MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE RELATIONS DURING MAHATHIR'S PREMIERSHIP

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this thesis is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the complex interdependence relations between Malaysia and Singapore by focusing on the unresolved issues between the two countries. Although these two countries are relatively independent in terms of historical, familial, political and strategic ties, there are still several unresolved issues that had sparked off debates and disagreements once in a while. Tensions between these two states are higher than any other ASEAN members and it obviously escalated during Mahathir's premiership. However, when the current Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Abdullah Hj Ahmad Badawi held the new reign, the issues are seen as less intensified. Unlike Mahathir, the current leaderships seem to be more liberal in handling the unresolved issues. However this does not mean that Malaysia is more willing to compromise. Hence, the research question lingers around the gap here whereby this thesis attempts to answer why Mahathir and his correspondents have been insistent towards each other unlike his successor who is more flexible in managing the unresolved issues. This leads to the hypothesis that distinctive leadership styles have caused tensed relations between Malaysia and Singapore particularly during Mahathir's administration. The objectives of this research are to identify the key issues that have caused strained bilateral relations between Malaysia and Singapore and also to demonstrate that incompatibility between Mahathir and his Singaporean correspondent's leadership styles in managing the issues have caused strained bilateral relations in the era of 1980s and 1990s. Finally, the study concludes that in spite of different leadership styles in the approach to administering these issues, the most important thing for both countries is to work together and manage their differences in order to uphold the security and stability in the region particularly in South East Asia.
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