

*Crisis
Committees*

Merdeka! The Independence of Singapore, 1965, The Second Cabinet of Lee Kuan Yew



CHAIR: Daniel Catapang

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December 7th

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Letter from the Dias

Esteemed Delegates,

Welcome to the Greater Washington Conference on International Affairs (GW CIA) XXIX! My name is Daniel Catapang and it is my distinct honor to be serving as your Crisis Director for the Second Cabinet of Lee Kuan Yew! I am currently a Sophomore at the George Washington University and I'm originally from the San Francisco Bay Area. At GW, I am majoring in Asian Studies and International Affairs with a minor in History.

I have been a delegate for MUN since my freshman year of high school and I now compete in the collegiate circuit with GW's incredible Model UN Travel Team. Alongside GW CIA, I staff our high school conference, WAMUNC, and SCVMUN back home in California. Outside of MUN, I work as a Junior Editor and Writer at *The Globe*, our International Affairs Research Journal. I also work as a Research Fellow at Vanguard Think Tank and serve as the Director of Logistics of GW's Alexander Hamilton Society. I am also involved in Strategic Crisis Simulations, GW's Wargaming Society.

Lee Kuan Yew is widely hailed as the Father of Singapore and his 2nd Cabinet was pivotal in the foundation of this unique nation. The actions of the Cabinet led to Singapore becoming one of the most economically successful nations in the world despite its small size. However, despite the economic success of Singapore, the nation is a semi-authoritarian state, without a truly fair electoral process and limited civil liberties. In this committee, I hope that you will use the tools at your disposal alongside

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the tools of the committee and secret allies to set a new path for Singapore. Consider your character's beliefs and ambitions and how those interact with the rest of the committee. I can't wait to see what unique and creative crisis arcs and solutions you develop in the committee.

I look forward to seeing you all in December!

All the best,

Daniel Catapang

Crisis Director

The Second Cabinet of Lee Kuan Yew

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (with your advisor cc'd) at daniel.catapang@gwu.edu

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Committee Format and Procedure

This committee will feature full crisis elements, including a backroom and directives. Instead of the traditional resolutions found in GA-style committees, this committee will enact all actions via directives. These directives are only a few pages long (at the discretion of the chair) and include brief actionable points on what the committee intends to do. Typically, these directive rounds will occur following each crisis update and take 30-45 minutes to draft and pass. These directives are meant to allow the committee to directly influence crisis updates and the flow of the committee.

The backroom will allow delegates to utilize their character's portfolio of resources to engage in activities behind the scenes of the committee (front room). You will be provided pads that will allow you to write covert notes (not to be seen by anyone in the committee) to characters who will carry out your commands. The Crisis Staff will collect these notes every so often (at the Crisis Director's discretion) and will incorporate the actions conducted by your character in the backroom to be brought up into committee. When you write your first note, please write a "manifesto" that will outline the overall goal of your character and how you will accomplish that goal in your backroom. Please be concise and neat in your notes and we highly encourage the use of actionable bullet points in your notes. Delegates should use their backrooms creatively to tackle the issues at hand effectively and within the scope of their characters and committee. **However, any content in backroom notes that encourages genocide, deliberate civilian deaths, war crimes, and/or discrimination based on race, gender, age, or sexual orientation is strictly prohibited.** Delegates are encouraged to engage in outside research to further understand the topic of this committee, as well as to consult the Delegate Handbook for a more in-depth explanation of how crisis style committees work.

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Committee Overview

On August 9th, 1965, Singapore faced an unprecedented challenge. Following a unanimous vote by the Malaysian Parliament, Singapore is expelled from Malaysia and becomes an independent nation. In a famous televised program, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew tearfully announced the independence of Singapore to the Singaporean people. Singapore has now been thrust into a dangerous situation, for it is now a state unprepared and unwanting of statehood. Singapore faces numerous challenges across the board; its economic situation is now in jeopardy as it has been cut off from any outside resources that the island nation depends on. Furthermore, the nation faces integral struggles between the three racial groups of Singapore, the majority Chinese population, the native minority Malay, and the minority Indian population. Finally, Singapore must contend with ensuring its own security as its security forces are minuscule and there is no guarantee of security from the ongoing *konfrontasi* conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia alongside the looming spread of Communism from the People's Republic of China or the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam). Thus, the newly affirmed Cabinet of Singapore, led by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew is faced with leading the nation in the face of this crisis and ensuring a prosperous future for Singapore for decades to come.

Economic Situation in Singapore

In 1965, Singapore's economic situation was dire. Singapore is a small island that had just been cut off from Malaysia, which it depended on for food, water, and other necessities. Singapore lacked any natural resources on its own and its small economy left it with very little capital to invest in itself. In 1965, Singapore's Nominal GDP per

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Capita was \$USD500 (1965), comparable to Mexico or South Africa.¹ It's important to note that despite this low GDP per Capita, Singapore's GDP per Capita was significantly higher than its neighbors in Indonesia and Malaysia due to the city's historic location as a major trade stop from its time as a British Crown Colony.² The only resource that Singapore could truly bring to the table was its people. However, Singapore's labor market was in a critical position, hosting a dangerous 10% unemployment rate. Furthermore, most of these workers were unskilled trade workers, as the previous colonial system had not set effective public educational policies.³

Alongside the minimal potential for industry and the poor economic state of the nation, Singapore faced numerous challenges to the quality of life for its citizens. Much of Singapore was composed of slums and *kampong* houses as part of the legacy of the British colonial administration and the recent annexation of Singapore by the Empire of Japan in the Second World War. 300,000 Singaporeans lived in semi-permanent housing without proper sanitation or utilities, alongside another 250,000 living in rented cubicles with even worse access to utilities.⁴ The nation further suffered from a lack of quality education for much of its population. In 1957, the literacy rate in Singapore was only 52.3%. Due to the heterogeneity of ethnicities in Singapore, there

¹Ravi Menon, "Ravi Menon: An Economic History of Singapore - 1965-2065," Bis.org, August 7, 2015, <https://www.bis.org/review/r150807b.htm>.

²Sarah Stricker, "Singapore and Its Pursuit of GDP Growth," www.eh-exhibition.uni-bayreuth.de (Universität Bayreuth, n.d.), <https://www.eh-exhibition.uni-bayreuth.de/en/cs/Singapore/index.html#:~:text=In%201965%2C%20GDP%20per%20capita>.

³Kenneth Bercuson, *Singapore: A Case Study in Rapid Development, Occasional Papers* (Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 1995), <https://doi.org/10.5089/9781557754639.084>.

⁴"MND | Our Early Struggles," www.mnd.gov.sg (Ministry of National Development, July 4, 2019), <https://www.mnd.gov.sg/our-city-our-home/our-early-struggles#:~:text=When%20Singapore%20gained%20independence%20in>.

was a broad lack of literacy across multiple languages. Singapore's most spoken languages include Chinese, Malay, Tamil and English.⁵

This Cabinet must help guide Singapore towards independent financial success. If Singapore is to develop itself economically, it must also choose what languages are taught in schools and used in state functions while allowing for recognition of minority languages/ethnic groups of the island. Singapore must also contend with providing for its citizen's health and well-being. Disease runs rampant in the slums of Singapore and there is limited access to medical services for many Singaporeans. While some have advocated for the type of Social Healthcare developed by Singapore's former British colonizers in the form of the National Health Service (NHS), it remains to be seen how the struggling nation will be able to afford such a program.⁶ When exploring the issues facing Singapore's economy, it's important to recognize the role that housing, unemployment/economic recovery, education, and healthcare will play in ensuring the prosperity of the new nation for generations to come.

Ensuring the Security of Singapore

After the economy, security is the second most pressing challenge facing the new Cabinet of Singapore. Being a brand new nation without any historical precedent of existing as an independent state means that the nation is extremely vulnerable to outside threats. The recent creations of Communist states in the People's Republic of China and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam have allowed Marxist-Leninism to spread

⁵Eddie C. Y. Kuo, "Language Status and Literacy Trend in a Multilingual Society-Singapore," *RELC Journal* 5, no. 1 (June 1974): 1-15, <https://doi.org/10.1177/003368827400500101>.

⁶PolyMatter, "How Singapore Solved Healthcare," YouTube, June 15, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKjHvpiHk3s&t=307s&pp=ygUeSG93IFNpbmdhcG9yZSBmaXhlZCBoZWFeZGhjYXJl>.

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down to Southeast Asia, with Malaysia having its own Communist Conflict in 1960 and Indonesia currently facing opposition from the Communist Party of Indonesia.⁷ Singapore already has a past history with Communist insurgency within its borders, having enacted Operation Coldstore in 1963 led by Lee Kuan Yew that eliminated 130 suspected Communists and Leftists in the country. Based upon this foundation, the People's Action Party (PAP) led by Lee Kuan Yew is fervently anti-Communist and is ready to use less than orthodox means to ensure that Communist forces remain at bay.⁸ However, with China's fall to Communism and considering the large Chinese population of Singapore, the government must seek to dissuade any loyalty to the People's Republic of China among its own Chinese population while also ensuring the Chinese population is not the target of anti-Communist actions.

Alongside the threat of Communism, Singapore must also contend with the ongoing conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia known as the *konfrontasi*. When Singapore was expelled from Malaysia (which was in a raging war with Indonesia at the time), the status between the newly independent Singapore and Indonesia came into question. Singapore had previously been the target of four bombings including the MacDonald House Bombing and Katon Park bombings conducted by Indonesian forces during the *konfrontasi*.⁹ Thus, the Cabinet of Singapore must seek to gain guarantees both from the Indonesian and Malaysian governments to respect Singapore's new territorial sovereignty and security. However, this is far easier said than done.

⁷"The Malayan Emergency (1948-1960)," cotca.org (University of Nottingham, n.d.), <https://cotca.org/case-studies/the-malayan-emergency-1948-1960/>.

⁸Kirsten Han, "Operation Coldstore: Singapore's Struggle to Confront History," www.lowyinstitute.org, May 24, 2018, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/operation-coldstore-singapore-s-struggle-confront-history>.

⁹ Alvin Tan, "Konfrontasi: Singapore's Experience of an Undeclared War," Nlb.gov.sg (National Library, Singapore, 2014), <https://biblioasia.nlb.gov.sg/vol-19/issue-4/jan-mar-2024/singapore-malaysia-indonesia-konfrontasi-confrontation/>.

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Singapore's newly formed National Security Forces lack much professional training or a robust officer corps. The previously existing Singapore Volunteer Rifle Corps only had some experience in anti-riot activity, lacking the knowledge or skills to fight against both conventional and guerilla forces. Furthermore, Singapore's small population has made it clear that a volunteer service army would not be sufficient to ensure the nation's security, thus many in the government have proclaimed their support for mandatory military service. However, such an initiative will be unpopular, especially as Singapore has yet to establish its own national identity.¹⁰ Historically, Singapore depended on the protection of the British Empire and the wider Commonwealth— however, the failure of the British to defend what was previously considered the “fortress” of Singapore against the Japanese in 1942 broke the confidence in many Singaporeans in Commonwealth forces.¹¹ Furthermore, there have been talks in London to withdraw the British garrison in Singapore as the cost of the Empire became too high for the British to maintain. Alongside leaving Singapore exposed to potential security threats, the withdrawal of British troops would take away jobs from Singaporean workers who are already struggling.¹² Thus, as the Cabinet focuses on ensuring the nation's economic recovery, they must also prepare to secure the nation against the looming threats from everywhere around. Delegates will be expected to establish the Singaporean military as a reputable professional force while also seeking means to ensure its safety through diplomacy.

¹⁰“National Service through the Years,” Sg101.gov.sg (SG101, 2014),

<https://www.sg101.gov.sg/defence-and-security/case-studies/national-service/>.

¹¹Oliver Steward, “The Fall of Singapore: An Avoidable Catastrophe?,” UK Defence Journal, December 4, 2017,

<https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/the-fall-of-singapore-an-avoidable-catastrophe/>.

¹²“Britain Announced the Withdraw of Their Troops from Singapore,” Sg101.gov.sg (SG101, 2023),

<https://www.sg101.gov.sg/History/On-This-Day/Britain-Announced-Withdrawal/>.

Addressing Racial Tensions

Singapore's population is ethnically diverse, with Chinese, Malay, and Indian communities coexisting within its borders. The region itself is historically the domain of the Malay people, however in the decades following British colonization, the descendants of Chinese traders have led to the Chinese becoming the majority population of Singapore. In fact, it was this high population of Chinese people in Singapore that was a principal motivator for Singapore's expulsion from Malaysia. Alongside the Malay and Chinese populations, there is also a sizable population of Indians, descendants of traders from the British Raj.¹³ The multitude of ethnicities and languages in Singapore has led to plenty of racial conflict between ethnicities. In 1964, race riots broke out between Malay and Chinese mobs following an escalation of tensions between the two groups. The Malay Agitators claim Malay supremacy due to the territory historically being Malay, while the more well-off Chinese population claims majority rule as the largest ethnic group of Singapore. Many Singaporean politicians in the People's Action Party (PAP) have been pressured to prefer one ethnicity over the other, but the PAP has stood firm with its commitment to multiculturalism and the equality of races.¹⁴ If Singapore is to cool the continued racial tensions between the multiethnic peoples of Singapore, it must work to establish a single Singaporean identity and ensure true equality for all ethnicities in business, government, and education. Delegates will be expected to navigate this crisis with sensitivity and to explore solutions of multiculturalism and effective policies towards a Singaporean identity.

¹³“The People of Singapore,” Guidemesingapore.com (Hawksford, 2019), <https://www.guidemesingapore.com/business-guides/immigration/get-to-know-singapore/the-people-of-singapore>.

¹⁴“Racial Riots (1964 and 1969),” Sg101.gov.sg (SG101, 2023), <https://www.sg101.gov.sg/social-national-identity/examples/racialriots/>.

Building the Nation of Singapore

While Singapore is a newly independent state, it does have many precedents as an established government in its structure and political norms. As a result of its colonial history with the British Empire, Singapore has adopted English Common Law and the Westminster Parliamentary System of Government.¹⁵ Furthermore, Singapore's current Cabinet and Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew had served as the regional/self-governing Cabinet of Singapore during its time under British and later Malaysian administration.¹⁶ However, these precedents alone will not be enough to truly establish Singapore's new government and role as a nation-state on the world stage. The ruling PAP has previously used authoritarian tactics to ensure its own political survival and Lee Kuan Yew is no stranger to running the nation as if he is the CEO and the nation a company. While the PAP's authoritarian tendencies may be disapproved of by the Western world, the system has worked to uplift the nation previously.¹⁷ This Cabinet must decide if it shall continue this political precedent for the nation of PAP rule or if it shall commit fully to liberal free democracy. Even if the Cabinet uses its harsh tactics to crush descent, the PAP is only able to stay in power if it can improve the lives of Singapore and ensure the protection and safety of the Singaporean people and nation.

¹⁵ "Singapore and the United Kingdom: 1819 to 2019," Nus.edu.sg (National University of Singapore, Centre for International Law, 2024), <https://cil.nus.edu.sg/publication/singapore-and-the-united-kingdom-1819-to-2019/#:~:text=The%20British%20colonial%20administration%20in>.

¹⁶ "The First Cabinet Is Sworn In," www.nlb.gov.sg (National Library Board, Singapore, 2014), <https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuiid=c51f9647-32ea-43a7-8c65-82b76e4f22ae>.

¹⁷ Cheryl Sim, "People's Action Party: Post-Independence Years," www.nlb.gov.sg, March 21, 2018, <https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuiid=72982a4f-29f7-4384-a667-0791e96b8900>.

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Guiding Questions

1. How should Singapore address its numerous economic problems when it lacks any resources and few friends in the region?
2. How can Singapore ensure its security? What are the greatest security threats to Singapore?
3. Should Singapore be led by the people through a free liberal democracy despite its divisions, or should the government enforce its grip on power for the betterment of the nation at large?
4. How can Singapore best address the racial tensions between its major Malay, Chinese, and Indian populations and promote national unity?
5. What should Singapore's place be in the wider world? Should Singapore align with its former colonizers in the West, the Communists in the North, or should the nation carve its own path?

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Character List

Disclaimer: While these are real historical figures who lived during the period, many of these people have had their backgrounds modified, exaggerated, or invented to provide a better experience for all delegates.

Lee Kuan Yew - *Prime Minister*

Placed into the position of Prime Minister of the new nation, Lee Kuan Yew is responsible for ensuring the government tackles the challenges facing the new nation. A fierce pragmatist and believer in *realpolitik*, he is willing to use unpopular means to ensure the nation's survival. While is a firm anti-Communist and anti-Populist, he has authoritarian tendencies that he believes are needed to ensure the survival of the nation.

Toh Chin Chye - *Deputy Prime Minister*

Toh acts as Lee Kuan Yew's right-hand man as Deputy Prime Minister, ensuring that his policies are implemented. He acts as a mediator between the different ministries to ensure the smooth operations of the government. He is a founding member of the PAP, serving as the first chairman of the General Executive Committee, and is a fierce anti-Communist.

Edmund W. Barker- *Minister for National Development*

As Minister for National Development, Barker has an integral role in leading the nation through its development crisis. Barker's task is to lead the nation's infrastructure and social development programs in order to bring up Singapore's standard of living and population. While he recognizes the importance of healthcare, education, and

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welfare, his first and foremost priority is to provide housing and infrastructure for the people of Singapore

Lim Kim San- *Minister for Finance*

As the Minister of Finance, Lim is principally responsible for ensuring that the national balance remains stable and secure. While Singapore endeavors to enact several programs to uplift its population and economy, Lim must ensure that these endeavors are within the finances of the new nation and ensure that the nation has a steady flow of income. With the Government's limited finances for the moment, Lim seeks to have others fund Singapore's growth, namely through foreign investment and privatization.

Othman Wok - *Minister for Home Affairs and Social Welfare*

Othman is principally concerned with the well-being and welfare of the people of Singapore across a broad spectrum of areas. With Singapore's lackluster public utilities, healthcare, and education, Wok must ensure that these issues are addressed even if they are seen as less important to the issues of security or housing to the rest of the Cabinet. Othman must also work through this with Singapore's limited fiscal resources and balance the needs of the other ministries.

Jek Yeun Thong - *Minister for Labour*

Jek is responsible for the Ministry of Labour and thus ensuring the well-being of the Singaporean workers. While certainly not amicable to the Socialist and Communist governments of Singapore's neighbors to the North, he is concerned with ensuring that Singaporean workers are given fair treatment and fair pay by their employers. With the

current state of the economy, he must ensure that the workers stay in line and do not cause any disruptions to the productivity of the new nation.

Yong Nyuk Lin - *Minister for Health*

As minister of health, Yong is responsible for ensuring the health of the Singaporean people. With high levels of poverty and disease in Singapore, Yong is tasked with providing treatment for all Singaporeans. With Singapore's current lackluster healthcare services, Yong must work to expand the existing healthcare system while considering the high fiscal cost of the operation. While Yong champions the ideas of the British National Health Service, he must find an effective way to finance the service as he competes with other ministries for funding and support.

P. S. Raman - *Ambassador to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*

With the Cold War in full swing, Singapore must ensure its security in the era of the US-Soviet rivalry. Raman is responsible for maintaining cordial relations with the USSR while preventing any prospect of a Communist uprising in Singapore. The Sino-Soviet Split— which saw a fallout between the USSR and China— has made the USSR a convenient partner against Singapore's more pressing enemy, China. Raman is driven to ensure the success of Singapore, even if it must engage with its ideological opponents.

Ong Pang Boon - *Minister for Education*

Ong is tasked with massively overhauling Singapore's fledgling public education system. With much of the population near poverty, Ong must bring up Singapore's educated population to build a pathway to economic development. However, he must

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contend with creating an education system that panders to Malay, Chinese, and English speakers while also ensuring that no group gets preferential treatment in the education system.

S. Rajaratnam - *Minister for Foreign Affairs*

A co-founder of the PAP, Rajaratnam is a leading figure in Singaporean politics. He is a major proponent of a multiracial Singapore and seeks to build up Singapore as a “global city.” As Minister of Foreign Affairs, he holds the task of ensuring that Singapore’s foreign presence is secured. He is ready and willing to use Singapore’s strategic location to gain as many economic and security benefits from foreign powers as possible.

Ko Teck Tin - *High Commissioner to Malaysia*

As High Commissioner to Malaysia, Ko acts as the ambassador to Singapore’s former countrymen. While Malaysia has no desire to see the return of Singapore to the nation, it remains a major economic and security link for Singapore. Ko must work with Malaysia to obtain as many resources of Singapore’s former Hinterland as possible while also addressing the high amounts of work immigration of Malaysians to Singapore. Overall, Ko must work to mend the relationship between Singapore and Malaysia if Singapore is to survive.

Wong Lin Ken - *Ambassador to the United States of America*

Wong acts as the first point of contact with the United States for Singapore. With the Cold War in full swing and the Vietnam War raging not far away, Wong must ensure

that the conflict does not jeopardize Singapore's neutrality. However, he is also determined to gain as much benefit from the US presence in Asia as possible.

Goh Keng Swee - *Ministry for the Interior and Defence*

Goh is principally responsible for ensuring the safety and security of Singapore. Having previously served as the Minister of Finance, Goh is aware of the fiscal constraints facing Singapore's defense apparatus internally and from abroad. He is a prominent proponent of initiating mandatory military service for all men to ensure the continued defense of Singapore, an idea which remains controversial.

Yusof bin Ishak - *President*

As President of Singapore, Yusof acts as the largely ceremonial head of state of Singapore. Hailing from a career in journalism, he was formerly the Yang di-Pertuan Negara (Head of State) during British rule. He is a strong proponent of multiculturalism, having previously advocated for multiracialism during the 1964 Racial Riots. He strives to build Singapore into a multicultural state of Malay, Chinese, and Indians under the national identity of Singaporeans.

Arumugam Ponnuswami Rajah - *High Commissioner to the UK*

As High Commissioner, Arumugam acts as the ambassador to Singapore's former colonial master, the United Kingdom. As such, he is determined to ensure that Singapore gains as many benefits that came from British rule as possible while still guaranteeing Singapore's continued sovereignty. Arumugam is principally responsible for ensuring cordial relationships with the United Kingdom and the rest of the Commonwealth.

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