

On economic history in the colonial era, the most important study is W.G. Huff, *The Economic Growth of Singapore: Trade and Development in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).


Political change after the Second World War is treated in L.A. Mills, Malaya A Political and Economic Appraisal (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), and very thoroughly studied in Yeo Kim Wah, Political Development in Singapore 1945–55 (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1973). There is an important new book: T.N. Harper, The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; paperback, 2001), which introduces the theme of late imperial nation building and the collapse of this scheme. Although Harper does not say so, the collapse had far reaching consequences for Singapore. For it meant that the advocates of Malayan unity there, who believed the destinies of Singapore and Malaya to be inextricably intertwined, were chasing an impossible dream.


The inside story of the PAP’s collaboration and competition with the communists, and the linkage to the conflict over merger in Malaysia, is told in John Drysdale, *Singapore: Struggle for Success* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1984); Dennis Bloodworth, *The Tiger and the Trojan Horse* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1986); and above all in Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Times Editions, 1998). But there is also a lesser known important work by a historian who was given access to the archives of the Internal Security Department, Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore. (Drysdale and Bloodworth also had access to security documents). This is Lee Ting Hui’s *The Open United Front: The Communist Struggle in Singapore 1954–1966* (Singapore: South Seas Society, 1996), a monograph based on his PhD thesis.


The well-documented studies by Lee Ting Hui, Matthew Jones, and Albert Lau offer the welcome chance to see the extent to which they corroborate
the account given in Lee’s memoirs. Additionally, it is possible to see in the Jones study whether there was a British viewpoint which differed from that embodied in The Singapore Story. The Malaysian viewpoint is clearly discernible in Cheah Boon Kheng, Malaysia: The Making of a Nation (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), and the same author’s “Ethnicity and Contesting Nationalisms in Malaysia” in his edited book The Challenge of Ethnicity: Building a Nation in Malaysia (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International, 2004).

The first-generation PAP leaders who stood with Lee are depicted in Lam Peng Er and Kevin Y.L. Tan, eds., Lee’s Lieutenants: Singapore’s Old Guard (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1999).

Coming in from the cold are Chin Peng, My Side of History (Singapore: Media Masters, 2003), and C.C. Chin and Karl Hack, eds., Dialogues with Chin Peng: New Light on the Malayan Communist Party (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004). These volumes tackle the issues that historians have puzzled over for a long time, but do not dispel all mystery, and in any case, have little to say about the communist network in Singapore, though this in itself may be a significant revelation.

The PAP started nation building from the moment it took office in June 1959, and simply went on at a more fervid pace, under greater pressure and urgency, when Singapore was suddenly independent in August 1965. Lee Kuan Yew’s autobiographical sequel From Third World to First: The Singapore Story, 1965–2000 (Singapore: Times Editions, 2000), conveys the grit and the will of the Prime Minister to make independence stick, and to build a nation by (in his words) “getting the basics right”. Chan Heng Chee and Obaid ul Haq, eds., The Prophetic and the Political: Selected Speeches and Writings of S. Rajaratnam (Singapore: Graham Brash, 1987, reprinted, Graham Brash and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007), includes his expositions on communal versus national culture. The speeches of the Prime Minister and other Ministers are obviously very important. I have turned to them frequently. I have also used the Straits Times, Singapore Herald, and Business Times, and where necessary, the Hansard. All the above sources have been my mainstay, particularly in the chapters on the merger 1961–63, national service, education, the universities, home ownership, political succession, and the Goh Chok Tong Administration.


The economic scenario after the Islamist attack on the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001 has been the focus of study by certain political economists who published essentially the same account in different works. The best account as regards Singapore is Garry Rodan and Kevin Hewison, “Neoliberal Globalization, Conflict and Security: New Life for Authoritarianism in Asia?” in *Empire and Neoliberalism in Asia*, edited by Vedi R. Hadiz (London: Routledge, 2006).

Nation building under the PAP is, as the title of Kernial Singh Sandhu and Paul Wheatley’s monumental edited tome suggests, *Management of...*
Success: The Moulding of Modern Singapore (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989). This is an all-encompassing reference work topped by the editors’ magisterial summation.


The emergence of national identity is essayed in Wang Gungwu, Community and Nation: China, Southeast Asia and Australia (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin [new edition] 1992); the same author’s Bind Us in Time: Nation and Civilisation in Asia (Singapore: Times Media Pte Ltd, 2003); and David Brown, Contemporary Nationalism: Civic, Ethnocultural and Multicultural Politics (London: Routledge, 2000).

The use of history to undergird national identity and national values is examined in Hong Lysa and Huang Jianli, “The Scripting of Singapore’s National Heroes: Toying with Pandora’s Box”, in New Terrains in Southeast Asian History, edited by Abu Talib Ahmad and Tan Liok Ee (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), and the same authors’ “History and the Imaginaries of ‘Big Singapore’: Positioning the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall”, Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 35, no. 1 (February 2004). The official histories presented have not gone uncontested, in particular, by Chinese-educated and post-65 generation bilingual intellectuals, as Hong Lysa and Huang Jianli observe.

Albert Lau, “Nation-Building and the Singapore Story: Some Issues in the Study of Contemporary Singapore History”, in Nation-Building: Five Southeast Asian Histories, edited by Wang Gungwu (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), notes the controversy generated by the Singapore Story and national education objectives, viz. the rebuttals from former opposition politicians and the general public in Singapore, and from Malaysian leaders, angry with the PAP for reopening old wounds. Albert Lau’s own stand is that while total objectivity is unattainable, the importance of sticking to the archival evidence and of being honest should be emphasized. Wang Gungwu, the editor and contributor to the volume, and the other authors who are country/region specialists like Wang, reflect on the concerns and approaches that the nationals in their respective Southeast Asian countries of specialization bring to the writing of nation-building history.