

The Impact of Religious Factors on the Split Between Singapore and Malaysia

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Abstract. As one of the major events in Southeast Asia in the last century, the split between Singapore and Malaysia has aroused a certain degree of heated discussion in the academic community. However, the majority of scholars have not paid much attention to the impact of religion on society when analyzing this event. Therefore, this paper seeks to examine how religions influenced the division of Singapore and Malaysia. The paper will explain the logic of the operation of religion in this event, integrating the influence of people, parties and churches on this event and the influence of this event on this event and its logic. This study further discusses the relationship between religion and the division event by analyzing the relationship between religious belief and race and the proportion of religious believes. It explains to some extent how religious antagonism in Malaysia affects the decision of the public and political parties to split the country. In the conclusion, the paper argues that folk separatism caused by nationalism had been closely related to religion.

Keywords: Singapore, Malaysia, division, religion, nationalism.

1. Introduction

Singapore and Malaysia are relatively culturally diverse countries. The implementation of cultural equality, religious freedom, and liberalism is more conducive to their development. However, the Singapore-Malaysia split, as one of the important events in modern Southeast Asia, highlights the religious, cultural, political and economic intolerance of Malaysia. When studying the Singapore-Malaysia split, most scholars do not pay much attention to the impact of religious confrontation caused by ethnic confrontation on the split issue. Their research focuses on economic policies, political issues, historical issues, and nationalism between Malaysia and Singapore [1].

Among existing scholarly works, most scholars rarely address the religious factors that affect nationalism and political policy issues. Therefore, this paper aims to fill the research gap by examining the role of religion in the Singapore-Malaysia split. Specifically, this paper argues that Malaysia's national religion Islam and the Mahayana Buddhism and Taoism practiced by most Chinese are one of the reasons for the Singapore-Malaysia split. This study explores how these religious differences affected the political and social dynamics leading to the Singapore-Malaysia split.

2. Literature Review

During the British colonial period, Malaysia was indirectly ruled by British companies, while Singapore was under direct rule of the British. Thus, it is influenced more by liberalism, while Malaysia was ruled indirectly during the colonial period. Therefore, Malaysia is more preferred to nationalism. Due to the fundamental model differences between the liberal economy and the bureaucratic capitalist economy and the friction between interest groups, the core of the liberal economy in Singapore is the Chinese group, while the core of the bureaucratic capitalism in Malaysia is the Malay group. From the friction of interests, due to racial differences, differences in all aspects, and gradually rise to separatism. With the opposition between the two political parties, under the influence of the propaganda factors, the division between the Chinese and the Malays in the country has gradually deepened [2].

Singapore's independence from Malaysia marked a major event in Southeast Asian politics in the 20th century. From an economic perspective, it transformed Singapore into a country with foreign trade as its core, but at the cost of losing resources provided by Malaysia. Conversely, Malaysia lost an important port and foreign trade opportunities, which determined the economic system of the Malaysian government's dominance. This separation created conflict between the Malaysian supremacy of a political party headed by the UMNO party and the Singapore People's Action Party [3]. The two parties had fundamentally different visions for their countries' political and economic futures.

From a political perspective, this division highlights the opposition between the UMNO Party and the People's Action Party. The two have different economic models due to different situations in their areas. At the same time, due to the differences between races, nationalist policies and liberal policies have been formulated. In terms of historical problems and culture [4]. It allows us to learn about the division of Malaysia and Singapore's divisionism.

As the modern Singapore region has an important port, the British government has implemented a policy of direct rule, while the modern Malaysia region is only used as an indirect rule for colonial. There are quite a lot of governance models between the two. Singapore is more free trade, while the Malaysia region is more of the economic system with planting gardens as the core. In these two very different circumstances, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Singapore has gradually grown, and more and more Chinese people come to Singapore to work and live, while Malaysia has not changed much. Due to the differences in changes in these races, in subsequent events, Singapore and Malaysia have been split.

Many scholars discuss the ethnic differences between the nations on the division of the new Malaysia. However, Malaysia was influenced by the culture of Western colonists and saw the rise of Islam and Christianity. Singapore is affected by Chinese people and has begun to believe in Mahayana Buddhism and Taoism. This difference is the most significant difference between ethnic groups. Few scholars have analyzed the role of religious differences in the division, which presents a research gap. Therefore, this paper aims to fill that gap by examining the difference between religious beliefs on policymaking and their role as a decisive factor in the separation of Singapore and Malaysia.

3. The Relationship between Race, Religion and Politics

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, the proportion of Malaysia's population is 70.1% Malay, 22.6% Chinese, 6.6% Indian, and 0.7% other ethnic groups [5]. The proportion of Singapore's population is about 74% of the Chinese, and the rest are Malays, Indians and other races [6].

From the above data, it shows that the composition of the population of Malaysia and Singapore. Malaysians have the largest number of Malays, followed by Chinese and Indians. Chinese Singaporeans dominate the social composition. Under the influence of democratic republic and universal suffrage, the party that reflects the interests of the socially dominant nation in the society will dominate. If this party could eventually grasp the interests of this nation with sensitivity, on the contrary, this is precisely why the party should unite the national forces, which is also the basis of party power. It is reflected in Malaysian society that Umno made Islam the state religion in order to unite the Malays.

The author explains that the combined effect of democratic republicanism and universal suffrage affects the largest interest groups in society to elect the parties that favor them: Democratic and republican political system allows the existence of multiple parties, and each party needs a certain mass base, that is, to reflect the interests of certain masses. The universal suffrage system enables every citizen who has the right to vote legally to cast his or her own vote, which reflects the interests of himself or his or her group. In this society, the single interest group is more powerful, and the mass base is more powerful. The number of votes received will increase, and the status of the major party will be secured, since it reflects the interests of the majority.

The specific number of religious beliefs is unsearchable. However, according to the following logic for running this event inferred from the ideal experiment, the races are positively related to religious beliefs. Due to the influence of traditional culture and the faith passed down from generation to generation, most Chinese believe in Mahayana Buddhism (a few people believe in Taoism, but Taoism's overall beliefs account for too little, so they are not discussed). The Malays believe in Islam due to the influence of European colonialism. Some missionaries came to Malaysia to spread Islam to the Malays (some also believed in Christianity, but it was omitted because of its similar influence on Islam in this case and its small number). The Umno Party hope to build a society dominated by Malays. Meanwhile, there are more Malaysians who believe in Islam, so the Malays also hope to build a society with Islam as the core. Umno has united its forces through some policies conducive to the development of Islam. Therefore, the Umno Party has set up Islamic religions as state religions.

The primary and secondary division of religion would inevitably cause conflicts between these groups of people, and some believers might believe that Islam is higher and more supreme than other religions. Although these people do not account for the vast majority of religious believers, the behavior of these people would still have a huge influence, because they express their discontent through some extreme or radical means, and these incidents are good social topics. Once these things reach the ears of the Islamists, it could provoke them to fight back. In this tug of war, the contradictions between the two sides perhaps intensify, and because of the ethnic nature of the believers, the social influence could also increase significantly.

Under this influence, there could be confrontations between folk beliefs and the opposition of local churches as the scale increases. The rivalries of folk faith can gradually develop into rivalries of local churches, and eventually into nationalism and separatism because of the fundamental ethnic differences among believers. Due to the serious opposition among the people and the ethnic nature of the existence of parties, parties represent the interests of the nations they represent. Therefore, the excessive behavior of the people would affect the parties and the government. Subsequently, there would be party antagonism. Furthermore, in such a newly merged political power, the relationship and interest relationship of all parties are relatively fragile. The rivalry between the parties would thus eventually lead to division. This way would lead to the separation of Singapore and Malaysia.

Nationalism did not originate from the decline of religion, but to enhance religious emotions. In addition, the formation of early nationalism or original nationalist politics and nation or the original nation also appeared during the period when religious emotions were enhanced rather than decline. Some scholars have proposed that nationalism may be part of the accidents of religious development [7].

After the independence of Malaysia, the increase in Islamic policies has led to its increase in social influence. This increasing influence is related to the global Islamic revival and PAS politicalization. The Islamic leadership of the UMNO party as the core of the Political Group has led to expanding the gap between the awareness of the Chinese and the Malays and the intensification of social division [8].

4. Conclusion

This paper analyzes the split between Singapore and Malaysia from the perspective of religion. It points out that the antagonism of religious beliefs may be an important factor that led to the generation of nationalism. The rise of nationalism in these regions indirectly affected the political parties' policies. Thus, it can be argued that nationalism led to the subsequent split between these two regions. This is an angle that has been ignored by most scholars. This perspective can explain the role of religious beliefs as an important part of the ideological culture of the Malaysian people in the origin of nationalism and the subsequent division.

However, this paper is limited by the fact that some Chinese and Malays do not believe in the religion of the majority of the same ethnic group. Moreover, this paper does not discuss the social problems of these groups, their role in ethnic problems, and the reasons for the antagonism between

different ethnic groups. This paper primarily examines the general process of religions that had affected the split event. In the future, the role of these special faith groups in ethnic issues, their attitude, reasons and roles of different religious groups in each process need to be further studies. Scholars need further investigate how the religious opposition develops into the opposition between political parties through nationalism. Further studies could provide more comprehensive understanding of the historical, political, and religious reasons for the split between these two regions.

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