

SINGAPORE

Polity5 regime codes:

fac	scode	polity	pers	bmon	bday	byear	emon	eday	eyear	exec	exconst	polcomp
0a	SIN	-4	53	8	9	1965	99	99	9999	4	3	2

PITF Problem Events: none

In November 1954, a group of young, British-educated, middle class Chinese, led by Lee Kuan Yew, established the People's Action Party (PAP) as a broad-based, "noncommunist" political organization. The PAP won 43 of 51 seats in parliamentary elections held on May 30, 1959, and Lee was named prime minister as Singapore gained status as a self-governing state in the United Kingdom on June 2, 1959. Lee was a staunch advocate of merger with an independent Malaya and when the proposal of a broadened Malay federation of Malaysia, including Malaya, Singapore, and the British territories on Borneo, was made by the Malayan Prime Minister Tengku Abdul Rahman on May 27, 1961, Lee immediately began agitating for merger. The issue caused a split in the party as members who opposed the merger were expelled; opponents then formed the Socialist Front. A popular referendum on the proposed merger was held on September 1, 1962; it was criticized by the opposition for providing three options on the form of the merger without an option for rejecting the merger. The Socialist Front called on voters to cast blank ballots to express rejection of the merger; yet, the option favored by the PAP government gained 70% approval. On July 9, 1963, the Singapore government signed the Malaysia Agreement, Prime Minister Lee declared independence from the United Kingdom on August 31 (the original date for the merger), and Singapore became an autonomous state in the Federation of Malaysia on September 16, 1963.

0a) August 9, 1965 (independence) – The merger of Singapore with Malaysia was problematic from the beginning as the mainland government tried to control the "leftist" influence of the PAP administration in Singapore and thwart the mobilization of an ethnic-Chinese opposition. The Singapore administration, on the other hand, became disillusioned when the anticipated benefits of economic merger failed to materialize. Increasing polarization of Malays and Chinese led to the formation of opposing alliances in early 1965 and a further escalation of tensions. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Tengku Abdul Rahman, strongly recommended the separation of Singapore from the federation and, on August 9, Singapore officially seceded and declared its independence. Although not technically a one-party state, the government has remained under the total control of the PAP and the Lee Kuan Yew regime has not shied from blocking the rise of any effective opposition. It is probably inappropriate to refer to Singapore as an autocratic state but, rather, a corporate state wherein the PAP regime administers the country as an economic conglomerate. The PAP has used its position of power to control the media; intimidate, incarcerate, and co-opt opposition; and organize the electoral institutions of parliamentary democracy to their own advantage. As such, the PAP has faced only token opposition in parliamentary elections since independence with opposition members never gaining more than 5% of seats in any election (4 seats in 1991) despite winning as much as a third of the votes cast. Having ruled Singapore continuously since 1959, Lee Kuan Yew submitted his resignation on November 26 and his designated successor, Goh Chok Tung, took office as prime minister on November 28, 1990; Lee retained the post of Senior Minister. In January 1991, the constitution was amended to provide for a directly-elected president granted with some veto and oversight authority; however, the qualifications for the post are so severely restricted that few people

actually qualify and, as such, only one presidential election has been subjected to a vote between competing candidates (August 1993). The president's veto authority was limited by a 1996 constitutional amendment that provided that a presidential veto can be overridden by a two-third majority vote in parliament (the PAP has never controlled less than a 90% majority). Goh Chok Tong resigned his post as prime minister on August 12, 2004, and was replaced by Lee Kuan Yew's son, Lee Hsien Loong; Goh retained the position of Senior Minister and Lee Kuan Yew became Minister Mentor.