



THE MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE SEPARATION IMPACT TO MALAYSIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract:

The 1965 separation of Malaysia and Singapore was a crucial event in the history of Southeast Asia, greatly impacting Malaysia's national security situation. This article examines the continuous threats and long-term effects of the separation on Malaysia's national security apparatus. Singapore's separation from Malaysia was influenced by several factors, including profound political ideology, economic gaps, and racial conflicts. As a result, Malaysia had to traverse a challenging regional landscape characterized by the Cold War, communist insurgencies, and power dynamics among neighbouring countries. Following the immediate aftermath, Malaysia's task was to reaffirm authority and stability within its recently delineated boundaries. Malaysia's national security strategy has evolved, with a focus on enhancing its defence infrastructure, fortifying bilateral relationships with neighbouring nations, and actively participating in international alliances. This article employs a qualitative approach to elucidate the threats between Malaysia and Singapore, utilizing NVivo 12 software for data analysis. It concludes by highlighting the significance and relevancy of the Malaysia-Singapore separation, as well as the existence of new threats between both states.

Keywords:

Impact, Malaysia-Singapore Separation, National Security, NVivo 12, Threat

Introduction

National security is a dynamic and multi dimensional concept evolving with changes in the global landscape, technological advancements and emerging threats (Zelizer & Greenberg, 2024). Futhermore, it's refers to the protection and preservation of a nation's sovereignty,

territorial integrity and the well being of its society from any internal and external threats (Ringas, 2023). The issues of national security has played a crucial role to the Malaysia's stability. National security refers to a state of being free from any threat, whether internally or externally to it's core values (Prebilic, 2020). The state's government fully responsible for ensuring the national security are continuously safeguarded and well maintained. National security does not simply imply preserving territorial integrity. It also entails ensuring the country's rapid industrialization and the development of a unified, equitable and technical society. Anything that gets in the way of its progress whether inside or outside, is a national security threats (Singh, 2015). Threats are no longer mainly military in nature and security is not primarily about defending national boundaries. These non-military risks have become one of the focal points of state survival, as well as to the survival of populations that live within the state's boundary (Abdullah, 2010).

The issues of national security in Malaysia can be traced throughout history, impacting the state's future. When Malaysia which are before independence well known as Malaya was colonized by the British, the state's security issues were under the care of colonial power. However, after the independence, this country needed to organise itself to resist and counter challenges that endangered the national security. Additionally, there are two types of main component that affects Malaysia's national security since 1957 which is internal and external. This paper are focusing on the external threat to Malaysia's national security.

In terms of the external component, Malaysia's national security was influenced by the Malaysia-Singapore separation in 1965. The separation of Malaysia and Singapore remains a pivotal moment in Southeast Asian history, profoundly impacting the political, economic, and social landscapes of both nations. While much has been written about this separation, its implications for Malaysia's national security deserve closer scrutiny. The secession of Singapore, which occurred against a backdrop of ethnic tensions and divergent political ideologies, posed immediate and long-term security challenges for Malaysia.

The departure of Singapore exacerbated ethnic tensions within Malaysia, particularly between the Malay majority and the Chinese minority. The split heightened fears of communal violence, necessitating robust internal security measures. Additionally, Malaysia had to navigate the geopolitical landscape of the Cold War, where regional security was precarious, and the potential for external threats from communist insurgencies and neighboring countries was a significant concern.

Over the long term, the separation influenced Malaysia's security strategies and defense policies. The need to safeguard its sovereignty led Malaysia to strengthen its military capabilities and seek regional cooperation frameworks, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to ensure collective security and stability. Furthermore, the economic competition with Singapore pushed Malaysia to adopt policies aimed at ensuring economic security, which is intrinsically linked to national stability.

Methodology

This research was studied qualitatively and NVivo 12 software has been used to analysed the data. The qualitative approach aims to explore and understand a phenomenon by searching for relevant sources of information in the form of words or texts, which are then collected and analysed (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Qualitative methods allow this article to use interpretivist

paradigms to perceive social reality as a phenomenon that can change rapidly, experience processes, and subjective meaning as a result of social construction (Lan, 2018).

Data collection was carried out through primary data and secondary data. Primary data involved interview with the informants from various background which is academicians, industry expert in the field of national security and also involved politicians. Secondary data came from libraries, documents, thesis regarding the Malaysia-Singapore separation 1965 issues. The literature search focused on articles published in peer-reviewed journals to ensure the perspective was up-to-date and relevant to the study (Snyder, 2019). Through qualitative methods, this study can provide in-depth insights into the role of Malaysia-Singapore separation 1965 threats to national security.

NVivo 12 software has been used to analysed the data. According to Burns (2000), data analysis is about finding meaning from the data and then presenting it in a systematic form. There are three types of data that will be analyzed in this study. The data are obtained from in-depth interviews, field study and documents analysis. All the data are organized and prepared in text form called 'verbatim data'.

Table 1
NVivo 12: Steps in Data Analytical Process Protocols

No.	Steps	Data Analytical Process
1	Step one	Transcribe and organise all the data
2	Step two	To generate the initial codes for the first field study set based on interviews and document review.
3	Step three	Take notes from individual reflections or other remarks in the margin
4	Step four	To make similar phrases, patterns, and themes and divide between sub-contexts and sequences.
5	Step five	To mark off these samples and modes, similarities and varieties and take them out to the field for data collection.
6	Step six	To elaborate on a minor generalisation set covering the correlations in the database.
7	Step seven	To examine these generalisations within a framework.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), the analysis process occurs in two stages. The first stage begins during the data collection process. At this stage, the researcher may already have a general idea of the themes and categories present in the collected data. The second stage occurs after the data collection process. In this stage, the data is specifically analyzed to understand and extract themes, categories, and subcategories. This second stage is called content analysis. The collected data is then interpreted based on themes derived from the literature review through a deductive process. Additionally, the data is analyzed to identify new themes from the study findings through an inductive process (Mohd Tobi, 2017). During the analysis process, tasks such as data cleaning, understanding the data, and generating themes and categories will be performed with the assistance of the NVivo 12.0 software.

During the process of constructing categories and themes, the researcher assigns codes (open coding) for each theme along with operational definitions. These definitions are specific to this study, regardless of whether they align with established definitions or not. This is because the use of themes refers to the meanings used by the study participants and informants.

Literature Review

The 1965 separation of Singapore from Malaysia changed Malaysia's implementation approach on the outside. *Lee Kuan Yew and Malaysia* article by James Chin (2015) explains the differences in ideologies and the very different ways that Singapore and Malaysia governed their policies. Malaysia used race-based policies, but Singapore used meritocracy. According to Lee Kuan Yew, most Malaysians consider themselves to be Malay; all else are foreigners, and the Bumiputras, sons of the land, rule the nation. The majority of Singapore's professional elite comprises mainly Chinese-Malaysians, while more than half of the country's post-independence cabinet members are Singaporeans by birth. Besides, the most significant factor is Lee Kuan Yew's connection with Tun Mahathir. His opinions on Malaysia were undoubtedly influenced by their tense relationship. Lee Kuan Yew was a realist who could not alter geography or history. By utilising previous agreements or international law as the cornerstone of all negotiations with Malaysia, he controlled the relationship with Tun Mahathir (James Chin, 2015).

Singapore might quit the federation and become independent as a result of Tunku Abdul Rahman's "agonised choice," according to Mushahid Ali (2015) in *Separation 1965: The Tunku's "agonised decision"*. Due to the caustic nature of the disagreements between the state government of Singapore and the federal government of Malaysia, Tunku determined it was better for Singapore to follow its own course. Without it, there was no possibility of peace. On August 9, 1965, a constitutional decree formalised a settlement between the state of Singapore and the federal government, causing Singapore to become independent from Malaysia. The act of separation was carried out by approving an amendment to the Malaysian Constitution and ratifying the Separation Agreement signed by the governments of Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. Singapore has suggested the division of Malaysia into the old states of Malaya and the new states of Singapore, Sarawak, Sabah, and Penang, as an alternative constitutional system for the looser confederation. This idea was born out of the Malaysian Solidarity Convention's appeal from political organisations for a "Malaysian Malaysia" that would guarantee equality for all the states and ethnic groups in the nation. This demand outraged Malaysia's governing alliance, particularly the powerful UMNO. Malaysia's top officials were worried that violence would break out, resulting in racial clashes across the country as the dispute raged the emotions of the Malays (Ali, 2015). The history of Singapore's independence from the Malaysian federation is explained in this article. Although Malaysia and Singapore carefully considered their choice, preserving the peace between the two nations is essential.

Research Findings And Discussion : Section 1

The form of external threat contribute to the state's national security related to the Malaysia-Singapore Separation in 1965.



Figure 1: External Threat to Malaysia After Independence

Malaysia-Singapore Separation 1965

Based on the analysis conducted, the research findout that the Malaysia-Singapore Separation 1965 revolves around related category which are (a) Impact to national security. Table 1 indicate the Malaysian – Singapore Separation 1965.

Table 1: Malaysia-Singapore Separation 1965

No	Theme	INVS								DAN S1-7	OM 1-2
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
a.	Impact to national security	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	-

Impact to National Security

The Malayan-Singapore separation 1965 impact to national security as in table 2 composed of two main themes which are first, threats to national security and second, new threats exist.

Table 2: Threat National Security

No	Theme	INVS								DAN S1-7	OM 1-2
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
a.	Threat to national security	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	-
b.	New threats exist	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	-

Source: Fatimah Binti Kuzi, Phd Thesis on “The Malaysia’s National Security in Relations to Political and Ethnic Stability in Conforming to Ibn Khaldun Model”

The first theme in research finding, the Malaysia-Singapore separation in 1965 are the threat to Malaysia’s national security (IVNS1, 2023; IVNS2, 2023; IVNS4, 2023; IVNS6, 2023; IVNS8, 2023; DANS2, 2023). At the time, the separation generated apprehension on both sides. Singapore harbored concerns regarding Malaysia's intentions, while Malaysia reciprocated with assertions of its inability to trust Singapore. This mutual distrust, characterized by a lack of confidence between the two parties, was widely regarded as

detrimental to regional security. Currently, the notion of an immediate threat from Singapore is not a pressing concern for Malaysia. While some residual mistrust persists, both nations are highly interdependent, particularly in economic terms. The adversarial perspective prevalent in 1965 is no longer a prudent stance. Malaysia and Singapore share substantial economic interdependence and maintain close socio-cultural connections. Many Singaporeans have relatives in Malaysia, and there is a shared cultural heritage, including similar culinary traditions and linguistic ties, such as the use of Malay Chinese. This extensive equality and interconnectedness align with the principles of liberalism, which posit that economic interdependence reduces the likelihood of conflict. Thus, Malaysia-Singapore relations are characterized by mutual interdependence (IVNS1, 2023).

IVNSS4 (2023) also explain “But for a long time we can't, neither does the DAP ideology remain. Malaysia-Singapore relations are not like Malaysia-Indonesia relations, other. That's reality. But Indonesia thinks we're his brothers, and he is his big brother. But with Singapore we have no feelings of love, hatred and have the prejudice because of the Chinese itself. That's sentiment. Maybe it's better to break up. And the lesson for Singapore that we weren't at Tunku's place at the time. Two years of pain, so that it doesn't spread, it's better to break up”. IVNS6 (2023) explain “Singapore is an 80% Chinese country. Built on the basis of a secular state and a free market. By themselves, the Chinese have the advantage of being political and capitalist. Malay lags behind even though there's a policy that helps Malay, but it's unsatisfactory. Developed on the principle of secularism, capitalism. They were built and assisted by the Western powers, Isreal. Isreal was important in developing defence forces in Singapore from the outset. It's not a secret. George Yeo. Recruited from Israel”.

Singapore is acutely aware of potential threats impacting its foreign policy, often referring to itself as the 'Little Red Dot' amid the Muslim-majority nations in the Malay world. The legacy of past emergencies continues to influence its policies, as evidenced by its retention of the Internal Security Act (ISA), which Malaysia has abolished. Singapore, a small nation with a developing economy, features a Malay minority that is relatively less demanding, contributing to a perception of stability. However, dissatisfaction exists among many Malay-Chinese, though it is managed through a combination of strict governance and a system of give and take. High-quality services and infrastructure are appreciated by the populace, yet there are underlying concerns about human rights and depression.

Singapore's bureaucracy is known for its efficiency, which is critical from a security standpoint. The relationship between Malaysian politicians and Singaporean counterparts plays a significant role in regional stability. Singapore prioritizes security and maintains the right to consult on defense matters as it sees fit, which cannot be contested externally. Its approach to marginalization is subtle, characterized by a discreet version of a bumiputera policy. Unlike Malaysia, which openly labels its affirmative action policies as part of the bumiputera constitution, Singapore implements similar measures without explicit acknowledgment, creating a more delicate situation.

The issue of racial oppression is more pronounced in Malaysia, where systemic corruption and misrepresentation exacerbate the problem. In contrast, Singapore's policies are implemented in a manner that avoids overt racial categorization, presenting a more refined approach to ethnic relations (IVNS6, 2023)

The findings of this study indicate that the Malaysia-Singapore separation posed a significant threat to Malaysia's national security at the time of its occurrence. However, this threat was temporary and confined to that specific period. In the present context, the issue of Malaysia-Singapore separation no longer holds significant relevance and does not pose a threat to Malaysia's national security.

Research Findings And Discussion : Section 2

Malaysia-Singapore Separation 1965 Not Continuous Threats to Malaysia's National Security

However, in the current context, the issue of Malaysia-Singapore relations no longer poses a threat to national security. This statement was supported by IVNS 1 (2023), "Still considered a threat to national security? I understand before when it first happened in 1965, yes, it created a great concern for our national security. However in my view, that situation has a lesson, and has been reduced to the extent that I am of the view that I don't think that I were not considered as a threat today. Before yes. So if you want your view still be a threat then you need some support from an official statement or book that say yes it is. To me, no. In the beginning yes. Why in the beginning it affected the political stability of the country because of the breakup, the breakup of the territory is one symbol or symptom of insecurity".

IVNS2 (2023) "I think the two countries are advanced and sovereign, there is no real threat anymore and there is still perception. I believe this matter is no longer of significance. The separation of Singapore from Malaysia posed a concern due to racial status. Singapore is predominantly inhabited by the Chinese ethnic group, whereas the Malay ethnic group forms the majority in the Federation".

IVNS5 (2023) "No issue. We already accept that we are separated. But we know that we are very interdependent on each other. Economically but politically we are separated. And even Malay politician proposed that Singapore rejoin Malaysia, I don't think we want to accept it. Because they are going to reduce the political power of the Malay and dominated by race Singaporeans. It is impossible for us to merge politically. Economically, yes. I can foresee the future, but our economy is still lagging behind. So how to catch-up with Singapore because we rely more on Singapore, Singapore relies on us in terms of resources, but I don't think we produce more of them. Resources in terms of main power: yes. Other than that, I don't think so. They are going to hi-tech. Our capital exports outside, especially to Singapore".

IVNS8 (2023) explain "The dynamic has changed. Not an external threat. But an internal threat. The creation of Malaysia was designed to allow British control of the area. Indonesia disagrees and creates confrontation. British plan to control the area. Indonesian security feels threatened. We don't want the influence of internal and external invaders. Sabah Serawak will have a domino effect because of Vietnam. Fear of a communist threat. Tunku fought against the communists for a long time. The insurgency has succeeded".

Both countries have attained political stability and maturity, with established governance structures that effectively manage internal and external challenges. The presence of institutional mechanisms for conflict resolution and crisis management further reduces the likelihood of bilateral tensions escalating into security threats.

Despite their political separation, Malaysia and Singapore maintain significant cultural, linguistic, and familial ties. These sociocultural connections foster mutual understanding and goodwill. Regular people-to-people exchanges, facilitated by travel, education, and business interactions, have strengthened social bonds and diminished the likelihood of conflict.

Research Findings And Discussion : Section 3

New Threats Exist

Second theme related to Malaysia-Singapore Separation in 1965 was new threats exist between both states (IVNS1, 2023; IVNS2, 2023; IVNS4, 2023; IVNS6, 2023; IVNS8, 2023; DANS2, 2023) IVNS1 (2023) “To continue Singapore our national security concern would not be good for our interest and relations with Singapore. But you can say, we still because defending national security ini even in peacetime it’s normal, but we dont target Singapore. We do our defence capabilities to protect our national security, and territory sovereignty. National defence white paper, national security-protect our national security, to enhance our national security. We don’t want to make enemies. That is one strategy. We have a residue of trust, but there is no hostility. National security and sovereignty is not negotiable. That is the reason we continue to enhance our defence”.



Figure 2: New Threats between Malaysia-Singapore

IVNS4 (2023) explain “With Singapore, there's a water deal, a border deal, defence intelligence is always tense with Singapore”. IVNS5 (2023) “But we know that we are very interdependent on each other. Economically but politically we are separated. And even Malay politician proposed that Singapore rejoin Malaysia, I don’t think we want to accept it”.

Because political integration would diminish the political power of the Malay population and be dominated by Singaporeans, a political merger between Malaysia and Singapore is not feasible. Economically, however, integration is possible and foreseeable in the future. Despite Malaysia's economic lag, both countries are economically interdependent. Malaysia relies on Singapore for economic activities, while Singapore depends on Malaysia for certain resources, particularly manpower. However, Malaysia does not produce a significant amount of other

resources, and Singapore's focus on high-tech industries further accentuates this disparity. Malaysia's capital often flows outward, especially towards Singapore.

In the event of economic collapse, both regional economies would suffer. Traditionally, military perspectives regard other countries as potential threats, but from a liberal standpoint, nations are viewed as common friends rather than threats. The pandemic highlighted the mutual reliance between Malaysia and Singapore, revealing that threats are not solely physical but also include non-military elements. Countries in Southeast Asia, including Malaysia and Singapore, do not build defense strategies based on offensive capabilities but rather on defensive postures.

IVNS6 (2023) "The primary concern is in religious extremism". Malaysia and Singapore engage in cooperation, yet some disparities persist. For instance, Zakir Naik, who is considered inappropriate in Singapore, has been accepted in Malaysia. This issue underscores a broader concern. The Malaysian Agreement lacks stringent binding force, and while Singapore upholds secularism, the Islamic institution in Malaysia, which is pro-Salafi, safeguards Zakir Naik. Singapore's refusal to accept him is significant. Collaboration between the two nations is crucial. Historically, Singapore was a center for the habib hub, and denying entry to certain individuals can potentially foster the development of extremism. Therefore, it is imperative to address extremist matters under the jurisdiction of the central government and classify them as security concerns to achieve policy synchronization. While religion falls under the jurisdiction of the state, coordinating on security issues related to extremism is essential for maintaining regional stability. (IVNS6, 2023).

IVNS7 (2023) "So now it's a threat. Ethnic threats, migration, border, economic, refugee, and cultural competition threats. Everyone wants to claim. The same goes for Singapore. We take Singapore as our little sister; they're moving forward. Singapore's foreign policy with Malaysia is different. They can be nice to Israel. This is a competition. From the airspace point of view, there's a problem. So it's a threat, and it has to be dealt with, not with confrontation".

Addressing these emerging threats requires effective communication, dialogue, and cooperation between Malaysia and Singapore, as well as a commitment to resolving differences peacefully and promoting regional stability and prosperity.

Conclusion

The findings of this article certify that the separation of Malaysia and Singapore in 1965 was considered a threat to Malaysia's national security. The main reasons behind the conflict was the political rivalry between the ruling parties in Malaysia (United Malays National Organisation, UMNO) and Singapore (People's Action Party, PAP) heightened tensions. There were concerns that the ideological and political differences could lead to further conflicts. Besides that, the split exacerbated existing ethnic tensions. Singapore's predominantly Chinese population and its political leadership under Lee Kuan Yew had been at odds with the Malaysian central government's policies, which favored the Malay majority. There were fears that the separation might fuel ethnic conflicts within Malaysia itself, particularly given the communal riots that had already occurred. These factors combined to create a complex security environment for Malaysia in the immediate aftermath of the separation.

But unfortunately, the separation of Malaysia and Singapore in 1965 is no longer considered a threat to Malaysia's national security for several reasons. Over the decades, Malaysia and

Singapore have developed a strong and cooperative bilateral relationship. Both countries work together on various fronts, including economic partnerships, security collaborations, and regional stability initiatives. Besides that, both Malaysia and Singapore are founding members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which promotes regional stability, economic integration, and security cooperation. ASEAN provides a platform for dialogue and conflict resolution, reducing the risk of bilateral conflicts. The economic interdependence between Malaysia and Singapore has grown significantly. Singapore is one of Malaysia's top trading partners, and both countries benefit from mutual investments and trade. This economic bond creates a vested interest in maintaining peaceful and stable relations. Both nations have experienced political maturity and stability, which has allowed them to focus on cooperative rather than adversarial relationships. Malaysia and Singapore engage in regular military exercises and have mechanisms for security cooperation. This collaboration helps both countries address common security challenges, such as terrorism and maritime security, fostering a sense of mutual trust.

In summary, the separation of Malaysia and Singapore in 1965 is no longer a threat to Malaysia's national security due to the evolution of strong diplomatic, economic, and security ties, along with regional cooperation through ASEAN, political maturity, and the positive influence of globalization.

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