Michael D. Barr

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A Modern History

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I.B. TAURIS
LONDON · NEW YORK

Published in 2019 by
I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd
London • New York
www.ibtauris.com

References to websites were correct at the time of writing.

ISBN: 978 1 78076 305 7
eISBN: 978 1 78672 527 1
ePDF: 978 1 78673 527 0

A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library
A full CIP record is available from the Library of Congress

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: available

Text design, typesetting and eBook by BBR Design, Sheffield

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Foreword

CARL A. TROCKI

The Australian scholar, Michael Barr, has written extensively on contemporary Singapore politics and its political economy. Over the past two decades he has published works on the thought of Lee Kuan Yew, on the political economy of Singapore Inc., on Asian values and on the social impact of Singapore's educational system, among other things. In all of this he has pioneered looking behind the curtains of mythology and self-congratulation that have become hallmarks of the 'story' of Singapore's success, as told by its elite class. With this book, Barr makes an important contribution to the literature on Singapore's history and sets a new standard for scholarly treatment of the state.

While I have never thought of him as an outspoken critic of the regime, his work has provided considerable evidence that the self-portrait of Mr Lee and his government is not always what they would wish us to believe. At the same time he has not been slow to recognise the legitimate and considerable accomplishments of the city-state. In some cases he argues that these might be more impressive than those for which People's Action Party (PAP) claims credit. The current work offers a number of examples of this view.

Although much of his recent work has been in contemporary political study, this book revisits his original discipline, which is history. Speaking as a historian myself, I find this cross-over of history and contemporary politics both gratifying and extraordinary. Rarely do students of politics do more than provide a cursory and stereotypical view of the historical developments that have shaped their subjects. I hasten to add that Barr himself is not usually guilty of this blind spot but, even allowing for that, he has approached Singapore's past in a unique manner. Although six of the eight substantive chapters deal mainly with the years before 1965, the entire book is truly grounded in the issues and problems of the twenty-first century. Rather than a standard chronological approach, Barr has opted for what I see as a thematic approach, or perhaps a problem-based approach.

The main 'problem' as Barr sees it, is 'The Singapore Story'. This is the title of Lee Kuan Yew's historical autobiography – himself and Singapore – as if the two could

not be separated. In this sense, Barr's book is frankly in the category of 'revisionist' history. It is important to understand that 'history' in Singapore has a rather interesting history. At first, when Singapore became independent under the rule of Lee and his PAP, the government felt there was little need for history. In their eyes, as of 1965, the world was made anew. The British colonial past was little more than a period in which many Chinese had come to settle on the island. Singapore had been born out of a series of crises beginning with the Japanese Occupation, the communist 'threat' and the experience as part of Malaysia. In any case, the past was now irrelevant. These three 'crises' had been overcome by the wise leadership of the PAP and Lee Kuan Yew and there was no need to probe further. In Singapore's schools and in the public discourse of the 1960s and 1970s, there was virtually no history beyond this.

By the 1980s, the government's view on the uselessness of history had changed. A new generation had arisen which had not known the strife of the past and it was deemed necessary to inform them about the history of those who had built this new Singapore. Thus we see the origins of the Singapore Story. This was a tale of great men, such as Thomas Stamford Raffles who had founded this dynamic port city where only a sleepy Malay fishing village had formerly existed in 1819. It had been populated by rags-to-riches Chinese immigrants supplying tin, rubber and pepper to Britain and the world. Mary Turnbull had written the history of British Singapore. Then came a series of crises: the Japanese Occupation, the communist threat and the unhappy experience with Malaysia. Singapore faced a grim economic future and was surrounded by danger on all sides. Luckily, Singapore had been steered through these recent difficulties by the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew. Today, Singapore lives with this 'mythology', as Loh Kah Seng has described it.

Barr begins his attempt to redress this somewhat lopsided version of the past by looking at three 'problems' that force us to readjust our thinking about Singapore. These include Singapore's 'place', secondly its 'size' and thirdly, whether it is a city or a nation. In discussing place, Barr begins with a circumstance of which few would be aware. He offers us a map showing Singapore as a major node of the global undersea cable network. These cables carry about 95% of the world's electronic communications. His map shows that Singapore is on a level with London, New York, San Francisco and Tokyo in terms of importance. Perhaps this centrality could be explained by the fact that gutta-percha, the substance that was initially used to coat those marine cables, was a product of the Johor rainforests and was 'discovered' in Singapore and exported to the world from Singapore. It is also important to remember that the network was created in the nineteenth century, and except for the fibre-optic cables that now make up the bulk of the network, it remains an example of nineteenth-century technology. But, there is more to Singapore's position than this.

In terms of global shipping, it is likewise important as a major node between the Indian and Pacific oceans at the entrance to the Straits of Malacca. This centrality is nothing new, but has been the case since the mid-nineteenth century. Today, Singapore is also a global node of airline traffic, a financial centre, a petroleum centre and, of course, a shopping centre. Moreover, recent archaeological evidence has shown that Singapore had been the site of a prominent entrepôt on the Indian Ocean–South China Sea trade routes perhaps as early as the twelfth century. On the other hand, this centrality was not inevitable.

In 1819, Raffles' choice of Singapore as a British port was actually quite arbitrary. Barr argues that Raffles chose the site largely because it was *available* at the time. In fact, he and William Farquhar had originally hoped to found a settlement at nearby Riau, on Bentan Island, but the Dutch had managed to pre-empt their scheme. They then turned to Karimun, but finally settled on Singapore because the Malay prince, the Temenggong Abdul Rahman, had set up a residence there. The Temenggong, who possessed the island by hereditary right, offered a slight cover of legitimacy to Raffles' claim. For the Temenggong, Raffles offered the chance to make Singapore an important node of Asian commerce. Also, in this story, it is important to acknowledge the role of Farquhar who had the on-the-ground knowledge to lead Raffles to Singapore Island.

Singapore, despite its excellent harbour, was not necessarily destined to be the great port of the Straits. Although Singapore had flourished in the fourteenth century and again in the sixteenth, in other times, other sites had been equally significant, including Malacca, Riau, Johor, Palembang, Aceh and Kedah. Barr's argument clearly undercuts a number of key myths of Singapore's history. The first is the wisdom and foresight attributed to Raffles and the importance of the 1819 date. As I have suggested earlier in my own work, the whole period between 1795 and 1824, when the Napoleonic Wars shook the world, was transitional. In the eighteenth century both Holland and France were considerable counter-weights to British power. Britain's position in Asia (and Singapore's especially) was not secured until well after Waterloo. Barr places the narrative of Raffles' 'foundation' of Singapore squarely as a minor consequence of this shift in hegemonic power rather than as part of a grand design. Finally, as Barr makes clear, for most of the nineteenth century, Singapore remained an 'Asian' port, or an Indian Ocean port. It was one more reincarnation in the succession of multicultural entrepôts that have made up what John Miksic has styled the 'silk road of the sea' for nearly two millennia. The East India Company gained nothing from the possession, even though its merchants prospered.

On the other hand, Barr also makes clear that while Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP did much to overhaul and renovate Singapore's economy after 1965, it was not really a case of 'Third World to First' as the myth boasts. The British and European contribution

to Singapore's economic situation became crucial in the late nineteenth century and maintained its importance through the early twentieth century. Such factors as the development of steam travel, the railroad, the modernisation of Singapore's port facilities, its shipbuilding industry, its place in the oil industry, the trans-oceanic cable network and even Singapore's early industrialisation and its public housing programme were all elements that were already in place before 1959.

Although Singapore was in a rather insecure position in 1965 when it left Malaysia, the crisis was never so great as pretended. The possible loss of the Malaysian hinterland and a possible threat from Indonesia were matters for concern. But perhaps the anticipated reactions from Britain and Australia to Singapore's independence were seen by Singapore's leaders as more significant threats.

The real contributions of Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP were, however, considerable. They included the decision to containerise the port in 1969 and the creation of an alliance with American and Japanese capital to power Singapore's industrialisation. The policy pushed by Goh Keng Swee to finance Singapore's housing and urban development with the Central Provident Fund was a key element in Singapore's success. So too was the creation of the financial and management structures which included a carefully balanced partnership between business and government that has developed into 'Singapore Inc.'. Likewise, one might consider the creation of a 'leadership class' and a system for self-renewal and perpetuation of the family-based political economy as one of Lee Kuan Yew's unique contributions. Barr notes that experts on state capitalism '[regard] Singapore Inc. as being the most efficient form of state capitalism in the world'. Barr's focus on Singapore's 'place' in the global economic network and the ability of Lee and his associates to parley that situation in the late twentieth century are really the key elements in the city-state's success.

The creation of social stability as well as the quiescence of the labour force has also been an important accomplishment of Singapore's ruling elite. Barr warns, however, that the long-term success of this system now that its architects have passed on is an open question. So too, is the fact that much of this quiescence was achieved by sidelining local capital and most of Singapore's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These were not only economic entities, but also had considerable cultural and social power that Lee Kuan Yew saw as a threat to his own prominence.

In terms of size, Barr correctly reflects again on the history of Singapore as an important centre of the Malay world. Singapore has always been more than merely an island full of Chinese. The pre-nineteenth-century entrepôts that flourished in and around Singapore were always Malay centres. Singapore was always part of the islands to the south and the west and the peninsula to the north. Johor, Riau-Lingga and eastern Sumatra had been a joint maritime zone since the earliest times. It remained so

in the nineteenth century as I have shown in my discussion of the pepper and gambier agriculture and the revenue farming systems of the era, despite the European attempts to divide the area into British and Dutch spheres. This local coherence has been resurrected since the 1980s with the development of Singapore–Johor–Riau (SIJORI) growth triangle.

Yet in the years between World War II and 1980, the geographic consciousness of official Singapore was really quite blinded to this reality. Particularly, in the 1960s and 1970s, one felt particularly isolated in Singapore. The sense of being on an island, surrounded by 'enemies', was pervasive. Of course, this was not true of the tens of thousands of Singaporeans and Malaysians who commuted daily across the Causeway. To the government, this often seemed like an unwelcome anomaly. Thanks to official foot-dragging on both sides, this border crossing remains one of the more tedious commutes I know of.

Even though it was long the case that newspapers were confiscated when one crossed the Causeway, the governments and peoples of Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia always retained many links. Inhabitants of Riau and Johor constantly watched Singapore television and listened to Singapore radio. People moved constantly across these borders, and now money, technology and expertise likewise flow along their 'natural' and historic patterns. This ambiguity of Singapore's sense of its size is part of the uncertainty surrounding the issues of Singapore's identity as a city-state or a nation-state.

Much of Singapore's continued success will probably depend on the development of Singapore's society and culture. This is where the question of Singapore's identity comes in, and we can see the relevance of Barr's query about whether Singapore is a city or a nation. As a city, Singapore aspires to be 'world class', a global city – one that is open and welcomes all with talent, one that is cosmopolitan, affluent, competitive and dynamic – but it also presents itself as a nation-state. It must protect its borders, serve the needs of its citizens and promote the 'national interest'. There are many contradictions in attempting to pursue these two paths. One cannot be a neo-liberal and a nationalist at the same time forever. At some point, the 'heartlanders' will find it compelling to reject the cosmopolitan agenda. Can its self-perpetuating elite continue to rule in its arbitrary and sometimes arrogant fashion and still pretend that they rule by democratic consensus? Can a city-state be a nation-state?

Related to this is the question of Singapore's idea of multiculturalism. Can the nation-state continue to coexist with the CMIO (Chinese, Malays, Indians and 'Others') consciousness that pervades the entire system? Particularly when ethnic Chinese constitute such an important element of the population? Barr has shown that the system from education to military service has been quietly rigged to promote Chinese over the other races. Part of the reluctance to acknowledge Singapore's history as well as its place

in Southeast Asia stems from the consciousness that such awareness would require an acknowledgement of the important role of the Malay peoples in Singapore.

This attention to place, size and city- or nation-state identifies many of the important, but often unacknowledged, issues that lie beneath the surface of Singapore. Barr gives us what we may justly see as a much more balanced picture of Singapore's past than we have from the Singapore Story. He has done a thorough survey of much of the recent scholarship on Singapore and its history and has produced a readable and engaging work that analyses and unpacks the current mythologies. He also shows us that Singapore's actual history has some of the real depth that the mythologies ignore. He likewise provides us with some of the tools that make it possible to understand key issues that Singapore will face in the future. In structuring his study around these three issues, he completely deflates the Singapore Story, and in the process reveals its fundamental emptiness.

Prologue

At the outset of writing a history of Singapore, it is humbling to realise that I am able to present the basic outline in four paragraphs:

1. Singapore is a largish island (currently just over 700 square kilometres) at the mouth of Malaysia's Johor River. It was formerly part of the Johor-Riau Sultanate and home to traders and pirates who maximised the benefits to be gained from its strategic location across the Straits of Malacca. In 1819 it became a British trading port-cum-colony and a free port welcoming all traders and taxing none, thanks to the initiative of the colony's founder, Sir Stamford Raffles. Chinese flocked in as labourers and entrepreneurs, along with natives from the region (mostly from places that today are parts of Malaysia and Indonesia).
2. As part of the British Straits Settlements (comprising Singapore, Malacca and Penang) Singapore was administered from Calcutta from 1826 until 1867, and then directly by the Colonial Office in London until the Japanese Occupation in 1942. After the war the Colonial Office disestablished the Straits Settlements and Singapore became a Crown Colony while Malacca and Penang were integrated more fully into British Malaya. The British granted the new Federation of Malaya independence in 1957 but retained Singapore as a colony until it joined with Malaya and Britain's North Borneo colonies (Sarawak and Sabah) in 1963 to form the new Federation of Malaysia.
3. The integration of Singapore into Malaysia ended in bitter recrimination after only 18 tumultuous months, and the Republic of Singapore was born in 1965 despite no one wanting its creation – not the British, nor the government in Kuala Lumpur and not even the ruling elite in Singapore itself.
4. Having had independence thrust upon it, the Singapore Government set about making it a success by integrating the new country into the global capitalist order. Over the half-century since independence its government has milked to the full the advantages provided by the island's British heritage and connections

> (capitalism, a strong administration, the inheritance of tangible assets, the use of English) while dispensing with inconvenient legacies such as civil liberties and full democracy. The young republic has emerged as a well-ordered and professionally run bastion of state capitalism.

At less than 400 words, this thumbnail sketch even outperforms Wikipedia for brevity. For any reader who knows Singapore as little more than that place with the nice airport, it might even be a useful point of orientation. But it is hardly an adequate description; nor is it free of value judgements. Just to take two points: the description of Singapore as an island at the mouth of the Johor River, and the choice of the pre-colonial Johor-Riau Sultanate as a starting point. The absence of any mention of Singapore's second 'founding father', Lee Kuan Yew, and its post-independence ruling party, the People's Action Party (PAP), will also raise some eyebrows, as will the failure to mention the country's two primary foundation myths – the operation of meritocracy and multiculturalism (which in Singapore is known as 'multiracialism').

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I have kept this little exercise in subjective brevity separate from the main text because it really is an affront to the notion of writing a national history to presume to condense it thus, and yet I have retained it as a Prologue precisely because it hints at some of the enigmas and challenges of writing a national history.

Benedict Anderson[1] assures us that any national history is a constructed entity, with a starting point, stories of change, shifting emphases and even potential futures that are selected by national myth-makers: variously aristocrats and royalty, religious and political leaders, scholars and journalists, novelists and poets, and sometimes even educational bureaucrats. These disparate people may collude with each other in making such selections, but they are just as likely to be operating in competition with each other or feeding off each other or their long-dead ancestors without any sense of collusion. The narrative they weave between them is in some form a truly 'national' story in the sense that it is representative of a dominant national self-image. In another sense it is just the self-representation of the winners in the society and so national histories change as the locus of power shifts within the society, or as the fortunes of the nation itself wax and wane. Furthermore there can be competing national narratives, each playing to a different domestic constituency.

That such traps lie in wait even for the author of a 400-word national history of a very small and young country like Singapore emphasises the contingent nature of the picture presented in the pages of this book.

Singapore's national history is a battleground between rival visions of the country. Unlike the case with larger, older countries, the practical parameters of this battleground are highly restrictive, but the very smallness, closeness and newness of the field makes it a highly volatile one. Members of the current national elite consider (and want) the national narrative to be more or less settled as it now stands because it concludes with the presumption of their continued rule and the country's continued prosperity. They might have their way but I do not see my role as helping this along. If I have a mission, it is to pull the national narrative apart and see how it can be put together differently. With this goal in mind, I have written a revisionist national history that devotes a great deal of attention to an interrogation of the narratives and myths that comprise the national history – and the very role of national history in national identity and national politics. I even question whether the 'national' perspective is the most appropriate way to study Singapore's history and include a chapter that interrogates the presumptive 'idea' of Singapore.

Yet for all my questioning of the national perspective, I open the book writing about Singapore's 'national' achievements and close with thoughts about its 'national future'. It really is difficult to escape this perspective when writing about a city-state in the early twenty-first century. Perhaps my underlying nation-based perspective is a reflection of my personal methodological bias, which I admit gravitates towards elite politics, but I think it also says something about the hegemonic place of the 'nation-state' in our understandings of the location of power in the modern international system – where both imperial states like China and city-states like Singapore have to be fitted neatly into an international system of 'nation-states'. In this book I have certainly made a major effort to break free of the rigidity of the national prism. I leave it to readers to judge how fully I have succeeded.

Acknowledgements

This book has been in gestation since 2012 while I was still working on *The Ruling Elite of Singapore*, and has been a serious work in progress since 2014. In that time I have accumulated numerous debts of gratitude that have contributed to the finished product.

Institutionally, I need to begin by thanking Flinders University for its support in providing me with a semester's sabbatical in 2015, and financial assistance to buy archival photos and some editorial assistance. The National University of Singapore Department of History and the National University of Singapore Library were both generous to my needs – and my special thanks goes to Mr Tim Yap Fuan at the Library, who was as helpful as he could be, as always. I am especially grateful to the National Archives of Singapore and the National Archives of Australia for permission to use archival photos. Thanks also goes to the Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University, the Malaysia and Singapore Society of Australia, the International Convention of Asia Scholars, and Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, each of which provided me with venues at which I could try out sections of my book on unsuspecting audiences. I would also like to thank the team at I.B.Tauris – especially Joanna Godfrey, who commissioned this book, and Sophie Campbell, who saw it through to production. I would also like to make a special mention of Chris Reed of BBR, who has proved himself to be an exceptionally diligent copy-editor – and who saved me from many a slip! I am exceptionally impressed with IBT for going the extra step of taking my amateurish maps and getting Chris to turn them into professional, publishable graphics.

In terms of scholarly and collegial support, I owe huge debts of gratitude that I can never hope to repay to a collection of very senior figures in the field of Singapore history. First there is Peter Borschberg, who I knew only slightly before I began this project, but who I now count as a good friend and colleague. Peter was so generous with his time, advice and friendship – and eventually advance samples of his own publications – that it is humbling. He had a fundamental impact on the shape and scope of the book, over and above the feedback he gave me on the chapters that he read for me. Carl Trocki was already a friend and colleague of long standing when he agreed to read the first full draft of the manuscript. His detailed, extensive (and brutally honest!) feedback was just what I needed to save me from many errors and lift the quality of the book. I have never met

or had any dealings directly with John Miksic, but I thought I should mention him for his decades of work on the *longue durée* framework that was so important to my project.

Moving beyond historians, I need to thank Garry Rodan who has engaged with me and mentored me (I suspect rather patiently) as I have worked to appreciate more fully the political economy dimensions of his analysis of Singapore politics. Being trained as a historian, I find it both refreshing and challenging to learn from those who come from outside my home discipline, and yet with whom I have so much in common. I need to thank my former students, Anantha Raman Govindasamy, who gave me a tour of Kampung Baru Nilai, and Rizwana Abdul Azeez, who, among other things, gave me access to her research on the Iskandar development in 'North Singapore'. Thanks also to Stephen Dobbs who wrote such a beautifully crafted social history of the Singapore River that I not only used his work as part of my framework for the first half of Chapter 8, but I asked if I could borrow some of his photos – and he gifted them with such unaffected generosity that I was quite overwhelmed by the show of goodwill. Stephen was one of several social historians of Singapore who influenced me, both through their scholarship and through more personal and direct interactions. James Warren, Loh Kah Seng and Ernest Koh come readily to mind. Scholars such as Kevin Tan, Lily Rahim, Terence Lee, Jason Lim, Wang Gungwu, Geoff Wade, Kenneth Paul Tan, Thum Ping Tjin, Hong Lysa, Tim Huxley, Tim Harper, Fr James Minchin, Huang Jianli and Brian Farrell all deserve my thanks for their input to my work – though perhaps not all of them would be aware of it until reading this acknowledgement. I cannot repay my debts, but at least I can express my gratitude.

In terms of scholarly input, I also need to give a special thanks to the two anonymous reviewers of my manuscript. They worked me very hard indeed after I had received their feedback, and I thank them for it most sincerely. I doubt that I fully met all of their expectations or fully dealt with all their criticisms, but rest assured I took them all to heart and I hope they find that the book is considerably improved from the version that they read.

A special mention goes to my Masters and now-PhD student, Abdul Rahman Yaacob, specifically for finding a good photo of Goh Keng Swee for me when I had left it almost too late, but more generally for giving me the pleasure of teaching such an enthusiastic and innovative student of Singapore history. Thanks also to Rosa Evaquarta, for doing the index.

My final vote of gratitude is the most fundamental of all – and it goes to my wife, Shamira, who has carried me through the downs and helped me celebrate the ups as I worked through this project while carrying a full teaching load at Flinders University. As if that wasn't enough, she has also made more than her share of direct contributions to my understanding of Singapore society over the years. Many thanks and all my love go out to Shamira, as always.

MDB, Adelaide, July 2018

List of Abbreviations

ABL	Anti-British League
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BMA	British Military Administration
CEO	chief executive officer
CPF	Central Provident Fund
CPM	Communist Party of Malaya (a variation of MCP, Malayan Communist Party)
DBS	Development Bank of Singapore (now known as DBS Bank)
EDB	Economic Development Board
EIC	[English] East India Company
FDI	foreign direct investment
GDP	gross domestic product
GIC	Government of Singapore Investment Corporation
GLC	government-linked company
KMM	Young Malay Union (Kaum Melayu Muda) (Malay)
KMT	Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) (Mandarin)
MCA	Malayan/Malaysian Chinese Association
MCP	Malayan Communist Party (sometimes called the CPM, Communist Party of Malaya)
MIC	Malayan/Malaysian Indian Congress
MP	Member of Parliament
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
MRT	Mass Rapid Transit (train system)
NIDL	New International Division of Labour
OFDI	outward foreign direct investment
PAP	People's Action Party

Timeline

PREMODERN SINGAPORE

Before the Seventeenth Century

1025	Indian (Chola) attacks begin the decline of the Srivajaya Empire, which had been based at Palembang on the north-east coast of Sumatra
1126	Song dynasty opens up China and encourages maritime trade to the south; new period of prosperity in Southeast Asia
1290	Beginning of Singapore's first period of prosperity
1325	Temasik (Singapore) sends a tributary mission to China
1340s	Singapore attacked by Siamese forces
1349	Wang Dayuan writes of Dragon Tooth's Gate/Old Singapore Strait (between Sentosa and Singapore Island) as the gateway between oceans
1390	Sang Nila Utama flees Javanese attacks on Palembang and invades Singapore; changes its name from Temasik to Singapura and settles there with his followers
1396	Sang Nila Utama leaves Singapore for Malacca with most of his followers; founds Malacca Sultanate; end of Singapore's first period of prosperity
1436	Ming dynasty bans Chinese participation in maritime trade
1511	Portuguese sack Malacca; Sultanate returns to Riau/Johor area and continues as the Johor Sultanate; beginning of Singapore's second period of prosperity
1570s	Portuguese consider building a fortress on or near Singapore
1580s	New Singapore Strait (south of Sentosa) starts being used for maritime passage and the Old Singapore Strait starts falling out of use
1594	Jacques de Coutre reports a significant settlement on Singapore

The Seventeenth Century

1600	Formation of the Honourable [English] East India Company (EIC)
1602	Formation of Dutch East India Company (VOC)
1603	Dutch establish first settlement in Java; Dutch and Portuguese fight a naval battle off Singapore
1606	Dutch Admiral Cornelius Matelieff de Jonge reports the presence of a harbour master at Singapore; negotiates treaty of alliance with Sultan of Johor
1630s	Dutch identify five strategic points of control around Johor, Singapore and Malacca
1641	Dutch capture Malacca from Portuguese; Sultan Iskander Thani of Aceh dies, ending a century of Acehnese attacks on Johor
1669	EIC establishes a factory in Kedah (which survives only four or five years)
1699	Murder of Sultan Mahmud Syah of Johor; effectively the end of the Johor Sultanate; gradual depopulation of Singapore and Johor; the end of Singapore's second period of prosperity

The Eighteenth Century

1703	Sultan Abdul Jalil offers Singapore to the British (but they decline)
1718	Raja Kecil of Siak (Sumatra) captures Johor, claiming to be the heir of Sultan Mahmud Syah
1724	Raja Kecil defeated and returns to build his kingdom in Siak; the final end of Johor Sultanate
1720s	Bugis begin filling the vacuum left by fall of Johor Sultanate; establish themselves in Riau as a Riau Sultanate; begin opening the waters and harbours of Riau to the British
1756	Riau engages in open warfare with the Dutch
1782	Governor General of (British) India begins seeking a base in the Straits of Malacca in response to a military setback by French forces in the Bay of Bengal
1784	Riau attacks the Dutch in Malacca; the Dutch repel the attack and take Riau, signing a treaty with Sultan Mahmud
1784	Dutch cede free navigation of the Far East seas to Britain
1786	British accept sovereignty of Penang from Sultan of Kedah; establish a colony

1787 Sultan Mahmud attacks the Dutch on Riau with the help of mercenaries; the Dutch retaliate successfully but Riau is razed and destroyed as a regional centre, leaving settlement of Chinese gambier and pepper farmers to work the island

1795 Sultan Mahmud returns to Riau under a new treaty with the Dutch

1799 The end of the VOC; the Dutch state takes over its colonies

1801–1867

1811 Temenggong Abdul Rahman begins settling thousands of his followers on Singapore; establishes a large settlement at Kampong Glam and begins enticing Chinese gambier and pepper farmers from Riau; British invade and occupy Dutch Java as part of the politics of the Napoleonic Wars; Sir Stamford Raffles installed as Lieutenant Governor of Java

1812 Death of Sultan Mahmud; succeeded by his younger son, Sultan Abdul Rahman, overlooking his elder son, Hussain/Hussein Mahummud Shah; Temenggong Abdul Rahman aligns himself with Hussein

1814 The British return Java to the Dutch at the end of the Napoleonic Wars

1817 Raffles appointed Lieutenant Governor of Bencoolen, on the south-west coast of Sumatra

1818 The Dutch arrive in Riau, and sign a treaty with Sultan Abdul Rahman, thus recognising his claim to the throne and re-establishing their sovereignty over Riau; Temenggong Abdul Rahman relocates to Singapore, making it his main base; the Governor General of India dispatches Raffles to Penang with the mission of establishing a base at the southern end of the Straits of Malacca

1819 Raffles and Colonel William Farquhar arrive in Singapore; Raffles and Temenggong Abdul Rahman sign an interim treaty to establish an EIC factory; a week later the Temenggong, 'Sultan' Hussain and Raffles sign a Treaty of Friendship and Alliance. These treaties confirm the Temenggong as the 'Ruler of Singapore' and Hussain as 'Sultan of Johore'; together they are confirmed as comprising 'the Government of Singapore-Johore', and the EIC is recognised as a tenant with rights in the river district. Raffles returns to Bencoolen with authority over the Singapore settlement; Farquhar appointed Resident of Singapore.

1822 A colonial town planning committee plans the segregation of Singapore town on racial lines

1823	Sultan Hussain, Temenggong Abdul Rahman and Raffles sign a new treaty, giving Britain sovereignty over all of Singapore except for the Sultan's and Temenggong's personal compounds; Sir John Crawfurd replaces Farquhar as Resident of Singapore; Raffles retires; Singapore becomes an Indian Presidency, administered from Calcutta
1824	Signing of the Treaty of London, which legitimises the British claim to Singapore and the Temenggong's claim to Johor, but gives his southern island holdings to the Dutch; Malacca is given to the British – Singapore's third period of prosperity has now unambiguously begun; publication of Singapore's first local newspaper, the English-language *Singapore Chronicle*
1825	Death of Temenggong Abdul Rahman; succeeded by his 15-year-old son, Daing Ibrahim
1826	Singapore, Penang and Malacca are formed into a single Indian Presidency called the Straits Settlements owned by the EIC and administered from Calcutta
1829	Beginnings of Singapore's shipping industry
1830s	Seat of government of the Straits Settlements begins shifting from Penang to Singapore
1830	Straits Settlements downgraded from a Presidency to a Residency
1833	Renewal of EIC Charter; the EIC loses its monopoly of the China trade
1834	Singapore Free School, which subsequently became Singapore Institution (forerunner of the Raffles Institution) opens as Singapore's first school, teaching in English and initially in Malay, Mandarin and Tamil
1835	Sultan Hussain dies in poverty and without any successor; Governor Samuel Bonham begins building up Daing Ibrahim's stature and importance as a means of controlling piracy
1837	Building of Singapore Free School completed
1840s	Secret society violence in Singapore on the rise; Singapore's inland roads programme begins
1841	Daing Ibrahim officially installed as Temenggong, having notionally held the title since 1825
1842	End of the First Opium War with the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing
1843	Discovery of gutta-percha in Johor
1844	Temenggong Daing Ibrahim begins developing Johor through gambier and pepper farms

1845	Beginning of the age of steam ships
1850s	Singapore emerges as a major coaling station; Christian missionary societies begin opening schools in Singapore
1851	Opening of the Horsburgh Lighthouse on Pedra Branca
1852	Opening of New Harbour (Keppel Harbour)
1853	Americans force 'free trade' on Japan
1855	British force 'free trade' on Siam
1856	Judiciary shifts from Penang to Singapore, finally ending the last vestige of Penang's role as the seat of government and administration
1857	Indian Mutiny
1858	EIC is dissolved; the Colonial Office assumes control of the Straits Settlements, though it still administers them through Calcutta; the seat of Johor's government and administration is transferred from Singapore to Johor Baru
1860	End of the Second Opium War
1862	Death of Temenggong Daing Ibrahim; succeeded as Temenggong by his son, Abu Bakar
1864	Beginning of development of New Harbour (Keppel Harbour) by Tanjong Pagar Dock Company
1866	Temenggong Abu Bakar given title 'Maharaja' by the British and adds Muar to his territory

MODERN SINGAPORE BEFORE INDEPENDENCE, 1867–1965

1867	Colonial Office in London takes direct control of the Straits Settlements; creation of a Straits Civil Service; a nominated, advisory Legislative Council formed
1868	Tanjong Pagar Dock Company opens Singapore's first dry dock
1869	Opening of Suez Canal
1871	Opening of the first submarine cable between Singapore and London
1876	Publication of first Malay newspaper, *Jawi Peranakan*
1870s	Tin and rubber replace gambier and pepper as Malaya's main exports; British hold over central-western Malay peninsula tightens, with Abu Bakar's assistance

1947	Foundation of the Progressive Party
1948	Declaration of the 'Malayan Emergency'; MCP declared illegal; a partially elected Legislative Council instituted in Singapore
1949	CCP victory in China
1950	Dismantling of the MCP's Singapore Town Committee; 'Maria Hertogh Riots'
1950–3	Korean War
1954	Foundation of the People's Action Party (PAP); 'National Service Riot'
1955	Introduction of limited self-government with an elected Legislative Assembly; foundation of the Labour Front; David Marshall appointed Chief Minister, heading a coalition led by the Labour Front; 'Hock Lee Riot'; creation of the Central Provident Fund
1956	'Middle School Riots'; abortive negotiations in London over self-government; opening of Nanyang University; Lim Yew Hock appointed Chief Minister heading an ever-changing coalition; Lim Yew Hock begins programme of detentions
1957	Successful negotiations in London for self-government; foundation of Workers' Party by David Marshall; PAP wins inaugural City Council elections; foundation of the Federation of Malaya
1958	Nanyang University opens; Lee Kuan Yew enters a united front with the MCP
1959	Singapore granted almost complete self-government; PAP wins Legislative Assembly elections; Lee Kuan Yew appointed Prime Minister
1960	Foundation of the Housing and Development Board; announcement of plans for Jurong Industrial Estate
1961	Bukit Ho Swee fire; two PAP by-election losses; Tunku Abdul Rahman, Prime Minister of Malaya, declares support for merger between Singapore and Malaya; splits in PAP; foundation of Barisan Sosialis (Socialist Front) and the United People's Party; foundation of the Economic Development Board (EDB); formation of National Trades Union Congress (NTUC)
1962	Mobil approaches EDB about expansion; plebiscite on 'Merger' with Malaya; the beginning of Indonesian Konfrontasi
1963	Operation Coldstore; PAP wins general election, Barisan forms opposition; formation of Malaysia, including Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah; beginning of Konfrontasi

1964 'Singapore Race Riots'

1965 Lee Kuan Yew, Goh Keng Swee and E.W. Barker negotiate Singapore's exit from Malaysia

INDEPENDENT SINGAPORE, 1965–

1965 Foundation of the Republic of Singapore with Lee Kuan Yew as Prime Minister, heading a PAP government; the last Singapore Legislative Assembly becomes the first Singapore Parliament; first American troops deployed in Vietnam

1966 Mobil opens Singapore's first oil refinery at Jurong; in Indonesia Sukarno falls, Suharto rises; end of Indonesia's Konfrontasi

1967 UK devalues the pound stirling

1968 PAP wins every seat in parliament; foundation of the Development Bank of Singapore (DBS); decision taken to turn Singapore into a financial centre; UK announces early closure of naval base; foundation of Sembawang Shipyards Pty Ltd, forerunner of Sembcorp; Lee Kuan Yew begins his sabbatical at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

1969 'Malaysian Race Riots'; Nixon announces the Guam Doctrine, partially withdrawing from Asia; Lee Hsien Loong passes matriculation in Catholic High School; decision taken to containerise the Port of Singapore

1970s Traditional Chinese schools wither and are all but extinguished

1970 First junior college, National Junior College, opens; Lee Hsien Loong passes matriculation at National Junior College

1971 Nixon defaults on US commitment to the gold standard; Singapore Armed Forces Overseas Scholarship announced, with Lee Hsien Loong a first-round winner

1972 Port of Singapore is containerised

1974 Formation of Sheng-li Holdings (later Singapore Technologies and ST Engineering) and Temasek Holdings; scholarship scheme for serving Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) officers instituted, with Lee Hsien Loong in first round of winners

1975 End of Vietnam War

1978 Singapore's 'Second Industrial Revolution'; Deng Xiaoping visits Singapore; Lee Hsien Loong enrols in US Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth

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