

Multiple dimensions in negotiating the cross-border transport links that connect and divide Singapore and Johor, Malaysia

Paul A. Barter

LKY School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, 29 Heng Mui Keng
Terrace, Singapore 119620.
Email: paulbarter@nus.edu.sg

Abstract: *Despite recent literature pointing to the need for a multidimensional approach to border processes, transport links across borders are usually uncritically associated with cross-border 'integration'. This paper focuses on examining the roles played by transport facilities in border processes. It uses case studies of three key transport links at the border between Singapore and Johor, Malaysia. As would conventionally be expected, enhancing these links was often seen in terms of the economic opportunities expected to arise from the easing of bottlenecks. However, the findings also reveal multiple roles for the transport links at this border, many of which cannot be enlisted in any simple conception of cross-border integration, even when clear enhancement of the links is involved. These roles include: as 'filters' (or 'valves') used to encourage or discourage certain flows; as 'gateways' asserting territoriality; and as 'bargaining chips' in the bilateral relationship. A role as 'collision points' between policy regimes was also surprisingly important. However, contrary to usual expectations none of the transport links examined appear in the guise of 'bridges', contributing towards integrated governance. These findings highlight the complexity of border processes, and underline the contingent interactions between different dimensions of cross-border processes sometimes simplistically conflated as 'integration'.*

Keywords: *borders, bridges, cross-border transport, Growth Triangle, Malaysia, Singapore*

Puzzles at the border

Crossing the narrow straits¹ between Singapore and Malaysia, one meets some puzzling features. Departing Singapore by rail, it is startling to find not a Singapore checkpoint but a counter where Malaysian immigration officials examine passports but stamp none and ignore filled-out forms. Heading to Johor Bahru (JB) from Singapore in a shared taxi via the busy causeway that connects the two, the driver might point out the new Malaysian customs and immigration complex that is under construction. It sits to the east of central JB, apparently marooned on a hill, where it was designed to connect to a bridge to replace the causeway. Travelling by car from Malaysia into Singapore via the Second Link bridge located at the western end of Singapore you might be impressed by expressways, the checkpoint complexes and the bridge

itself, but would also be struck by the light traffic. This paper was stimulated by curiosity over these puzzling features. Contemplating them unsettled a comfortable assumption that transport links have some simple correlation with cross-border integration.

This paper focuses on examining the roles played by these transport facilities in wider border-related processes between Malaysia and Singapore. The first major section identifies the conventional roles or guises in which cross-border transport links appear (or that are assumed) in discussions of integration across borders. A second section reviews relevant approaches to the study of borders, with a focus on the need for a multidimensional approach to border processes. The third section introduces the Singapore–Malaysia border, its crossings, their historical background and important context on the bilateral relationship and evolving

interactions across the border. A fourth section presents case studies of controversial episodes in recent decades over the three key land transport links between Singapore and Malaysia. A fifth section interprets these cases as revealing cross-border transport links in a surprisingly diverse set of roles, and as supporting the need for a multidimensional understanding of border processes. The paper concludes by briefly discussing implications for the study of borders more generally.

Simple connections between cross-border transport links and integration?

This section examines guises in which transport links have been associated in a relatively simple one-dimensional way with cross-border integration agendas. For example, transport and cross-border integration are aligned in a normative way when such links appear as 'objects of cooperation' that highlight the need for improved boundary-spanning cooperation (as with other issues that inherently transcend borders) (Sparrow, 2001). A lack of adequate cross-border governance or cooperation is often seen as a potential obstacle to improved transport networks (Schnell *et al.*, 1999).

We also encounter transport links in a related but more ambitious guise, metaphorically as 'bridges' to promote cross-border cooperation and governance integration.² Sometimes, these are literal bridges, as in the case of the Öresund Bridge between Denmark and Sweden, which was the focus of 'expectations of a new regional development regime towards a functionally integrated bi-national region' (Matthiessen, 2004). Indeed, investment in cross-border transport infrastructure is a key focus of European Union efforts to actively promote border region integration. Sidaway (2001: 747) notes that '(e)nvigating and rendering European space as connected and harmonised finds practical expression in the funding of transport infrastructure, particularly when it has a cross-frontier dimension'. Such efforts reflect functionalist assumptions³ in which cross-border transport enhancements are assumed to be inherently supportive of 'integration'.

Behind these assumptions are perspectives in relevant policy-oriented fields that view transport links and border crossings that are insuffi-

cient in number or capacity as 'bottlenecks' to be eased for the sake of network efficiency (Nijkamp, 1994) often for the sake of economic spin-offs and trade liberalisation. Practical dimensions of this include: interoperability (vehicles can operate on both sides); interconnectivity (increasing the number, quality and capacity of infrastructure links and cross-border services) and intermodality (ability to switch between transport modes at or near the border) (Button, 2001). So a prominent economic guise for cross-border transport links sees them as 'windows' of economic or developmental opportunity arising from latent demand for exchange that is expected to be unleashed by the easing of these bottlenecks.

Transport facilities also appear in the literature on 'binational cities' or border-crossing urban areas or 'extended metropolitan regions' that cross borders (e.g. Buursink, 2001), including on this Southeast Asian border region (Rodrigue, 1994). It is also important to note here that a city-competition perspective, which might be expected to complicate cross-border integration, can be enlisted in it, together with enhancement of transport links. An example is the Öresund region mentioned above, where an explicit aim of the 'bridge building' is to raise the binational region higher in Europe's urban hierarchy.

Towards multi-dimensional perspectives on cross-border integration

We have seen that transport links across borders have often been enlisted in notions of cross-border integration. Such notions have often been rather one-dimensional. Whether arising from functionalist or neo-functionalist assumptions,⁴ predictions of a borderless world and the demise of the significance of states have tended to assume that these would follow logically from (or inevitably lead to) the reduction of barriers to economic exchange, assuming a one-dimensional connection with borders and bordering processes. Much critical research has demonstrated that predictions of a borderless world were exaggerated. Nevertheless, as Anderson and O'Dowd (1999) (and many others) note, political territoriality is indeed changing, with states and borders reducing in importance in certain contexts and for certain

purposes. Therefore, they argue, to reconcile these requires a multidimensional understanding of globalisation or regionalisation processes with economic, political and cultural aspects being related in a contingent rather than a necessary manner.

In a related trend, several approaches to border studies increasingly focus attention on a wide range of actors, in contrast with the realist focus on central states. Taylor (1995) draws attention to trans-state processes as undermining the primacy of state–state processes. The triangular diplomacy perspective looks beyond state–state relations to state–firm and firm–firm interactions (Phelps, 2004). Multiple actors are also an aspect of a shift in attention ‘from government to governance’, including investigations of the rescaling of states and a multi-level understanding of the term ‘glocalization’, with its focus on ‘strengthening interdependencies and interactions between local and global actors’ (Blatter, 2004: 530).

Such awareness of the range of actors draws attention to multiple cross-border processes. For example, Blatter (2004) compares glocalisation (with central states no longer the exclusive gatekeepers) in European and North American border regions with results that highlight the distinctness of trans-boundary governance and trade dimensions of integration. Glocalisation in European border regions emerges as territorially demarcated in a logic of ‘spaces of place’, while North American cases exhibit logics of ‘spaces of flows’ despite a lack of significant institution building across borders. Similarly, Brunet-Jailly (2000) finds no simple positive connection between the dimensions of cooperative governance and economic exchange in a study of Detroit and Windsor at the USA–Canada border.⁵ Shen (2004) highlights the significance of state resistance in Hong Kong to cross-border governance integration, even as economic interdependence expanded rapidly. Conversely, Europe has often seen disappointing results in terms of economic and social interchange despite strong efforts to integrate governance across borders (e.g. Strüver, 2002). The Öresund region is again an example (Matthiessen, 2004).

A multiplicity of dimensions in border processes comes as little surprise, of course, for theoretical perspectives such as constructivism

in international relations that rejects assumptions of utility maximisation as a key motivation,⁶ or critical geopolitics that rejects views of international relations as a ‘manifest and legible reality’ and focus attention on the social and cultural practices or performances of geopolitics and discursive constructions of territorial spaces (Ó Tuathail and Dalby, 1998).

Singapore–Malaysia border and its transport links in context

This section provides essential context that is specific to this particular border, with a focus on the bilateral relationship,⁷ cross-border governance and the economic changes likely to influence flows across the border, with special attention to how these dimensions may have interacted.

Historical background to 1965

This is a relatively young border, becoming highly significant only since 1965. Until late in the colonial period, Singapore and Johor shared a common history as part of the maritime Malay world. British colonial Malacca, Singapore and Penang were administered together from the early nineteenth century as the Straits Settlements. The Johor royal family founded JB in the mid-nineteenth century as independent Johor’s capital and moved there from British Singapore. However, British control over Malaya, including Johor, was complete by early in the twentieth century. Until 1965 the city of Singapore was effectively the largest city and port in Malaya (and then Malaysia).

Significant immigration took place in the colonial period from southern China, parts of southern India and what is now Indonesia. Singapore became Malaya’s entrepot, acquiring an ethnic Chinese majority. Ethnic politics was significant in events leading up to 1965. For example, Singapore was left out of independent Malaya in 1957. Contrasting ethno-political equations were central to the turbulent two years of merger and in Singapore’s exit⁸ from Malaysia in 1965. A legacy of those events is the extent to which political elites on each side have often viewed the other with suspicion, and seen the other’s approach to the political economy of ethnicity as an affront (Ganesan, 1998; Rahim, 1999).

Political separation but continued economic interdependence: 1965 to the mid-1980s

Changing economic interdependencies intertwined with the bilateral relationship in complex ways between 1965 and the mid-1980s, without a close correlation. The mid- to late 1960s had tense bilateral relations, with numerous sources of conflict in the process of disengagement, and with a context of ethnically charged political instability in Malaysia.⁹

Nevertheless, economic connections changed slowly at first. Tariff barriers had existed even during the colonial and merger periods but border control over personal movement did not commence¹⁰ until 1966 and Singapore's role in transshipment for Malaysia declined only gradually and in relative terms (Kumar, 1994). The 1970s and early 1980s saw mostly strong economic growth in both countries and generally easier relations bilaterally during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' heyday in the face of external Cold War threats. Malaysians working in Singapore, with many commuting from JB, became significant in the 1970s (Lim and Byrnes, 1985) and since then Malaysians have held preferential labour status as 'traditional source workers allowed to work in all economic sectors' (Ofori, ca. 2001). Meanwhile, continued leisure and shopping visits from Malaysia were encouraged by Singapore's duty-free environment (Lim, 1990).

Bilateral and economic relationships out of synchrony: Late 1980s and early 1990s

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, we find changing and intensifying economic interactions coinciding with bilateral prickliness¹¹ (in contrast with functionalist expectations). After a sharp recession in both countries in the mid-1980s, rapid economic growth quickly resumed. Nevertheless, the bilateral relationship in the years 1986 to 1991 saw heightened tensions.¹²

In contrast with bilateral difficulties, economic interactions across the straits intensified. Factors in these changes included: Malaysia's lifting in May 1986 of an entry permit that had been levied since 1978 on Singapore vehicles (Raj, 1986); rising costs and wages in Singapore;

a rise in Singaporean purchasing power;¹³ Malaysia's enhanced receptiveness to foreign direct investment; Singapore's efforts to move up the value chain and Singapore's steps to 'internationalise' its economy (Perry, 1991). These trends helped accelerate the relocation of Singapore-based manufacturing into Johor, triggered further growth in skilled-labour migration and daily labour flows from Johor to Singapore, and prompted the rise of southern Johor as a retail and leisure destination for Singaporeans and as Malaysia's third major focus for manufacturing investment (Lim and Byrnes, 1985; Lim, 1990; Kumar, 1994). Following these largely market-led developments, it was in 1989 that official talk of a growth triangle emerged as a Singapore suggestion under the name SIJORI (Singapore–Johor–Riau) (Sparke *et al.*, 2004).

Bilateral and economic relationships correlated again since the early 1990s

From 1992 until 1996, smoother bilateral relations emerged in the context of a remarkable economic boom, with Dr Mahathir's government secure again in Kuala Lumpur, and with improved regional security (Tan, 1997). The Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore Growth Triangle (IMS-GT) was formalised in 1994 to include Johor along with Riau and Singapore. The period 1994 to 1997 witnessed great heights of optimism over cross-border economic opportunities and cooperation (Azman Awang *et al.*, 1998).

However, such optimism was rarely seen between 1997 and late 2003 when both economic and bilateral interactions became bumpy. In 1996, 1997 and 1998 a series of statements by Singapore's former Prime Minister (and still cabinet member) Lee Kuan Yew provoked an offended nationalistic response in Malaysia.¹⁴ This set the scene for strained relations as the Asian financial crisis hit in 1997, prompting additional tension as Malaysia was initially harder hit, aspects of Singapore's response were seen as worsening the impact for Malaysia (and vice versa), and in the context of political crisis¹⁵ in Malaysia from mid-1998 until late 1999.

The financial crisis also led to dampened investment flows and reduced optimism about the entire region. Economic rivalry intensified,

with Malaysia increasingly open about efforts to compete directly with Singapore in a number of arenas, especially Johor's ports, high value-added foreign direct investments and air traffic (Debrah *et al.*, 2000; Ganesan, 2005). It would be simplistic to see this as a sudden change but these efforts were increasingly ambitious compared with the earlier focus on reducing transshipment through Singapore, the drain of skilled labour from Johor and concern about being locked into a subordinate role in the cross-border region (Yuhanis *et al.*, 1991; Kumar, 1994; Van Grunsven, 1998). The financial crisis also prompted Singapore to broaden its internationalisation efforts by looking beyond the immediate region (*Asiaweek*, 2000). Conversely, the crisis probably actually increased cross-border shopping due to a further rapid shift in the Malaysian Ringgit (RM) to Singapore Dollar (\$) exchange rate, from about RM 1.8 to RM 2.3 or so.

Relations improved briefly in 2001, culminating in apparent resolution of a 'package' of five key bilateral disputes in September 2001. These were to have been resolved together, with the objective of allowing more room for compromise over specifics (Lim, 2002). Singapore was seen as willing to compromise for the sake of a deal to extend two agreements on the supply of water beyond their expiry dates of 2011 and 2061. However, a year later the package approach broke down and the final years of Dr Mahathir's Prime Ministership saw strained relations. A particular low point came in late 2002 and early 2003 involving many issues.¹⁶ This was followed by a thaw from late 2003 when Abdullah Ahmad Badawi became Prime Minister of Malaysia.¹⁷

Intensive flows but no exemplar of cross-border integration

Although economic interdependence across the border is clearly significant and is reflected in the extent of human and vehicle flows, transport links are far from ubiquitous nor free of fuss. Nevertheless, flows across this border are substantial. The largest movements are now of Malaysians commuting to work and education in Singapore (roughly 30 000 to 50 000 people) and of shopping and leisure trips from Singapore to Johor (30 000 typically but up to

60 000 or more on certain days) (Mafoot Simon, 2003a,b).¹⁸

During the 1990s, the IMS-GT came to be held up as a supposed exemplar of cross-border integration (e.g. see Lee, 1991; Kumar, 1994) and an 'extended metropolitan region' (Rodrigue, 1994; Mcleod and McGee, 1996; Van Grunsven, 1998). Critical observers, however, have emphasised a range of complex bordering processes (see Sparke *et al.*, 2004). Grundy-Warr *et al.* (1999) acknowledge increasing economic interdependence but downplay any enhancing of trans-state processes (that bypass central states). They point to a preference for ad hoc cooperation and a lack of formal cross-border institutions.¹⁹

We thus see strong economic interdependence across the border coexisting with an often-strained formal bilateral relationship. This reflects perhaps the persistence of realist doctrines, jealously protective of sovereignty, in these states' relations, tempered by liberal institutionalist openness to trade and acceptance of international norms (Ganesan, 2005). The lack of clear-cut correlation between trends in these two dimensions supports the need for an awareness of multiple dimensions in cross-border relationships.

Key episodes: Cross-border transport links and their guises

Armed with an understanding of the context and an awareness of the need to go beyond simplistic one-dimensional approaches to cross-border processes, I set out now to investigate guises in which transport links appear in border processes between Malaysia and Singapore. Are transport links involved only in simple pro-integration agendas or do they emerge in multiple guises, reflecting multiple dimensions of the border? The cases involve the three most important land transport links between Johor and Singapore.

The case studies and the discussion that follow them are built mainly upon sources in the public domain, including the academic literature on the bilateral relationship, official statements, news coverage and opinion.²⁰ Clearly, news sources in this context must be interpreted with caution. These sources are complemented by insights built up through frequent use of the

transport links and through conversations with residents of Singapore and Malaysia during a decade of living in both countries.²¹

The Second Link

The Second Link is the most dramatic expansion of the physical connections for many decades. This bridge runs between the western end of Singapore and rural southwest Johor. Its vehicle capacity at 200 000 vehicles per day is said to be four times that of the causeway. It would seem to be obviously and positively associated with cross-border integration. Indeed, much of the early rhetoric associated with its planning and building portrayed it as a symbol of cooperation, close bilateral ties and window of developmental opportunity (e.g. *Business Times Singapore*, 1989).

The project was mooted by Singapore in the late 1980s when causeway delays threatened to hinder cross-border investment growth (*Business Times Singapore*, 1989; Perry, 1991). Singapore's enthusiasm seems to have arisen out of its efforts to regionalise its economy. The proposal received a positive response from both national governments in 1990 and detailed agreement to proceed in 1994.

Malaysian enthusiasm was also driven by the prospect of developmental opportunities. This outweighed the early uneasy bilateral relations, initial scepticism of the SIJORI growth-triangle notion (Yuhanis *et al.*, 1991), concerns over which side's port would benefit more and over negative impacts for Johor villagers and their resistance to land acquisition (e.g. see *The Straits Times*, 1990a). The Malaysian part of the project was awarded on a concession basis to a consortium led by United Engineers (Malaysia) Berhad, which had submitted a proposal in 1989 (Feiruz Khan Mohamed Rafik, 1998). This award (without a public tender) to a politically well-connected private consortium was in line with Malaysia's approach to infrastructure development since the late 1980s under Mahathir (see Gomez and Jomo, 1997). The planned Bandar Nusajaya township development nearby was an integral part of the venture.²²

Early discussions on toll levels seemed promising, with a proposal for tolls at twice the then RM1 charge at the causeway (*The Straits Times*,

1990b). Singapore's part of the project was to be funded and managed by the government and would therefore not normally have been tolled. However, the Singapore authorities stated early that any toll would need to be shared by both sides, or else both sides would need to impose a toll (*The Straits Times*, 1990b). This proved ominous and controversy erupted as the project neared completion in 1997 when the Malaysian Ministry of Public Works proposed tolls in which cars would pay eight times and lorries 25 times the causeway rates, causing an outcry in both countries (Fernandes, 1998; Stewart, 1998). The Singapore Government reiterated that it would levy a symmetrical toll²³ and urged Malaysia to lower its proposal. Malaysia's Minister of Public Works, Samy Vellu, subsequently announced reduced tolls (to roughly half the 1997 proposal). This presumably implied extending the payback period or an injection of public funds, or both (Halldane, 1998). The Minister complained that the Malaysian concessionaires had spent much more on the project than Singapore had, including building 1.7 km of the 2.0 km bridge (*The Straits Times*, 1997). By this time, wider bilateral relations had also soured.

Charges for vehicles using the Second Link include Malaysian expressway tolls, both sides' symmetrical bridge tolls and Singapore's entry fees imposed on foreign vehicles (which are discussed below). These are apparently higher than the market will bear (Fernandes, 1998) and traffic on the link more than a year after opening remained at less than a third of the level needed for the concession to be viable (Asia Pulse, 1999). Slower-than-expected economic growth was also a factor but pricing is clearly also crucial. Delayed development of Bandar Nusajaya is a result of both the late 1990s economic crisis and of low traffic on the Second Link, as well as a cause of that low traffic demand. The Second Link appears to represent a significant missed opportunity for both sides.

How can this episode be interpreted in terms of roles in cross-border processes? First, as noted above, with its promise to ease bottlenecks, the Second Link was clearly seen as a window to economic development opportunities, in line with common one-dimensional assumptions about the role of transport links at borders. However, the unfortunate impasse over

tolls and charges arises from starkly contrasting approaches to the financing of infrastructure in each country. This reveals the crossing in another dimension, not only as a large transport infrastructure project but also as the site of friction at the boundary of different policy regimes. An apparent enhancement of transport links has actually brought border-related friction into sharper focus.

Another possible interpretation of the toll problems might be in terms of another dimension of the border, economic rivalry, possibly via a role as 'filter', favouring certain flows. The two sides certainly have contrasting interests with regard to goods traffic (associated with rivalry over ports)²⁴ and possibly over private vehicular traffic (related to retail rivalry or concerns over tax revenue leakage). There is some evidence of attempts from the Malaysian side to filter traffic in its economic interests, using regulatory and procedural means. Singapore commentators have perceived port-related protectionist impulses behind episodes of restricted or slowed procedures at Malaysia's checkpoints in 1977 and in 1997 (Chua Lee Hoong, 1997). Soon after the Second Link opened Malaysian authorities sought to require various categories of lorry to use the Second Link which would increase their costs (Fernandes, 1998).²⁵

The toll structure on the Second Link might be an opportunity for Malaysian filtering but there is no evidence of its use in this way. The ratio of the heavy goods vehicle toll to that of cars on the Second Link is much higher than on Malaysia's North South Expressway (4.5 versus 2.0) but the ratio on the Penang Bridge in northern Malaysia is even higher which cannot be explained by economic rivalry. What the market will bear is a more likely explanation. Furthermore, favouring private cars over lorries in toll prices would be difficult to reconcile with the cost recovery imperative in Malaysia's privatised infrastructure model.

Over the years, there have been many allegations from Malaysian commentators and politicians that Singapore discourages its residents from shopping in Johor. For example, this had been alleged as the motive for policies such as the 'half-tank rule' in 1990 (later 'three-quarter tank rule'), which banned Singapore-registered vehicles from leaving with empty fuel tanks and

was explicitly aimed at reducing the leakage of fuel tax revenue (*The Straits Times*, 1990c,d).²⁶ It seems unlikely that economic rivalry is a key factor here (and has been denied consistently), although obviously some dampening of cross-border shopping might not be unwelcome from a Singapore-government perspective.

We do however find filtering through prices in Singapore's clear favouring of goods traffic in the Vehicle Entry Fee (VEP) that it imposes on foreign-registered vehicles entering on weekdays via both Second Link and causeway. The VEP has traffic-demand management as its rationale but VEP rates for goods vehicles, at \$S10 per month, are much lower than for cars, which are charged \$S20 per weekday. These differences are much larger than can be accounted for by differences in vehicle taxes.²⁷

Finally, we can also see some sense of territoriality in the design of the Second Link, revealing a guise as prominent 'gateway'. This is reflected in the choice to have two separate and highly prominent checkpoints at either end of the bridge rather than building them close together on one side.²⁸ Note that this is a 'rebordering' role played by the link even as it is meant to enhance flows across the border.

Rail travails

The focus of this episode is the rail line of Malaysia's government-owned intercity rail company, Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM). Built in the colonial era, it crosses the causeway and ends at Tanjung Pagar next to Singapore's central business district at the south of the island. Passenger services on the line compete with coaches and airlines to provide a small part of the public transport service in the corridor between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. Interpretations of this story as a bilateral issue have been provided by Ganesan (1998, 2005: 60–62), who highlights territoriality and sovereignty as central. The railway's role as a simple cross-border transport link, with potential for enhancement, has usually been overshadowed by the bilateral disputes.

Two issues have been seen as central to the bilateral disputes related to the railway, and although distinct, are closely intertwined. One was Singapore's wish to shift the railway Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) check-

point from Tanjung Pagar to a point close to the causeway. This would close off a security gap and smuggling opportunity afforded by the trains moving through its territory before reaching the checkpoint. It would also help reassert sovereignty over the rail corridor through the heart of Singapore. The second issue was the irritant of KTM ownership under a 999-year lease of the rail corridor and 200 hectares of land, including the Tanjung Pagar station on prime land. These seem to many to be almost an enclave of Malaysian territory, in practice if not in law (*Malaysiakini*, 2003).

The land issue was addressed by the 'Points of Agreement' (POA), signed in 1990, despite ongoing bilateral tension, by Malaysia's Finance Minister Daim and Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew (on his final day in that role). It provided for the eventual shifting of the rail checkpoint to Woodlands near the causeway. The sweetener for Malaysia was the opportunity for KTM to develop (jointly through a joint holding company) several prime pieces (63 hectares) of its land along the line, which a 1918 law restricted to rail-related uses (Lim, 2002). The deal implied that trains would eventually no longer run to Tanjung Pagar but would terminate near the causeway.

The POA subsequently unravelled, initially over Malaysian proposals in 1995 to enhance the link with double-tracking and electrification from Tanjung Pagar all the way to Kunming, China, as part of a Trans-Asian Railway project. Singapore authorities objected to the overhead electrical cables but Ganesan (1998) suggests that the real objection was that the proposal contradicted the POA. The POA hit a stalemate in 1998 at the height of further tensions when Dr Mahathir declared that the POA was not binding, citing a lack of parliamentary support.²⁹ Meanwhile, Singapore had been preparing for the fulfilment of the terms of the POA and in 1998 announced the move of its checkpoint to a new CIQ complex at Woodlands. It requested Malaysia do likewise, as earlier agreed, but Malaysia now opted to remain at Tanjung Pagar, apparently based on the view that moving would be seen as implementation of the POA (Ganesan, 2005: 60). Malaysia's CIQ therefore continues without legal status (based on Singapore's non-consent). This explains the strange order of checkpoints and

the absence of passport stamping at Tanjung Pagar described in the introduction. Although this is a strange stalemate, Singapore's own CIQ move addressed its security concerns.

In late 1998, both the POA and CIQ issue were included in the 'package approach' to negotiations on five key bilateral disputes, which also included renegotiated water deals (Lim, 2002). In 1998, Dr Mahathir also suggested that the causeway be replaced by a bridge (see the next case study) and that the railway run through a tunnel under the straits and terminate in Singapore at a checkpoint and interchange next to the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) station at Kranji (near Woodlands). This, along with refinements to the KTM land deal, was eventually agreed in 2001, as a sixth element in the package approach (Pereira and Ng, 2001; Tan, 2001). However, in October 2002 Malaysia abandoned the package approach amid disputes over the status of the POA³⁰ and continued bilateral tension. The KTM land and Malaysia's rail CIQ issues therefore remain far from being resolved at the time of writing.

It requires a closer look to reveal that enhancing public transport links has also been a part of the story. In the late 1980s and early 1990s KTM's short-distance, four-times-per-day 'rail-bus' service (now replaced with conventional trains) demonstrated some interest in making better use of the line. Between 1989 and 1994 there were also discussions over extending Singapore's MRT to JB (or to build light rail) together with suggestions that the KTM service be scrapped (*The Straits Times*, 1990e, 1991, 1994). As mentioned above, an upgraded KTM line was raised in 1995 by Malaysia, but served to complicate the POA issue. The 2001 package agreement included a sensible suggestion for a Kranji interchange (and terminus) between the KTM line and Singapore's MRT, which would improve access into Singapore's mass transit system. In the meantime, public transport services across the causeway have quietly been improved in recent years, via the licensing of several additional bus services, including some by a new Malaysian company (Mafoot Simon, 2003a). The KTM announced in 2004 its intention to renovate the station at Tanjung Pagar, to improve the tracks³¹ and to enhance service between Johor and Singapore (*The Straits Times*, 2004). However, this enhancement only hard-

ens the stalemate over the KTM land and CIQ issues.

In summary, what roles in wider border processes are apparent for the railway crossing of the straits? Real transport enhancement and a potential role as a spur to economic exchange was present but was not central. The role of the railway, its land and checkpoints in the assertion of state territorial control and the guarding of sovereignty is clear in this case (most theatrically in the case of Malaysia's ongoing 'performance' of a checkpoint without substance at Tanjung Pagar). This checkpoint theatre also highlights another key role (not seen in the Second Link case) as a bilateral bargaining chip, mostly in Malaysia's hands. The Malaysian Government seems keen to retain this bargaining chip, despite the embarrassing lengths required to do so (*Malaysiakini*, 2003). Moreover, certain Malaysian efforts to actually enhance cross-border rail service have only magnified bilateral problems over this link, in stark contrast with the usual assumptions about transport and borders.

The 'crooked half-bridge' saga

In 1996 with the Second Link not yet open, Dr Mahathir suggested informally that the causeway be replaced by a bridge. The need was not obvious³² and Singapore was reluctant but in 1998 suggested its inclusion in the package approach mentioned above. The bridge and rail tunnel proposal thus became part of the short-lived 2001 package agreement (as mentioned above). Talks on the bridge continued into 2002 but when the Malaysian side lost patience with the package approach in October, the Singapore Government responded by dropping its earlier support.

Dr Mahathir's surprising and dramatic response was to publicly announce in early 2003 that Malaysia would replace its side of the causeway with a 'half' bridge, saying 'It does not involve Singapore. It is ours. We are implementing it on the Malaysian side... no need to seek permission' (Reme Ahmad, 2002).³³ In order to meet the causeway halfway, the bridge would need to be curved (or 'crooked') in order to reach sufficient height for small ships. Suspicions were aired that Singapore reluctance to demolish the causeway arose from port-related

rivalry although this was denied (Zuraidah, 2003). Singapore pointed out that it remained open to the full-bridge proposal but only if included in a package approach (Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003). This came at a low ebb in relations for which the surreal 'crooked bridge' design was expected to become a 'fitting metaphor' (Lim, 2002). The 'Integrated Southern Gateway' project, for a new train station, customs, immigration and quarantine facilities, bridge and railway line (using a swinging bridge for the rail line which could open to allow shipping to pass), was launched in 2003.

The issue seemed to have been defused in 2004 when the bridge project was deferred (Lau, 2004), but both bridge options re-emerged in August 2005 (*Malaysiakini*, 2005; *The Straits Times*, 2005a). This prompted further talks and a warning from Singapore in a third-party note that 'international facilities such as the Causeway cannot be lawfully demolished without the approval, agreement and involvement of both states' (*The Straits Times*, 2005b). Behind the scenes, according to recent Malaysian accounts, Malaysia continued to push for agreement on a full bridge, in response to which Singapore sought concessions on other issues. These reportedly involved the sovereignty-linked and, for Malaysian nationalists, emotionally charged issues of reversing the 1998 ban on the use of Malaysian air space by Singapore's air force and the 1997 ban on the sale of sand to Singapore for use in land reclamation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, 2006).

In late January 2006, the half-bridge burst back onto Malaysia's public agenda. A new twist was a suggestion that the causeway need not be demolished at first (an apparent acknowledgement of legal obstacles to this). Singapore was publicly criticised for allegedly seeking unreasonable concessions in return for agreement on a full bridge. Malaysian proponents launched a media campaign highlighting key arguments for the bridge and expert studies to back some of them.³⁴ There seemed to be a high degree of commitment to proceed with a bridge one way or another.³⁵ However, in light of later statements from Malaysia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2006), it would appear that public posturing over a half-bridge was mainly

aimed at stepping up pressure on Singapore to agree to the full bridge.

It was a surprise when, in April 2006, the Malaysian cabinet suddenly announced that there would be no bridge at all. The CIQ is to be connected to the existing causeway and the turnkey contractor consortium is to be compensated. Two key rationales for this decision have emerged. For the full bridge the price in terms of concessions on emotive sovereignty-related issues was too high and would be unacceptable to the Malaysian 'public'. On the half-bridge, legal advice was cited that unilateral action on the Malaysian side would indeed breach international law.³⁶

What roles in border processes can we see here? A role as bilateral bargaining chip was clearly very prominent, reflected in the inclusion of the bridge in the package approach and Singapore's apparent efforts to extract concessions on other issues. Former prime minister Dr Mahathir apparently saw the unilateral half-bridge option as a way to avoid handing a bargaining chip to Singapore. Malaysia's rail line bargaining chips had not been forgotten in this, as can be seen in the inclusion in the half-bridge proposal of a 'swinging rail bridge', however far fetched that might have seemed (Reme Ahmad, 2002). However, it also emerged that KTM's lease on its rail land in Singapore would be engendered by any six-month period without rail services there (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, 2006). In contrast with Dr Mahathir's view, Abdullah Badawi's administration came to the conclusion that a half-bridge would not only be inferior but would actually still allow Singapore to extract concessions, and if pursued unilaterally might endanger another asset and bargaining chip, the KTM land.

We again see a strong guise of window to development opportunities as economic stimulus. The bridges proposals were consistent with Malaysia's developmental approach to major projects and, some critics have said, of Dr Mahathir's fondness for mega-projects awarded without tender (Kim Quek, 2005).³⁷ Consistent with this was the lack of hard evidence presented publicly regarding economic evaluation or cost-benefit analysis, including impacts on traffic and capacity.³⁸ This development opportunity guise is also reflected in the lack of discussion on the impact that tolls would have on

demand or the possibility of deliberately managing demand with pricing.³⁹

The little-discussed question of tolls may also have been important in other ways.⁴⁰ Singapore's leaders had earlier (during the package agreement of 2001 and 2002) expressed concern publicly over possible toll rates at the proposed bridge and again warned that symmetrical tolls would be necessary.⁴¹ The half-bridge proposal may therefore also be seen as an attempt to avoid a repeat of the toll-related problems of the Second Link. A half-bridge would have made any Singapore insistence on symmetrical tolls seem absurd.

Ultimately, the failure to reach agreement rested largely on sovereignty sensibilities (over the concessions asked by Singapore) and on the legal impossibility of sharply asserting territoriality right up to the midway point of the maritime border zone (as attempted with the half-bridge). A crooked half-bridge would have provided a wonderfully ironic inscription of territoriality onto the straits, rendering visible the maritime border in a strange twist on the 'gateway' guise discussed earlier. The strange design may have seemed embarrassing and it might seem difficult to believe that the half-bridge was ever a serious proposal. However, we have seen that Dr Mahathir, at least, apparently saw considerable advantages in the idea. He has also sought to portray the project cancellation as a loss of sovereignty in which Malaysia gave up the right to act within its own territory. Finally, it is striking in this case that efforts to enhance a transport link were pursued in such a way as to try to avoid the need to cooperate, and in ways that actually worsened bilateral relations.

Diverse roles for transport links in multidimensional border processes

What guises have been revealed in these case studies and do they require an awareness of multiple dimensions in border processes? In an earlier section, guises were identified that can be understood as uncritically associating transport links with a vaguely defined cross-border integration agenda. Some of these can indeed be seen in the case studies. There was of course much evidence of enhanced transport links being seen as developmental windows of opportunity. These hopes relied on efforts to

enhance transport links and reduce their bottleneck or barrier role (albeit with ambivalence over certain flows).

More importantly for the argument of this paper, many roles or guises for these links require a multidimensional approach to border processes. But first, support for this argument is also provided by striking absences from the list of roles that are often unquestioningly associated with integration. For example, in none of the cases did we see cross-border institutions being formed in order to coordinate the transport links or their enhancement. So missing here are the roles of 'stimulus to cooperation' and 'bridge', in the sense of contributing to integrated governance. Furthermore, in contrast with the Öresund bridge between Sweden and Denmark, the enhancing of transport links is not seen here as a way of cooperatively raising this potential binational urban region higher in global rankings of competitiveness.⁴² These absences highlight the need to distinguish between the dimensions of economic interdependence (or flows) and of governance. They also reflect the continued importance of sovereignty concerns at this border and reluctance to institutionalise local cross-border governance arrangements noted earlier (Grundy-Warr *et al.*, 1999; Phelps, 2004).

Now turning to guises that were found in the three cases, an economic example that undermines simple correlations between transport and integration is the possibility of crossings playing a role as 'filters' (or perhaps better, as 'valves' since the filtering varies with direction), selectively encouraging or discouraging certain kinds of flow. This is obvious in the form of immigration, security and customs practices that carefully discriminate among people and goods attempting to cross. However, the Second Link case shows that even if border controls were absent, cross-border transport links could still play a filtering role, potentially in the service of economic rivalry.

The cases also revealed roles that relate to sovereignty and territoriality. A practical sovereignty-related checkpoint role is complemented by a symbolic or performative guise in making territoriality visible (a 'gateways' role). This also requires a multidimensional perspective, as the enhancement of a transport link could potentially enhance economic interdependence while simultaneously symbolically increasing a

border's visible significance. This was most strikingly the case with the crooked (or 'scenic') half-bridge proposal.

We have seen that transport link issues can easily become embroiled as 'bargaining chips' in formal bilateral relationships. Proposals for changes or enhancements in both the rail and the half-bridge cases became bargaining chips embroiled in events that could have undermined cross-border integration to some extent, although the real impact on economic exchange seems to be relatively small in the short term, suggesting a certain amount of posturing is involved. However, the long-term impact in terms of missed opportunities might be significant.

The cases also revealed complications arising when cross-border transport links are seen simply as pieces of infrastructure with all of the usual public policy challenges that surround the planning, evaluation, financing and management of such infrastructure (Gómez-Ibáñez, 2003). We saw that the inherent difficulties of infrastructure policy can be further complicated when an international border is involved. On the one hand, this would suggest that any successful cooperation over such high-stakes projects could be seen as strong evidence of commitment to cooperate and therefore as support for a simple correlation of links with integration. On the other hand, we saw in the case of the Second Link that even apparently minor failures of cooperation can therefore be problematic. This particular problem also revealed a surprisingly important role of the link as a 'collision point' or point of friction between policy regimes. Different approaches to cost recovery and demand management created a lose-lose stalemate over toll rates. There is no sign in this case of policy harmonisation via cooperative effort to address the issue.

Conclusion

This paper has presented three prominent cases involving negotiation, development and management of transport links between Singapore and Johor, Malaysia. It first highlighted the common tendency to assume a simple correlation between transport links and cross-border integration. In contrast, border processes are increasingly seen in multidimensional terms.

Three cases revealed that transport links at borders also play multiple roles, some of which have been little commented upon in the literature on borders. Furthermore, some commonly expected roles were missing in this case, which also provided insights.

The paper thus found that negotiations over transport links across this border cannot be understood as part of any one-dimensional march towards a borderless region or cross-border integration. This lends support to the view that cross-border processes must be seen as multidimensional, with different dimensions related only in a contingent manner. Most clearly, the findings undermine notions of any necessary relationship between deepening economic interdependence and the development of trans-boundary governance.

The surprising multiplicity of guises for these links and the undermining of simplistic assumptions about transport links and their roles in border processes emerged despite the relatively narrow focus on transport links, which drew attention mainly to economic, political and public policy layers of border processes and relatively little to social, cultural or discursive realms. Surprising complexity was also revealed despite an approach that lent itself mainly to insights into state–state interactions, without foregrounding other actors. For example, interesting findings emerged despite the fact that the rescaling of governance did not emerge strongly in the cases. There are (small) hints of independent roles in cross-border dynamics for Johor politics (at the state level in Malaysia's federal system) but these did not appear prominently.⁴³ The paper thus includes various hints that much remains to be written on this particular border.

All three case studies presented here remain, to some extent unresolved. A test of the framework and interpretations presented here will be whether they withstand the test of time and remain relevant to future developments at this border. It should also provoke a re-examination of other cases around the world where transport links may have been uncritically associated with the 'dismantling of borders'.

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Notes

- 1 Known as the Straits of Johor in Singapore and usually the Tebrau Straits in Malaysian usage.
- 2 Sidaway (2001) offers a critical geopolitics perspective on the bridge metaphor in the rhetorical aspirations and integration processes in a relatively marginal part of the European Union.
- 3 Functionalist perspectives in international relations share a positive view of trade with liberal institutional approaches and see local cross-border cooperation as arising from functional interdependencies such as market-led interactions (Brunet-Jailly, 2000).
- 4 A neo-functionalist interpretation (focused on an international level of interdependency and its consequences) would predict that strengthening supranational organisations would foster cross-border cooperative programs (Brunet-Jailly, 2000).
- 5 Instead he finds that despite considerable economic interaction, a competitive-cities perspective best explains local relations across the border.
- 6 Constructivist theory emphasises intersubjective behavioural norms or socially-shared, value-based expectations of behaviour, thus also bringing domestic society into the foreground, in contrast with realist perspectives and its main offshoots (Boekle, Rittberger and Wagner, 1999).
- 7 This paper's summary of the highs and lows of the relationship is based mainly on Tan (1997), Ganesan (1998), Rahim (1999) and Ganesan (2005).
- 8 Singapore's leadership characterised it as an expulsion, in contrast with the mutually agreed separation portrayed from Kuala Lumpur.
- 9 This was in the lead-up to the May 1969 federal elections and race riots in Kuala Lumpur, which provided the trigger for founding Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman's forced resignation, the brief suspension of parliament, the formation of the National Front (Barisan Nasional) and the New Economic Policy (NEP) with its explicit targets-based affirmative action for *bumiputra* ('sons of the land'), primarily the Malays.
- 10 Malaysia had, in April 1966 ordered checks on vehicles making the crossing. However, official immigration and customs controls were not established at the causeway until August 1966 and identity cards were sufficient until July 1967 when a passport or restricted passport (valid only in the two countries) were required (Singapore Immigration and Customs Authority, 2003).
- 11 The metaphor of prickliness seems apt in that prickliness only assumes significance for actors with a certain degree of interaction or closeness.
- 12 These arose over the 1986 visit to Singapore of the Israeli President, allegations of airspace violations, spying allegations, a territorial dispute over the rocky outcrop that houses the Horsburgh lighthouse, and

- cancelled joint military exercises. Singapore's 1990 agreement with the USA on hosting certain military facilities further underlined differences. Another factor was the political turbulence in Malaysia that followed a split in the main ruling party, United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), in 1986. Heightened ethnic tension between Malays and Chinese was a side effect of the crisis.
- 13 The currencies had been at par until 1973 when they were delinked. The Singapore Dollar (S\$) had risen gradually relative to the Malaysian Ringgit (RM) but then jumped from buying about RM1.2 in early 1988 to RM1.7 in 1992.
 - 14 See Ganesan (2005: 66–68). The offending comments involved: (i) in June 1996 to the effect that a re-merger with Malaysia was possible if Singapore failed economically and politically, with subsequent comments that could be taken as critical of Malaysia's policies of affirmative action for Malays; (ii) in early 1997, describing Johor as 'notorious for shootings, muggings and carjackings' in an affidavit (together with seven other senior People's Action Party (PAP) MPs) filed in a legal action seeking to freeze the assets of an opposition figure, Tang Liang Hong, who was facing legal action by the eight PAP leaders for defamation, but had fled to Johor; (iii) candid, often critical, comments published in Lee's memoirs in September 1998 about former Malaysian leaders during the period of the merger.
 - 15 An invigorated opposition movement mounted a stronger-than-usual challenge to Dr Mahathir's *Barisan Nasional* government in the aftermath of the financial crisis and the dismissal and arrest of his former deputy, Anwar Ibrahim, in September 1998.
 - 16 These included water, land reclamation, enhanced security checks at the Singapore CIQs and the proposal to replace the causeway with a bridge. Tension over water was central, culminating in Singapore's release of previously confidential correspondence between the two leaderships (Zuraidah, 2003).
 - 17 This improvement in relations has been widely attributed to the change of leadership in Malaysia, although Singapore also had a change of prime ministership in 2004. Another factor may be the defusing of the water issue. Singapore's response to the failure to resolve this through a package approach has been to dramatically step up its efforts to diversify its water sources to the point that it would no longer need to extend its water agreements with Malaysia (Singapore Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, 2003).
 - 18 Statistics on cross-border flows are not generally made public by either country but are cited selectively and intermittently. Singaporean news reports from 2003 estimated daily flows across both the causeway and Second Link combined as roughly 80–90 000 people each way, with about 21 000 motorcycles, 11 000 cars, 1100 lorries and 425 buses. These are one-way estimates based on numbers cited in Tan (2003), *The Straits Times* (2001, 2003a) and Mafoot Simon (2003a,b). Higher estimates come from a recent report by transport consultant Dr Tai Tuck Leong, who was commissioned by Gerbang Perdana, the contractor for the proposed bridge to replace the causeway (mentioned by the *New Straits Times*, cited by *Today*, 2006), which suggests that 69 million people use the causeway alone each year. Assuming that this must be the two-way figure, it suggests that 95 000 people use the causeway alone each way. Numbers from the same source imply one-way figures of about 57 000 vehicles, including 16 750 cars and 35 900 motorcycles. This would make the causeway among the busiest border crossings. The crossing between San Diego and Tijuana, sometimes said to be the world's busiest, has reported daily one-way traffic of about 110 000 persons (Bae, 2003).
 - 19 Although their focus was Singapore and Batam, these observations are relevant to this study.
 - 20 The mainstream mass news media in both Singapore and Malaysia tend to be closely aligned with the respective government perspectives in their reporting and editorial stances. Malaysia, more so than Singapore, does have a number of alternative news and opinion sources, such as *Aliran Monthly*, *Harakah* (the organ of the Islamist opposition party, Parti se-Islam Malaysia (PAS)) and the online news site, *Malaysiakini* (since 1999).
 - 21 My curiosity and puzzlement over these transport links has made them a frequent topic of conversation over the years, including with various professionals in the academic, urban planning and transport sectors of both countries. However, the degree of sensitivity over the bilateral relationship and the tendency for official secrecy to surround many aspects of it discouraged me from seeking interviews with official sources on either side.
 - 22 It was launched as a joint venture between companies linked with the Second Link consortium (another Renong subsidiary called ProLink) and the Johor Government. Revenue from this 10 800-hectare land development and from the Second Link and other expressway tolls was expected to finance the bridge, the land acquisition for the township and its basic infrastructure (Feiruz Khan Mohamed Rafik, 1998).
 - 23 The rationale being to seek to discourage high tolls on the other side, with the implication that if Malaysia set zero tolls so would Singapore. It also arises from concern to prevent the other side from 'creaming' all the toll revenue that the market would bear at the crossing.
 - 24 Malaysia sees the transshipment role of Singapore's ports as against its interests and might be tempted to seek ways to reduce this, while not wanting to harm its exports to Singapore itself. Conversely, it is in Singapore's interests to encourage goods traffic across the border.
 - 25 Other reasons were cited. Nevertheless, circumstantial evidence strengthens the case for implicating port rivalry here. For example, in 1990, the Johor Port Authority called for the Second Link project to be delayed, over fears it would harm their position relative to Singapore's ports (*The Straits Times*, 1990a).
 - 26 The stepping up of security checks at the Singapore checkpoints in late 2002 and early 2003 in the wake of heightened fears of terrorism provoked similar allegations (Tan, 2001; *The Straits Times*, 2002, 2003b;

- Mafoot Simon, 2003b). Negative reporting in the Singaporean media on crime and other problems in Johor Bahru has also been alleged in Malaysia to be another attempt to discourage cross-border shopping, especially in 1997 and again in the early 2000s.
- 27 We would expect some difference as goods vehicles attract generally lower vehicle taxes in Singapore than private cars. The level of the VEP is set with the aim of making the daily fixed costs for a foreign vehicle entering Singapore match those of a similar vehicle registered in Singapore, which are high due to steep vehicle taxes and charges.
 - 28 A single checkpoint would have been more convenient for travellers, especially by coach, but would have required greater trust and flexibility towards territorial sovereignty.
 - 29 Which rang hollow given the ruling coalition's overwhelming majority in the Malaysian Parliament.
 - 30 Namely, whether the 1990 POA is legally binding and still in force, not legally binding, or legally binding but only entering into force, when (or if) Malaysia moves its rail terminus and checkpoint to Woodlands (Lim, 2002).
 - 31 At the time of writing, piles of new concrete sleepers can be seen at certain places along the tracks.
 - 32 Total transport capacity across the straits increased greatly between the late 1980s and the late 1990s. This was through the Second Link project and through a series of efforts made at the causeway to cater to increasing cross-border flows. The main focus of these was the capacity of the checkpoints and their approaches. Malaysia moved first in 1988 with a project to increase its causeway road checkpoint from 14 to 22 lanes and the number of bays from 22 to 55, also increasing the goods vehicle capacity and building a lorry waiting area. Singapore made plans in the early 1990s (after the signing of the POA) to greatly expand its causeway checkpoint capacity with a new Woodlands CIQ complex to include both rail (mentioned earlier) and road facilities. Efforts to streamline border procedures also received attention. For example, Malaysia simplified procedures for its citizens working across the causeway and in 1996 Singapore implemented an automated system to speed clearance for frequent travellers who obtain a 'Checkpoint Access Card'.
 - 33 The fallback possibility of a half-bridge had actually been raised during the package approach to bilateral negotiations but a full bridge was seen as preferable, as explained in an April 2002 letter from then Singapore Prime Minister Goh (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, 2006).
 - 34 Arguments included: the need to disperse traffic away from central Johor Bahru; the suggestion that the new CIQ complex would be a white elephant without the bridge it was designed to link to; the need to ease congestion and cater to traffic growth on the causeway itself; the need for the free flow of water in the straits for the sake of water quality (it is now heavily polluted); the rising cost of the project if it is delayed further; the possibility of 'feeder services' by small ship between Johor's two ports (that lie to the north east and to the west of Singapore respectively) and that the project is essential in Johor's push to become a 'regional logistics hub'.
 - 35 Contractual obligations seemed to confirm this. The turnkey contractor (politically well-connected consortium Gerbang Perdana) had proposed a RM 1.7 billion Seven Year Medium Term Notes issuance and been given an AAA rating based on the government's commitment to pay for the CIQ project (*The Star*, 2004). Note that RM 2.5 billion is the estimated total cost including bridge (Integrated Southern Gateway n.d.). Gerbang Perdana Sdn Bhd includes Ibx Corporation, DRB-Hicom and Hyundai-Berjaya Corporation (*The Straits Times*, 2003c). Refer, for example, to Gomez and Jomo (1997) for further insight into the roles of DRB-Hicom and Vincent Lim's Berjaya Group in the political economy of Malaysia.
 - 36 Although Dr Mahathir angrily insists otherwise and claims that Singapore's leaders had already agreed to both half and full bridge options. In this, he is conveniently ignoring the fact that these agreements (in early 2002) were in the context of the package approach.
 - 37 Singapore has usually been seen as more cautious in such investments, with cost-benefit analysis as a key tool (albeit rarely made public). However, Singapore's developmental state has in fact also made 'strategic' investments in transport infrastructure in order to enhance national competitiveness and strategic interests even when evaluation has not clearly supported them (Phang Sock Yong, 2003). (Note: Kim Quek is a frequent writer for the Malaysian opposition Democratic Action Party, DAP.)
 - 38 Most proponents tended to imply that it is self-evident that capacity problems of the causeway itself explain traffic delays there. Perhaps the benefits were thought to be obvious in light of demographic scenarios that raise the not-too-distant prospect of almost 10 million people in this urban region? Singapore has over 4 million residents, while Johor Bahru District, which roughly coincides with the Johor Metropolitan Area, had almost 1 million by the year 2000 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2001). A 2030 population for Singapore significantly higher than the earlier planning horizon 'target' of 5.5 million has recently been mooted. Continued growth of 4–5% per annum in southern Johor would produce a metropolis of around 2.5 million people by 2020.
 - 39 Ironically, in early April 2006, before the bridge was cancelled, Malaysia announced the likely imposition of a RM 20 vehicle entry fee for foreign-registered vehicles entering the country. The purpose of this fee is to reduce fuel tourism in which Thais, Indonesians and Singaporeans are benefiting from Malaysian fuel subsidies. News coverage and commentary made no mention of the likely benefits if this slightly dampens traffic flow at the causeway.
 - 40 In contrast with the Second Link, this is a government-financed project under the Ministry of Public Works with another politically well-connected private consortium as turnkey contractor. Although this financing model does not require tolls, it does seem likely that a toll would have been levied. There are several rea-

sons for this: the causeway already has a modest toll (Malaysian, and a symmetrical toll by Singapore); the Second Link is still losing money and undercutting it with a new and better bridge would make this worse and a toll-free bridge (especially a half-bridge built entirely by Malaysia) might be seen as benefiting mainly Singapore users at the expense of Malaysian taxpayers.

- 41 At the signing of the 2001 agreement that included a full bridge, Singapore's Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew argued for toll charges to be the same as the causeway (Pereira and Ng, 2001). Later, in an echo of the Second Link problems, Prime Minister Goh argued that symmetrical tolls would have to be applied (Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003).
- 42 However, something akin to this was behind Singapore's efforts to internationalise its economy and growth triangle proposals (Sparke *et al.*, 2004). Paradoxically, Malaysia's current approach to development in southern Johor explicitly leverages on proximity to and 'spillover' from Singapore while also aggressively competing with Singapore in some of its core niches.
- 43 The lack of attention to this issue might have surprised some readers and another approach might have revealed more on this. However, it should also be noted that Johor's freedom to play a significant independent cross-border role is severely limited. The federal government jealously asserts its monopoly on foreign policy. Secondly, centralised internal UMNO power structures reduce the independence of action for states like Johor (that, like the nation as a whole, are ruled by a UMNO-dominated Barisan Nasional government) compared with their apparently more independent status constitutionally. The main exceptions are Penang and Sarawak, which have Barisan Nasional governments that are led by other component parties in the coalition, and of course opposition-ruled Kelantan. Local governments are appointed from the state level and have even less scope for independent action. Singapore is essentially a one-tier city-state government so this question hardly arises there.

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