Floating on a Malayan Breeze

Travels in Malaysia and Singapore

Sudhir Thomas Vadaketh

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Introduction

This is a story about Malaysia and Singapore—or Malaya, if you will.

I use "Malaya" because I grew up thinking of the two countries as one. As a little boy, I remember travelling from Singapore to Malaysia, sitting in the backseat of my dad's car, swerving through Malaysia's old single-lane highways, evading smog-emitting trucks piled high with oil palm fruit. We would visit relatives, sometimes five or six homes in a day, popping our heads in to sip tea, nibble cakes and watch the oldies play Cupid—"Is there a nice boy for her in Singapore?"

We would stop at roadside vendors, slurping up tropical fruits for a song, and yet still wonder, all the way home, whether we had just been fleeced. We would, in short, soak in Malaysia, her people, her nature, everything about this vast country.

Our country, we sometimes thought. Well, if not exactly our countrymen, then our cousins, our brothers from another mother. Malaysia is a 20-minute ride away. Malaysians speak the same languages and eat the same food. We had a separate passport that allowed us entry to (peninsular) Malaysia and nowhere else, as if to signify that we were special, less different than the rest. It was as if God had created another Singapore, right next to us, and blessed it with more land and lower prices.

Political divisions and developmental ideologies didn't bother me back then. I was young and eager and just wanted to go on a road trip, to leave Singapore's urban madness for some country adventure and *kampung* durians. As I grew older, my youthful naiveté slowly gave way to curiosity.

Malaya, as I slowly realised, is actually made up of two quite different countries. How can that be? Malaysia and Singapore are, after all, physically divided by only a narrow strait. They were connected politically for centuries.

So how come the countries are so different now? Why is Singapore so much more economically developed today than Malaysia? How is it that the ideologies, cultural narratives and ways of thinking vary so much across the narrow border? Is it all because of the invisible political line that divides us?

Sumana, my best friend, and I were seeking answers to these questions eight years ago when our real journey through Malaya began. *Real*, because before 2004,

we had never really made an effort to dig deep below the surface, to venture beyond the comfort of cosy conversations and public presumptions.

It is frighteningly easy, after all, to live in Singapore with tunnel vision, not needing to think too much outside the daily grind. Life here goes on, day in and day out, with that unmistakable beat of clockwork consumerism. Singapore just works.

The comfortable monotony can also numb one's senses. It was a conversation in the US, oddly, that forced me to sit up and think a bit more about Malaya. Sitting in a campus pub, in 2003, I had been teasing my American grad school classmates about their country. "Where next are you guys exporting democracy to?"

Foreign students in the US tended to huddle together, seeking the comfort of fellow outsiders. We shared much in common, strangers in a strange land. This natural alignment allowed for some rollicking US vs. Foreign debates, which were fuelled by egos, perceived enlightenment and pints of beer.

American misadventure in Iraq had provided us with plenty of fodder. We spewed "neocolonialism", "torture", "WMD" and other words of the moment at our hapless American friends, as they cringed, embarrassed, for the most part, at what was going on in the Middle East. It was all very unfair, particularly since most of them did not support the war. But who cared? It was great fun seeing them stumped, torn between their ideals and nation.

In class, our professors asked us to get into groups and theorise about the best way to reconstruct Iraq. Before long, we were recommending policies for the Shias and suggesting ways to accommodate the Kurds. It all seemed a bit misplaced. We were just a bunch of students, sitting 6,000 miles away.

Most worryingly, in our view, was that nobody there really knew much about the people, the Iraqis, having never met one in their lives. Was this how policy in the US was formulated? Based on just research papers, historical boundaries and academic discussion? We grilled our classmates.

"So how well do you know the people in your neighbouring countries?" one of them asked us. Cocksure, I shot back with some drivel about having visited Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand many times. They weren't buying it. "How many different Thai beaches have you been to, again?" they laughed.

I felt a bit stupid. The truth is that I really didn't know *that* much about our neighbours. I was somewhat oblivious to the many strata of society in Singapore, let alone Malaysia.

Many Singaporeans only really know the mainstream, establishment view—what our governments tell us through their media channels. There is little alternative dialogue in our countries. What did ordinary Malaysians really think? What inspired

them, motivated them, disgusted them? We had lived all these years, in our tiny little bubbles, without bothering to find out more.

Sumana and I could have easily gone our whole lives without caring. Yet something inside us tugged away. Perhaps it was our grandparents and their friends, whose stories, filled with romance and tragedy, provided a bridge to the colonial era, when Malaysia and Singapore were one.

Or perhaps it was just the endless contradictions that we had trouble dealing with. Malaysia is beautiful; Malaysia is dangerous. Malaysia is multicultural; Malaysia is racist. Which is it? We yearned to find out more.

But how exactly should we go about this? American education, for better or worse, filled us with dreamy hope, idealism and bravado. We felt younger and more energised than we had in high school, eight years before in Singapore.

And so we hatched a plan. We would walk across Malaysia in our sarongs and talk to people. It was a cheap and simple idea that had us suitably stoked. We soon realised it would be nigh well impossible. For one, our legs would likely buckle under the weight of our beer and durian-fed pot bellies. What's more, in our sarongs, and carrying giant backpacks, we looked less like Gandhian pilgrims than wayward buffoons.

Restless, we quickly came up with an alternative idea. We would cycle around Malaysia for a month, visiting every state in peninsular Malaysia and meeting random people along the way. We also decided to subsist on RM10 (about US$3) a day each, a limit that would force us to live simply and seek out help and assistance whenever we could. An early working title for this book was *On the Benevolence of Malaysians*.

We sought advice from friends, family, and professors. A few urged us on. Most said the idea was crazy. And quite a few confirmed what our mums had always told us—that we are, indeed, wayward buffoons.

But we had made up our minds and there was no turning back. And so our journey through Malaya, our *real* journey through Malaya, began eight years ago. With two bicycles, a tent and RM600, we spent a month cycling around the whole of peninsular Malaysia.

We visited hundreds of towns, met many fascinating people, had countless conversations, and landed in several comedic capers. It was a random, rollicking, rip-roaring exploration through Malaysia and, also, through ourselves—our own emotions, misconceptions and prejudices.

What started out as a dive into Malaysia, therefore, quickly became a look at our home, Singapore, as well. We found ourselves constantly comparing the two countries. Each became a sounding board for the other. During that time, the kernel for

a story had grown, but only just. Our one-month bicycle trip had merely whetted our appetites.

We spent the next eight years speaking to many different people in Malaysia and Singapore—analysts, economists, farmers, managers, ministers, politicians, professors, senior business executives, shopkeepers, students, taxi drivers, and others, laypeople, from all walks of life.

Our interactions with these people serve as the backbone of this story, which I have divided into 11 chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 explore the relationship between Malaysia and Singapore—our shared history, imagined identities and separation anxieties. Chapters 3 and 4 look at politics and government in our countries. Chapter 5 examines the roles of the media, judiciary and civil society in our countries. I talk about business and economic development in Chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 8 deals with issues surrounding ethnicity and race. Chapter 9 discussed the influence of religion in our two countries. Finally, I spend Chapters 10 and 11 pondering something that rarely gets enough attention here—happiness.

It would be arrogant and foolish for me to suggest that I really understand Malaya now. Our story is, undoubtedly, more a collection of insights than a comprehensive study. Every time we spoke with somebody different, or visited a new place, we realised that there is something else we don't know.

There is also a geographical omission in this work that I must explain. Modern Malaysia is spread out over two separate land masses. There are eleven states and two federal territories on Peninsular Malaysia (West Malaysia), and two states and one federal territory on the island of Borneo (East Malaysia).

My research covers mostly West Malaysia and not East Malaysia. There are several reasons for this. Throughout this book, I have tried to consider what happens when one country is split apart and each subdivision pushed on its own developmental path. Using this lens, it is West Malaysia that has deep-rooted cultural, historical, political and social bonds with Singapore. East Malaysia is different from both West Malaysia and Singapore in many ways, not least its peoples' provenance.

East Malaysia joined the Federation of Malaysia only in 1963, in the face of much local opposition.[1] It has never been an easy union. All this put together, there seems much less reason to compare East Malaysia's development to Singapore's.

Still, it may seem negligent for any book on Malaysia to ignore those two beautiful states of Sabah and Sarawak, particularly given how they have become key battlegrounds for control of the Federal government. Unfortunately this book's scope does not permit me to give them the treatment they deserve; I hope to one day.

There is so much more to this complex region that has yet to be written about. I can really hope only to contribute a bit to our collective understanding.

What, in essence, did I discover?

The first, perhaps obvious point, is that Malaysians and Singaporeans do indeed have much in common. All across Malaysia we met people who had connections to Singapore. An old man who had lived and worked there under the British administration; a daughter who had been sent to school; a young man who, originally from Kelantan, a northern state, now lives in Johor, the southernmost, in order to commute every day to Singapore for work. Similarly, there are so many people in Singapore with relatives, friends or business contacts in Malaysia—more than 5 per cent of Singapore's population is, in fact, Malaysian.

Yet Malaysia is a much bigger, more diverse land. Though the country's broad ethnic, religious and developmental diversity is apparent from afar, there are many smaller differences that emerge only upon close inspection. "You guys speak Malay right, but I tell you as you go up the coast, the language is going to change, even we don't understand," a Malay youth in Pahang told us. "Pahang is famous for *lepak*, relax, Kelantan is good for women, because they are mixed with Siam, they are beautiful up there, Terengganu is great for food and Johor is the place to look for work."

Nevertheless, Malaysia's and Singapore's shared histories, cultures, languages and place ensure that a familiar voice or recognisable sight is never far away. The experience of visiting some of Malaysia's small old towns is akin to stepping back in time, seeing what Singapore was like decades ago. Or at least that's what some older Singaporeans tell us, nostalgically, in those moments when they decry Singapore's rush to modernity.

If a Malaysian and Singaporean were travelling overseas, it would really be quite hard for the locals to tell us apart—our dress, appearance and accents are similar enough. When we've visited far off countries in Africa and Central America, some people there have given us puzzled looks when we've said, "We're from Singapore"—they may have heard of the place, but don't really know much about it. Many think we are a Chinese appendage, like Hong Kong and Macau. When we add "It's near Malaysia", most of them immediately get their bearings.

Our commonalities, then, are largely because of our proximity. Once we look past them, some startling differences emerge—most important, our political and socio-economic systems. Malaysia is a country where one ethno-religious group—the majority Malay Muslims, the so-called *bumiputeras*, sons of the land—is given preference over the others.[2] Singapore, which is majority Chinese, tries its best to run a race-neutral meritocracy. This difference in our worldview is the major reason our countries split apart in 1965.

Before we cycled through Malaysia, we had a feeling that Malaysia's system is inherently unfair. The Malays are given preference at the expense of the Chinese

and Indians. The Malays, therefore, are lulled into complacency. The Chinese and Indians are aggrieved. Everybody is worse off.

What we did not expect, however, was for several Malaysians to complain about Singapore's system. Many of them believe that our exacting meritocracy is inherently unfair, because it allows the rich to get richer, and the poor to get poorer. It does not try to give a leg up to those at the bottom. According to this school of thought, Singapore is, at best, a tough place to live, and at worst, a Darwinian tragedy. Proud Singaporeans, we were shocked. We had not expected any Malaysian to trumpet their system over ours.

We think their system is unfair; they think our system is unfair. We remember feeling ignorant and sad. Our countries are farther apart than we had thought.

Although we listened to these diatribes against Singapore, we felt they were mostly poppycock, the indignant ramblings of residents from a poorer country. As the years passed, meanwhile, and as we found out more about Malaysia, I became even surer of our conviction—Malaysia's system is unjust, even racist.

Many Malaysians, of course, will shudder when reading that, all the more since it is coming from a Singaporean—anything that smacks of Singaporean superiority tends to evoke nausea in Malaysians. Still, that is no reason not to say it.

Through countless encounters with Malaysians all over the country, we have seen how the *bumiputera* affirmative action policies have created a culture of dependence amongst the Malays, sowed disharmony between the Malays and other groups, reduced economic efficiency and opened the door to mind-boggling corruption, cronyism and nepotism. The only people who have really benefitted from it, meanwhile, are the Malay aristocrats and politically-connected businessmen.

It is worth noting that the *bumiputera* policies, like so many other grand political ideologies, were born of noble ideals: eradicating poverty, economic empowerment, raising the dignity of the Malays. Some of its original proponents, such as Hussein Onn, are considered Malaysian heroes of impeccable character.[3]

Sadly, over the years—and most noticeably from the mid-1980s—the policy has been hijacked by vested interests. In other words, an idealistic but discriminatory philosophy has been completely undermined by corruption. Malaysians will never know what might have come of this grand experiment in social engineering.

In my opinion, Malaysia must dismantle these *bumiputera* policies. That is absolutely essential for social and economic progress. Some critics suggest switching the policy from pro-Malay to pro-poor. Though a noble idea, this could open up new channels of corruption and leakage. Malaysia needs to level the playing field as soon as possible (while providing highly targeted assistance to certain low-income groups).

The current prime minister, Najib Razak, seems to want change. It is unclear, however, if his mooted reforms signify a genuine shift or are more window dressing, in his bid to win domestic votes and attract foreign investment.

Sadly, serious reform appears far away, not least because of the powerful entrenched Malay interests in the country. Ultimately, there are still many Malays who believe that Malaysia's *raison d'être* is to protect Malay interests—not those of all Malaysians.

To my astonishment, we also met a fair number of Malaysian Chinese and Indians who believe that the *bumiputera* policies are essential—they have come to believe that Malays are so inherently handicapped that they will stutter unless given privileges and preferences. This, more than anything else, proves the absurdity of the policy.

The raft of privileges, preferences and exclusions has also sliced and diced Malaysian society, such that it has become extremely stratified. There is a bewildering array of honorifics and titles in use today. Malaysia's minions vie for these precious titles, some of which can open bountiful doors of opportunity.

Some might say that calling another person Datuk, Dato' or Datoh is just a form of respect. Well, maybe. All too often, however, I have seen bigwigs bossing people around, and cringed as underlings grovel at their feet. For all its egalitarian pretences, Malaysia can seem feudal, and much more classist than it was before independence.

Malaysia has, nevertheless, managed to bumble along, growing into a robust middle-income country with, amongst other things, strong agricultural and technology sectors. It is admired in many parts of the developing world.

With its rich resources and dynamic population, however, many Malaysians feel that their country should have achieved high-income status by now. Instead, it is stuck in the so-called middle-income trap, held back by, amongst other things, mismanagement, corruption, stagnant productivity, poor English standards, a shortage of management and presentation skills, a brain drain and economic inefficiencies—all in some way due to the *bumiputera* policy, and its philosophical father, *ketuanan Melayu*, literally Malay superiority, the idea that Malays deserve a special place in the land of Malaysia.

Rather than trying to emulate the likes of Hong Kong or Singapore, Malaysia is, therefore, constantly looking over its shoulder. Its neighbours have been busy building meritocratic, pro-business economies. Malaysia's policymakers might have once considered Indonesia and Vietnam as economic backwaters. Today, they worry about them winning foreign investment that might otherwise have gone to Malaysia.

There is little doubt that Singapore, on the other hand, is one of the 20th century's economic success stories. Amongst people I speak with—even some of his ardent critics—there is a general sense that Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first prime minister, deserves much credit for this. In a short span of time, following independence, he managed to root out corruption, strengthen the rule of law, foster administrative competence, instil a hardworking, disciplined ethos in Singaporeans, attract lots of foreign investment, and ultimately raise living standards. He also managed to build a party and government famed for its limitless ability to groom new leaders.

Much has been written about these successes, and there is little reason for me to harp on them here. What we did find far more arresting, throughout our conversations and travels, is the fact that there are some genuine problems brewing in Singapore. Most importantly, perhaps, is the fact that the Malaysians are right.

In 2004, as we cycled around Malaysia, many people lamented Singapore's cold capitalism, and predicted that income inequality would prove a big problem. Even back then, this was not really a new idea. Many Malaysians, including Mahathir Mohamad, a former prime minister, had made similar observations before.

In short, those predictions have come true. One of the biggest challenges in modern Singapore is the yawning gap between the haves and the have-nots. Singapore's Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, is higher than America's and China's.

A frequent complaint I've heard is that Singapore has become a place for the global rich, not the average Singaporean. These people frequently indulge in posh homes, luxury yachts, Cartier watches and foie gras. This group includes a small coterie of the richest Singaporeans, including—in many people's eyes—senior politicians, who are paid millions of dollars a year.

Below them on the income ladder sits a huge middle class—Singaporeans (and many foreigners) with enough money to afford an apartment, a car and a maid. Life is fairly comfortable, but certainly not as indulgent as one would expect for one of the richest countries in the world.

Right at the bottom, finally, are the people for whom the Singapore dream has become a nightmare. The real incomes of Singapore's bottom 30 per cent of earners stagnated from 1997 to 2007, a period during which Singapore's economy boomed.

One of the best descriptions I've heard for Singapore today is "a first world country with a third-world wage structure". If you are lucky enough to be a banker, consultant or some other senior executive, you will get paid handsomely and enjoy living in Singapore. Wages for lower-level jobs, however, have not kept pace with economic development.

Singapore offers cheaper food, haircuts, taxis and shop service than any other rich world city—only because the people at the bottom probably do not earn enough. At the risk of sounding simplistic, Singapore's poor people should earn more, and Singapore's rich people should pay them more for their work.

Income inequality, in a sense, should not come as a surprise—many developed countries grapple with the problem. What did strike us, however, was the fact that nobody talked about it much before 2007. While Malaysians warned us about it in 2004—even as we foolishly brushed them off—there was barely any mention in Singapore.

That speaks to another facet of life here—social, political and economic dialogue in Singapore is extremely shallow and narrow. Given the dominance of the People's Action Party (PAP), the government's control over the media, and a natural Singaporean deference to authority, there is precious little debate and discussion over many national issues. This reticence carries over to the workplace, where Singaporean workers, seeking refuge behind their fancy degrees, tend not to speak out much or challenge convention or authority.

In many other democratic countries, the problem of income inequality—or for that matter, any other contemporary challenge—would have been discussed extensively in the media, government and by citizens. In Singapore, it appears as if any topic has to receive an implicit nod from the government, before the public is allowed to discuss it. Once the green light is given, the media fall into line dutifully.

This, of course, has grave implications for Singapore's economy. Though a manufacturing and service success, Singapore has had trouble building a knowledge economy. No wonder. We Singaporeans are not trained to think or speak out.

That is one reason for the decline of Creative Technologies. In 1998, Creative Technologies was more valuable than Apple. Through its industry-standard computer sound cards, such as the Sound Blaster, Creative had established itself as a global leader in digital sound. It was in a perfect position to capitalise on the nascent MP3 industry.

Instead of bringing innovative new products to market, however, Creative dithered. Apple, with little prior experience in digital sound, released its iPod, which made Creative's players look like museum pieces. It quickly became apparent that while Creative is adept at building electronic cogs that work quietly within machines, it is hopelessly lost when it comes to design and marketing. In other words, excellent behind the scenes, stage fright in front.

Thus began Apple's resurgence. In 10 years, a Californian company had destroyed Singapore's pride and joy. Few people even remember that Creative once ruled the digital sound roost.

It is unsurprising that Apple is from California and Creative from Singapore. Singapore's inherent strengths are not creativity and dynamism. They are stability and rule of law. Given our current trajectory, therefore, it looks as if Singapore will not succeed in building a creative, knowledge economy so much as a safe financial centre and a corporate HQ. Switzerland of the East? Perhaps. But only the finance, please, not the watch-making.

How should Singapore change, then? The easy answer, in theory, is more social and political freedoms. In practice, though, this will prove tricky. Singaporeans have grown up knowing only one government, and one way of doing things. There is little impetus for change—for most of our history, the Singapore model has flourished economically while supposedly freer countries around us have floundered. If it wants to liberalise Singapore, the government has to simultaneously relax control over the country, while allowing independent institutions to grow. All along the way, naysayers will complain.

For Singapore has many sacred cows, certain fixed ideas and orthodoxies that nobody argues with. For instance, what if Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP were wrong? What if their plan of developing Singapore at breakneck speed, fuelled by foreign labour and foreign capital, was a mistake?

Imagine that development to a high-income knowledge economy is a 400-metre race. Singapore has sprinted the first 300 metres, exhausting itself, and now finds it difficult to complete the race. Perhaps it might have been better to run at a slower pace.

Some suggest that Singapore's economic model served it well only until the 1990s. It then should have been fundamentally retooled—rather than tweaked—to better prepare Singaporeans for life in a globalised knowledge economy. That would have helped lessen our dependence on foreign labour and capital.

What if Lee Kuan Yew was wrong? Many people in Singapore would consider me rude for even posing that question. That, quite frankly, is the problem.

Given our government's smugness, it is tempting to be overcritical of Singapore. Throughout my research, and during many conversations, I was reminded of the unbridled success of so many of Singapore's policies.

Even as Malaysians criticised our (supposedly) unfair system, they would heap praise on our effective, incorruptible administration and economic efficiencies. Despite a series of horrible gaffes recently—including letting a suspected terrorist, Mas Selamat, escape from a detention centre—Singapore's PAP-led government has, on the whole, done an exemplary job.

Are Singaporeans happy, though, with the country's success? From my anecdotal evidence, materialism has helped drive Singapore's economy, but it has not really led to that much happiness. In the land of the rich, many Singaporeans still feel relatively

poor—we always want more. Those already with serious money, meanwhile, seem to be looking for something else in life. Oddly, we found many Malaysians, rich and poor, to be seemingly happier with their life.

Perhaps that reflects what we value in life. Malaysians, by and large, appear to place a greater importance on big families. We Singaporeans, meanwhile, are clearly more interested than Malaysians in making money.

Singapore's society has long pushed a materialistic definition of success, the so-called "5 C's"—Cash, Credit card, Car, Country Club, Condominium. Sadly, somebody forgot to include the most important one—Children.

When we Singaporeans say, "He/she is doing well", we are almost invariably talking about that person's material well-being. A good job, a high salary and possibly a killing in the property market.

If a Malaysian says, "He/she is doing well", we found them often talking about a person's health or family. Living well, perhaps, with many children.

More happiness could also be because Malaysia is a much bigger country, with many more places to go, jobs to do and activities to engage in. People have more options, avenues to explore and ways in which to be happy. Singapore, by contrast, is small, and people tend to do the same things. If you're not intent on making money, and racing your Ferrari from one traffic light to the next, then what exactly are you up to?

Happiness, of course, is relative and subjective. The Malaysians and Singaporeans we met are all somewhat happy, and yet still looking for happiness. Ultimately, that is because we are all unsure about who we really are.

What does it mean to be a Malaysian? What does it mean to be a Singaporean? What binds each country together? As we've traversed our countries, and asked hundreds of people, I've had trouble finding that common element, that special ingredient, in each country.

Both countries are still struggling to come to terms with their founding principles. Malaysia's constitution guarantees preeminence to Islam and Malays. What that means in practice is still a matter of great debate. Malaysians are genuinely torn between running a Malay country and a country for all Malaysians.

Singaporean identity, meanwhile, appears even more vacuous. We all grew up believing in a one-party system that delivers economic growth through a race-neutral meritocracy. All we had to do was keep quiet and work hard and we'd become rich. Cracks are appearing in that philosophy. And without hard work and lots of money, there seems precious little else to being *a Singaporean*.

As both countries search for meaning, our guiding philosophies are likely to converge. For most of its history, Malaysia has been guided by the desire for "equality of

outcomes". It has been trying to redistribute the fruits of growth in a more equitable fashion by giving some people—the *bumiputeras*—more opportunities than others. Malaysians have been focused on the end result.

Singapore, meanwhile, has been guided by the desire for "equality of opportunities". We have been striving to provide every person with the same opportunities in life. But after that, we haven't really cared much about who becomes a millionaire and who a pauper. Singaporeans have been focused on the start.

Both countries have pursued their philosophies with a dogged determination. But both have realised that their systems are faltering. Malaysia's pursuit of "equality of outcomes" has created some serious problems, not least the ethnic tensions in society today.

Singapore's desire only for "equality of opportunities" has led to gross inequality—or very different "outcomes"—in the country. And with that, it has become harder and harder to guarantee "equality of opportunities"—a rich family's child will always be much better positioned for success than a poor family's child.

Hence, as Malaysia and Singapore embark on their next stage of development, they will have to become a bit more like each other. Malaysians will want more "equality of opportunities" and Singaporeans will want more "equality of outcomes".

This is not just theoretical fluff. These guiding philosophies have influenced how millions of Malaysians and Singaporeans think and interact with each other. In Malaysia, for instance, I have met Chinese and Indians who look down on the Malays around them because they are perceived as dependent on government help.

In Singapore, because of the assumption that everybody gets the same shot at life, those who ultimately do well are more prone to ignore—or even look down upon—those who don't. People are less aware that those at the bottom need extra help.

Therefore, this fundamental shift will dramatically change the way we think about ourselves and each other. It will shape the hearts, minds and souls of all Malayans. In many ways, this long transition has only just begun.

But these changes won't be smooth. In both countries, authoritarian states are slowly making way for more democratic societies. Ordinary people are only just finding out that their voices and votes do actually make a difference. Civil society is being forced to develop at warp speed. Private and public actors are having to adapt to new ways of communicating on a multitude of new platforms.

It is also worth noting that in terms of our guiding philosophies, Malaysia and Singapore are unique. We are probably the only two Asian countries where the original post-colonial movements still exert considerable influence over politics and broader societal mindsets. Almost every other country has seen some revolution or

another—including China's opening up from 1978 to India's from 1991—that has effectively replaced the post-colonial philosophies with newer ones.

Not so here. For better or worse, the post-colonialists' ideas and fervour still hold great sway over society. Many of the younger politicians are cut from the same cloth. Malaysia's current prime minister is the son of the country's second prime minister. Singapore's current prime minister is the son of the country's first prime minister.

All that is, no doubt, largely a reflection of how economically and politically successful this generation has been. But it also points to a worrying fact—Malaysia and Singapore have never had to go through that process of broad political renewal and a reimagination of societal norms.

As the Malayan post-colonial generation nears its end, the coming changes are going to be turbulent, to say the least. Political players, mindsets and institutions have become so entrenched that they will not take kindly to being turfed out.

Malaya split apart 47 years ago. Our countries chose different paths, and went our separate ways. Both have developed tremendously since 9 August 1965. Neither, it seems, is much closer to finding its soul.

***

Going home. 13 August 2004.

They will tell you to never try and smuggle anything illegal into Singapore, whether it's heroin, contraband Marlboros or pirated DVDs. Security is tight and the penalties horrid.

But that's just what "they" say. Allow me to let you in on a little secret: to smuggle into Singapore, you don't need high-technology sleuths—just a plain old bicycle.

As we waited in the long, smoky, lung-gnarling motorcycle line to get checked by the meticulous Singaporean customs officers, we were filled with a sudden void. What were we to do now?

Sure, there were many things we were glad to be done with. The return home spelt the end of those daily insect-ridden "showers"—squatting below a dripping foot-high tap, sometimes right next to the potty, at another squalid Petronas station. On several occasions, in some of Malaysia's more rural towns, I had opened the toilet door only to be greeted by a wall of bugs, grasshoppers and spiders, flying right at my face, as if to thank me for freeing them from their aviary.

We were also relieved to be released from our RM10 per day spending limit. As noble an effort as we like to think it was, the truth is that austerity is tough. And painful. There were so many times we did not have ice in our drinks just to save an extra 20 cents. Perhaps austerity in an economic desert is easy, but in Malaysia, a

thriving market economy, where all manner of goodies smile at you every hour, it is crushing. We would now finally be able to have that extra serving of meat.

Perhaps the most emotionally and psychologically draining part of the trip was not knowing where we were going to sleep. Almost every day, as dusk approached, we had to go look for a place to pitch our tent or sleep. Sometimes we would have to speak to more than ten people before we found a suitable spot, and even then all we got was a clearing in the gravel. The uncertainty, the sheer randomness of it all, had taken its toll on us.

It was the sort of intense experience that infuses your thoughts, dreams, memories, glands and heart. For weeks, every new sensory input would be interpreted in relation to that experience.

We had a lot of time for self-reflection, for the officer was fingering through each motorcycle like a dog in hunt of truffles. When we finally got to him, he looked at us, then at the huge bags saddled to the back of our bikes. He then smiled and waved us through, patting our backs instead of our bags. We still regret not having stuffed our bags full of rainbow-coloured chewing gum that day.

Fifteen minutes later we were guzzling down our first homecoming can of Tiger beer. It felt fantastic to have more than 10 ringgit a day to spend. But the decompression sickness had started, and we were wondering what to do. It was about 4 pm on Friday, 13 August 2004. Exactly 30 days since we had left Singapore.

And more than 62 years since the Fall of Singapore to the Japanese. They too had come storming down the Malay Peninsular on bicycles, entering Singapore over the same Johor Strait that we just had. What a cunning mode of transport, eh?

"From a very early age I've had to interrupt my education to go to school," George Bernard Shaw once said. We too had, from the age of six, suffered from the same interruption. This trip was our attempt at continuing education.

We had spent a month floating on a Malayan breeze. It felt strange to be back.

Epilogue

For the past six years, I have gone jogging in Malaysia at least once a week, sometimes more. I do so because I want greenery and solitude. There are few spots in Singapore where you can leave the urban jungle behind and just lose yourself.

Sure, there are many parks around, most notably the East Coast Park. "Nowhere in Asia can you find such a long, uninterrupted green stretch that close to downtown. It's a runner's dream," says Mike, an Australian friend, when I asked what he liked most about Singapore.

But even then, whichever Singaporean park you're in, condominiums, shops and other assorted emblems of Singapore's rapid development peek at you, reminding you where you are, threatening at any moment to swallow you and your humble, concrete-less sliver.

So when in 2006 I discovered the verdant corridor that surrounds the Malaysian railway track, I was ecstatic. There I could run amid giant trees, playful macaques and flocks of squawking birds. The narrow dirt path off Old Holland Road that leads down to the railway track is 15 minutes from my house. It soon became my little portal, transporting me from urban to rural, like a cupboard to Narnia.

Even better, I always feel a little naughty when I go jogging there. That entire stretch of land—belonging to Malaysia, but deep inside Singapore—is out of bounds. It's illegal for anybody to physically be there. At the entrance to the track off Bukit Timah Road, there is a huge "No trespassing" sign, by order of Keratapi Tanah Melayu (KTM, literally "Train of the Malay Land", Malaysia's railway authority).

I wasn't the only one who went there to get away. I met other runners, cyclists and hikers; maybe one or two each time, enough to make me feel secure, yet not so many that Narnia ever felt crowded. Teenage couples would go there, some in school uniform, and lock themselves in passionate embraces.

I once ran by a group of five youth, who were swigging from bottles while building a bonfire; they all looked high, and seemed to be having a damn good time. I often passed by foreign workers, mostly Thais, who seemed to be living nearby, and looked as if they were foraging in the jungle. Some looked nervous, and I would often wonder if they were secretly growing poppy.

In short, a coterie of castaways would emerge every day along the Malaysian railway track, each there for their own reason, but all in search of seclusion. The Malaysians, of course, never minded. I would often stop and chat with the railway officer at the little switching station off Bukit Timah Road, where there were dual tracks, the only point in Singapore where trains could pass. Indeed, the highlight of many a jog was seeing a train passing by as I jogged just a few metres to its side; the driver would often wave.

Narnia's dynamics changed in May 2010, after the Malaysian and Singaporean governments announced that the railway station would be moving to the border. As part of the deal, the Malaysians had agreed to swap the railway land for a few prime downtown lots. The last Malaysian train would travel through the heart of Singapore in July 2011.

In one fell swoop, Narnia was stamped with an expiry date. Many Singaporeans, aware that they only had a year left in which to observe that creaking colonial curiosity called a train, began swarming to the corridor every day, armed with cameras. Wedding couples started turning up, wanting a slice of Malaysian nostalgia in their albums. Several clubs started organising runs along the track.

For the few of us who knew what Narnia once was, all this was terrible. Gone was our little hideaway. The tourists had landed. Worse, land ownership was shifting from the Malaysian to the Singaporean government. That would spell, I thought, the end of the corridor's raw, unplanned beauty. The smiling, affable railway officer would be replaced by security fences and CCTV cameras. Welcome to Singapore.

And yet, a few weeks after the last train had left, some semblance of its former peace had returned. There were far fewer passers-by. There were more construction workers milling around the area, but they seemed to be primarily involved in laying a new green turf where the track once sat. Singaporeans debate over exactly what to do with this land, but whatever happens, it does seem likely that the majority of it will be preserved as a green corridor of sorts. Thank goodness.

Since 1965, Malaysia and Singapore have tried hard to create distinct nation states. For each country, that has often meant defining itself against the other. Each has tried hard to show how it is different.

And yet, as I have discovered, both countries are still struggling to come to terms with their founding principles. Malaysia's constitution guarantees pre-eminence to Islam and Malays. What that means in practice is still a matter of great debate. Malaysians are genuinely torn between running a Malay country and a country for all Malaysians.

Singaporean identity, meanwhile, appears even more vacuous. We all grew up believing in a one-party system that delivers economic growth through a race-neutral

meritocracy. All we had to do was keep quiet and work hard and we'd become rich. Cracks are appearing in that philosophy. And without hard work and lots of money, there seems precious little else to being *a Singaporean*. "Malaysian minus hinterland minus history minus soul = Singaporean," Alfian Sa'at, a Singaporean playwright, wrote recently.[1]

Instead of trying to distinguish themselves, perhaps the two countries need to look up and learn more from each other. From Singapore, Malaysia can learn, among other things, the importance of building a race-neutral meritocracy and running an efficient, corruption-free government.

From Malaysia, Singapore can learn, among other things, the fulfilment of non-material pursuits and the need to provide targeted assistance to those who may not be able to compete at the same level as others. Malaysians understood a long time ago that high income inequality is unsustainable (although their efforts to address it have been patchy).

As Malaysia and Singapore embark on their next stage of development, they will have to become a bit more like each other. Malaysians will want more "equality of opportunities" and Singaporeans will want more "equality of outcomes". This will dramatically change the way we think about ourselves and each other.

But these changes will not be smooth. In both countries, authoritarian states born out of post-colonial movements are slowly making way for more democratic societies. Ordinary people are only just finding out that their voices and votes do actually make a difference. The space between public and private actors is being renegotiated. For most people, it is a wonderful, refreshing, liberating and somewhat scary journey.

Presumably along the way, through this more collaborative dialogue, Malaysian and Singaporean identity will become stronger and more defined. Or perhaps we might discover that there are very few differences between us. Maybe political boundaries should not affect us so.

Malaysia is no longer just a 15-minute-jog away from my house. In order to visit the country, I now need to spend more time and effort getting across the border. And yet, every time I do, I learn something new.

Notes

Introduction

1. One might reasonably argue that Singapore too joined the Federation of Malaysia only in 1963. True. However, Singapore and West Malaysia have much longer mutual histories, dating back to the Johor Sultanate and the Straits Settlements.
2. In addition to the majority Malay Muslims, Malaysia's definition of "bumiputera" includes a few indigenous minority groups, including the orang asli of West Malaysia and the native peoples of Sabah and Sarawak.
3. Throughout this book, I refer to Malaysian leaders by their names, not by their honorifics, such as Tunku, Tun, Tan Sri, etc. The one exception is Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's first prime minister, only because he is popularly known as "Tunku". (In a few instances, interviewees refer to people they are talking about with honorifics, which I reproduce verbatim.) The reason for this is simplicity and also for balance with the Singaporean leaders, whom I frequently talk about in the same breath, e.g. Mahathir Mohamad and Lee Kuan Yew. I mean no disrespect to any leader by referring to them simply by their name.

Chapter 1 Forgotten histories

1. "Sedikit", the Malay word for "little", is often pronounced "Sikit" by non-native Malay speakers.
2. Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*, John Wilson Booksales, 2003.
3. Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng*, pp. 142–143.
4. Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Times Media, 2000, p. 211.
5. A. Schmid and A. Jongman, *Political Terrorism*, Transaction Publishers, 2005, p. 671.
6. Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng*, p. 47.
7. Joseph Knapik and Katy Reynolds, "Load carriage in military operations", Borden Institute, pp. 6 and 11.
8. Though Chin Peng is popularly regarded as the leader of the Communist Party of Malaysia, there were in reality four different camps in Betong, which fell under two broad groupings—a CPM Marxist-Leninist faction, which Betty was under, and a China-backed CPM faction, led by Chin Peng. According to Betty, Chang Chung Ming only occasionally cooperated with Chin Peng. Every time she mentioned his name, she would cite his rank too: "Chang Chung Ming, our leader".

9. "Ex-communist fighters adjust to a life with cash", *Asia Times*, 3 November 1999.
10. "Times have changed at Malaysia's border town", *The Straits Times*, 18 July 1999.
11. We have not been able to verify Betty's claims regarding the difficulty of obtaining a visa. Quite the contrary, it appears as if it has become relatively easy for the ex-communists to visit for short periods. Nevertheless, the fact that Betty and her comrades believed it was difficult, thus preventing her from visiting her father's grave, is interesting.
12. *I Love Malaya*, Asia Witness Production, Objectifs Films, 2006.
13. "Chin Peng apologises for death of innocents", *The Star*, 22 November 2009.
14. "PAS delegates want welfare for Malay Communist soldiers", *Malaysian Insider*, 5 June 2011.
15. "Chia Thye Poh", *Wikipedia*.
16. Both films are available on YouTube. Their popularity has no doubt been helped by the bans.
17. "Ban on Zahari film stays", *Channel News Asia*, 14 October 2009. "Film on ex-leftist leader Lim Hock Siew banned", 13 July 2010.
18. Press release on the prohibition on the film, *Dr Lim Hock Siew*, Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, 12 July 2010.
19. Though some of Mr See's other documentaries have been approved for public viewing, MICA's capriciousness in deciding what Singaporeans can or cannot watch contributes to the anxiety amongst filmmakers.
20. "A country's independence cannot be given", *The Straits Times*, 9 February 2003.
21. The Pedra Branca case was resolved in 2008, in Singapore's favour, following mediation at the International Court of Justice. An agreement over the relocation of Malaysia's railway station, and use of the railway land, was reached in 2010.
22. "Malaysia will not go to war with Singapore: Mahathir", *Agence France Presse*, 30 January 2003.
23. "Singapore action criticised (HL)", *New Straits Times*, 28 January 2003.
24. Singapore had declared independence from the British on 31 August 1963. It then joined the Federation of Malaysia. Unable to resolve their differences, this marriage lasted just two years. On 9 August 1965, Singapore separated from the Federation.
25. Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Times Media, 2000, p. 22.
26. One could argue that Singapore effectively separated from Malaysia in the 1940s, well before 1965. In 1941–42 the Japanese invaded the Straits Settlements—Penang, Malacca, Singapore—and began to administer them separately. After the war, the British similarly administered Singapore as a separate entity until partial independence in 1959. Nevertheless, the period from 1941 to 1965 was a turbulent one where Singapore's political future was unclear. Hence, 9 August 1965 should be remembered as the date when closure was brought to this question.
27. V. S. Naipaul, *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey*, Vintage Books, 1982, pp. 253.
28. Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*, Times Media, 2000, pp. 22–23.
29. Flags of The World. http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/sg.html and "Tribute to Dr Toh Chin Chye", *Remember Singapore Blog*, 3 February 2012 and "The national flag of Singapore", National Library Board Singapore, 21 December 1999.
30. Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story*, Harper, p. 42.

Chapter 2 Two countries separated at birth

1. James Michener, *The Voice of Asia*, Random House, 1951, p. 139.
2. Keith Sutton, "Agribusiness on a grand scale—FELDA's Sahabat Complex in East Malaysia", *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 22(1), 2001, pp. 90–105; p. 92.
3. "Reinventing FELDA", *The Edge* Singapore, 9 August 2004.
4. FELDA Holdings Corporate Website.
5. "PM: FELDA is a Malaysian success story", *The Sun Daily*, 14 August 2011.
6. "FELDA to market products in African continent", *Pertubuhan Berita Nasional Malaysia*, 11 September 2004.
7. "Call to improve FELDA housing", *New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Berhad*, 25 September 2004.
8. "Shopping, movie and a FELDA trip", *New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Berhad*, 23 April 2004.
9. "213 addicts nabbed in FELDA drug crackdown", *New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Berhad*, 25 April 2005.
10. "Social mechanism against drug menace in FELDA schemes—Abdullah", *Bernama The Malaysian National News Agency*, 8 September 2004.
11. It was shortened to two years in 2004.
12. "Iskandar Malaysia attracts RM77.82 billion cumulative investments", IRDA, 18 October 2011.
13. "Singapore, Malaysia formalise land swap deal", *channelnewsasia*, 28 June 2011.
14. "GTP Briefing", 6 August 2010, and "ETP Update", 26 August 2011, PEMANDU.
15. "DPM: Government to protect Bumiputeras' interest", *Malaysia Today*, 21 August 2011.

Chapter 3 The end of dominance: Part I

1. I explore accusations of judicial bias in Chapter 5.
2. BN later won back one of the opposition states, Perak, following a series of defections and by-elections.
3. Due to their structure, it is easier for bigger parties to win GRCs. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.
4. No doubt, Malaysian law does not mandate this sort of racial balancing in politics. So, there is nothing stopping, say, a Malay Muslim–dominated party from nudging out BN and gaining power.
5. Most Chinese, Indians and Malays there whom we spoke to said that for the most part, PAS rules fairly, and does not discriminate against minorities. If anything, the one recurring complaint we heard was about its supposed lack of business acumen.
6. Even though public acceptance of PAS has improved since the 2008 general elections, many Malaysians are still wary of their religious motives.
7. According to Malaysia's Department of Statistics, Kelantan's GDP per capita in 2010 was RM8,273 (at Year 2000 constant prices). By contrast, Penang had the highest GDP per capita at RM33,456.

8. According to the PAS website, the party was started in 1951, and took part in elections for the first time in 1955.
9. "BN defensive as Penang tops manufacturing investment", *The Malaysian Insider*, 21 February 2012.
10. "Harussani says Malays must defend their land", *The Malaysian Insider*, 21 February 2012.
11. "Waft of scandal choking Anwar", *New Straits Times*, 1 May 2011.
12. Najib appointed Shahrizat to the position in 2009. Because she had lost her parliamentary seat to Nurul the year before, she had to first be sworn in as a senator.
13. Though ethnic parties may well remain, they will no longer be able to succeed by simply appealing to—and working for—one community. The winners will be the ones with a broad-based multi-ethnic appeal.

Chapter 4 The end of dominance: Part II

1. "Straits Times Review", *The Straits Times*, 25 August 2006.
2. "Reporting public opinion in Singapore", *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, January 1999, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 11–28.
3. It later emerged that there was no such letter; instead, the IBA's president had praised Singapore's "outstanding judiciary" in a speech at the start of the conference.
4. Han Fook Kwang, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Man and His Ideas*, Times Editions, 1998.
5. Channel News Asia, 3 May 2006.
6. The last election saw a big change, of course, with many more credible, talented individuals representing the opposition, and their support base broadening considerably.
7. "Obituary: J.B. Jeyaretnam", *The Economist*, 9 October 2008.
8. Article 39A(1) of the Singapore Constitution.
9. Why did Singaporeans vote for the late JBJ, as he is fondly known? Maybe they genuinely thought he'd do a better job than the incumbent. Or maybe it was a protest vote, unhappy as they were about the years of single-party rule. Whatever the case, residents of Anson perceived him as the *better* candidate for them, so much so that they returned him to office in 1985.
10. Calculated from "Map of electoral divisions", Elections Department Singapore, http://www.elections.gov.sg/elections_map_electoral.html.
11. "On a high horse called Truth and Right, PAP lost in a changing world", yawningbread.wordpress.com, 21 September 2011.
12. The 2011 presidential election, a four-horse race between very different candidates, further normalised alternative views and opposition politics. Only 35 per cent of Singaporeans voted for Tony Tan, the government's preferred candidate, who won with a plurality in the first-past-the-post contest.
13. Six elected members of parliament (MP) and one non-constituency MP (NCMP), admitted as the "best of the losers".
14. Speech by Lim Boon Heng, 22 July 2011.
15. "Silvester Prakasam, "Evolution of E-payments in public transport—Singapore's experience".

Chapter 5 Not civil enough

1. Half the stories were about BN, compared to 15 per cent about the opposition. Of all stories, BN had about 20 per cent positive pieces and 3 per cent negative pieces. Thirteen per cent of all stories were negative ones about the opposition. Overall, BN had three times as many positive pieces than the opposition.
2. Though Rahman obviously could not back up his claim with any evidence, this quote is included here to reflect an opinion that we hear occasionally in Malaysia.
3. Today it is possible to read each other's newspapers online. But few people bother.
4. Speech at Singapore Press Club, 26 February 1988.
5. I occasionally contribute to *The Online Citizen*.
6. "Judiciary fails to protect minority rights", *Malaysiakini*, 16 September 2010.
7. "Chief jester's circus and charade comes to a close", *The Malaysian Insider*, 15 September 2011.
8. "Hong Kong has best judicial system in Asia: Business survey", *AFP*, 14 September 2008.
9. "Prosperity versus individual rights? Human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Singapore", International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, July 2008, p. 60.
10. "Lawyers accuse Singapore on human rights", *The Financial Times*, 9 July 2008.
11. "Singapore: Independence of the Judiciary and the Legal Profession in Singapore", Asian Human Rights Commission, 21 October 2007.
12. "Judicial independence in Singapore", Wikipedia, 26 November 2011.
13. "Prosperity versus individual rights? Human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Singapore", International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, July 2008, p. 59.
14. "Singapore lawyer happily represents thieves and even terror suspects–but no dissidents, please", *Associated Press*, 2 June 2002.
15. "15,000 nays to Lynas project", *The Malay Mail*, 27 February 2012 and "Taking a risk for rare earths", *The New York Times*, 8 March 2011.
16. *Tinur garik* is Kelantanese slang for *tak seronok*, literally "not attractive".

Chapter 6 Alibaba and the thieves

1. Malaysia's New Economic Policy (NEP) was enacted in 1971 and lasted until 1990, when it was effectively replaced by the National Development Policy, which pursued many of the same objectives. In this book, I generally use the terms NEP and bumiputera policies interchangeably to refer to this set of socio-economic policies that continue to give preferences to the so-called bumiputeras.
2. "Malaysia's GDP up 7.2pc, now equal to Singapore", *The Malaysian Insider*, 18 February 2011.
3. Economist Intelligence Unit, 2010 data.
4. Though Indonesia's car market, buoyed by rapid recent economic growth, will likely overtake Malaysia's soon.
5. "The tigers that lost their roar", *The Economist*, 28 February 2008.
6. "Money politics under fire—by Dr M", *The Straits Times*, 29 October 2008.

Chapter 7 Some are more equal than others

1. Kernial Singh Sandhu, *Management of Success: The Moulding of Modern Singapore*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 528.
2. James Michener, *The Voice of Asia*, Random House, 1951, p. 128.
3. The Economist Debates, 18 March 2011.
4. As an aside, there is a certain irony that somebody originally from Malaysia should be the one to help solve Singapore's water issues.
5. "Filipino gambling lords launder money in Singapore", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 27 September 2010.
6. "International Narcotics Control Strategy Report: Volume II Money laundering and financial crimes", United States Department of State, March 2011.
7. Forum, *The Straits Times*, 16 February 2011.
8. "Risk-averse culture hinders social mobility", *The Straits Times*, 6 April 2011.
9. The Economist Intelligence Unit.

Chapter 8 Colour matters

1. Mahathir bin Mohamad, The Malay Dilemma, Federal Publications, 1981, p. 97.
2. "Malaysian dilemma: The enduring cancer of Affirmative Action", The Center For Independent Studies, 23 February 2011.
3. See Chapter 6, note 1 (p. 273).
4. "The New Development Strategy", Economic Planning Unit (EPU), Malaysia.
5. Not to imply that *most* Penang Chinese are in favour of the *bumiputera* policy. Rather, that from my anecdotal evidence, more Chinese there than anywhere else expressed their support. Since our trip, vocal opposition has grown, particularly since the 2008 general election, when Lim Guan Eng became chief minister. In a conversation with me in mid-2008, he repeatedly expressed his desire to end the "political gravy train" which the *bumiputera* policy has been abused for.
6. *Malaysia: Death of a Democracy*, John Murray Publishers, December 1969.
7. "Population trends 2011", Singapore Department of Statistics.
8. Is the government actually allowing in more Chinese to Singapore to counter the prolific Indians and Malays? It is hard to say. While researching an article on immigration in late 2009, and then again in 2011, I had tried to get concrete data on the origin of new citizens. Sadly, I was rebuffed by both the Ministry of Home Affairs and the National Population Secretariat.
9. Michael D. Barr, "Lee Kuan Yew: Race, culture and genes", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 29 (2) (1999): 145–166.
10. "Census of population 2010: Households and housing", Singapore Department of Statistics.

Chapter 9 The influx of God and migrants

1. Malaysia's constitution defines all Malays as Muslim. What this also means is that somebody of another ethnicity can become Malay in Malaysia. According to Article 160 of Malaysia's constitution, "… when a non-Malay embraces Islam, he is said to *masuk Melayu* (become a Malay). That person is automatically assumed to be fluent in the Malay language and to be living like a Malay as a result of his close association with the Malays". This constitutional bonding of race and religion affects notions of identity throughout the country.
2. Since the 2008 general elections, when the opposition won more seats than ever before, PAS has slowly become more of a mainstream party, and has made extraordinary efforts to reach out to non-Muslims. This has assuaged some fears about their conservative and orthodox leanings. Nevertheless, the party's more fundamentalist elements regularly rear their head. In 2011, some PAS members were pushing for the implementation of *hudud*, Islamic laws, which allow for, say, the chopping off of thieves' hands.
3. Han Fook Kwang et al., *Lee Kuan Yew: Hard Truths to Keep Singapore Going*, Straits Times Press, 2011.
4. "Jesus do it now by Kong Hee.mp4", YouTube.
5. The government has announced its intention to review this.

Chapter 10 The joy of families and security

1. Many Malaysians and some Singaporeans, however, are dissatisfied with aspects of their educational and healthcare systems, as well as housing, as highlighted in Chapters 6 and 7.
2. See Francis Seow's account of the ISD in *To Catch a Tartar*.
3. This proved to be wrong. When Mas was finally captured, in Johor in 2009, Singapore found out that after escaping, he had fled to Malaysia almost instantly, wading across the narrow Johor Strait. All this showed how lost our authorities were, and was a severe dent to the image of (supposedly) super-secure Singapore.
4. G-plated cars are designated as Commercial Goods Vehicles in Singapore. And yes, one does need separate insurance to drive them in Malaysia.
5. Michael Richardson, "Lee Kuan Yew apologizes for remarks that angered Malaysia", *IHT*, 14 March 1997.
6. The United Nations Surveys on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems publishes different crime and justice statistics rates, based on 100,000 people. In 2000, Malaysia had 353.58 total police personnel. Singapore had 324.22. Malaysia had 717.48 total crimes reported. Singapore had 1,202.61. There were 288.76 people brought before the criminal courts. Singapore had 426.51. Malaysia had 192.22 persons convicted. Singapore had 292.71. Malaysia had 339.90 people incarcerated. Singapore had 411.55.
7. There are also a few who simply enjoy their job so much that they keep working, not for want of fame nor fortune. However, in our opinion, Singapore does not have many such souls.
8. Preliminary figures from Malaysia's Department of Statistics.

9. "Population in brief 2011", Singapore Department of Statistics.
10. Tey Nai Peng, "Social, economic and ethnic fertility differentials in Peninsular Malaysia", June 2002.
11. "Eugenics in Singapore", Singapore Democrats, 9 November 2008.
12. J. John Palen, "Fertility and eugenics: Singapore's population policies". *Population Research and Policy Review* 5(1) (1986): 3–14. The more controversial aspects of the Graduate Mothers Scheme were ended in 1985.
13. "Playing cupid once more", *The Star Online*, 1 November 2008.

Chapter 11 The stress of work and city life

1. HIV statistics from Malaysia's and Singapore's respective Ministries of Health. 2010 Malaysia population: 28.3 million, Singapore: 5.1 million, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit.
2. Many Malaysians we met, particularly in the North and East, refer to Thais as "Siam" people.
3. "Malaysian royal arrested over wedding brawl", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 2005 and "Victims of Pulau Rawa brawl refuse to come forward", *New Straits Times*, 20 November 2005
4. "Singapore ranks second-lowest for job satisfaction", *The Business Times*, 18 April 2009.
5. "Medicine is not just a career, but a calling", *The Straits Times*, 9 December 2008.
6. "Surgeon billed Brunei patient $40m over 4 years", *The New Paper*, 1 March 2011.
7. "Surgeon inflated $400 bill to $211,000", *The Straits Times*, 24 February 2011.
8. "Cheers and jeers for maids' day off in Singapore", *AFP*, 7 March 2011.
9. "Heritage Society 'not consulted' on Bukit Brown plans", *My Paper*, 21 October 2011.
10. "Money and happiness", The Economist Online, 25 November 2010.
11. "Letters", *The Economist*, 9 December 2010.
12. The Economist Intelligence Unit, March 2012.
13. "How's life?", OECD, 12 October 2011.
14. Jas Jaafar, Haslina Muhamad, Shajaratu Hanapiah, Tina Afiatin, Yogi Sugandi, "The index of happiness of the Malaysian and Indonesian peoples", *Academia.edu*.

Epilogue

1. Facebook Status Update, Alfian Sa'at, 26 February 2012.

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