Post September-11 Singapore

Evolving Malay-Muslim Citizenship

Michelle Lau Mei Ling
Acknowledgements

To God, in whom I find my purpose and meaning in life.

Many thanks to Mom, Dad and my lovely brothers for the love and support you have shown.

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Abstract

Concepts of citizenship have largely centred on the balance of rights and obligations in any given political community. However, contemporary debate has introduced the ‘notion of belonging’ and a sense of identity which is become of great significance when considering citizenship today. Prior to September 11, Malay-Muslim citizenship in Singapore has already been unique from the general populace. Constituting the nation’s largest minority, the community’s delayed socio-economic, educational and political achievements have contributed to their latent, bitter relationship with the government. Following the attacks of September 11, attention was shifted primarily to the nation’s security measures and building a sense of ‘social cohesion’ amongst the citizenry. Subsequently, the Jemaah Islamiyah arrests have exacerbated the Malay-Muslim plight in Singapore despite repeated government declarations that their Muslim citizens were ‘moderate and tolerant’. Government policies and evidence of increased Islamic consciousness among the Malay-Muslim community have exposed the community’s desire to preserve religion as an integral part of political participation in civic society. As a result, there has been increasing citizen-initiated religious organisations lobbying for a greater place in political debate and activity. This thesis suggests that it is insufficient for the Singapore government to engage the Malay-Muslim community on the basis of race or ethnicity; it has become essential to position religion, specifically Islam, as an important issue when engaging Muslims as citizens in Singapore.
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AMLA</td>
<td>Administration of Muslim Law Act 1965</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMP</td>
<td>Association of Muslim Professionals</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>Compulsory Education</td>
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<td>CPF</td>
<td>Central Provident Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRC</td>
<td>Group Representation Constituency</td>
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<td>Jamiyah</td>
<td>Muslim Missionary Society, Singapore</td>
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<td>JI</td>
<td>Jemaah Islamiyah</td>
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<tr>
<td>MBF</td>
<td>Mosque Building Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>MENDAKI</td>
<td>Council of Education of Muslim Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Singapore</td>
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<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>MUIS</td>
<td>Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (Islamic Religious Council of Singapore)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAP</td>
<td>Peoples’ Action Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>PERGAS</td>
<td>Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers’ Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>S21</td>
<td>Singapore 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAF</td>
<td>Singapore Armed Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>WOT</td>
<td>War on Terror</td>
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Introduction

September 11 represents a watershed in the world’s political history. Since 2001, much of the literature has looked at Muslim citizens living in pre-dominantly non-Muslim western democracies and how they have sought to negotiate a public space or a ‘sense of citizenship’ by re-working their identities in light of changing domestic and foreign policies. Scholarly articles, books and government press releases have been published, dealing with Muslim citizen communities in Britain\(^1\), Europe and the United States as alienated entities. Increasingly in the post 9-11 era, work has been done in Southeast Asia on terrorist networks and research on Islam has intensified significantly. However, the issue of Muslims as citizens in pre-dominantly non-Muslim Southeast Asian countries has not been dealt with. This paper attempts to look at Muslims as citizens in Singapore and how Malay-Muslim citizenship has changed in the post 9-11 era.

Previously, citizenship for Malay-Muslims in Singapore had not differed very much from the general population, apart from a latent but controlled discontentment with the State; however the post September 11 environment has become a challenge for the relationship between Singapore’s Malay-Muslim minority and the government. This thesis suggests that there is a new ‘sense of citizenship’ and an increasing imbalance between Malay-Muslim citizenship rights and their obligations in Singapore, the latter carrying more weight. The Malay-Muslim minority’s relationship with the state is constantly susceptible

to fluctuations, dependent on external forces and yet continually balanced with domestic policies. In order for the Singapore government to accommodate and engage the population, non-Muslims and Muslims in particular, it is insufficient to simply use previous state construction tools of ‘social/national cohesion’ or calls for integration into ‘mainstream/moderate Islam’ as a one-off solution in order to assimilate the Malay-Muslim community in Singapore. This thesis asserts that it is essential to engage religion (in this case, Islam) as an important factor in the context of citizenship and civil society when dealing with Malay Muslims as a minority in the Singaporean political community.

In identifying sources for this thesis, it has become clear that there are several major gaps in the study of religion, in this case specifically Islam, in Singapore. With its long history in Singapore and almost 350,000 believers today, there are in fact, very few studies on Islam in the state.\(^2\) The majority of studies have concentrated on kinship, marriage or economic aspects of Malay society. Tong Chee Kiong openly declares that ‘it is not an exaggeration to say that there has not been a systematic study of Islam in Singapore’ and further highlights that the majority of studies in Singapore on Islam have tended to fuse religion, culture, and community into a single category.\(^3\) It is evident that Islam cannot be bound solely in the category of ‘religion’, a narrow sense of the term defined as ‘a set of doctrines binding the individual’\(^4\) and has become in recent times, necessary to examine Islam’s relationship with identity, culture, and community. This thesis addresses that Muslims are a politically significant religious minority in Singapore, thus positioning the

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\(^3\) Ibid., p388

need for religion to be incorporated into the characterization of citizenship. Muslims in Singapore make up 14.9% of a total population of 3.26 million. This is compounded by the fact that an overwhelming number, approximately 99.6%, of Malays are also Muslims; therefore this often leads to assumptions of homogeneity when addressing Islam in Singapore. For purposes in this thesis, all Malays are assumed to be Muslims.

When dealing with Malay-Muslims in Singapore as a minority community the regional dimension makes the situation a lot harder than it seems. As indicated in Table 0.1 below, Singapore’s immediate neighbours, Indonesia and Malaysia, comprise of populations that are overwhelmingly Malay and Muslim. Hence, while Malay-Muslims are a minority in Singapore, they constitute a majority in the region.

**Table 0.1 Muslim population in Southeast Asia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total Population (million)</th>
<th>Muslim Population (million)</th>
<th>% of Muslims</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>136.9</td>
<td>123.2</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>240.5</td>
<td>133.0</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This regional dimension is important when considering Malay-Muslim citizenship in Singapore and how the September 11 has changed their identities and positions within the state and also how they relate with external events. As a non-Muslim state in Southeast Asia, Singapore, and its history with racial conflict and communal relations, has been a major site of discussion where Malay-Muslims are concerned.

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5 *Census of Population 2000,* Singapore Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade and Industry, p 9
Introduction

Asia, Singapore is often viewed as a nation sandwiched between the giant Muslim states—Indonesia and Malaysia. Singapore’s obvious geo-political location within the “Malay-World” of Southeast Asia explains the government’s reluctance to adopt an ethnic-blind defense policy.7 Singapore’s bilateral relations with its close neighbours are often strained by assertive pro-Malay and pro-Muslim overtures in these states. Government policies towards racial or religious issues are often handled with sensitivity and not permitted in public discussion.8

Chapter One deals with citizenship and its multiple concepts, applicable to this thesis in the political system—namely the two extremes of liberal citizenship and civic-republicanism. It also addresses a recent phenomenon within citizenship termed as ‘a notion of belonging’9. This chapter will examine how the Singapore government has constructed a sense of citizenship through its policies of nation building. It will conclude by suggesting that in a multi-ethnic society, religion must be addressed in relation to citizenship especially in Singapore.

Chapter Two establishes the status of the Malay-Muslim community in pre September 11 Singapore—mainly establishing their socio-economic, political and educational status. It will also assess how the government has engaged them through the use of religious organizations. In Chapter Two, it is evident that the State recognizes and addresses the role of race or ethnicity but not the role of religion openly or publicly. The State, in the

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9 Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Belonging and the politics of Belonging', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40/3 (2006), 197-214
Introduction

pre 9-11 period has increasingly sought to establish a foothold in the Malay-Muslim community using government-sponsored organisations to ensure that their ideological orientation is consistent with and affiliated to the PAP government. Citizen-initiated religious associations have increasingly attempted to provide alternative leadership for the Malay-Muslim community; however the government’s firm hand reinforces that religion and politics do not mix.

Chapter Three specifically analyses the impact of September 11 on the status of the Malay-Muslim community in Singapore and how their ‘sense of citizenship’ has changed. The chapter discusses government responses, both security measures and ideological engagement, to the ‘War on Terror’ and the attempted Jemaah Islamiyah attacks which followed. Chapter Three will also deal with the Malay-Muslim response to these events and address the significance of a minority working out their position in a secular state and grappling with their evolving identity as Singaporean citizens as well as Muslims.
Chapter 1- Citizenship

“Citizenship reflects a major dilemma of democracy: it touches on the relationship between an individual and society, between an individual and the state, and, hence, between the collective and the individual.” –Felix Gross, 1999

The topic of citizenship, including its forms and concepts are wide-reaching and extensive; the body of literature is constantly expanding. This chapter will briefly introduce the concepts of citizenship applicable to this thesis namely, the liberalist theory, the civic republican model, cosmopolitan citizenship and citizenship with regard to the ‘notion of belonging’. It will not seek to address the complexities, i.e. the advantages and disadvantages of these various concepts of citizenship. The second section of the chapter will discuss the concept of citizenship which the Singapore government has adopted and addresses the ideology which the state enacts in order to construct a sense of citizenship and nation building since its independence in 1965. The last section will reveal that in this contemporary discourse of citizenship, religion plays very little or no significant role, and will suggest that it is essential to engage religion when considering citizenship in Singapore.
1.1 Concepts of Citizenship

General literature on the concept of citizenship defines it as involving group membership, most commonly with a political community and carries with it a set of relationships between rights, duties, participation and identity. The concept of citizenship primarily describes a legal relationship with the state thus; the classic notion of citizenship is meaningless without its anchorage, the state. It is now widely recognized that various processes of globalization have greatly undermined the sovereignty of the nation state however, the state must still be seen as present and active especially in shaping the types of citizenship it embodies. This is not to limit the possibility of different levels of citizenship. Hence, depending on the context, there are a barrage of labels for types of citizenship, terms ranging from active, democratic, cultural, communitarian, European, environmental, global, liberal, participatory and republican, to list a few. In recent times, the introduction of the term ‘cosmopolitan citizenship’- extends citizenship to an international level where it is applied to the totality of the citizens of their constituent countries combined. Examples of cosmopolitan citizenship are citizenship in the European Union and also citizenship within the Commonwealth of Nations. Nevertheless, it is clear that the modern state still represents a primary reference point for identity and belonging.

Amongst the various forms of citizenship, liberal citizenship represents one end of the spectrum in modern democracies. It emphasizes, in the language of rights, the individual

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11 Ibid., p1
12 Ibid., p52
Chapter 1- Citizenship

entitlement. According to Delanty, ‘Citizenship rights are entitlements.’ These rights establish a legitimate sphere for all individuals to pursue their actions and activities without risk of arbitrary or unjust political interference. The nature of “freedom”, how the term “free” is defined and the degree to which individuals are “free” are often open to question and debate in democracies. The state’s intervention is required in order to ensure effectiveness and a proper conception of citizenship within a certain community. On the other hand, citizenship also requires the protection of the citizen against the arbitrary exercise of state power. Thus, the innate tension in the liberal’s position on citizenship is unavoidable since it both depends upon, and can be threatened by, the state.

Communitarianism, on the other extreme end of the spectrum, emphasizes the collective over the individual. The term ‘communitarianism’ derived from the word ‘community’ is not new in political thought. It shifts the focus of interest toward the community and away from the individual; it outlines an individual’s obligations, duties and responsibilities to the political community to which he/she belongs. Within this tradition, the civic-republican model has been developed in recent explorations of the citizenship concept, notably by Oldfield. In this model, citizenship emphasizes the duties of the individual and is rendered meaningful by the practice of those duties within a community of similarly responsible and participating citizens. In contrast to liberal citizenship, the goals of the collective rather than of the individual take precedence.

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14 Ibid. p21
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
In essence, the civic-republican model is all about responsibility. ‘Responsibility is both etymologically and philosophically a social concept’\(^{18}\). “Within civic-republicanism, citizenship is an activity or a practice, and not simply a status, so that not to engage in the practice is, in important senses, not to be a citizen. ‘If citizenship entails membership in the community and membership implies forms of social participation, then citizenship is all about the involvement of people in the community in which they live’.\(^{19}\) However civic-republicanism recognizes that, unsupported, individuals cannot be expected to engage in the practice [of social participation]”\(^{20}\). Thus, individuals have to be given opportunities to perform the duties associated with the practice of citizenship and also be given sufficient motivation, i.e. incentives or benefits, to practice them.

Geoff Mulgan\(^{21}\) presents four principles in which society can lean towards constructing a more responsible and mutually ‘answerable’ society. It is an idea born of the assumption that people live in communities and that they are accountable to one another. The four basic principles according to Mulgan are firstly that people are social as well as individual creatures, finding identity through groups and collective structures as well as through obligations and society must tap into individual’s desires to be responsible. Secondly, that the challenges and dangers of responsibility are inseparable from its benefits and it is essential to take risks in order to reap the benefits of a ‘responsible’ society. Third, that collective responsibility should be trusted when necessary. A strong

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\(^{19}\) Held, 'Between State and Civil Society: Citizenship' p 20


\(^{21}\) Mulgan, 'Citizens and Responsibilities', p44
sense of mutual obligation and a sense that the community can help people to take responsibility for their own lives help prevent society from sliding into mutual indifference. Fourth, the political system should establish congruence between power and responsibility. It is not sustainable to distribute power unless those exercising it are responsible for how it is used and capable enough to use it. Mulgan presents these principles as a starting point for policies and programs and not as a final solution. Mulgan builds a case for any government to invest in the ‘ideal of a more responsible society’, however he also reasserts that this ‘ideal’ lends no easy answers but is constantly re-evaluated in contemporary societies.

In contemporary literature, a sense of citizenship is closely aligned with the ‘notion of belonging’. In an article by Yuval-Davis, she outlines the politics of belonging and how it relates to the participatory politics of citizenship as well as to that of entitlement of status. She differentiates between the terms ‘belonging’ and the ‘politics of belonging’, and states that belonging ‘tends to be naturalized, and becomes articulated and politicized only when it is threatened in some way’ however, the term ‘politics of belonging’ refers to a constructed project or culture by the state to achieve a particular nation-building aim. In a legal way, citizenship defines on paper the belonging of an individual to a particular state or organization. However, people can ‘belong’ in many different ways and these vary, in a concrete or abstract way, from the smallest attachment to the whole of humanity. It is useful to understand the notion of belonging under different analytical levels. The different levels concern social locations, ethical and political value systems,
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religious beliefs, cultural heritage. These levels are most definitely interrelated, and often they cannot be dealt with separately. Thus, it is difficult to separate religion from politics, especially when citizenship involves an individual’s participation in society. This thesis deals with a sense of ‘citizenship’ increasingly associated with the notion of belonging as this discourse on the ‘notion of belonging’ views citizenship as a sense of identity and connection with the community as a whole.

Theories of citizenship must be reconsidered in countries where religion plays a large role in political and social life. There is a growing importance of religion in political contexts and in contemporary approaches to citizenship, thus it is essential to locate the role in which religion plays in government. The importance of religion has often been minimized in political contexts and many writers on politics have, in the past, assumed that religion had no legitimate political role. However, of late the management of religious and ethnic diversity has become a pressing issue and increasingly relevant to contemporary conditions in the world. Citizenship is largely conterminous with nationality but must be recognized as varying on different sites, contexts and domains.

24 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
Chapter 1- Citizenship

1.2 Citizenship in Singapore

Within the Singaporean context, religion has not been addressed sufficiently by the state especially for Malay-Muslim citizens to actively participate in civil society and beyond. It is safe to say that when citizenship carries the notion of belonging to a nation in which ‘the people’ are at the centre as active agents in the shaping of their collective life\(^27\) the Malay-Muslim community in Singapore must be regarded as active agents and constantly allowed shape policy in order to understand their compatible roles as Muslims and as citizens. Literature on the concept of citizenship adopted in Singapore is associated with the model of civic republicanism, making it a viable alternative to the liberal individualist conception of citizenship.\(^28\) This model emphasizes the duty-bearing citizen over the right-bearing citizen thus conferring duties and is rendered meaningful by the practice of those duties within a community of similarly responsible and participating citizens.\(^29\) Appeal to pragmatism has been a characteristic feature of Singaporean citizenship and ‘nation-building’ has consisted primarily of the practice of citizenship in the civic republican tradition.

In Singapore, the goals of the collective take precedence over the individual. In this sense, the importance of practicing individual religion or asserting ethnicity must be given less priority to an overall sense of cohesion and unity which the state views as essential to adopt in order for stability and harmony. The term “Active citizen” coined by the government in 2003 would be the acknowledgement of the communal goals in society and part of the construction of nation-building in Singapore.

\(^{27}\) Kwok and Ali (1998)
\(^{28}\) Oldfield, *Citizenship and Community: Civic Republicanism and the Modern World*
\(^{29}\) Ibid.
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“Active citizenship means taking an active part, as a citizen, in making the country a better place to live. It means realizing that every citizen has a stake in this country. Like the founding generation of Singaporeans, it means a concern to do all that is necessary to make this the best home possible.”

Despite encouragement from the government to take on the role as “active citizens” and whilst the Constitution of Singapore guarantees certain fundamental liberties for the Republic’s citizens, the PAP governing elite imposes certain conditions that limit expression and participation. The Constitution guarantees the liberal rights of Singaporeans, and hence the mechanisms for citizen participation are in place. The failure to practice or implement these principles and structures, however, is administrative and political rather than a legal one.

In Singapore, nation-building is given priority as a process of political integration and as citizenship formation. The forging of a political consciousness is a process in which the definition of citizen vis-à-vis the state has to be repeatedly renegotiated. The concepts of citizenship and nationality being articulated within a city-state such as Singapore, argue that state-society relations are problematic, in particular state-minority relations. There is constant need to define the relationship between the state, sovereignty and nationality in order to understand how citizenship is perceived and practiced. It will be demonstrated that the relationship between the modern state and its citizens is at best negotiable and

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33 Ibid.
Chapter 1- Citizenship

uncertain. Even when a state, such as Singapore, has achieved a high degree of surveillance and ‘reflexive monitoring’\(^{34}\) it needs to constantly address the unpredictable responses and demands of its citizens.

Unlike the concept of ‘belonging’ mentioned earlier which tends to be naturalized, nation-building aims specifically at the ‘politics of belonging’- aiming to construct belonging in particular ways especially in the area of education.\(^{35}\) Citizens can convert this consciousness- of themselves as citizens, into a basis for negotiation. The government ‘educates’ its population into identities appropriate to its political agenda, but these identities subsequently take on an autonomy which cannot be anticipated or unintended so that the elite then has to readdress them. When consolidating control and legitimacy, the political elite in Singapore require of their citizens to possess a consciousness of themselves as citizens: this is important in confirming the regime’s claim to internal legitimacy.\(^{36}\)

Singapore is an overwhelmingly Chinese society\(^{37}\) in which no religion enjoys a hegemonic influence. Although linked during its colonial history to peninsular Malaya, today Singapore’s political and cultural situation differs significantly from her neighbours, whereas Malaysia and Indonesia are predominantly “indigenous Malays” and Muslim. When considering a multicultural and multi-ethnic state such as Singapore, the modern dream of democratic citizenship appears more daunting in the presence of ethnic,

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\(^{35}\) Yuval-Davis, 'Belonging and the politics of Belonging'

\(^{36}\) Hill and Lian (eds.), *The Politics of Nation-Building and citizenship in Singapore*

\(^{37}\) Note: In the Singapore Census of Population taken in 2000, Chinese represented 77%, Malays 13.9% and Indians 7.9%.
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religious and linguistic divisions in society. In such cases, where this ideological homogeneity is lacking, the state takes the lead in inculcating a common culture among its diverse citizenry. Samuel P Huntington declares that national integration or the development of a common culture requires “the replacement of a large number of traditional, religious, familial, and ethnic political authorities by a single, secular, national political authority.” In Singapore however, Chua Beng Huat suggests that the “legitimacy and longevity of the PAP government from 1959 to present is built on a strong ideological consensus with the people around economic pragmatism” whilst Francis Loh terms it as a “developmentalist ideology” which is closely related to economic gain- a result of the common concern, which unites the Singapore citizenry.

The key role of the Singapore government must be acknowledged in constructing nationality and citizenship. The term “politics of cultural engineering” describes the state’s attempt to create a sense of national identity in cultural terms- principally in the areas of education and communication. In the construction of the concept of the nation, and in building a ‘sense of citizenship’, there are distinctively two dimensions, the

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38 Robert W. Hefner (ed.), The politics of multiculturalism : pluralism and citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), p1
39 Ibid., p2
40 Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p34
41 Beng-Huat Chua, Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore (London: Routledge, 1995), viii
42 Francis Kok-Wah Loh, 'Where has (Ethnic) Politics Gone?: The Case of the BN Non-Malay Politicians and Political Parties', in Robert W. Hefner (ed.), The Politics of Multiculturalism (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 2001)
43 Hefner (ed.), The politics of multiculturalism : pluralism and citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia , p38
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cultural-symbolic and the civic-instrumental. The cultural-symbolic construction of the nation in Singapore is clearly illustrated by the PAP’s policy on bilingualism, multiracialism and national values- all of which have been received differently by the ethnic groups in the Republic. The civic-instrumental dimension is primarily concerned with the material and the utilitarian, and the problems of administration and resource control. Ironically, the state’s penetration into the lives of its citizens has offered them a stronger sense of security, affiliation and even a personal sense of identity- certainly more so than any other alternative source.

“Singapore’s Five Shared Values:

- Nation before community and society before self
- Family as the basic unit of society
- Community support and respect for the individual
- Consensus, not conflict
- Racial and religious harmony”

In multiethnic societies like Singapore, membership of a community is articulated in supra-ethnic terms to foster a set of shared values (as shown above). This set of national values, first conceived in 1988 can be said to transcend ethnic identifications and loyalties. It must be apparent that ‘nation-building’ in Singapore since 1965 has revolved around the concepts of multiracialism and multilingualism. Multiracialism is defined by Singapore leaders as the practice of cultural tolerance towards the various communities; acceptance of differences in religious practices, customs and traditions of the different communities; and according each community equality before the law and equal

\[\text{References:}\]

45 R Breton, 'The Production and Allocation of Symbolic Resources: an Analysis of the Linguistic and Ethno cultural Fields in Canada', *Canadian review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 21/2 (1984), 123-144 ;

46 Breton, 'From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: English Canada and Quebec'


49 Hill and Lian (eds.), *The Politics of Nation-Building and citizenship in Singapore*
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opportunity for advancement.\textsuperscript{50} It is clear from the discourse on citizenship in Singapore, that it deals largely with ethnicity and race, not directly engaging religion.

In Singapore, the term multiracialism is used safely and interchangeably with multi religiously. Implicitly, as a member of a ‘multiracial’ community, there are responsibilities which follow it. It becomes an effective instrument of social integration as long as the term ‘multiracialism’ is defined and perceived loosely. Much of the discourse on Malay-Muslim citizenship has focused on the issue of ethnicity and not religion. Multiracialism and multilingualism become concepts which are internalized by Singaporeans through a variety of mechanisms of socialization including education, public ceremonies and the media.\textsuperscript{51} All of which have contributed to the development of sovereignty and the sense of nationality in Singapore.\textsuperscript{52}

Christopher Tremewan has argued that Singapore’s political elite has put into place institutions and procedures (i.e. election laws, legislative measures, and policies regarding such important issues such as public housing) that serve to deliberately hinder political resistance and opposition.\textsuperscript{53} However, the PAP has justified this by stating that Singapore’s identity as an Asian state required developing its own brand of communitarian democracy.\textsuperscript{54} The Singapore political system establishes specific

\textsuperscript{50} Heng Chee Chan, 'Nation-building and National Identity in Southeast Asia', in S.N. Eisenstadt and S. Rokkan (eds.), \textit{Building States and Nations: Analyses by Region} (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1973), 2, p308-9
\textsuperscript{51} Hill and Lian (eds.), \textit{The Politics of Nation-Building and citizenship in Singapore}, p34
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{53} Christopher Tremewan, \textit{The Political Economy of Social Control in Singapore} (New York: St Martin's Press 1994)
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parameters that impose practical constraints on citizen involvement as well as religion in policy-making. 55

These constraints include a prohibition of discussion of sensitive issues- parameters often described by policy makers as “OB markers” (out-of-bound markers). 56 “OB markers” are issues designated by the government that are deemed too sensitive to be discussed in public for fear of destabilizing or jeopardizing public peace and order. 57 An unspoken consensus has developed between the government and the citizenry that religious and racial issues constitute an “OB marker”. 58 Of recent times, it is citizen-initiated religious associations which are taking advantage of the frequent pressures placed on the government for the liberalization of citizen consultation which is critical to fostering and sustaining a democratic way of life. Such organizations which gather under the banner of religion especially during the period of growing tensions in the region are not lightly dismissed.

55 Ho, 'Citizen Participation and Policy Making in Singapore: Conditions and Predicaments'
56 Ibid. pg 440
57 Ibid., pg 441
58 Ibid.
1.3 Conclusion

Thus, it is evident that the discourse on citizenship in Singapore inevitably involves ethnicity and race, revealing that although issues of religion are integral to an individual’s citizenship, it plays no intrinsic role in the bureaucratization of many aspects of society in Singapore. The literature reveals that religious institutions have no legitimate role in political debate or participation in policy-making, both of which are integral parts of citizenship and contribute heavily to a sense of belonging to a political community. As Lee Kuan Yew aptly expresses the Singapore government’s stand on religion:

“A religion looks after the spiritual, moral and social well-being of its followers. But religious organizations should leave the economic-political needs of people to non-religious groups, like political parties. This is because if any religious group tries to define the socio-economic agenda of Singapore and mobilizes the grassroots by ‘social action programs’, other religious groups will do likewise. Once people are mobilized on socio-economic issues on the basis of religious loyalties, the consequences will be bad for all.”

The secular state of Singapore defines religion solely as a personal and private affair. However, both pre and post September 11 discourses expose the need to address and engage religion as a significant issue when considering citizenship and the management of civil society.

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Chapter 2: Malay Muslim Citizenship Pre 9-11

“The Islamic society in Singapore must be viewed as an evolving entity and not as an insulated community.”
- Hussin Mutalib, 2005

“There is an increased Muslim desire to preserve their Islamic orientation, and manifest their open and vocal objections to governmental policy initiatives.”
- Suzaina Kadir, 2004

This chapter attempts to establish the socio-economic, educational and political status of the Malay-Muslims in Singapore and subsequently how the government has responded to the existing status of its minority community. It highlights the gaps in the literature which exclude the direct engagement of religion, specifically, Islam, in the discourse of Malay-Muslim citizenship in Singapore. The first section will deal with the process of ‘minoritisation’ and the impact of colonial ideology. The second section will look at the continued deficiencies in Malay education from the colonial era, the madrasah issue and consequently the socio-economic marginality of the Malay-Muslim community. The third section will discuss the containment of Malay politics, how the Singapore government has administered Islam in the state by the use of religious organisations and how citizen-formed organizations have contested this leadership provided by the government.

As mentioned previously, the Malays in Singapore make up 14.9% of a total population of 3.26 million.\(^{60}\) The large number of Malays who are also Muslims contributes to the

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\(^{60}\) Census of Population 2000, Singapore Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade and Industry, p 9
inclination to conflate both religious and ethnic identities into a single one: the Malay-Muslim Singaporean. The conflation of these ethnic and religious identities is a product of historical and political factors. In order to understand the pre 9-11 status of the Malay-Muslim community, it is vital to consider the variety of factors which have impeded their progress and development, limiting them from making a fuller contribution to the state.

2.1 The Process of ‘Minoritisation’ and Impact of Colonial Ideology

The descent of the Malay-Muslim community from a majority to a minority status has become noticeable since the founding of modern Singapore in 1819. According to Haikal and Yahaya, this root of ‘minoritisation’ originated within the parameters of colonialism. The exact number of Muslims living in Singapore at the time of its founding in 1819 is difficult to determine and there is no agreement among academic scholars with regard to the precise number of Malays who contributed to the bulk of Muslim population living in Singapore in 1819. According to a National Situation Report on Singapore during the 1977 Asian Muslim Youth Seminar on Da’wah, it was reported that there were 150 Malays, also presumably Muslims, living on the island at the time of Raffles’ arrival in 1819. Turnbull has estimated that in the same year, the island was populated by up to 1000 Malays, and sub-ethnic Malay groups.

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61 Term is coined by Haikal and Yahaya (1997)
63 Report on the Asian Muslim Youth Seminar on Da’wah, Kuala Lumpur, Feb 1977, pp 144
65 Groups such as Orang Kallang, Orang Seletar, Orang Gelam, and Orang Laut were included.
Hence, there is substantial evidence to conclude that Malays formed the bulk of the population at the time of Singapore’s founding in 1819. Which, according to Chee, was the situation up to 1824; however, the Chinese had by 1830 become the largest single ethnic component of the population with 53% and had swelled to 65% by 1867 when they numbered 55,000. Numerically, it was the long unrestricted immigration policy by the British that resulted in the dwarfing of the original Muslim population, as most of the immigrants were non-Muslims. Similarly according to Rahim, by 1836 the indigenous Malay communities were reduced to the status of a numerical minority (see Table 2.1 below) owing to the rapid influx of foreign labour from China and India needed to work in the tin mines and plantations in the Malay States and the Straits Settlements.

Table 2.1 Ethnic Population of Singapore

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>77.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The establishment of Singapore and the economic opportunities available coincided with the period when, for various reasons, the Chinese were looking for places to migrate. The socioeconomic position of the Chinese was given a political boost when they joined and

68 Refer to Roff (1967) and Turnbull (1985) for a detailed account.
struggled for the control of the Peoples’ Action Party. According to Turnbull, the revision of the layout of the town of Singapore in 1822 by the British removed Malay leadership from their dominating position in the heart of town by shifting the Temenggong, the representative ethnic/religious head for community, 3 miles to the west of the town gradually causing indigenous leadership and political influence in the community to be eased out of public view. The numerical decline of the Malay community, which occurred rapidly in the nineteenth century, corresponded with their economic and political eclipse in colonial Singapore.

The treatment of education by the colonial rulers of Singapore is still regarded by many scholars as the root of the socioeconomic dislocation of the Malay Muslims till today. In a number of articles, Ahmad attributed the problem of Malay education to the British colonial policy which served in retarding the Malay education by making it purely for the purposes of preserving the Malay traditional life. Basic skills for peasantry and fishing were often recycled in the early generations to ‘safeguard’ the customs of the Malay-Muslim community. Zoohri noted that the British colonial policy had much blame to bear for aggravating the economic deprivation of the Malays as the educational policy was

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69 M Leifer, 'Politics in Singapore', *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, 2 (1964)
71 The Malay community suffered from an absence of a traditional leader after the death of Sultan Hussein in 1835 and the subsequent resettlement of Temenggong Ibrahim to Johore. For an insightful account of Sultan Hussein and the fate of his descendents, see Pang Keng Fong (1983).
Chapter 2: Malay Muslim Citizenship Pre 9-11

that of only providing primary vernacular education to the Malays.\textsuperscript{73} As a result of this vicious cycle, Hussain claims that it was the educational pattern that largely withheld the Malays from entering into the competitive economic arena and civil service.\textsuperscript{74} This resulted in various repercussions and had vast effects on the Malay-Muslim community on both their citizenship and on their ability to participate in the socio-political arena.

\textbf{2.2 The Madrasah Issue}

The issue surrounding education in the 1990s has been the role of the madrasah system in the education of the Malays. Since the 1980s, the madrasahs had been experiencing an increase in demand.\textsuperscript{75} As a result, there have been concerns in the government that 5-6\% of the Malay cohort each year did not graduate from mainstream schools.\textsuperscript{76} This is an issue mainly because of the perception that madrasah education is seen to be below the standards of mainstream schools.\textsuperscript{77} There is an ongoing debate about the merits of madrasahs, also known as Islamic schools, and the status of the country’s Malay-Muslim minority with regards to education.

Government criticism of religious education has concerned some Malays who feel their personal religious identity may be coming under threat. There are six full time madrasahs in Singapore, and most predate Singapore’s political independence. In the post 1980s, Muslim numbers attending state/government schools decreased, with more parents

\textsuperscript{73} W.H Zoohri, \textit{The Singapore Malays: Dilemma of Development} (Singapore: Kesatuan GuruGuru Melayu Singapura, 1990), p7
\textsuperscript{76} Straits Times, 28 December 1997
\textsuperscript{77} See also Abu Bakar Mukhlis, 'Islamic Religious Schools in Singapore: Recent Trends and Issues', National University of Singapore 1999/2000
preferring their children to receive an Islamic education rather than attend state schools. Data showed that the number of applications to the madrasahs jumped from 824 in 1994 to 1354 in 2000.78 Government officials have expressed their concern about this trend in August 1999 and it has sparked off heated discussions within the Muslim community and between the representatives of the madrasah and the government. This trend has had the government questioning the viability of an Islamic education, whether religious schooling can equip Muslim children for a working life (especially in terms of employment rates) in a thoroughly secular Singapore. The concern regarding the slipping educational standards of the Malay-Muslim minority compared to the majority Chinese accompanies a sense of disadvantage amongst the Muslims which eventually translates into discontentment. With increased scrutiny and ministerial criticism, the Muslim community in Singapore feels largely targeted and cornered into an overall ‘social cohesion’ which the government continually advocates.79

The introduction of Compulsory Education (CE) for children ages 6 to 10 by the Ministry of Education (MOE) attempted to make elementary school education compulsory for all Singaporeans in 1998. This has been a major concern amongst the Muslim community regarding the future of Islamic education in Singapore. In the process, it became clear that the Singapore government had not been able to extend its administration over the madrasah in Singapore through religious organisations. Citizen-initiated organisations such as PERGAS issued warnings that it would not allow any effort to undermine or

78 Kadir, 'Islam, state and Society in Singapore', pg 360
79 BBC news, 28th April 1998.
shut-down Islamic education in Singapore.\textsuperscript{80} The compromise came that the functioning six madrasahs would have to prepare their students for the Primary School Leaving Certification Examination and that it had the right to review the performance of these students at the end of the 6 years.\textsuperscript{81} The madrasah debate has opened discussions on the struggle for meaning and representation of Islam in a secular state and in the relationship between the Muslim community and the Singapore government.

\textbf{2.3 Malay-Muslim Socio-Economic Marginality}

Throughout the duration of colonial rule in Singapore, the Malay community remained persistently on the socio-economic, educational, and political margins of society. The need to address the issue of Malay underdevelopment has long been recognized among Singapore academics, as it is necessary to examine Islam’s relationship with identity, culture, and community.\textsuperscript{82} The widening of the socio-economic and educational gap between the Malays and the Chinese can be attributed to the adoption of a minimalist approach by the PAP government towards the socio-economic and educational malaise confronting the Malay community.\textsuperscript{83} As the Table 2.2 below indicates, the gap between Malays and Chinese in the two highest occupational categories was 2.3 percent in 1957, which increased to 4.1 percent in 1970 and 9.6 percent in 1980.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & Malay & Chinese \\
\hline
1957 & 2.3 & \\
1970 & 4.1 & \\
1980 & 9.6 & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Occupational Gap Between Malays and Chinese}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{80} Berita Harian, The Straits Times PERGAS press statement, 11 May 2000
\textsuperscript{81} Kadir, 'Islam, state and Society in Singapore', p366
\textsuperscript{82} Milner, \textit{Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule}
\textsuperscript{83} Lily Zubaidah Rahim, \textit{The Singapore Dilemma: The political and Educational Marginality of the Malay Community} (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1998), p19
Chapter 2: Malay Muslim Citizenship Pre 9-11

Table 2.2 Percentage of Malay and Chinese Working Males by Occupation

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional &amp; Technical</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin. &amp; Managerial</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture &amp; Fisheries</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production &amp; Transport</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not classified</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2.3 Percentage of Each Ethnic Group Attending University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1990</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malays</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indians</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


In the 1980s and certainly in the 1990s as Table 2.3 above indicates, at the tertiary level the educational gap between the Malays and Chinese showed signs of widening. The Chinese appeared to make the most progress with a 2.9 percent increase of those within this community attending university between 1980 and 1990 compared to the increase of
1.7 percent for Indians and a modest 0.8 percent increase for Malays. The educational
gap between the Malays and non-Malays becomes more alarming when the percentage of
graduated household heads for each ethnic community is considered. Whilst only 1.4
percent of Malay households in 1990 were headed\textsuperscript{84} by a person with tertiary
qualifications, the figure was 9.6 percent for Chinese households and 6.4 percent for
Indian households.\textsuperscript{85}

Overall, since the nation’s independence in 1965, there have been some improvements,
albeit gradual, in the Malay’s socio-economic status. Since the early 1990s, the issue of
the Malay-Muslim community’s absolute gains and ‘profound achievements’\textsuperscript{86} have been
regularly emphasized by the PAP leadership and the media.\textsuperscript{87} Articles applauding the
success stories of individual Malays, coupled with data on the educational and
occupational progress, have been a regular feature in the local newspapers.\textsuperscript{88} It must be
acknowledged that Malay-Muslims like other citizens aspire to progress and share the
broad goals and vision of this city-state. However, in a highly competitive society such as
Singapore, the level of relative deprivation felt by socially marginalized communities
becomes more readily enhanced. Additionally, exposure to ideals such as social justice,
equality and equity have contributed significantly to feelings of relative deprivation.\textsuperscript{89}
This sense of deprivation is especially felt by the highly educated and professional ethnic
minorities particularly when faced with difficulties in attaining high status jobs and

\textsuperscript{84} The anomalous title of ‘head’ in the government complied census data refers to the father or single
parent.
\textsuperscript{85} Straits Times, 28 November 1992
\textsuperscript{86} Goh Chok Tong, Straits Times, 16 April 1991; A Mattar, 16 April 1991)
\textsuperscript{87} Rahim, The Singapore Dilemma: The political and Educational Marginality of the Malay Community ,
p23
\textsuperscript{88} Straits Times, 12 October 1992; Straits Times, 16 May 1993
\textsuperscript{89} Donald Horowitz, Ethnic groups in conflict (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p5
promotions despite their academic credentials. The difficulties confronting Malay professionals particularly when seeking employment in local Chinese firms may perhaps explain their stronger representation in the civil service and Western multinational corporations.

While multiracialism at the cultural level is encouraged in Singapore, the empirical evidence presented in the Rahim’s study does suggest that multiracialism and equal opportunity, particularly at the institutional level, are far from satisfactory. The frustration of these Malay professionals with perceived discrimination and unequal job opportunities in the work-force was articulated by participants at the National Convention of Singapore Malay-Muslim Professionals in October 1990. At the congress, suggestions were made for the implementation of anti-discrimination laws and the establishment of a body to monitor discriminatory practices in society. To date, the Singapore government has not acknowledged that discrimination against minorities in the work-force is a problem that needs to be seriously addressed in order to preserve the integrity of the nation’s meritocratic and multiracial ideal. Rahim argues that the prolonged situation of the Malay-Muslim community on the socio-economic and educational fringes of society


92 Rahim, *The Singapore Dilemma: The political and Educational Marginality of the Malay Community*, p26

93 Ibid., p25
constitutes an unhealthy obstacle towards improving relations between Malays and non-Malays and with Singapore’s Malay neighbours.\(^{94}\)

\textbf{2.4 The Administration of Islam in Singapore}

The government has made efforts at engaging the Malay-Muslim community in Singapore through various ways especially through the establishment of government-sponsored religious organizations, such as the Islamic Religious Council (MUIS) and the Council of Education of Muslim Children (Mendaki). However, consequently citizen-initiated organizations such as Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers’ Association and Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP) were formed as an alternative voice to these government associations.

As a secular state, Singapore’s constitution upholds the right of groups to adhere to their religious faiths but enshrines a separation of religion and the state. Previous experience with racial riots in the 1960s has led to strong controls on religious activities. The Religious Harmony Act, which came into effect in March 1992, allows the government to take action against the various religious groups which violate the act, i.e. leaders or members of a religion who threaten Singapore’s religious harmony by their words or actions, and those who conduct political and subversive activities under the guise of religion.\(^{95}\) It is important to note that the state does not ban or bar religious activities.

\(^{94}\) Ibid.

\(^{95}\) The Paper, Religious Harmony Act, 1992, pp 9-10
for its respective citizen-communities but insists that religious identities be kept out of politics.\textsuperscript{96} This is widely reflected in the administration of Islam in Singapore.

After Singapore’s independence in 1965, the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) was introduced in the parliament to reinforce the provisions already established in the Muslim Ordinance and synchronize the management of Muslim affairs, such as the collection of the zakat (tithe), administration of mosques, management of wakaf land and coordinating Haj activities. The subsequent establishment of MUIS under the AMLA in 1968 allowed the organization to advise the President of Singapore on all matters relating to Islam in Singapore.\textsuperscript{97} MUIS subsequently came to represent a culmination of the fusion of Malay and Muslim identities in Singapore. It sought a central role in shaping the Muslim community since it became, partnering with the government, the sole legitimate representation for Islam. As part of the government’s attempt to engage its Malay-Muslim community, religious organizations such as MUIS were often seen as an arm of the Singapore State ‘setting the Islamic agenda, shaping religious life and forging a Singaporean Muslim identity’\textsuperscript{98} for the minority community.

With the establishment of MUIS, Muslims in Singapore encountered a religious bureaucracy that sought to administer and manage the community. This centralization in administration was also evident in the role that MUIS would play in mosque management. Prior to political independence, individual mosques were constructed and maintained by the local Muslim populations living within their respective vicinities.

\textsuperscript{96} Kadir, 'Islam, state and Society in Singapore', p362
\textsuperscript{98} ibid
Chapter 2: Malay Muslim Citizenship Pre 9-11

MUIS acquired responsibility of managing about 90 existing village mosques in 1965.\(^9\) MUIS emerged as a key player in ensuring that the minority Muslim communities were not deprived of their mosques when it pushed for the establishment of a Mosque Building Fund (MBF). The MBF sought to utilize a small portion of the compulsory social security fund, the Central Provident Fund (CPF), of Muslim citizens to help in the building and maintenance of the Mosques. These new mosques functioned as kindergartens, religious classes, pilgrimage classes, Arabic language courses, remedial tuition classes and even family counseling.

The establishment of the government-sponsored self-help body Mendaki (Council of Education of Muslim Children) in May 1982 represented a shift in the PAP government’s management of the socio-economic and educational malaise confronting the Malay community.\(^10\) Prior to the establishment of Mendaki, the PAP leadership had adopted the British minimalist approach towards the status of the Malay-Muslims. The failure of the minimalist approach to improve the relative socio-economic and educational position of the Malays was revealed in the 1980 national census.\(^11\) The government’s recognition that the minimalist stance had to be replaced by a more ‘interventionist approach’ sought to address the acute sense of relative deprivation and frustration felt by the Malay-Muslim community.\(^12\) Mendaki was established to improve the community’s socio-economic standing through education. However, the responsibility was placed on the


\(^10\) Rahim, *The Singapore Dilemma: The political and Educational Marginality of the Malay Community*, p211


\(^12\) Rahim, *The Singapore Dilemma: The political and Educational Marginality of the Malay Community*, p211
Chapter 2: Malay Muslim Citizenship Pre 9-11

Malays to adapt, adjust, and change their supposedly deficient cultural values and attitudes.\textsuperscript{103} The organization was consistent with the corporatist nature of the Singapore government which has a history of establishing institutional channels for the various interest groups to articulate their demands. Similar to other state sponsored bodies such as MUIS, the internal leadership and ideological orientation of MUIS and Mendaki are closely affiliated to and consistent with that of the PAP government.\textsuperscript{104}

Despite MUIS’ endorsement by the state, there are a number of various religious organizations/bodies that are relatively autonomous from MUIS. Many of them have existed prior to Singapore’s political independence and while MUIS oversees these associations, they retain their institutional independence. PERGAS was registered as an association in 1957 while Muslim Missionary Society (Jami’yah) is the oldest Islamic organization in Singapore, having been established in 1932. Disagreements between MUIS and these organizations have occurred in the past but more often than not such debates take place behind closed doors. This has reflected new tensions over the representation of Islamic authority in Singapore.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., p212
\textsuperscript{104} Several PAP Malay Members of Parliament have held executive positions in Mendaki. See Ibid., p212
Chapter 2: Malay Muslim Citizenship Pre 9-11

2.5 Alternative Muslim Leadership

The Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP) was formed in 1990 as an alternative voice to the government self-help group, Mendaki. In its formative years, AMP focused on the educational economic advancement of the Malay-Muslim community. However, in 2000 it developed an interest in managing the growing Islamic consciousness among the Malay-Muslim community in Singapore. The organization proposed the development of the mosques and championed the need to harness the leadership potential of religious leaders in helping the community move forward. Essentially, AMP wanted a public role for Islam.

The Prime Minister’s Office issued a press statement declaring that if AMP intended to propose alternative leadership for Malays they should form a political party and contest the general elections. The AMP proposals were seen by the government as an effort to undermine the PAP Malay Members of Parliament (MPs) leadership. However, Kadir suggests that the state may have misunderstood the point of contention. The AMP proposal had simply lobbied for a greater emphasis on ‘Muslim’ affairs and not to be represented as ‘Malay’ affairs. For the PAP government, leadership and representation are based on ethnicity and not religious affiliation.

This emphasis on ethnic affiliation is seen clearly in the formulation of the Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs) instituted in Singapore’s political system in the

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106 Kadir, ‘Islam, state and Society in Singapore’, pg 368
107 Straits Times, 10 November 2000
108 Kadir, ‘Islam, state and Society in Singapore’, pg 368
109 Ibid.
1990s. The GRCs were introduced to ensure minority representation in parliament. In a GRC, one out of the six candidates must be from a minority group. The minority representation, however, is defined narrowly as minority ‘race’ and not religious affiliation. In the case of representation of the Muslim community, the state assumes that religious representation is encapsulated by the ethnic identity that is by ‘Malay’ representation. It assumes the Malay MPs also to be Muslim MPs. Kadir gave the example of the appointment of the Malay cabinet Minister, often the Minister of Community Development and Sports, who would also be appointed the position of Minister in-charge of Muslim affairs.110 The AMP proposal, in essence, questioned government-initiated structures of Malay political leadership and the extent to which it truly represented the religious interests of the community. The AMP called for special attention to be paid to the positive role that mosque leaders and ulama (religious teachers) could play at the grassroots level, and in linking the community to the state. The fact that the proposal died a quick death is evident of the State’s firm hand that religious leadership should not interfere in political affairs.

The tensions between the state-sanctioned Muslim elite (MUIS), Islamic religious (ulama) community and Muslim citizens create new arenas of contestation as these groups become more diverse within themselves.111 Muslim politics in Singapore can therefore be characterized by the horizontal contestations of meanings, between the Malay-Muslim community and the state government, and a vertical contest for legitimate

110 Ibid., pg 369
111 Ibid.
representation of the Islamic society to the state. This requires the state to release the tight reins in the administration of Islam in order for the Malay-Muslim community to reform itself from within.

\[\text{Ibid., p370}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
2.6 Conclusion

It can be concluded in the pre 9-11 period that, there has been an increased Muslim desire to preserve their Islamic orientation, and manifest their open and vocal objections to governmental policy initiatives, thus the Islamic community in Singapore must be viewed as an evolving entity and not as an insulated entity.\textsuperscript{114} The increasing public manifestation of a stricter Muslim identity has pushed for Islam to be the dominant identity for Muslims.\textsuperscript{115} The revival also pushed for a comprehensive conceptualization of Islam as a way of life and an anchor for economics, politics, state and society. This had a significant impact on the continuing development of the Malay Muslim religious consciousness in Singapore.

In a 2002 National Day Rally speech by then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong\textsuperscript{116}, urged Muslims as citizens to be responsible in their interpretation and practice of Islam, as it would affect community growth. This is greatly significant to the concept of citizenship which Singapore adopts- preserving national cohesion over the individual. However, in the discourse of Singaporean citizenship, especially when considering Malay-Muslim citizenship, the importance of practicing religion or asserting one’s ethnicity must be addressed. There must be an increasing consciousness to the rise of religiousity and changes must be made for religion to be addressed in the political arena and not become an issue for the government to prescribe its structures upon.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p369
\textsuperscript{115} Hussin Mutalib, 'Islamic Revivalism in ASEAN states: political implications', \textit{Asian Survey}, 30/9 (1990), 877-891, p878
\textsuperscript{116} National Day Rally Speech 2002
Chapter 3- Post 9-11 Malay-Muslim Citizenship

“The event could not but compound further the Singapore government’s scrutiny of its Muslim population. More than any other Singaporean community, the terrorist attack pushed Singaporean Muslim citizens into the limelight and made them the subject of scrutiny, if not suspicion, once again.”

- Hussin Mutalib, 2005

The events of September 11 have only served to exacerbate the Malay-Muslim plight in Singapore. The government has taken pains to assure the community that their increased ‘Islamicity’ is not so much a problem and rather, that it is the religious extremism of fringe elements in the community that worries them. The event has placed Singapore’s Muslim population under a spotlight, more than any other Singaporean community and has made them the subject of scrutiny, if not suspicion. When considering Malay-Muslim citizenship today, it is important to note, as previously dealt with in Chapter Two, their latent bitter experiences as part of the citizenry in the pre 9-11 era. It is significant that the impact of September 11 has changed how the Singapore Malay-Muslim community perceives their citizenship and ‘sense of belonging’; it continues to challenge both the community and regional relations with Malaysia and Indonesia.

This chapter will assess government responses to the post September 11 and ‘Jemaah Islamiyah phenomenon’, its policies towards the citizenry and in particular the states’

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117 Hussin Mutalib, 'Singapore Muslims: The Quest for Identity in a Modern City-State', Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, 25/1 (2005), 53-72, p56

engagement with the Malay-Muslim community. The first section will examine the ‘JI phenomenon’ in Singapore and its implications for the Malay-Muslim community, the state and the region as a whole. The second section will cover the ‘War on Terror’ (WOT) and how the Singapore government has aligned itself with WOT objectives by introducing security measures and social cohesion imperatives. The third section will begin with the response of the Malay-Muslim community to the September 11 and JI phenomena. It will then address the compatibility of citizenship and religion in Singapore for the Malay-Muslim minority, and significantly how they have developed a unique identity, which is constantly evolving, both as Singapore citizens and Muslims.

3.1 Jemaah Islamiyah and Homegrown Terrorists

In December 2001, Singapore and Malaysia arrested the first group of some 30 homegrown Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members as they were planning to detonate seven truck bombs at American, British, Australian and Israeli targets in Singapore. The discovery of JI was particularly painful to Singapore Malay-Muslims who view themselves as being ‘Singapore Muslims’ and therefore highly conscious of their religious identity in a multiracial environment. It reinforced the emerging dominant discourse of a growing Islamic consciousness among Muslims in the pre 9-11 period and suggested for the first time a link with religious extremism. This different challenge, with a politically-driven agenda, religious call to arms and organized regional links was a

120 Kadir, 'Islam, state and Society in Singapore', pg 365
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‘hard dose of political realism’\textsuperscript{121} to Singaporeans, whom many never expected to be ‘at their doorsteps’\textsuperscript{122}. The White Paper on the JI revealed that the men were relatively educated and employed. It stated that “these men were not ignorant, destitute or disenfranchised” but appeared to regard “religion as the most important personal value”.\textsuperscript{123} The focus subsequently turned to erroneous teachings in Islam with calls for a tightening of religious teaching.\textsuperscript{124} But as noted by Kassim and Hassan, ‘it is all but overlooked that none of the JI detainees in Singapore had any formal religious education at local full-time madrasahs.’\textsuperscript{125}

Like other governments in the region, the Singapore government has taken security and law enforcement measures to contain the perceived threat. However, the challenge of the JI phenomenon is primarily an ideological one. Desker argues that if the challenge of this radical ideology that anchors these individuals is not met with an effective response, there can be no guarantee of preventing another generation of JI recruits.\textsuperscript{126}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{121} Rahil Ismail and Brian J Shaw, 'Singapore's Malay-Muslim Minority: social identification in a post 9-11 world', \textit{Asian Ethnicity}, 7/1 (2006), 37-51, p40
\textsuperscript{122} Arlina Arshad, 'Malay/Muslim Leaders back Government crackdown', \textit{The Straits Times} (Singapore ), 6th January 2004,
\textsuperscript{123} Anon, 'The White Paper on 'The Jemaah Islamiyah arrests and the threat of terrorism”', Ministry of Home Affairs 7th January 2003b
\textsuperscript{124} 'Press release on Jemaah Islamiyah arrests', PERGAS 2001
\textsuperscript{125} Yang Razali Kassim and Muhammad Haniff Hassan, 'Madrasahs can be key partners in war on terror', \textit{The Straits Times} (Singapore), 20th September 2004,
\textsuperscript{126} Desker, 'The Jemnah Islamiyah (JI) Phenomenon in Singapore'
\end{flushleft}
Diagram 3.1 Chart of JI’s links with foreign organizations

Source: Desker, Barry (2003) pg. 495

The discovery of the JI regional terrorist network based and coordinated in Singapore, as illustrated in the above diagram 3.1, raised the question of potential conflict between the Malay-Muslim community and the state to high prominence. This threat was the final push for potential conflict between a secular state and an increasingly religious minority population. The White Paper published by the government on the Jemaah Islamiyah arrests and the threat of terrorism dealt with the origins of the network and assessed the local threat levels. The language of the government-issued report was methodical in assessing current threat levels and prescribing security measures but took extra care to

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127 Kadir, ‘Islam, state and Society in Singapore’, p365
reinforce the view that “the vast majority of Singaporean Muslims are moderate, tolerant and law-abiding, and [did] not support the actions of the Muslim militants.”

The ‘JI phenomenon’ in Singapore raised the issue of the supposed incompatibility between Islam and secularism, as well as much as older issues regarding the marginalization of the Malay-Muslim community by Singapore’s predominantly non-Malay and non-Muslim state. The government has been keenly aware of this increasing Islamophobia and discrimination among the general population towards the Malay-Muslim community. In 2002, then PM Goh Chok Tong stressed that “Muslims should focus on the substance of Islam, practice *ijtihad*[^131], and urged moderate Muslims to speak up against intolerance, inflexibility and extremism.”[^132] The JI incidence has increasingly exposed that the Singapore government’s policy vis-à-vis the Malay-Muslim community has required more engagement and integration than simply a sense of ‘prescribed’ citizenship.

### 3.2 Singapore’s Response: Security Measures and ‘Social Cohesion’

Prior to the JI phenomenon, the War on Terror (WOT) was launched by the United States of America with support from NATO and other allies, following the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. carried out by al-Qaeda. The campaign had the stated goal of ending international terrorism by preventing terrorist groups from posing a threat, and by putting an end to state sponsorship of terrorism. Singapore, like most non-Muslim ASEAN countries has responded to the War on Terror in a range of

[^129]: Anon, 'The White Paper on 'The Jemaah Islamiyah arrests and the threat of terrorism’
[^130]: Kadir, 'Islam, state and Society in Singapore', pg 365
[^131]: The Islamic term for ‘the search for knowledge’.
ways. All the countries in ASEAN have condemned the terrorist attacks but practical responses have varied. A declaration for joint action against terrorism was signed in November 2001 but it was merely a guarantee to exchange information with no operational coordination. Non-Muslim states, like Singapore in particular, play a unique role in managing their Muslim minorities through policies of engagement and inclusiveness. As a member of ASEAN, Singapore has partnered with regional countries and has adopted security methods of sharing intelligence and coordination in the region. The government has also set up a new National security secretariat within the Ministry of Defence in order to strengthen coordination at a strategic level between all security agencies. Border security has tightened post 9-11 and laws have been adopted against money laundering and financing of terrorism.

The Singapore government’s response can be said to encompass two broad goals: improving security measures and building social cohesion, or a ‘national identity’. Evidently, there has been some perceptible change in the republic’s management and approach in dealing with defense and security issues, particularly in the post 9-11 years. In general, Singapore has adopted a three-pronged strategy against terrorism: prevention, protection and response. Measures taken under ‘Prevention’ include tighter security controls at border points and at shipping ports and airports; use of x-ray machines to scan containers; deployment of sniffer dogs; naval escorts for tankers and other high-value and vulnerable vessels; new laws to forbid dealings in terrorists’ funding.

and property. The second strategy ‘Protection’ deals with measures taken to protect against sabotage or contamination of water supplies; plans to protect Singapore’s IT, telecommunications and financial sectors; increased protection for key installations. The third element in the strategy ‘Response’ includes a new inter-agency committee to improve national defenses against biological and chemical attacks, including training for civil defense personnel in handling bio-chemical attacks. The guiding principles are coordination and integration between relevant agencies.

In addition to these, Singapore has set up a new National Security Secretariat within the Ministry of Defence in order to strengthen coordination at a strategic level between all security agencies. The Singapore approach is based on the principle of setting up a network to fight the terrorist network. However, Singapore has avoided setting up a huge bureaucracy like the US Homeland Security Department due to sensitivity to race and religion in the region.\footnote{Ibid.} The role of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) in defence has been crucial in enforcing security measures in the country. However, the role of the SAF has changed considerably in the last decade or so. Equipped with the latest in weapons and intelligence technologies and actively engaged in defense research and development, the SAF today is a highly professional and modern institution. But the SAF has also changed in yet another profound way. This is in its new philosophy and approach in dealing with the issue if security and warfare, a movement from the traditional function of deterrence and defense from potential foreign military aggressors and enemies, to one of widening the threat factor to encompass all probable sources, including domestic.\footnote{Mutalib, 'The Socio-Economic Dimension in Singapore’s quest for Security and Stability', pg 41}
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This tightening of security was precipitated by a similar shift in the international arena—from the traditional state-centered and militaristic notions of security, to non-traditional security frameworks and other imperatives.137

The non-traditional aspect of security involves the role of the community and is based largely on Singapore’s experience in maintaining cordial inter-racial and inter-religious relations. Rasheed suggests that that local community is one of the most effective but under-utilized institutions in countering terrorism.138 Singapore’s emphasis on promoting common areas and spaces recognizes every community’s efforts and celebrates its own history and heritage. The state is increasingly protective of the element of the ‘common space’ shared by all citizens and takes a serious view against any individual or group that may, through actions or statements, be attacking the racial and religious harmony in Singapore. Rasheed advocates that the community acts as an effective support base for the individual, so that he/she is not susceptible to deviant teachings. The community also acts as a material and emotional support base so that when these aspects are fulfilled, individuals are less vulnerable. The community must also be an effective tool for the propagation of a moderate voice of Islam.139 The idea of ‘Total Defence’140 relies heavily on the role of the community. It was premised on the conviction that the revolution in military affairs has made modern wars no longer limited to military combat elements, but conflicts involving entire nations and peoples. It is plausible to argue that the role of security is no longer restricted to the Armed Forces, but aimed at inculcating a feeling of

137 Ibid., pg 39
139 Ibid.
140 See Singapore government’s official website http://www.sg
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Singaporean nationalism at home.¹⁴¹ Most notable in the idea of ‘Total Defence’ is the key component of psychological defence. As stated, psychological defence “emphasizes the necessity for the multi-ethnic citizenry to work, live and play together as one united people, irrespective of their ethnic, religious and social status or backgrounds.”¹⁴²

In accordance to the state construction of ‘nation building’, the vision of Singapore 21 (S21), launched by the then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in 1997 is a continued policy of social cohesion prior to 9-11. Singapore 21 is a governmental campaign towards national and social cohesion.¹⁴³ It was launched in 1997 to allow all people living in Singapore to be active agents in shaping the present and future of Singapore, whether at community, national or international level. It focuses on the significance of national identity, a sense of ‘shared values’ and introduced National Education as a compulsory subject in all government schools in 1997. It also emphasized the importance of having greater inter-racial understanding stating that “Tolerance is not good enough. We need to actively develop a better understanding of fellow Singaporeans of different races and cultures.”¹⁴⁴ The emphasis on the citizenry and the ‘notion of belonging’ as a strong cause for the defence of the nation is evident in the language used by the government.

Post JI and September 11 discourses build upon and emphasize pre 9-11 social cohesion calls. At PM Goh’s dialogue with community leaders on 28 January 2002, he expressed concern about inter-racial and inter-religious relations at grassroots levels and directed

¹⁴¹ Mutalib, 'The Socio-Economic Dimension in Singapore’s quest for Security and Stability'
¹⁴² For Singapore’s ‘Total Defence’, see the official website http://www.sg/flavour/profile/Defence/total.htm
the setting up on Inter-Racial Confidence Circles (IRCC) and Harmony Circles at community levels, schools and work places to promote better inter-racial and inter-religious understanding between the different communities.\textsuperscript{145} Echoing his predecessor in his 2006 National Day Rally Speech, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong emphasized the importance of the ‘Singapore heartware’, which denotes a deep commitment to the nation. He explains ‘heartware’ as “getting all Singaporeans to engage and to participate in shaping the character and the life of our society, to feel passionately about our country and to get together to do something about it.”\textsuperscript{146}

### 3.3 Malay-Muslim Response

A perceptible majority from the Malay-Muslim community openly condemned the attacks and such a sentiment was widely publicized in the local media. The first open display of the inclination of the local Muslim community came on 23\textsuperscript{rd} September when the American expatriate community in Singapore organized a memorial service at the National stadium for the victims of September 11.\textsuperscript{147} The Mufti, the highest Muslim religious authority in Singapore, echoed the Singapore government’s stand and urged all Muslims and Singaporeans to preserve religious harmony by strengthening greater human understanding and well-being.\textsuperscript{148}

The measured reactions of the Singaporean Muslim community are in sharp contrast to the tempest seen in Indonesia, Malaysia or other parts of the Muslim world. There were

\textsuperscript{145} 'The White Paper on 'The Jemaah Islamiyah arrests and the threat of terrorism'', pg 23
\textsuperscript{146} Hsien Loong Lee, 'National Day Rally Speech' 20 August 2006
\textsuperscript{147} Yang Razali Kassim, 'The relationship between Singapore's Muslim Community and international events', in ISEAS (ed.), Islam in Southeast Asia: Analysing Recent Developments (Singapore: ISEAS, 2002), pg 26
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
no demonstrations or street protests in Singapore (although this could be due to the fact that the state is highly-policied). In comparison, even the Muslim minorities in Thailand boycotted American fast food outlets.¹⁴⁹ However, the cautious response of the Singaporean Muslims does not indicate that they have no anxieties or concerns about September 11 and the consequent ‘War on Terror’. Engaging in dialogue with non-Muslims behind closed doors, the sentiments of the local Muslim community were less inhibited. Fears of being singled out by the government or by the non-Muslim majority were imminent, as if they too were guilty by association for the September 11 attacks. There is evidence however, that these fears were short-lived.¹⁵⁰ The larger non-Muslim community in Singapore generally stayed away from the trap of “Muslim-bashing” seen in some Western countries such as the US, Britain and Australia. The Singapore government’s quick and decisive action in sending signals to the population not the treat the local Muslims differently or unfairly has prevented the seeds of discord from taking root.¹⁵¹

Malay-Muslim responses toward the Singapore government’s policies and language in the post September 11 from the Malay-Muslim community in Singapore have varied. However, it is unmistakable that there is an increasing trend of growing religiousity and reassertion of Muslim identity. On the 4th January 2002, four seven-year old schoolgirls defied the Ministry of Education’s warning and attended the first day of school wearing the Muslim headscarf or ‘tudung’ in what several foreign news agencies described as “the

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., pg 27
¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pg 28
¹⁵¹ Ibid.
most potent act of civil disobedience this tightly controlled nation had seen in years.”

In interviews with local media, one of the fathers insisted that “my religion is as important to me as education [so] why do I have to choose between them?” The four schoolgirls were subsequently suspended from attending public school. This incident sparked intense discussions between representatives of the Muslim community and the government. MUIS was forced to issue a public statement to defuse tensions, pointing out that Islam did not require girls to cover their hair at such a young age. Such a public debate around the headscarf is especially striking and the controversy has suggested level of serious contention, previously undetected, involving the Muslim minority and the state.

It is evident from this event, the concept of citizenship that the Singapore government is advocating, placing the community above the individual. The Singapore government’s corporatist rationale for disallowing the headscarf in schools centered on two arguments: first, allowing the tudung would only defeat the purpose of having uniforms in school, and secondly, allowing it would only conscript the ‘common spaces’ among students of different racial and religious backgrounds, deemed so necessary to foster a common Singapore identity. Recent issues such as this ‘tudung’ issue and government policies that were not well received by local Muslims are symptomatic of a tendency to assert their religious identity. For example, the proposal in 1998 for a compulsory education

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153 Ibid.
154 Anon, *The Straits Times* (Singapore) 3 February 2002,
155 Kadir, ‘Islam, state and Society in Singapore’, p357
156 Mutalib, ‘Singapore Muslims: The Quest for Identity in a Modern City-State’, p63
system, which if implemented fully, could pose problems to the future of madrasahs in Singapore and to Islamic education, which is esteemed highly to a practicing Muslim.

### 3.4 Evolving Malay-Muslim citizenship

The Singapore government’s security measures and social cohesion imperatives have had a weighty impact on Malay-Muslim citizenship in Singapore. As citizenship is not merely described as a series of ‘rights and obligations’, it comprises the need for ‘recognition’ and includes emotional elements, such as the ‘notion of belonging’\(^\text{157}\) as mentioned in the first chapter. Security measures have become one of the major anxieties of the Malay-Muslim community in Singapore and have impacted their sense of ‘belonging’. Similar to British Muslims and Muslim communities elsewhere, they are concerned about government policies and public attitudes, physical attacks and abuse, anti-terrorist legislation, extremist ‘Islamophobia’ agenda of various institutions (which includes the media) and a general public attitude of ‘anti-Muslim culture’\(^\text{158}\).

Despite reservations from the government and anxieties mentioned above, most Malays do not perceive a problem with adopting inter-dependent identities being both Singaporean and Muslim. While they are prepared to downplay their constitutionally indigenous status, given its sensitivity in multiracial Singapore, and demonstrate their patriotism and loyalty to the country, they seem to want the government to accept and be more tolerant of their particularistic desires and aspirations, as Malays and especially as Muslims. The Singapore government’s tendency to focus on the obligated citizen, rather

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\(^{157}\) Yuval-Davis, 'Belonging and the politics of Belonging'

\(^{158}\) Reza Ameli Saied and Merali Arzu, 'Dual Citizenship: British, Islamic or Both? — Obligation, Recognition, Respect and Belonging', Islamic Human Rights Commission 2004
then the right-bearing citizen has caused a mismatch in the Muslim perception and expectation of their citizenship, if left unsettled, could affect Muslim integration into the broader Singaporean national identity and consciousness.

This delicate balance between their identity as Muslims and as Singaporeans at the same time is not a new phenomenon. The Malay-Muslim community has faced this dilemma since Singapore’s separation from Malaysia in 1965. This ability to manage identities was acknowledged openly by Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong. He observed how the Muslim community here had handled itself steadily throughout the September 11 crisis and significantly expressed understanding for the feelings of the local Muslim community.\textsuperscript{159} The president of MUIS, Alami Musa, observes that as more Muslims in Singapore come to terms with what it means to live as a minority in a secular state, a progressive brand has been developing in the Muslim community, seeking an understanding of their position vis-à-vis a secular nation-state.\textsuperscript{160} Kadir explains that this evolving position can be aided by working out a sphere for Islamic beliefs and practices without contradicting the basis of a secular state. Whilst a handful in the Malay community, including some Muslim leaders, hold the firm view that Islam is a comprehensive way of life and does not distinguish between public and private spheres, others have no problem with a secular state that respects the basic religious beliefs of its citizens, which has to be constitutionally guaranteed.\textsuperscript{161}

\textsuperscript{159} Kassim, 'The relationship between Singapore's Muslim Community and international events', p25
\textsuperscript{160} Discussion with Mr Alami Musa, President of MUIS, Singapore, 26 June 2004 in Kadir, 'Islam, state and Society in Singapore', pg367
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid. pg 367
3.5 Conclusion

The Singapore government has launched two separate campaigns in the post September 11 and ‘JI phenomenon’ period: the first includes the improvement of security measures to combat extremist elements and the second aimed at re-strengthening ‘social cohesion’ and psychological defence to address ideological elements in the community. Security measures have largely affected Malay-Muslim citizenship in Singapore; the fears of being targeted as a community and singled out as ‘extreme’ seem to permeate the post 9-11 atmosphere. The increased Islamic consciousness among the Malay-Muslim community has exposed that the Singapore government’s policy vis-à-vis their minority community requires more engagement than previous prescriptions of citizenship which emphasize the collective over the individual. The Malay-Muslim community in Singapore, like elsewhere, must be viewed as an integral aspect as part of the government’s efforts in countering terrorism. Thus, Muslim integration into the broader Singaporean national identity and consciousness is imperative, and the role of religion specifically Islam, cannot be seen as separate from the Malay-Muslim community’s political participation. It must be noted that for the ordinary Malay-Muslim in Singapore, their citizenship and religion are viewed as compatible entities. However, the adoption of being both ‘Singaporean’ and ‘Muslim’ requires balance and a constant negotiation between the community and the state.
Conclusion

It is certain that citizenship and belonging for the Malay-Muslim community in Singapore has changed in the post September-11 period. The state-constructed national identity and a sense of shared values have been prescribed with an overarching sense of the PAP’s corporatist and pragmatic approach to nationhood. In Singapore, this sense of Malay-Muslim citizenship, or the extent to which Muslim citizens ‘belong’ has been marked by slight, but manageable discontent in the pre September 11 period. However, this concept of citizenship which Singapore adopts, emphasizes the preservation of national cohesion over the individual, and has threatened to alienate the Malay-Muslim minority in the post September 11 period. The government’s education policies, the state’s reluctance in effectively dealing with the distinct socio-economic marginality of the Malays and the containment of religious politics has outlined the form of citizenship of the Malay-Muslim community prior to September 11. The Singapore government has drawn out “carefully mandated spaces and boundaries for both secularism and religiousity”\(^\text{162}\).

With Singaporeans having become more religious over the decades, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong says steps must be taken to increase interaction between those of different faiths.\(^\text{163}\) Speaking at the opening of the Harmony Centre, which has the promotion of inter-faith dialogue as one aim, he indicates that social cohesion may weaken ‘unless we

\(^{162}\) Ismail and Shaw, ‘Singapore's Malay-Muslim Minority: social identification in a post 9-11 world', pg 48

\(^{163}\) Xueying Li, 'PM: Step up interaction between faiths', *Straits Times* (Singapore) 8 October 2006,
actively work to bring the different groups together\textsuperscript{164}. Relations between Muslims and non-Muslims have been under strain worldwide. Events such as the Danish newspaper’s publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad and Israel’s July invasion of Lebanon have provoked demonstrations in Indonesia and Malaysia. “We must not import these foreign problems into Singapore, but neither is it realistic to expect to insulate ourselves totally from them,” Mr Lee said. Public spaces such as schools, workplaces and community areas must be preserved as “shared spaces” to widen common grounds and to strengthen race and religious harmony.\textsuperscript{165}

However, in the post September 11 period, the Singapore government cannot ignore the increasing trend of religious assertion and growing religiosity within the Malay-Muslim community. The community has sought to weave itself and adapt around the fundamental premise of being a ‘Singaporean’ and ‘Muslim’ at the same time. In the post September 11 period, the government has emphasized the compatibility of their roles as Muslims and as citizens. As Dr Yaacob Ibrahim\textsuperscript{166} clarifies, “There is, ultimately, no fundamental contradiction between modernity and religiousity.”\textsuperscript{167} Nevertheless, the Singapore government’s tendency to focus on the obligated citizen, rather than the right-bearing citizen and on ethnicity rather than on religion, if left unsettled, could affect Muslim integration into the broader Singaporean national identity and consciousness.

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{166} Dr Yaacob Ibrahim is the current Minister for Muslim Affairs.
\textsuperscript{167} Ismail and Shaw, ‘Singapore's Malay-Muslim Minority: social identification in a post 9-11 world’ ,pg 49
Conclusion

In order for the Singapore government to accommodate and engage the population, non-Muslims and Muslims in particular, it is insufficient to simply use previous state construction tools of ‘social/national cohesion’ or calls for integration into ‘mainstream/moderate Islam’ as a one-off solution in order to assimilate the Malay-Muslim community in Singapore. It is essential then, for the Singapore government to engage their citizens as Muslims, together with religious institutions and leaders, in the context of citizenship and civil society when dealing with Malay Muslims as a minority in the Singaporean political community.

*Word Count: 13,157*
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