDB Town

Toa Payoh was the first town entirely developed by the HDB. It was built based on the HDB's new neighbourhood concept: small neighbourhoods grouped around a town centre, with each neighbourhood having its own facilities such as hawker centres, wet markets, shops and playgrounds.

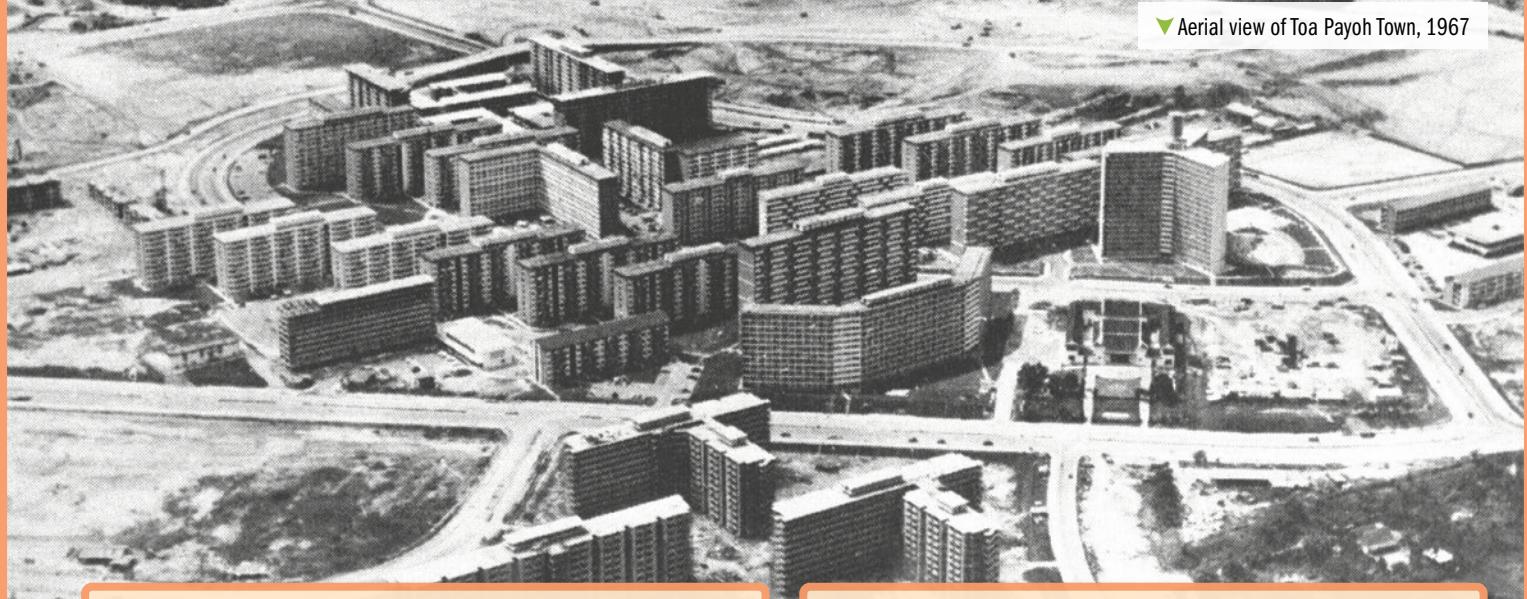


▲ Construction of Toa Payoh Town, 1960s



▲ Crowd at the balloting ceremony for the sale of flats at Toa Payoh Town, 1 October 1966

▼ Aerial view of Toa Payoh Town, 1967



▲ Newly built food centre in Lorong 1 Toa Payoh, 1969



▲ Queen Elizabeth II of Britain touring Toa Payoh Town, 18 January 1972

Strengthening the Education System

Singapore also faced the urgent challenge of educating and preparing its youth to enter the workforce. In 1965, a quarter of the population was still of schoolgoing age, and the **literacy rate⁸** was a mere 60 per cent. In addition, more than 50,000 babies were being born annually; they would soon require an education too. Urgent action was needed to ensure that the youth would have the necessary values, skills and knowledge to earn a decent living and help build the nation.

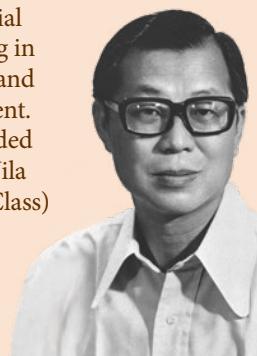
First, the government had to ensure that there were sufficient resources to support the education of all students. In the early 1950s, the colonial government had begun building more schools to cater to the needs of the growing population. However, this was insufficient to meet the needs of a large and rapidly increasing number of children of schoolgoing age in the early 1960s.

Hence, during the years of full internal self-government and merger, about 83 new schools were built, at a rate of around one per month. Additionally, teacher recruitment efforts increased significantly, such that within a decade of attaining full internal self-government, the number of teachers had almost doubled to over 19,000. Though schools still had to operate double sessions (morning and afternoon), they were now able to meet the swiftly increasing demand for education.

Who was ONG PANG BOON?

Born in Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, Ong Pang Boon (b. 1929) entered politics when he assisted Lee Kuan Yew during the 1955 election. Subsequently, he became the Organising Secretary of the PAP. In 1959, he was elected into the Legislative Assembly as the representative for Telok Ayer.

As Minister for Education (1963–1970), Ong played an important role in strengthening Singapore's education system. The National Pledge was also introduced during his term of service. Before his retirement from politics in 1988, he also served in various other ministerial roles, including in Home Affairs and the Environment. Ong was awarded the Order of Nila Utama (First Class) in 1990 for his contributions to Singapore.



▼ School building under construction, 1966



⁸ The literacy rate measures the percentage of people within a country who can read and write. Generally, a higher literacy rate indicates that a country has provided for the education of its people.



◀ Students at Tanjong Rhu Integrated Primary School attending a class taught in the Chinese language, 1974. The school later merged with two other schools to become Tanjong Rhu Primary School, which was closed in 1989.

Schools continued to observe the bilingual education policy, which was first proposed by the colonial government in 1953 and implemented after Singapore attained full internal self-government. Under the policy, all students would learn both English and their respective vernacular languages. English would serve as a common language to help break down language barriers and foster stronger social bonds. At the same time, by learning their vernacular languages, students would remain connected to their ethnic and cultural roots.

English, one of the four official languages, was chosen as the common language as none of Singapore's main ethnic groups could claim it as their own. This was to send the message that the government did not favour any ethnic group over the others. Furthermore, as English was used internationally as a language of commerce and industry, learning the language would help students secure a better future. Read Source 5 to find out more.

SOURCE 5

My mum started us off by putting me in Primary 1 in a Chinese school. So I spent one year learning only Chinese. ... Then subsequently, her friends told her, "Oh, you cannot leave your son in a Chinese school. When they are educated in Chinese, ... they would find it very hard to get good jobs. And [if] you want to work for the civil service and all that, you must be English educated." So she changed her mind and decided to transfer me to an English school. I had to start Primary 1 again in English this time.

*- Adapted from a 2002 oral interview with Lew Syn Pau, a student in the 1960s.
Lew later went on to become an MP.*

- According to Source 5, what were the reasons for the increasing popularity of English-language education?

In line with the bilingual education policy, several changes were made to the education system. In 1960, the first integrated schools were set up. In these schools, students who had different first languages studied on the same campus. This encouraged more interracial mixing and unity among students and teachers alike. Additionally, all students in primary and secondary schools had to learn two languages. By the end of the 1960s, the second language was made a compulsory examination subject in these schools.

Refer to Figure 10.6 below to find out more about how the government tried to strengthen the education system.

Policy	Reason	Examples of Actions That Were Taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater emphasis on mathematics, science and technical subjects in schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students would have the necessary knowledge and skills to work in the industrial sector when they graduated. A steady supply of trained workers would be available for the industrial sector, thus helping Singapore remain attractive to MNCs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From 1969, all male lower secondary students and half the female cohort had to take up technical subjects such as Woodwork, Technical Drawing and Home Economics. More technical teachers were trained, and specialised schools were set up to provide more opportunities for a technical education.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equal opportunities for education for girls and boys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone would be able to contribute to Singapore's economic progress. This would help foster greater unity and a sense of national identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Singaporean children were provided with free primary education. The government called on families to send both their sons and daughters to school.

▲ Figure 10.6: Some education policies from the late 1950s to the 1970s

By the end of the 1970s, the government saw that further changes had to be made to the education system to meet the new demands of the developing economy and society. Thus, Deputy Prime Minister Dr Goh Keng Swee led a team to review the education system. The team released the Goh Report in 1979, recommending changes to education policies, with an emphasis on the need to ensure that each child could learn at a pace suited to his or her ability.



▲ Education Minister Ong Pang Boon (centre) and his wife PAP MP Chan Choy Siong (centre right) at the opening of Queenstown Technical Secondary School (present-day Queenstown Secondary School extension, 1968)



◀ Students from Willow Avenue Secondary School in biology class, 1966. Located at Potong Pasir, the school was closed in 1991.

Improving Public Health Standards

Singapore also faced challenges in **public health**.⁹ This was due to overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions, and poor general hygiene and health habits among large parts of the population. Unsurprisingly, there was a high **infant mortality rate**.¹⁰ In 1965, there were 27.3 deaths per 1,000 births. Life-threatening infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and cholera were also widespread. Read Source 6 to learn more about the living conditions then.

SOURCE 6

The drain [near my house] was really filthy. ... It was almost like an open sewer, [and] ... a very convenient dumping ground for all kinds of waste. Chinese New Year, for example, that's when we [did] spring cleaning. All the stuff [we didn't] want, the most convenient place to throw it of course [was] this drain. ... Many of the rivers and streams in Singapore [were] used that way. ... It was quite a natural thing [to build our houses on stilts] because ... flooding was very common. ... [There was] garbage everywhere, [and] flies and mosquitoes. ... You would hear of cases of people down with malaria, typhoid, [tuberculosis. ... These were] conditions that [gave] rise to many of these diseases and public health problems.

- Adapted from a 2015 oral interview with Yap Kheng Guan on life in a kampong during the 1950s

- From Source 6, what actions do you think needed to be taken to improve public hygiene?

Since an unhealthy population would affect the development of the country, the government had to take steps to tackle the public health problems.

Earlier, you saw how the new HDB flats provided more hygienic and spacious living conditions, which helped minimise the spread of diseases. However, Health Minister Yong Nyuk Lin and his successors still faced the challenge of dealing with many serious public health issues, which threatened the health and livelihoods of the people.

Refer to Figures 10.7 and 10.8 on the following pages to learn about these problems and the measures taken to improve the cleanliness of the environment (Figure 10.7) and public health standards (Figure 10.8) in Singapore.

DID YOU KNOW?

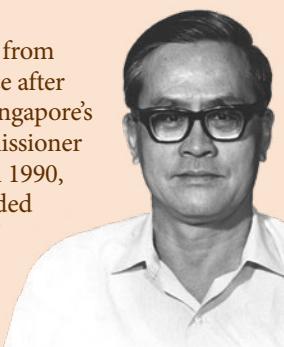
Cattle used to be farmed in heavily populated areas in Singapore. In the mid-1960s, a law was passed to clear them from these areas as they were seen as a threat to public health and property.

Who was YONG NYUK LIN?

Yong Nyuk Lin (1918–2012) was born in Negeri Sembilan, Malaya. Yong joined the PAP in 1955 and was elected into the Legislative Assembly as the representative for Geylang West in 1959.

Following stints as Minister for Education and Minister for Health, Yong served as Minister for Communications (1968–1975). Under his leadership, Singapore Airlines and the Singapore Telecommunications Authority (known today as Singtel) were created, and Singapore's civil aviation and container port facilities were expanded.

Yong retired from public service after serving as Singapore's High Commissioner to Britain. In 1990, he was awarded the Order of Nila Utama (Second Class).



⁹ Public health is concerned with protecting and improving the lives of the population and includes aspects such as disease prevention and public hygiene.

¹⁰ The infant mortality rate measures the number of deaths under one year of age among the total number of live-born babies in a particular area. A lower infant mortality rate is one indicator of a better standard of healthcare in a country.

Problem

Measures Taken

Living Conditions

Many people lived in squatter settlements near waterways that flowed to Singapore's reservoirs. Thus, there was a risk of sewage and other pollutants contaminating the water supply and posing a health hazard to the public.



▲ Squatter settlement on Serangoon Road, 1963

People who lived in these settlements were rehoused in HDB estates.



▲ HDB flats in Queenstown, 1962

Air Pollution

Due to increased industrial activity in Singapore, the air was getting more polluted, which could result in health problems.

WORST CANCER
HAZARD: AIR
POLLUTION

▲ Headline in *The Straits Times*, 11 April 1970

The government passed the Clean Air Act in 1971, which regulated the emission of pollutants into the air.

**Clean air fine
of \$5,000**

SINGAPORE. Sun. — Any person who contravenes or fails to comply with any provisions of

▲ Headline in *The Straits Times*, 17 January 1972

Risk of Flooding

Flooding frequently took place in several areas, which led to the spread of diseases such as dengue and cholera.



▲ Flooded barber shop, 1967

The government implemented flood control measures. For example, it built and widened drains and canals throughout the late 1960s and 1970s.



▲ Construction of a drainage canal, 1966

Problem

Measures Taken

Hawker Hygiene

Many in Singapore depended on street hawkers for their daily meals. However, a large number of the 50,000 street hawkers lacked knowledge of proper hygienic food preparation and waste disposal practices. Furthermore, 80% of them were unlicensed. This increased the risk of food poisoning.



▲ Street hawkers preparing sweet potatoes by the road, 1969

All hawkers had to be registered and licensed. This meant they had to observe proper hygiene practices and be screened and vaccinated against tuberculosis and other communicable diseases. They were also moved off the streets and into hawker centres, which had running water, electricity and proper waste disposal facilities.



▲ Jurong Town Hawker Centre, 1975

Public Cleanliness

It was common for rubbish to be dumped on the streets, which attracted pests and became a potential breeding ground for diseases. Many people also had a habit of littering and spitting in public.



▲ Pagoda Street in Chinatown filled with discarded rubbish, 1972

The Environmental Public Health Act was passed in 1968. Under the Act, people had to clear any rubbish dumped on their premises, and littering and spitting were punishable by fines. Waste collection was also improved, for example, through the purchase and use of new equipment.



▲ Anti-littering sign near the mouth of the Singapore River, 1969

▲ Figure 10.7: Public health issues and the measures taken to address them



▼ Empress Place Food Centre along the Singapore River, 1970s, with Empress Place Building (present-day Asian Civilisations Museum) and the clock tower of Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall in the background on the right. Empress Place Food Centre was opened in 1973 as part of Singapore's scheme to move hawkers off the streets and improve hygiene levels. It was demolished in 1993 to make way for the redevelopment of the Singapore River.



Learn more about further measures taken to improve public health standards as indicated on pages 188 and 189.

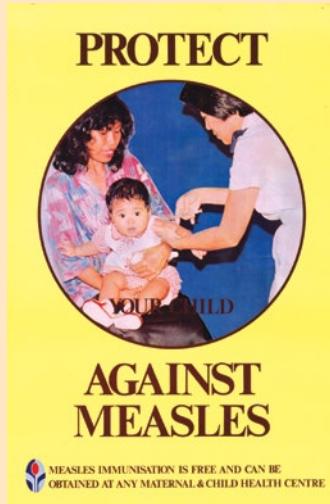
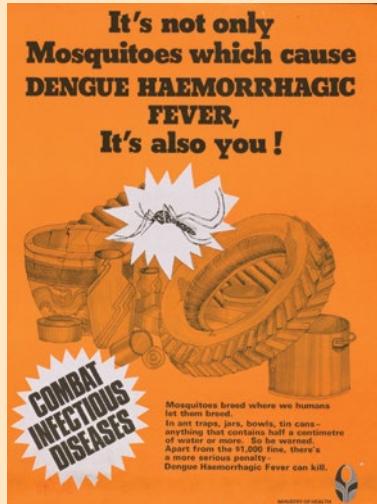
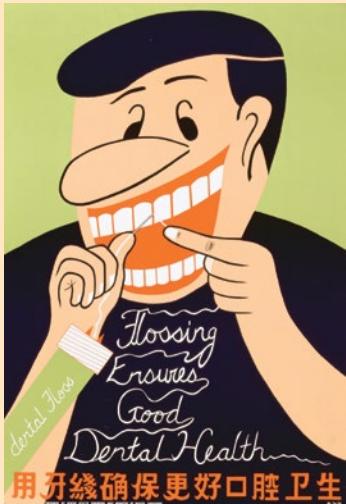
Aim

Examples

Conducting Public Health Campaigns

To increase awareness of important health practices regarding matters such as nutrition, maternal and infant care, and vaccination.

Public health talks were held and media such as posters, pamphlets, cartoons and films were produced to spread public health messages.



▲ Public health posters produced by the Ministry of Health in the 1970s

Improving Medical Facilities

To ensure that those in urgent need of medical care would receive prompt treatment at government hospitals.

Outpatient facilities at government hospitals were moved to separate government clinics, while both Thomson Road Hospital (part of present-day Changi General Hospital) and Tan Tock Seng Hospital were expanded to cater to more patients.



Thomson Road Hospital, 1965



◀ Health Minister Yong Nyuk Lin (third from left) touring the new extension to Thomson Road Hospital at its official opening, 1965

▲ Figure 10.8: Measures taken to improve public health standards

Aim

Examples

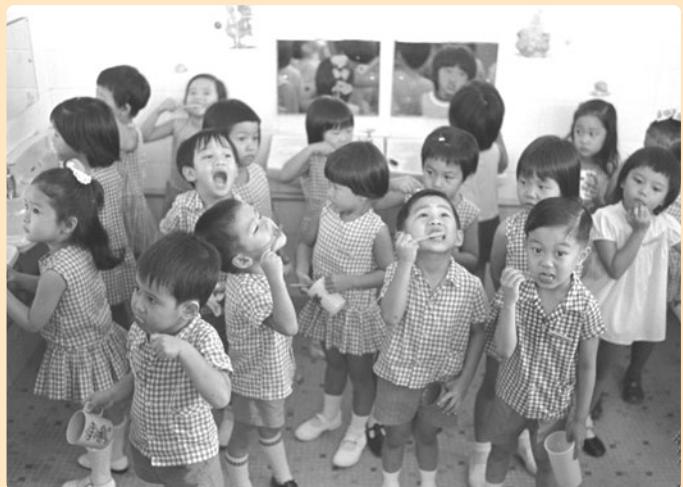
Improving Healthcare for School-Age Children

To tackle the high occurrence of medical and dental issues among school-age children.

The School Health Service introduced measures such as vaccinations and regular health check-ups in schools. Dental clinics were also set up in all new schools to detect dental problems.



▲ Students from Balestier Road Primary School lining up to have their teeth examined, 1970. The school has since closed.



▲ Children of Far Eastern Kindergarten carrying out their daily toothbrushing routine, introduced as part of the Ministry of Health's toothbrushing campaign, 1973

Improving Maternal and Child Healthcare

To ensure that the tens of thousands of babies born each year in Singapore grew up strong and healthy.

As parents often had fears about vaccinating their children, they were provided with information on the importance of being vaccinated against serious diseases such as diphtheria.



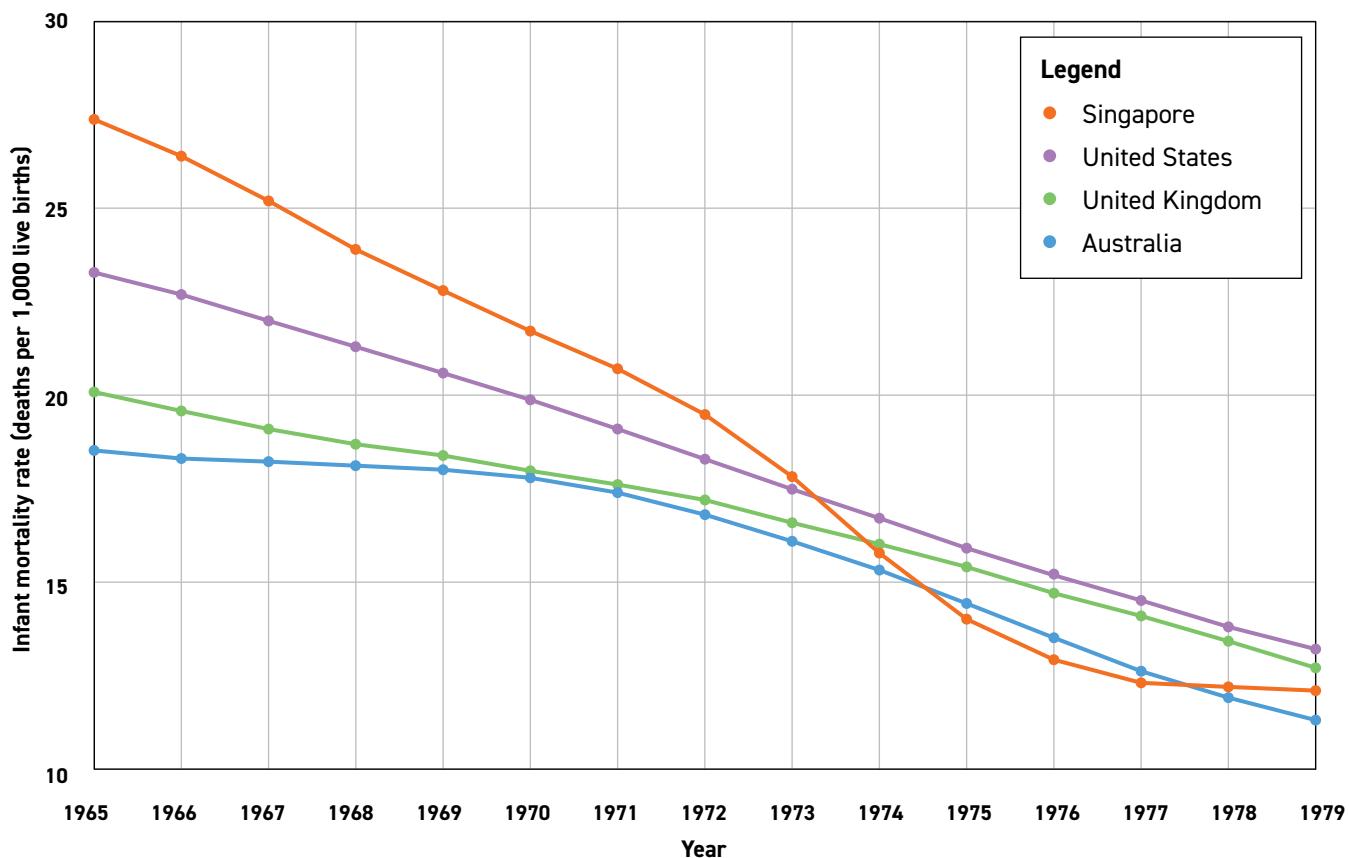
▲ Anti-polio vaccination campaign at the Institute of Health, 1962

**Diphtheria
wiped out
—thanks to the
child
immunisation
programme**

▲ Headline in the *New Nation*, 16 October 1976

As a result of the measures mentioned in Figures 10.7 and 10.8, the health of Singapore's population improved. For example, Singapore's infant mortality rate, which is an important indicator of the overall health of a country, dropped. Study Source 7 to find out more.

SOURCE 7



- Graph showing infant mortality rates in Singapore and selected developed countries (1965–1979), taken from World Bank data

- According to Source 7, how did Singapore's infant mortality rate compare to those of the other countries listed in the graph between 1965 and 1979?
- What does this tell you about efforts at improving maternal and child healthcare in Singapore?

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1966, Kandang Kerbau Maternity Hospital (now known as KK Women's and Children's Hospital) set a world record as the world's busiest maternity hospital, with 39,856 babies born in that year alone. It held this record for 10 years.

Mother with her newborn baby at Kandang Kerbau Maternity Hospital, 1972



Think!

Having read about the various challenges, which ones do you think were most urgent for the government to address upon independence? Why?

How Did People's Lives Change by the End of the 1970s?

As a result of the measures taken to address challenges to Singapore's economy, national identity and society, people's lives changed in various ways. Not only did their living standards improve, many also felt a greater sense of belonging and identity as Singaporeans.

Changes in Living Standards

By the late 1970s, the quality of life in Singapore had improved, as many people had better-paying jobs and lived in better conditions. They could afford basic necessities, and some even had the means to purchase items such as refrigerators and televisions, which were previously considered luxuries. The number of privately owned cars also increased. By 1973, there were 85 cars per 1,000 people, compared to just 58 cars per 1,000 people seven years earlier.



▲ Last-minute Christmas shopping at Plaza Singapura, 1976



▲ Spectators along North Bridge Road watching the march-past heading to the Padang for the 1972 National Day Parade

Conclusion

At the time of separation from Malaysia, Singapore had already experienced many changes from its days of self-government and merger. But as an independent nation-state, it faced a fresh set of challenges. New measures were needed in order to ensure that its people would not only survive but thrive under the new and unfamiliar circumstances. By the end of the 1970s, Singapore was in a better position to face the future as a young nation-state.



LET'S REVIEW

You have seen how much people's lives changed after 9 August 1965. You have also seen that some of these changes began before independence and continued into the post-independence years.

Review what you have learnt in this chapter by reflecting on the extent to which people's lives were transformed in the period from independence to the end of the 1970s. Follow the steps on the next page and fill in the table below. The first row has been filled in for you.

Area of Focus	What Were Some Developments or Events That Took Place?	What Changed?
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Attempts were made to diversify the economy, leading to a significant increase in manufacturing activity.The 1973 oil crisis affected Singapore's economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tens of thousands of new jobs were created.Many people enjoyed a higher standard of living.The oil crisis led to an increase in the cost of living.
National Identity		
Housing		
Education		
Public Health		

- In the second column, write down some developments or events that took place during this period.
- In the third and fourth columns, write down what changed and what stayed the same as a result of these developments or events.
- In the fifth column, indicate how far you think people's lives were transformed.

What Stayed the Same?	How Far Were People's Lives Transformed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The government continued to attract MNCs to set up factories in Singapore. 	 <p>No transformation Total transformation</p>
	 <p>No transformation Total transformation</p>
	 <p>No transformation Total transformation</p>
	 <p>No transformation Total transformation</p>
	 <p>No transformation Total transformation</p>



CASE INVESTIGATION

How far did the experiences of women in the workplace in Singapore change between 1965 and the end of the 1970s?

Up to the 1950s, many women in Singapore did not have the chance to go to school or work. They were often expected to focus on their traditional roles as wives and mothers, while men had the opportunity to receive an education and were the main breadwinner. This changed, especially after independence, as more educational and job opportunities became available to women.

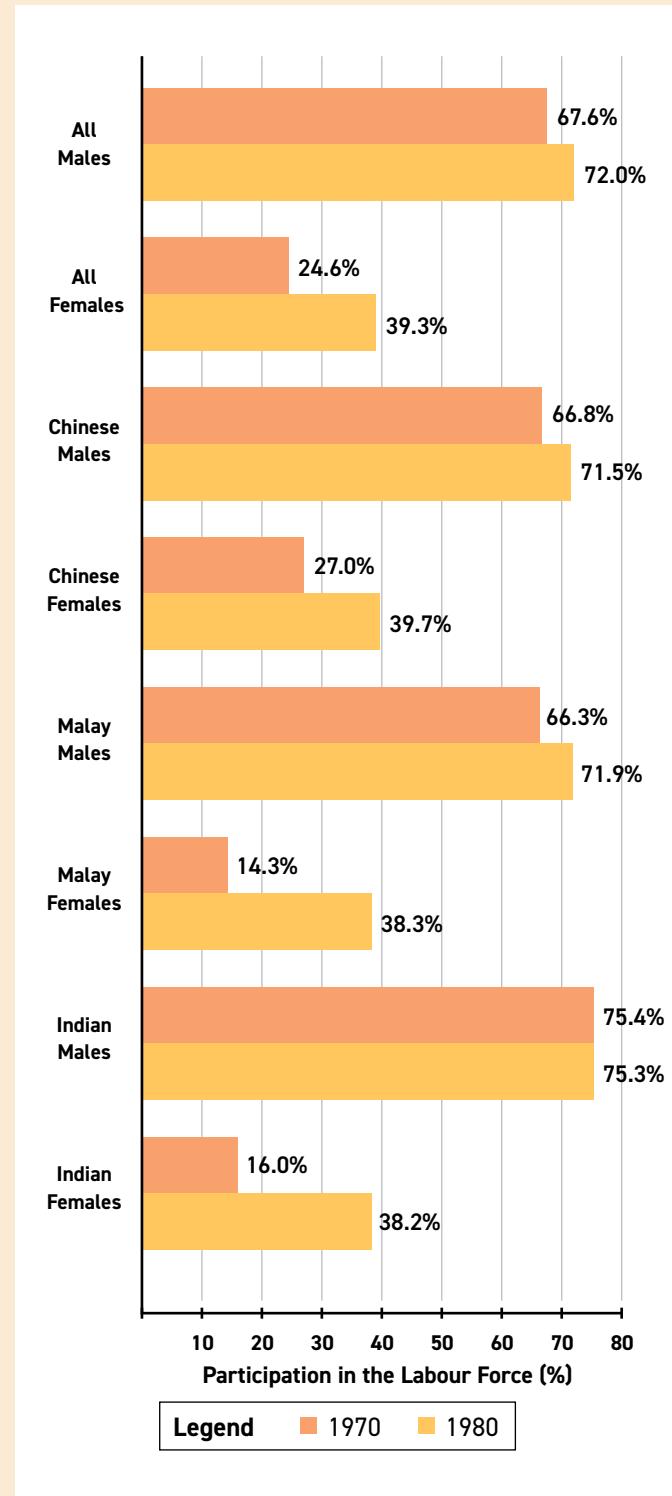
More and more parents became open to sending their daughters to school. By 1974, the number of girls enrolled in primary and secondary schools was almost equal to that of boys. Female students also made up 45.1 per cent of students enrolled in local universities in 1976, up from 30 per cent in 1966.

Women also had more opportunities to work outside their homes. More decided to join the workforce, as Singapore's growing economy meant more jobs were available, and with better salaries, working hours and benefits. As a result, the percentage of women participating in the labour force increased significantly between 1970 and 1980, as shown in Figure 10.9.

But did these opportunities change the experiences of women in every workplace? Read the following sources to find out more.



▲ One of Singapore's first female taxi drivers, 1976



▲ Figure 10.9: Graph showing the participation in the labour force in 1970 and 1980

SOURCE A

In 1970, Madam Chan Choy Siong stepped down from her Anson parliamentary seat to make way for new blood. **We've had no female Members of Parliament since.*** ... The pool of women who meet the ... requirements is small, and the number of women in that pool willing to consider a political career is much, much smaller. Singapore women are rapidly climbing the job ladder, moving confidently into ... management positions, showing that gender is, in most cases, an ... obstacle only in [people's] minds. More and more, ... women are running key departments if not entire organisations. Isn't it time women began to take a more active interest in the running of the country?

- Adapted from an article in The Singapore Monitor, a local newspaper, titled "It's About Time We Had a Woman MP", 24 April 1984

* Between 1970 and 1984, all of Singapore's MPs were male.

SOURCE B



▲ Male and female workers at a factory manufacturing typewriters in Bedok, 1974

SOURCE C

Five women have taken the initial step towards becoming the first woman air traffic controllers in the 15-year history of the Department of Civil Aviation. They joined eight men in an introductory course to air traffic control. ... Mr Willy Kwang [the Assistant Director of Civil Aviation (Operations)] said: "Women were not considered suitable for air traffic control originally as it was feared that **maternity leave*** for them would [have an impact on how much they could contribute at work]. But now men also need long leave for their **National Service commitments†** so that is not a valid reason any more." He added: "Asian women were also considered to be more 'fragile' than their Western counterparts. Controlling air traffic is not easy."

- Adapted from an article in The Straits Times, titled "Singapore's First Women Air Traffic Controllers", 28 July 1976

* Maternity leave refers to a period of absence from work granted by an employer to a mother before and after the birth of her child.

† After completing their National Service, Singaporean men may be called up for up to 40 days of reservist duties every year, for which employers in Singapore must grant them leave under the law.

SOURCE D

There was inequality [between men and women] in terms of employment. ... Even in the civil service, there was unequal pay. A male and a female with exactly the same educational background, even exactly the same age, would be employed into the government service at different pay, even in teaching. My sister started work in 1964, and I think her pay ... was at least \$100 less than [that of] her male colleague, and the pay at that time was not high. ... They ended unequal pay by the time I joined the service ... in 1969.

- Adapted from a 2005 oral interview with Koh Sauk Keow, a female teacher in the late 1960s

SOURCE E

Despite the laws and government policies, there are, I am afraid, still unfair prejudices against women in working life, in terms of allocation of responsibilities, promotion and training opportunities. These should be removed. I appeal to Singapore men to take a hard look at themselves. Male employers and superiors should not underrate the abilities of their female employees or subordinates. Of course, deep-rooted prejudices against women cannot be removed overnight by speeches or curbed by law. Respect has to be earned and I am confident that our Singapore women will respond to the challenge with a little help from their male counterparts in society and in the home. Singapore men should in turn shoulder greater responsibility at home at caring for, guiding and educating the children.

- An excerpt from the opening address by then Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Abdul Rahim Ishak at a seminar organised by the Singapore Business and Professional Women's Association, 21 September 1979

INVESTIGATE!

1. Read **Source A**. Identify one area of change and one area of continuity in terms of the role of women after independence.
2. Study **Source B**. What does it tell you about men's and women's opportunities in the workplace?
3. Read **Source C**. What reasons were given for women not being employed as air traffic controllers in the past?
4. Read **Source D**. According to the source, in what ways might women not feel valued in the workplace?
5. Read **Source E**. What was significant about the Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs giving this speech?

REPORT!

How far do you think the experiences of women in the workplace changed? Fill in the table below using evidence from the sources. An example has been done for you. Do note that some sources may only contain evidence that suggests either more or less advancement.

How Far Did the Experiences of Women in the Workplace in Singapore Change Between 1965 and the End of the 1970s?	
Area Where More Advancement Was Made	Area Where Less Advancement Was Made
Source A states that "more and more, ... women are running key departments if not entire organisations", which shows that women had greater responsibilities at work than before.	
I think that overall, after independence, women made great/small/few advancements in the workplace as ...	

CONCLUSION

What You Have Learnt

Over the past two years, you have had an exciting journey uncovering Singapore's history and exploring how it has developed over more than 700 years with influences from regional and global forces.

You started by learning how Singapore was a part of key trading networks with India, China, the Southeast Asian region and beyond from as early as 1299. You went on to find out how British rule and external developments, as well as the contributions of various migrants, helped make Singapore a dynamic and flourishing port city.

You also witnessed how Singapore fell to the Japanese during World War II, and what changes this brought to the lives of the people. Subsequently, you learnt how its post-World War II road to independence was influenced by global and regional forces, and individuals during this period. Finally, you explored the challenges that Singapore faced as a young nation-state and uncovered how its people overcame these difficulties.

Throughout your study of Singapore's journey through time, you have seen how the course of its history was dependent on the interaction between historical circumstances and the decisions and actions of individuals. Bearing that in mind, take some time to reflect on the roles people have played in shaping developments in Singapore from 1299 to the end of the 1970s, and how their contributions are still evident in Singapore today.



▲ Female internees forced to bow to their Japanese guards at Sime Road Camp, 1942



▲ Chinese Middle School Student Riots, May 1954



◀ First batch of national servicemen taking the Oath of Allegiance, 1967



▲ Majapahit-style headless horseman, c. 14th century



▲ Pages of the 1819 Treaty between Sir Stamford Raffles, Sultan Hussein and Temenggong Abdul Rahman



▲ Boat Quay, 1920s



▲ Rickshaw puller and his passenger, c. 1890s



▲ British commanders on their way to surrender to the Japanese, 15 February 1942



◀ Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew speaking over television on Singapore's separation from Malaysia, 9 August 1965



◀ Central Business District, 1977

▼ View of Singapore River, 1978, Kou Shang-Wei



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