

# SINGAPORE: A STORY UNFOLDING

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This Singapore monograph discusses the major challenges and policies instituted to build a functioning state, respected for its achievements and generally admired throughout the world. Policies, institutions, and adaptation characterize Singapore's continuing success, led by the People's Action Party (PAP). Given the vicissitudes of governing, the more recent challenge is the hegemonic rise of China. Singapore's strategies to maintain a peaceful and functioning security arena in the Pacific is one example of careful adaptation and response.

### A. Geography

An awareness of its unique and distinctive features is fundamental to analyzing Singapore. On August 9, 1965, Singapore became a sovereign city-state. Singapore is an island whose only physical link to mainland Southeast Asia is a man-made causeway, three-quarters of a mile in length. In terms of marine topography, there is no better port in Southeast Asia.

The geological structure of the Malay Peninsula west of the main range is such that the coastal strata of rocks slope gently downward, almost horizontally out to sea, producing mud banks and shallows stretching right across to Sumatra. Similarly, to the east of the main range, the strata there also slope gently down, and again there is a shallow sea. Nowhere on either coast is there deep water close in, with one exception. A few miles from Singapore River, at the southernmost tip of the island, where two offshore islands form a narrow strait, a most untypical geological fault has created a deep fissure, an abrupt drop, hard against the land. Scored constantly by tides that sweep in and out of either end, this narrow strait saved Singapore from decay and possible extinction. By keeping the channels clear of silt, it helped to make it one of the world's greatest ports.<sup>1</sup>

Singapore's geographical location at the tip of the Malay Peninsula has served to increase her commercial position as shipping technology has advanced,<sup>2</sup> and based on tonnage of shipping entering and leaving the port, Singapore is today the fifth largest port in the world and the second largest in the Commonwealth.

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<sup>1</sup> K.G. Tregonning, *A History of Modern Malaya* (London: Published by Eastern Universities Press Ltd. for University of London Press Ltd., 1964), p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, C.A. Gibson-Hill and George Bogaars, *Singapore, Old Strait and New Harbour: 1300-1870* (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1956); and George Bogaars, "The Effect of the Opening of the Suez Canal on the Trade and Development of Singapore," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XXVIII, Part I (March 1955), pp. 99-143.

The island of Singapore is small, 224.5 square miles (or 226 square miles at low tide, as Singaporeans sometimes boast!). With 1,002 miles of paved roads on the island (as of 1964), the center of the city is not more than 50 minutes by auto from any point. The longest and most circuitous trip is from the southwest corner of the island to the northeast, but even this journey takes less than an hour and a half by auto.

Since Singapore's independence from Malaysia in 1965, sustained land reclamation has increased the city-state's size to 277 square miles, an ultimate objective being 300 square miles. The gradual and inexorable use of ocean water remains a matter of concern to the Singapore government because approximately one-third of the city-state is 16 feet above sea level. More positively, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development estimates 80 percent of global trade by volume is transported by sea, and the Port of Singapore is the second busiest port in the world.

Much of Singapore's world famous Changi Airport stands on reclaimed land. Ships traveling from Pacific Asia to Europe and through the Swing Canal to Asia refuel in Singapore— fifty-four million tons of fuel were sold to ships in 2016.<sup>3</sup> As one report noted, "To be the Texaco station of the high seas, the island needs to maintain vast farms of oil tanks, enough to store the 53.6 million tons of fuel sold to ships last year."

A more recent development concerning reclamation is the fact that Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malaysia have halted exports of sand to Singapore, though Myanmar continues to sell sand to Singapore.<sup>4</sup>

## **B. History**

Modern Singapore was founded in 1819 and from 1824 onward, the Chinese formed first a plurality and then a majority of the population.<sup>5</sup> During this century, the Chinese proportion has remained nearly constant, being placed in 1921 at 75.4% and in mid-1965 at 74.9%.

Historically, Singapore was a point of entry and a redistribution center for immigrants; it was a society of uprooted, itinerant, pioneering,

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<sup>3</sup> Samanth Subramanian. "How Singapore is Creating More Land for Itself" New York Times Magazine. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/20/magazine/how-singapore-is-creating-more-land-for-itself.html>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Hayes, Marriott, "The Peoples of Singapore," in Walter Makepeace (ed.), *One Hundred Years of Singapore*, Vol. I (London: John Murray, 1921), pp. 355-60, summarizes all censuses from 1911 to 1924, breaking the population down by sex and race. At the time, Thomas S. (later, Sir Stamford) Raffles established a British presence on Singapore in 1819, the island was inhabited by less than 200 persons, all Malays.

and predominantly male persons.<sup>6</sup> Singapore was, in a sense, a huge railway station for adventurers who were staying temporarily as they sought their fortunes, almost invariably.

Singapore became an independent state on August 9, 1965, when it left the Malaysian Federation. The limited geographic size of Singapore's population and hence purchasing power offered an impetus to develop a regional then global economy based on trade and investment in Singapore. Fortunately for Singapore, a UN Survey Mission economic report was accepted by Singapore headed by an especially capable and astute, Albert Winsemius.

The Winsemius' report is important to understanding what Singapore had to do to survive and prosper. Equally significant was the fact that his recommendations were both endorsed and implemented under LEE Kuan Yew and GOH Keng Swee. Goh served in several Ministerial positions and became Deputy Prime Minister in 1983. Many continue to believe Goh was equal in many ways to LEE Kuan Yew in transforming Singapore into an economically developed First World State.

Winsemius initially surveyed Singapore in 1960 while chairing a UN Security Mission. He recommended Singapore become an international trade center, seek out foreign investment, with adequate pay and housing for the working class. Some say he was Singapore's unofficial economic advisor into the 1980s. He was careful, accurate, advised, well reviewed and adopted.

### C. Demography

Singapore's current population is approximately 5.6 million. During the past decade, the population trends have shifted significantly. Hitherto, a large majority of the population was situated in the 37.6 square miles of city proper extending out from the commercial heart of Singapore, at the mouth of the Singapore River.<sup>7</sup> Now, with the mushrooming of housing estates, both private and government, the population is rapidly spreading

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<sup>6</sup> In 1903, 220,321 persons arrived in Singapore from China; only 6.6 percent were female. Eight years later, immigrants from China had increased to 269,854, but the female proportion had increased only slightly, to 8.5 percent. Data are derived from Straits Settlements, Annual Departmental Reports of the Straits Settlements for the Year 1912 (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1913), p. 299. The two years chosen were representative years. The year 1911 set the record for arrivals from China, up to that date.

<sup>7</sup> The last Singapore census, conducted in 1957, reported that 63 percent of the population lived within the city of Singapore. The population density within the city was then 24,200 persons per square mile. State of Singapore, Report on the Census of Population, 1957, by S.C. Chua, Cmd. 19 of 1964 (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1964), p. 92.

throughout the island. See Tables 1-3 for an overview of population demographics in Singapore.

**Table 1: Population (in thousands)**

Year	Total Population	Residents Total	Residents Citizens	Residents PR	Non-Residents
1990	3,047.1	2,735.9	2,623.7	112.1	331.3
2010	5,076.7	3,771.7	3,230.7	541.0	1,305.0
2017	5,612.3	3,965.8	3,439.2	526.6	1,646.5

Source: Singapore Department of Statistics; *Population Trends, 2017*

**Table 2: Population Growth Rate (%)**

Year	Total Population	Residents Total	Residents Citizens	Residents PR	Non-Residents
1990	2.3	1.7	1.7	2.3	9.0
2010	1.8	1.0	1.0	1.5	4.1
2017	0.1	0.8	0.1	0.4	-1.6

Source: Singapore Department of Statistics; *Population Trends, 2017*

**Table 3: Residential Status (2018 Mid-Year Estimates)**

Residential Status	Total (in thousands)	% Change (from previous period) <sup>8</sup>	Previous Period Data (in thousands)
Singapore Citizens	3,471.9	1.0	3,439.2
Singapore Residents	3,994.3	0.7	3,965.8
Singapore Permanent Residents	522.0	-0.8	526.6
Total Population*	5,638.7	0.5	5,612.3

Source: Singapore Department of Statistics, <https://www.singstat.gov.sg/find-data/search-by-theme/population/population-and-population-structure/latest-data>

\* Total Population refers to the combination of Singapore residents and non-residents. The resident population refers to the combination of Singapore citizens and permanent residents.

<sup>8</sup> Refers to percentage change in the latest period over the same period in the previous year.

During the early years of Singapore's full independence in 1965, and certainly for decades before that, Singapore benefitted from the Nanyang Chinese, a term used to describe the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia. Referring to a 1990 study by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, David Roche concluded, "The diaspora of some 50 million ethnic Chinese in East Asia [Pacific Asia] generates a GDP of \$450 billion...the Chinese diaspora generates a GDP equal to forty percent of Southeast Asia's."<sup>9</sup> Even now, the Chinese diaspora is imposing in Indonesia, where it is estimated the Chinese share of the population is 4 percent, yet ethnic Chinese control seventy percent of Indonesia's GDP. In Singapore, ethnic Chinese people currently make up roughly seventy-five percent of the population and control ninety percent of the country's GDP.<sup>10</sup> Table 4 illustrates Singapore's ethnic composition as of June 2018.

**Table 4: Singapore's Ethnic Composition**

<b>Ethnic Groups</b>	<b>2018</b>
Total Chinese	2,969,281
Total Malays	535,824
Total Indians	360,528
Other Ethnic Groups	128,650

*Source.* Singapore Department of Statistics,  
<http://www.tablebuilder.singstat.gov.sg/publicfacing/createDataTable.action?refId=14911>

This monograph does not discuss in detail economic issues in terms of worker productivity, domestic worker training, and dependence on foreign workers, which appear essential for Singapore employment. The summary statement below analyzes foreign talent an economic keeping up with technological change with political issues. Economic and political issues are further complicated by a current citizen female fertility rate of 1.2, significantly below a required fertility replacement rate of 2.1 just to maintain a citizen population at the existing level.

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<sup>9</sup> Alexander Larson, "The Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia: Gains and Losses," Moscow: *Russian International Affairs Journal*, January 16, 2016, p. 2). A large majority of such persons identified as Chinese and Thai citizens.

<sup>10</sup> David Roche, "How Does Your Garden Grow?" *Asian Wall Street Journal*, November 3, 1995, p. 6.

#### D. Economy

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is an overall measure of a country's economy. By this standard, Singapore has performed well over the years (see Table 5). GDP growth plus low inflation are measures of a prosperous nation. A brief overview of the Singapore economy suggests sustained economic progress since independence in 1965. Nominal GDP in 1965 was U.S \$500 per capita, by 1990 it was US \$13,000 and in 2013 per capita GDP reached US \$56,000. Singapore's GINI index (the lower score the more equity) stood at .417 in 2017. For a point of comparison, the following GINI listings are provided: United States .506, Germany .500, Japan .49, France .516, and Sweden .432.<sup>11</sup>

Singapore's overall prosperity through effective niching in the global economy is not without problems. Despite maintaining a steady 2.1-2.2% unemployment rate since 2000 (see Table 5), Singapore's economy is not perfect. Growing income inequity and those left behind—most often older workers and those with minimal education—are prominent on the public agenda. Globalization, as in most globalizing countries has resulted in losers as well as winners, or at least several of the lower income deciles have not experienced the general prosperity.

As Singapore strives to maintain an affluent economy, growing wage inequity is a problem. One of the significant issues facing the Singapore government is the fact that the bottom 30th percentile of wage earners experienced an income decline between 2000 and 2005 (Chua, 2009: 9). The shortfall experienced by many heartlanders is widely discussed and is a government concern. Wealth inequality measured from a different perspective has remained the same for over 30 years. In 2015, the top 1 percent and 10 percent of wealth holders in Singapore own around 20 percent and 60 percent of total wealth respectively.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Finance. "Before and After Taxes and Transfers—Singapore's Gini Coefficient" 4 December 2017.

<https://www.mof.gov.sg/Newsroom/Parliamentary-Replies/before-and-after-taxes-and-transfers---singapore-s-gini-coefficient>

<sup>12</sup> See dollar amounts and percentages from Mr. Ravi Menon, Managing Director, Monetary Authority, Singapore Economic Review Conference, 5 August 2015.

<http://www.mas.gov.sg/newsandpublications/speechesandmonetary-policy.statements/speeches/2015/an-economic-history-of-singapore.aspx>

**Table 5: GDP Growth (Percentage of 2017 Market Value) in Singapore Currency, Millions**

Year	GDP	Percent Change
1996	128,653.0	8.1
1997	139,654.1	8.6
1998	138,345.0	-0.9
2000	162,162.3	17.2
2005	212,074.0	30.8
2010	322,361.1	52.0
2015	408,096.6	26.6
2016	410,271.9	.53

Source: Singapore Department of Statistics,  
<https://www.singstat.gov.sg/publications/publications-and-papers/reference/yoscontents>

**Table 6: Unemployment Rates in Singapore**

Year	Unemployment Rate as %
1960	9.0
1970 (Census)	8.2
1980 (Census)	3.5
1990 (Census)	1.7
2000	2.2
2010	2.2
2017	2.1

Sources: Singapore Department of Statistics,  
<http://stats.mom.gov.sg/Pages/Unemployment-Summary-Table.aspx#>; *Singapore Yearbook of Statistics*, Various Years

### E. Trade

As a globalized country, Singapore's exports and imports together equal 322.4% of GDP.<sup>13</sup> Globalization includes foreign investment for most First World countries. Singapore began implementing such a policy in the 1980s. The sustained investment remains economically successful. Tables 7-9 illustrate foreign direct investment by several countries which have both commercial and some security interests with Singapore. Particularly relevant is China (Hong Kong) where exports continue growing. Substantial economic interaction with China is a positive and

<sup>13</sup> "Trade (% of GDP)," *The World Bank*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.TRD.GNFS.ZS>



important reality for Singapore.<sup>14</sup> This is one reason that explains Singapore's efforts to maintain positive relations with both the United States (security) and China (economic).

**Table 7: Foreign Direct Investment in Singapore by Country**  
(Millions of Singapore Dollars)

Country	1985	1995	2010	2015
UNITED STATES	26.7	14,253	67,206.2	243,307.4
AUSTRALIA	2.3	3,131.6	8,296.1	15,500.9
EUROPE	30.4	24,815.7	233,371.0	379,087.5
ASIA	32.6	28,388.4	168,772.1	296,569.3
China		335.3	17,163.2	20,785.8
Japan	14.1	16,969.5	56,005.2	114,185.7
Hong Kong	8.1	3,910.4	19,555.2	48,297.2
Taiwan	0.3	927.9	5,795.4	14,556.8
ASEAN	9.2	5,677.3	32,047.3	47,084.1
EUROPEAN UNION	6,876.8	20,548.8	117,311.9	292,878.1

Source: *Yearbook of Statistics: Singapore*, 2016 (Singapore: Department of Statistics, 2017)

**Table 8: FDI in Singapore**  
Millions of Singapore Dollars (Millions of USD)

Year	Total FDI	China (including HK)	Japan	Malaysia	United Kingdom	Australia	United States
1998	\$144,197.2	3.7%	18.1%	11.4%	4.4%	2.3%	4.1%
2000	\$191,452.5 (\$82,444.8)	3.7%	15.2%	10.0%	5.0%	2.5%	6.3%
2005	\$323,821.1 (\$191,532.8)	1.7%	13.8%	8.4%	3.6%	4.7%	4.9%
2010	\$665,113.4 (\$507,197.5)	5.5%	8.4%	7.4%	9.3%	7.8%	9.3%
2016	\$1,359,476.8 (\$953,383.2)	5.7%	6.9%	5.5%	5.6%	5.8%	3.9%

Source: Singapore Department of Statistics, selected years. (Singapore Dollars converted to USD on December 1 of every listed year. [https://markets.businessinsider.com/currency-converter/singapore-dollar\\_united-states-dollar](https://markets.businessinsider.com/currency-converter/singapore-dollar_united-states-dollar))

<sup>14</sup> Thomas J. Bellows, "Economic Challenges and Political Innovation: The Case of Singapore," *Asian Review* Vol. 32, No. 4 (Winter 2006), pp. 248-51.

**Table 9: Singapore FDI Abroad (in Millions of USD\*)**

Year	Total FDI Abroad	China (including HK)	Japan	Malaysia	United Kingdom	Australia	United States
1998	\$75,218.1 (SGD)	26.4%	6.0%	11.4%	4.4%	2.3%	4.1%
2000	\$43,005.9	24.8%	5.6%	10.0%	5.0%	2.5%	6.3%
2005	\$118,530.3	21.3%	7.3%	8.4%	3.6%	4.7%	4.9%
2010	\$325,318.3	22.8%	7.4%	7.4%	9.3%	7.8%	9.3%
2016	\$549,470.3	22.6%	6.8%	5.5%	5.6%	5.8%	3.9%

Source: Singapore Department of Statistics, selected years.

\*Singapore Dollars converted to USD on December 1 of every listed year.

([https://markets.businessinsider.com/currency-converter/singapore-dollar\\_united-states-dollar](https://markets.businessinsider.com/currency-converter/singapore-dollar_united-states-dollar) )

## II. THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

### A. The Developmental State

The concept of the developmental state was introduced by Professor Chalmers Johnson in 1982 to explain the economic success of Japan. The developmental state undertakes an active, often directive, government role to promote national well-being in a changing, often challenging world. National prosperity and nation-building must be guided by the state – nurturing, guiding, and on occasion, intervening in a market-oriented economy. The determination to achieve national development makes an effective state a key causal variable, at times it might be considered as state-driven growth. Without state-will at crucial points in the historical timeline, would the necessary developmental steps have occurred? Developmental states are governed by goal-oriented, purposive, and determined elites whose principal commitment is to national well-being, not personal aggrandizement. In the case of Singapore, this was reinforced by an unwavering commitment to root out corruption as an integral component of good governance. A developmental state intervenes in a market economy to make it more productive, increase private profit as well as public revenue, participate in economic development with a reasonably balanced GINI index score, equity investment, and to work toward citizen prosperity. It is apparent that the pace of foreign investment began to

increase noticeably during the period 1988-1990 and significant growth has continued since then.

### **B. Party History**

Competitive elections began while Singapore was moving toward local self-government. One hundred fifty-six thousand persons voted in the April 1955 legislative elections. Assembly elections in which just over 156,000 persons voted with eight parties nominating candidates. Seven parties won seats. The People's Action Party (PAP), which had been recently founded in early 1955, won three seats and under 14,000 votes. By the May 1959 Legislative Assembly Elections, the PAP had won three seats and 13,634 popular votes of the 156,324 votes cast.

In 1959, Singapore basically had local self-government security under the collaborative control of British Malaysia (now an independent country) and Singapore authorities. In the May 30, 1959 elections, the PAP was a mass party. Much of its base supported and was invigorated by mass Communist front groups. Election rolls had been further expanded, and the PAP won 54.1% of the popular vote and 43 of 51 Legislative Assembly seats.

The grass roots base of the PAP was now under the control of left-wing (often pro-Communist) supporters. It was a tumultuous period. The left wing broke away and formed the left-wing Barisan Sosialis. A selective but significant number of Barisan Sosialis leadership were communists or obviously pro-Communist. Operation Cold Store in February 1963 detained roughly 150 Key Barisan Officials and supporters. As one government leader explained subsequently to the author, only key operational cadre were detained, 150-200, not a mass detention sweep. A massive sweep but would have alienated an excessive number of persons. The intent was to ripple the party, not set into motion massive popular unrest and widespread popular anger. The members of Barisan Sosialis leadership who were not detained chose not to participate in the Parliamentary Elections of April 13, 1968.

The left wing Barisan Sosialis, which had been infiltrated or co-opted by pro-Communists or Communists, was no longer a political force. The PAP strategy for state-building and nation-building continued to be implemented and the distinct possibility of a pro-Communist regime of power was over.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Thomas J Bellows, *The People's Action Party of Singapore*, ibid pp.75-99.

### C. Elections

The Group Representation Constituency (GRC) has become a significant institution facilitating the recruitment of top quality PAP candidates. The GRCs were introduced just prior to the 1988 Parliamentary elections. Initially there were only three candidates per GRC. In each GRC, one candidate must be a member of the Indian, Malay or another minority group. Today there are 14 GRCs, all with either five or six members each, totaling 75 members of Parliament (MPs). The remaining nine MPs are elected from Single Member Districts (SMD). The voter has a single vote to cast for the preferred party list. The winning list is required only to receive a plurality vote. There is no runoff.

The principal justification for creating GRCs was to insure minority representation in Parliament. The government had noted a “voting trend which showed young voters preferring candidates who were best suited to their own needs without sufficiently being aware of the need to return a racially balance slate of party candidates.” (Singapore National Heritage Board, 2006: 223).

Under the GRC system, first-time nominees, most of whom had minimal grassroots political experience, were able to avoid a potentially bruising one-on-one election contest. GOH Chok Tong spoke directly to this point. An important consideration inducing a ‘high flyer’ to enter politics are the GRC. Senior Minister Goh identified the recruitment asset of the GRC a few weeks after the May 2006 Parliamentary election:

Without some assurance of a good chance of winning at least their first election, many able and successful young Singaporeans may not risk their careers to join politics. “If you’re fighting individually, you go through a steep learning curve and you may not have enough time.” (cited Xueying, 2006: 1).

Former Prime Minister GOH Chok Tong observed that for a first-time candidate being on a GRC electoral team ensures that ‘you have a bigger chance of winning’. The Marine Parade GRC led by Goh was not challenged in 2006 and carried four new MPs into Parliament (Xueying, 2006: 1).

One reason the opposition had not fared well is that it frequently does not offer specific, viable alternatives. The following account by Warren Fernandez describes a shortfall exhibited by many opposition candidates. Fernandez, now Editor-in-Chief of The Straits Times, is an astute observer of Singapore’s political scene. On occasion, though not in the following quote, he had been a thoughtful critic of the PAP:

Consider the case of Singapore Democratic Alliance candidate Sin Kek Tong. Five years ago, I interviewed him at a press conference held at an HDB void deck, in the run-up to the 1997 elections. “What plans,” I asked, “do you have for Braddell Heights?” –the ward he hoped to contest. ‘I have no plans,’ he replied cheerfully, insisting that he was only an opposition candidate. Out of desperation, my colleagues and I threw him a lifeline. What about upgrading, covered walkways, better transport? “Yes, yes, I will do that,” he replied. “Any more ideas?” (Fernandez, 2001)

Senior Minister Goh, over the course of a distinguished career, had occasionally alluded to political pluralism and the need for more independent input. Recently, he observed that ‘as our society evolves and the needs of the electorate change, our political system must continue to move in step’ (Goh, 2008). He said further that any changes in the future must be fair to all political parties ‘and give them an equal chance to win’. Mr. Goh was speaking in the Hougang Constituency, a single member district controlled by the opposition.

The current system guarantees there be a minimum number of the opposition MPs. The Non-Constituency MP (NCMP) system is capped at three. The NCMP allocates up to three opposition candidates who lost in an election to be nominated by the President to serve in Parliament. This ensures there will be a parliamentary opposition. Nomination occurs only if less than three opposition candidates win a parliamentary seat. The individual(s) nominee(s) is/are the one(s) who scored highest among the losing candidates. Currently, three NCMPs sit in Parliament.

While speaking in Parliament in January 2016, Prime Minister Lee committed himself to lowering the average size of the Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs) and increasing the number of Single Member Constituencies (SMCs). GRCs averaged 5 members in the 2011 election and fell slightly to 4.75 in 2015. Critics of larger GRCs said it was difficult for the smaller opposition parties to recruit a full slate of qualified and reasonably prominent nominees. Moreover, it also was alleged, relatively unknown PAP candidates were elected principally because of the popularity of one or two tested and highly regarded PAP candidates in the GRC.

Furthermore, some argued, noting in single candidate districts increased voter identification with a candidate and increased popular feeling they were “his or her” representative. Reducing modestly the average number of representatives in a GRC and increasing the number of SMCs does not reduce the original purpose. The election of minority non-Chinese candidates in a multi-racial society– a rare phenomenon when

practically a system of the latter would be all single-member districts—would result in few, if any, minority persons elected. Moreover, ambitious, relatively unknown highly capable persons who went through a rigorous vetting process had an opportunity to demonstrate their potential and then a worthy performance; avoiding in most ways a personal bruising and combative campaign is important for some potential candidates.

GRCs protect concern for minority representatives necessary for nation-building an optimal People's Action Party (PAP) objective. The increase of Small Member Districts (SMD) increases a more democratic feeling; in a SMD, you are my representative. This increases the comfort level for some voters who perceive one-member districts as the more common way for individual voter input to be recognized. The modest reform soon to be implemented is a clear signal that those who want a “purist” textbook democracy will cheer this as an appropriate step. Dismantling the GRC system could well stifle meaningful input by relevant members of voters, a democratic step backwards. Those who promote a “purist” textbook reform too frequently cripple the very objective they purport to advance. A pristine world, adhering to the highest, demanding logical/academic standards and procedures is rare if non-existent. Compromise of the “best possible” characterizes an essentially dysfunctional democratic political system. Singapore continues to sustain and move in a democratic direction. The GRC system remains an important stabilizer and input component in Singapore.<sup>16</sup> Table 10 illustrates both democratic elections and the electoral dominance of the PAP.

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<sup>16</sup> For a careful, balanced, and empirical description of possible changes, see Dillan Koh, “Strengthening Minority Representation and Political Inclusion,” Institute of Policy Studies Commons, January 24, 2016. <https://www.psccommons.sg/the-angle-strengthening-minorityrepresentation>

**Table 10: Singapore Parliamentary Elections**

Year	PAP % of Vote	PAP Seats Won*/Total Seats	Opposition % of Vote**	Opposition Seats Won	Nominated PM (opposition)
1959	54.1	43/51	45.9	8	Lim Yew Hock (SPA)
1963	46.9	37/51	53.9	14	Lee Siew Choh (BS)/ Ong Eng Guan (UPP)
1968	86.7	58/58	13.3	0	(Independents)/(WP)
1972	70.4	65/65	29.6	0	(WP)/(UNF)
1976	74.1	69/69	25.9	0	(WP)/(United Front)
1980	77.7	75/75	22.3	0	(WP)/(UPF)
1984	64.8	77/79	35.2	2	J.B. Jeyaretnam (WP)/(SUF)
1988	63.2	80/81	36.8	1	J.B. Jeyaretnam (WP)/Chiam See Tong (SDP)
1991	61.0	77/81	39.0	4	J.B. Jeyaretnam (WP)/Chiam See Tong (SDP)
1997	65.0	81/83	35.0	2	J.B. Jeyaretnam (WP)/(SDP)
2001	75.3	82/84	24.7	2	Chiam See Tong(SDA)/(SDP)
2006	66.6	82/84	33.4	2	(WP)/(SDA)
2011	60.14	81/87	39.86	6 (plus 3 NCMPs)	Low Thia Kiang (WP)/Goh Meng Seng(NSP)
2015	69.9	83/89	30.1	6 (plus 3 NCMPs)	Low Thai Kiang (WP)/Chee Soon Juan (SDP)

Source: Singapore Government Website, General Elections.

[https://web.archive.org/web/20150914182139/http://www.eld.gov.sg/election\\_results.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20150914182139/http://www.eld.gov.sg/election_results.html)

\* Includes walkover seats

\*\* The sum of all opposition parties' percentage of vote

LEE Kuan Yew has personified Singapore to much of the attentive world. His commitment to meritocracy is a goal shared by his closet colleagues (Lam and Tan, 1999), as well as his successors, and has become institutionalized in Singapore's political system. One of the PAP's most influential leaders was S. Rajaratnam, a founding member, party theoretician and publicist, who held several ministerial positions before retiring from politics in 1988. He summarized his philosophy of

meritocracy: ‘I believe in a hierarchy of merit simply because I cannot think of any other way of running a modern society—for that matter even a primitive tribal society’ (cited Chan and Haq, 1987: 539).

This commitment to meritocracy is unwavering under the third generation of leaders represented by Prime Minister LEE Hsien Loong, who became prime minister in August 2004, succeeding GOH Chok Tong who served as prime minister for nearly 13 years. LEE Hsien Loong is the eldest son of LEE Kuan Yew. Under Prime Minister Goh, LEE Kuan Yew served as senior minister. After August 2004, Goh became senior minister and LEE Kuan Yew became minister mentor.

From a young age, LEE Kuan Yew developed a belief in elitism based on intellectual merit (Barr, 2000). Years later, when he became prime minister, he began the process of integrating the merit concept into the operational mechanism of the political system. This began to be operationalized in the political system when he became chief minister in 1959. This core criterion—recruiting, nurturing and judging potential leaders—remains in place today.

A careful analysis of the steps followed in the case of Singapore’s next Prime Minister, HEN Swee Keat, is available in a Hong Kong newspaper.<sup>17</sup> The selection, testing, and the consensus of the 4th generation ministers is analyzed in considerable detail.

The selection of testing (job performance) and consensus-building takes years. It is obvious this is accomplished with limited personal rancor and the leadership united at the conclusion.

#### **D. Democracy**

During the first years of independence and after, competitive, secret ballot elections continued to be held. In the early independent years, emphasis was on each individual contributing in his/her best way. Everyday life was characterized by orderly optimal effort. Singapore was never a police state. It was, though, a country determined to work in an orderly and focused manner. An ultimate objective was to become a prosperous, democratic state with as few as possible relegated to a permanent underclass. As then Prime Minister LEE Kuan Yew declared during the early years:

“We have all got to travel either on the left or on the right side of the road.

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<sup>17</sup> “Singapore’s next Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat,” *South China Morning Post*, November 24, 2018. See also: John Geddie and Fathin Ungku, “As Singapore enters twilight of Lee era, ruling party prepares for change,” *The Straits Times*.



We have all got to agree that when the light is red we stop. When it is amber, we take heed. When it is green, we go.”<sup>18</sup>

The strategies and struggle for economic development and political stability meant economic development, job availability, and effective government policy design and implementation, and combating communist activities took priority over creating a Westminster democracy. LEE Kuan Yew observed, probably correctly in 1992:

All people of all countries need good government. A country must first have economic development, then democracy may follow. With few exceptions, democracy has not brought good government to new developing countries... Westerners value the freedom and liberties of the individual. As an Asian of Chinese cultural background, my values are for a government which is honest, effective and efficient.<sup>19</sup>

Intense primordial or economic cleavage, uncompromising beliefs, and free-wheeling electoral political competition at all costs for control of national government further divide society and constant confrontations and growing cleavages inhibit the emergence of a functional government. Determination to acquire or stay in, at all costs, lets power inevitably cripple functional policy development.

Despite continuing critiques of Singapore falling short of being a full Westminster democracy, competitive elections continued. In addition to fair and competitive elections, for many years Singapore has provided other mechanisms for receiving public input. The Speakers' Corner in Hong Lim Park, implemented in 2000, allowed public speech without obtaining a police permit. Indoor rallies and public events no longer require a police license if the speaker and organizer are Singaporeans.<sup>20</sup>

Some elections have signaled noticeable dissatisfaction with PAP policies. This dissatisfaction has led to an increase in political openness and input, particularly after the 2011 Parliamentary elections. Citizens expressed unhappiness with public input on significant decisions affecting their personal lives. Full delegation of trust and satisfaction with government policy was modified in favor of more consultation and

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Thomas J. Bellows, “Big Fish, Small Pond.” *The Wilson Quarterly* (Winter 1983, Vol. VII, No. 3). Pg. 80.

<sup>19</sup> Lindsay Davis, Editor, *The Wit and Wisdom of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Edition Didier Millet, 2013), p.48.

<sup>20</sup> For a succinct and balanced summary of the election and consequences see Carol Soon and Gillian Koh, “Introduction” in Carol Soon and Gillian Koh, Editors, *Civil Society and the State in Singapore*, (Singapore: World Scientific 2017) pp. xi-xxix.

consideration of citizen attitudes of input between what is essentially free and open elections without any manipulation of vote-counting.

The drop in electoral support for the PAP in the 2011 elections (see election table) resulted in part as new younger voters went to vote for the first time. There was also considerable public concern with the government release of a White Paper, “A Sustainable Population for a Dynamic Singapore,” in January 2013. With Singapore’s low fertility rate of 1.5 (2.1 needed to maintain population at the existing level), the White Paper proposed that Singapore’s population increase by 30% to 6.9 million by 2030. Many Singaporeans believed such a population increase,” mostly of foreigners, meant excessive crowding of a limited space and a foreign influx to fill many of the anticipated best jobs as the population grew.<sup>21</sup>

Consequentially, this led to many legal public protests, meetings, and a popular vote decline to 60.1% for the PAP in the 2011 elections, a significant drop from the 2006 vote of 66.6%. One example of the public outcry was a rally held on February 16, 2013 in Speakers’ Corner to protest the White Paper. This rally, which was organized using the social network Facebook, was identified as “perhaps the first large, real confluence of persons against a proposed public policy. One estimate was that 1,000 to 1,500 persons attended. This rally is generally described as the “new normal” where citizen input, other than elections, can occur if involving race, religion or personal attacks on government officials.<sup>22</sup>

As evidence of public displeasure, the 2011 vote for the PAP was the lowest since independence in 1965. One consequence was that a significant number of social measures and wage reforms proposed by the PAP government led to popular government social policy changes, especially as a result of the 2013 Population White Paper.

The Soon/Koh book is an excellent compendium of the growth of autonomous orderly input into the public policy arena as it currently is occurring. In Singapore’s case, as over the world, the Internet is a game changer. Fortunately for Singapore, there are bumps and adjustments. Nevertheless, the balance with popular input continues to evolve in Singapore’s political system.

Today, as the PAP moves the country systematically toward identifying third generation leadership, Singapore continues its forward, successful journey to political pluralism in almost every way. It is accurate

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<sup>21</sup> The 2010 Census identified the population fertility rate at 1.2, far below the 2.1 fertility rate required to keep the population at its 2010 number.

<sup>22</sup> For a secured and balanced review of these developments, see Carol Soon and Gillian Koh, “Introduction” in Carol Soon and Gillian Koh *Civil Society and the State in Singapore* (Singapore: Institute of Policy Studies, World Scientific, 2017), XIV-XVII.

to describe the state of Singapore as a First World, developed country with free and competitive elections and a variety of places for public input in addition to competitive elections.

### **E. Political Pluralism**

Political pluralism and civil society are not discussed at great length in this monograph. The U.S. Department of State Human Rights Report, produced annually, provides a temperate overview of Singapore. It is obvious that non-violent freedom of expression is generally present; though there are some limitations today, they are not severe. While doing field work in Singapore several years ago, based on interviews, it was clear that the ballot was secret and there was no effort to determine a voter's ballot choice. Voting is compulsory, with a modest penalty for able persons not voting.

A recent excellent work, *Civil Society and the State in Singapore*<sup>23</sup> reviews these questions in an open and balanced analysis/evaluation with several suggestions on how to increase citizen input, practically. To this writer, it seems there is much more freedom of organization, expression, and voting in Singapore than often is attributed in the political system. A major issue today seems directed toward how much will civil society and many non-governmental organizations be a sustained voice in the policy-making process. These concerns are, of course, not unique to Singapore. They are present to varying degrees and shapes in all the First World democracies.

Singapore like most of the world, is now a social media society. It is stated that "70% of the entire population uses social media for an average of two hours every day."<sup>24</sup> Singapore does not engage in pervasive, all-encompassing social media censorship. Citizen input, observation, and opinion are frequently shared.

## **III. KEY INSTITUTIONS**

### **A. Meritocracy**

Preparation for Optimal merit-based achievement begins with Singapore's educational system. Statistics evaluating students are

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<sup>23</sup> Carol Soon and Gillian Koh, Eds., *Civil Society and the State in Singapore*. (London: World Scientific Publishing Ltd., 2017).

<sup>24</sup> "We Are Social," *Global Digital Statistics 2014*, *ibid.* p. xviii.

provided by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), utilizing data from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). These global results are based on examinations testing fifteen-year-olds in reading, science and mathematics in more than seventy countries.

Incredibly, the test results ranked Singapore students first among all countries in which students took the test. Test results placed Singapore students first in math, reading, and science. In 1959, recognizing the challenges of a plural society and an economy then based heavily on trade with limited development potential, the Singapore education system was substantially expanded to provide public educational opportunities throughout the island for all economic strata.

Singapore's first Prime Minister LEE Kuan Yew noted in 1966, one year after full independence, that "...a rugged, resolute, highly trained, highly disciplined community" is necessary for Singapore to survive and prosper.<sup>25</sup> By the late 1960's, English was established as the lingua franca. A uniform and common curriculum was put in place, with an operational emphasis on rewarding achievement and merit.<sup>26</sup>

The functional role of the state, in most first world countries, (and in some less developed) countries will grow significantly in the decades ahead. The difference is that Singapore maintains and will continue maintaining a balanced budget, while most First World countries are borrowing to the point that national debt exceeds GDP.<sup>27</sup>

In Singapore's case, a First World country, it is estimated healthcare expenses will double by 2030, from 4 percent to 8 percent of GDP. The state portion will rise from 1.5% now to 4% of GDP, quite expectantly exceeding military expenditure which currently is about 3.5% of GDP.<sup>28</sup>

A meritocracy presumes those with innate and demonstrated talent will be an elite. The implementation of meritocracy remains a guiding principle of the People's Action Party's (PAP) non-communist leaders who have governed Singapore since 1959. The success of the PAP, the

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<sup>25</sup> John Burton et al., "Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's founding father, 1923-2015." *The Financial Times*. March 22, 2015. <https://www.ft.com/content/24145cfe-b89d-11e2-869f-00144feabdc0>

<sup>26</sup> Zongyi Deng and S. Gopinathan, "PISA and the High-Performing Systems: Explaining Singapore's Education Success," *Comparative Education* 52, no. 4, 2016, pp. 449-472. See also World's Leading Education Systems: The Case of Singapore," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 64, no. 2, 2015, pp. 161-184.

<sup>27</sup> For example, U.S. national debt is 105.4% of GDP. In the case of Japan the rates is 253.0%, for France 97.0%, etc. Most democracies for now excessively for basic national needs and to need popular/election input (needs clarification).

<sup>28</sup> Janadas Devan, "Preface—Civil Society: The Idea and Its Ideals" in Carol Soon and Gillian Koh; *Civil society and the State in Singapore* (Singapore World Scientific, 2017) p. viii.

world's longest-governing elected political party, is based on meritocracy, incorruptibility and effective policies. Important to understanding Singapore's meritocracy is political recruitment which has been refined for half a century. Compensation for the high flyers means elected officials and top civil servants are among the highest paid in the world. The realistic justification is that you can retain outstanding persons. Comprehensive and effective anti-corruption measures combined with high pay means Singapore is one of the most corruption free governments in the world.

The early years of PAP rule were characterized by several political challenges from prior communist groups, including the now defunct *Barisan Socialis* (Bellows, 1970). But since the 1968 elections, no more than three opposition candidates have been directly elected to Parliament (so named after full independence), which has a current elected membership of 84 members. No opposition candidates were returned in the 1968, 1972, 1976, and 1980 general elections. There are several reasons for these electoral wins, but the principal reason was effective policies by a meritocratic political leadership.

Meritocracy is a defining trait of the Singapore polity. It is worth noting here, though, that there is more openness and more pluralism in Singapore than is generally recognized, and these continue to expand. The US Congress requires the Department of State to evaluate annually the human rights situation in every country. The 2007 Singapore report states: "There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances... There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees" (US Department of State, 2008: 1-3). The absence of such repression can be regarded as a minimal benchmark for a pluralizing society. The verifiable absence of such oppressive measures is relatively rare among a majority of the world's 200 political systems. Singapore deserves credit, through it is seldom acknowledged, for deliberately eschewing such oppressive policies.

Robert A. Dahl was a distinguished political theorist whose generalizations and conceptualizations were grounded in reality. Professor Dahl concludes that political systems are characterized by uneven control of political resources' (1991: 52). The first reason he lists is this specialization of functions in society or division of labor. Another reason is differences in social and biological inheritances (Dahl, 1991: 52-53). Even in full-fledged Western democracies, some individuals specialize in government – an elite, if you will.

Meritocracy is a utilitarian formula that asserts those who purposefully contribute to a system's 'well-being' will receive the greater rewards (Krauze and Slomczynski, 1985; Green, 1981; Pojman, 1999: 89).

To assert a small group of persons composes the critical group of decision-makers is not unusual. It is a norm in Singapore. Singapore's first prime minister, LEE Kuan Yew summarized political Singapore as it existed in its early years, and in many ways continues to exist today:

The main burden of present planning and implementation rests on the shoulders of some 300 key persons...If all 300 were to crash in one Jumbo jet, then Singapore will disintegrate. That shows how small the base is for our leadership (cited in National Heritage Board, 2003: 90).

The meritocracy now discussed is limited to elected public officials, though it obviously carries over into the civil service. Meritocracy, or the process of selecting persons on the basis of requisite achievement standards, is not unique. However, to apply the principle rigorously and consistently to an entire political leadership is rare. Merit in contemporary achievement-oriented societies generally is measured by tests of cognitive, psychological and social skills, educational achievement, reputation, self-assurance, and actual job performance. Such a society includes social stratification, with individuals rewarded in occupational positions/careers that provide varying degrees of influence, compensation, and status. To be successful in recruiting the meritorious, the criteria should be understood by most citizens, who should also believe that those in leadership positions have qualified through achievement and elections. Singapore's socio-economic achievements have persuaded a majority of the citizenry of the virtue of meritocracy as an objective in the political system.

Abraham Lincoln's 1854 summary of what governments should do is similar to what the PAP has accomplished since coming to power, although in very different circumstances. Lincoln (1953: 220-221) wrote:

The legitimate object of government is to do for a community of people, whatever they need to have done but cannot do, at all or cannot, so well do, for themselves – in their separate and individual capacities.

Within a few years of Singapore's independence in August 1965, Singapore faced the closing of the British naval base (1970-1971), which directly and indirectly contributed 20% to Singapore's GNP. After 1959, it confronted the challenge of 40,000 students graduating from middle school and fewer than 20,000 new jobs per year.

The government's primary task was fostering an equitable prosperity and creating jobs, without a hinterland to create a fallback cushion.

Another formidable challenge was the requirement to foster multiracialism, allowing room for ethnic identity yet nurturing a sufficient common space for national identity to emerge. The dynamics of such challenges within a small geographic area (270 square miles today) required an active, adaptive and directive government. Virtually little could be left to chance.

Given the unending need for policy innovation, the early struggle (1955-1963) with the pro-Communists in the party, the parallel need to restructure and reinvigorate the domestic economy, as well as the ins and outs of Malaysia experience, it is not surprising that a primary objective was structuring a proactive, effective government.

**Table 11: The Singapore Cabinet**

Name	Ministry	Age	Years in Cabinet	Highest Education Received	Profession Before in Cabinet
Lee Hsien Loong	Prime Minister	66	28	MPA, J.F.K. School of Government	Member of Parliament
Teo Chee Hean	DPM and Coordinating Minister for National Security	63	21	MPA, J.F.K. School of Government	Member of Parliament
Tharman Shanmugaratnam	DPM and Coordinating Minister for Economic and Social Policies	61	15	MPA, J.F.K. School of Government	Member of Parliament
Khaw Boon Wan	Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure and Transport	65	14	MS, National University of Singapore	Member of Parliament
Lim Hng Kiang	Trade and Industry (Trade)	63	23	MPA, J.F.K. School of Government	Singapore Armed Forces (SAF)
Lim Swee Say	Manpower	63	14	MS, Stanford University	Member of Parliament
Yaacob Ibrahim	Communications and Information	62	16	PhD, Stanford University	Member of Parliament
Ng Eng Hen	Defense	59	13	MD, National University of Singapore	Surgeon
Vivian Balakrishnan	Foreign Affairs	57	14	MBBS, National University of Singapore	Ophthalmologist/ SAF

K Shanmugam	Home Affairs and Law	59	7	LLB, National University of Singapore	Lawyer
Gan Kim Yong	Health	59	10	MPhil, Cambridge University	CEO/ Executive VP of NatSteel
S Iswaran	Trade and Industry (Industry)	55	12	MPA, J.F.K. School of Government	Member of Parliament
Heng Swee Keat	Finance	56	7	MPA, J.F.K. School of Government	Managing Director of the Monetary Authority of Singapore
Grace Fu Hai Yien	Culture, Community and Youth	54	12	MBA, National University of Singapore	Member of Parliament
Chan Chun Sing	Prime Minister's Office	48	7	MBA, MIT Sloan School of Management	Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) Chief
Lawrence Wong	National Development and Second Minister for Finance	45	7	J.F.K. School of Government	Executive of Singapore's Energy Market Authority
Masagos Zulkifli	Environment and Water Resources	54	8	MBA, University of Southern California	Senior Parliamentary Secretary
Ng Chee Meng	Education (Schools) and Second Minister for Transport	49	3	MA, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy	Singapore Armed Forces (SAF)
Ong Ye Kung	Education (Higher Education and Skills) and Second Minister for Defense	48	3	MBA, International Institute for Management Development	NTUC Deputy Secretary-General
Josephine Teo	Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister for Manpower	49	7	MS, London School of Economics	Member of Parliament/ CEO of Business China
Desmond Lee	Social and Family Development and Second Minister for National Development	41	7	BCL, Oxford University	Associate Director of Legal Department in Temasek Holdings



## B. Corruption

Two core principles discussed are unequivocal opposition and elimination of corruption and meritocracy. With regard to corruption, I draw heavily on two analyses by Jon S.T. Quah, the leading expert on Singapore's unequivocal commitment to attack and eliminate corruption in government, politics, and society.<sup>29</sup>

The colonial experience and the Japanese occupation were important factors, especially the latter, in facilitating widespread corruption. British Colonial authorities opposed corruption but such policies were marginally successful. Survival in Singapore (1942-45) during the brutal Japanese occupation was difficult under horrendous circumstances and corruption was one gruesome tool available to survive.

The Prevention of Corruption Act (POCA) enacted by the PAP government in June 1960, under PAP domestic self-government, set the stage. The rigorous enforcement of the POCA against anyone in government or outside without regard to title or status was unflinching. POCA was never used to entrap political enemies. PAP members or government officials were never exempt, including members of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB). "The CPIB has investigated five PAP leaders and eight senior civil servants without fear or favor from 1966 to 2014."<sup>30</sup> There is no selective enforcement. Persons being investigated can have bank accounts, income tax, etc. Critical is the fact this person's "pecuniary resources or property" that are disproportionate to their known sources of income is an important investigative inquiry.<sup>31</sup>

The continuing determination is reflected partly by the fact that in 2008, 81 persons were employed by the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau and the number employed grew to 232 by 2015.<sup>32</sup> Corruption in Singapore is below any other country in Asia. The source of integrity is

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<sup>29</sup> Dr. Quah, former Head of the Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore, is a leading expert on corruption in Asia and the outstanding published authority on corruption and its near elimination in Singapore." I have drawn heavily on corruption control in Singapore from recent writings by Dr. Jon S.T. Quah. Singapore's success in combating corruption lessons for policy makers, *Asian Education and Development studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 2017 pp.263-74; "Curbing police corruption in Singapore: Lessons for other Asian Countries" *Asian Education and Development Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2014, pp. 118-222; "Why Singapore Works: Five secrets of Singapore's Success, *Public Administration and Policy*" 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1108/PAP-08-2018-002>

<sup>30</sup> Quah op.it, p267.

<sup>31</sup> J.S.T. Quah "Curbing Corruption in Asian Countries, An Impossible Dream," Emerald Group Publishing, Bingley, 2011 p.220, i.bid p. 266.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, Table I, p. 266.

obviously an important reason Singapore continues to attract significant foreign investment each year.

Though few and far between, as in any country, Singapore has experienced rare but noticeable incidents of corruption. A rare but record-breaking corruption settlement occurred in Singapore in late 2017. Keppel Offshore & Marine (Keppel O&M), a component of Singapore-based Keppel Corporation, paid fines totaling US\$422.2 million allocated between Singapore, the United States, and Brazil. Agents of Keppel officials made corrupt payments totaling approximately US\$55 million to Petrobras officials between 2001 and 2014 in order to win contracts with Petrobras and its related companies. Several former officials were aware of the corrupt payments made in Brazil. Keppel accepted an additional warning from the CPIB in Singapore “in lieu of prosecution for corruption offenses punishable under the Prevention of Corruption Act (POCA).”<sup>33</sup>

International evaluations indicate Singapore is well-regarded for its control of corruption. Transparency International’s 2017 Corruption Perception Index ranks Singapore 6th out of 180 countries. Singapore is ranked as being the least corrupt state in Asia.<sup>34</sup> Wikipedia considers corruption in Singapore as low. Over the years, there have been a few cases rigorously investigated by the CPIB. A brief summary of corruption cases in Singapore is provided by Wikipedia.<sup>35</sup>

### C. Social Policies and Programs

The aftermath of the 2011 parliamentary elections was an unpleasant surprise for the PAP. There was some public concern about the high pay for top officials. The greatest unhappiness involved the January 2013 White Paper “A Sustainable Population for a Dynamic Singapore.” The white paper included a projected population of 6.9 million by 2030, a 30% increase. Many voters believed this would lead to an overcrowded Singapore and a substantial increase in immigrants, only some of whom would become citizens. This troubled many voters who believed they were not being sufficiently consulted on basic living issues. Public discontent triggered the subsequent response of the PAP government, particularly with regard to improvements in social policies and programs. The next

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<sup>33</sup> Lindsay Murdoch, “Singapore hit by Brazil-linked corruption scandal,” *The Sunday Morning Herald*, January 9, 2018. <https://www.smh.com.au/world/singapore-hit-by-brazillinked-corruption-scandal-20180109-h0fjdr.html>

<sup>34</sup> Corruption Perceptions Index 2017. [https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption\\_perceptions\\_index\\_2017](https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017)

<sup>35</sup> Wikipedia, “Corruption in Singapore,” September 2018. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corruption\\_in\\_Singapore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corruption_in_Singapore)

election in 2015 led to a popular vote increase of more than 9.7% and a gain of 3 seats for the PAP. The PAP had regained its mojo, and continues to respond to public concerns. For a list of social programs implemented in the aftermath of the 2011 elections, see Table 12.

**Table 12: Major Social Policies and Programs**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Policy/Program</b>
<b>1955</b>	<b>Central Provident Fund</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forced retirement planning; had 3 accounts</li> <li>• 1. Ordinary; use towards education/mortgage/stock</li> <li>• 2. MediSave; use towards medical expenses</li> <li>• 3. Special; use towards retirement and approved investments</li> </ul>
<b>February 1, 1960</b>	<b>Housing and Development Board was established</b>
<b>December 2004</b>	<b>Committee on Aging Issues was established</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>3 Core Principles of Ministry of Community Development, Youth, and Sports</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1. Self-reliance and Social Responsibility</li> <li>• 2. Family as the first line of support</li> <li>• 3. The Many Helping Hands approach; refers to volunteer welfare organizations and grassroots bodies working with the government as a safety net but emphasis was placed on Private Responsibility</li> </ul>
<b>2014</b>	<b>Pioneer Generation Office/Package</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$9 Billion towards Medisave Top Ups, MediShield Life, Disability Assistance, and Outpatient Bills</li> <li>• Covers appr. 450,000 Sing. Over an estimated 20 years</li> </ul> “Pioneer”= born on or before 31 December 1949 and obtained citizenship before 31 December 1986
<b>2015</b>	<b>Launched the School of Continuing and Lifelong Education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part of the National University of Singapore</li> <li>• Expands offerings to working adults</li> </ul>
<b>2016</b>	<b>SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statutory Board under the MoE</li> <li>• Derived from policy recommendation from the Committee for the Future Economy (Convened in Jan 2016)</li> <li>• Provides lifelong learning and workforce development programs for all ages</li> </ul>
<b>July 1, 2017</b>	<b>Re-Employment Age was made into law</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers must offer re-employment to eligible employees who turn 62 up to the age of 67</li> </ul>
<b>April 2018</b>	<b>Ministry of Social and Family Development handed senior-related social support services to Ministry of Health to streamline elderly care</b>

\*Recent trend shows added government willingness to contribute with less emphasis on self-reliance and personal responsibility. There was also a shift from focusing on grades to focusing on training/re-training the workforce.

The PAP government continues to emphasize social policy issues. Prime Minister LEE Hsien Loong spoke to these issues at the August 2018 National Day Rally. As summarized in *Petir*, the PAP's quarterly publication, Prime Minister Lee assured Singaporeans regarding "concerns about the cost of living pressures, public housing, healthcare and education." These expenditures remain "extremely important to the average Singaporean." Prime Minister Lee declared that "the Singaporean government will do all it can to provide support to ease their worries, especially the lower-income groups."<sup>36</sup>

#### IV. FOREIGN POLICY

The knowledge and intellectual appreciation of Singapore's relevance and success is well-known and respected among world leaders. Saudi Arabia currently initiates wide-ranging social and economic changes. The former Saudi Minister of Culture and Information wrote in 2018: "[T]here is no universal guidebook on how to reform a country. But leaders like LEE Kuan Yew of Singapore show how far a country can go with the right policies."<sup>37</sup>

##### A. China

In a perceptive piece written by two mainland China scholars analyzing relations with Southeast Asia, Singapore is described as defending both its foreign and domestic policies. Singapore relies on the United States to minimize its security and serves as an "ASEAN" advisor to magnify its international influence.

Singapore is a spokesman for Asian values to highlight its own cultural autonomy. Singapore avoids a special relationship with China, especially on security issues. As a city-state, "it is very difficult for Singapore to become China's primary partner." It also was noted that Singapore can become an important partner, especially in the economic and cultural fields.

Singapore-China relations generally have been smooth for several reasons – because of Singapore's trade worth and investment in China, Singapore's commitment to maintain – as nearly as possible – civil, beneficial, and legal economic relations with countries. China's study

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<sup>36</sup> "Government's new programs for housing and healthcare." *Petir*, September 2018, pg 5.

<sup>37</sup> Adel Al-Toraifi, "The Saudi Take on Radical Islam." *The Wall Street Journal*. March 20, 2018, p. A18.

missions to Singapore over the years and the fact that China regards Singapore as a “Chinese” state. There were overt bumps in the relationship in 2016 and 2017, a reflection of Singapore’s determination to maintain absolute political autonomy and China’s displeasure.

A sharp divergence between Singapore and China occurred in July 2016. If such disagreements had occurred previously, they were kept out of the public arena. A judgment by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in The Hague ruling on a brief submitted by the Philippines, ruled against China’s continuing economic and military expansion in the South China Sea. The Tribunal concluded that there was no legal basis for China’s claim of historic rights to resources within the sea area falling within the “nine dash line.” The Tribunal also condemned The People’s Republic of China (PRC)’s construction of artificial islands. The PRC’s response was forcefully summed up by a scholar at China’s National Institute of International Strategy. He stated the ruling was “biased, unfair, absolutely terrible and a joke.”<sup>38</sup>

Singapore’s response was cautious, relatively neutral, but clearly not in support of China, nor a rejection of The Hague Arbitral Tribunal ruling. In an August 2016 article, the Singapore Prime Minister LEE Hsien Loong said that the Hague based Permanent Court of Arbitration decision was much better than seeing “whose guns are more powerful.” He also stated Singapore welcomed U.S. engagement in the region.<sup>39</sup>

Singapore sought to maintain a neutral position and urged all parties to “fully respect legal and diplomatic processes, exercise self-restraint and avoid any activities that may raise tensions in the region.”<sup>40</sup> China made clear on this occasion and others that Singapore should stay out of the South China Sea disputes. China was frustrated by the lack of Singapore’s neutrality or preferably, some support for China’s aggressive actions in the South China Sea.

Singapore’s efforts to maintain a neutral position was not sufficient from the PRC viewpoint. Singapore’s Foreign Minister, Vivian Balakrishnan, declared Singapore took no position on the merits of specific territorial disputes in the South China Sea and urged all parties to

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<sup>38</sup> “Beijing Rejects Tribunals Rulings in South China Sea Case,”

[www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/12philippines-wins-southchina-sea-case-against-china](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/12philippines-wins-southchina-sea-case-against-china).

<sup>39</sup> “China Urges Singapore Not To Interfere on South China Sea Disputes at Asean Meeting,” South China Sea Morning Post (Hong Kong) August 17, 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Ian Storey, “Addressing Responses to the Arbitral Tribunal’s Ruling on the South China Sea,” (Singapore Perspective (July 28, 2016) p. 3).

refrain from provocative behavior. This neutral stance did not satisfy Beijing.<sup>41</sup>

For Singapore, investment in and trade with China is an important economic relationship to continue. Singapore also depends upon the United States as a principal security partner. This balance between the U.S. and PRC in Beijing was believed to be violated by Singapore's non-endorsement of the PRC's angry response. Unhappiness was setting in, and would only increase as the year continued.

Reportedly, on October 1, 2016 People's Liberation Army (PLA) Major General JIN Yinan accused Singapore of stirring up Sino-U.S. tensions, questioning Singapore's motives in hosting the Shangri-La dialogue, an annual security summit.<sup>42</sup> For both Singapore and China, this was an effort to sustain important sovereign perspectives and to affirm or modestly recalibrate Singapore-China relations. For China, it was a signal to position as the emerging hegemon in Asia and for Singapore to not be forced into a public position of having to rethink a long-standing, practical policy.

China's frustration and disappointment with Singapore was subsequently evident in the China inspired Hong Kong detention of Singapore's Terrex Infantry Carriers returning from training maneuvers in Taiwan that had a long history.

For many years, elements of the Singapore armed forces have trained in Taiwan. In order to train adequately with armed vehicles, Singapore regularly holds training maneuvers in the Republic of China, Taiwan. China has long objected to this overseas training arrangement with Taiwan, but Singapore maintains this is a sovereignty issue and is legally appropriate. China, however, "firmly opposes any of the countries that have diplomatic ties with China to have any form of official exchanges with Taiwan, including defense exchanges and cooperation."<sup>43</sup> China's most recent response manifested its continuing displeasure, though avoiding a direct confrontation.

Equipment is shipped to and from Taiwan during the exercises. On November 25, 2016, nine Terrex Infantry Carrier Vehicles were being shipped from Kaohsiung, Taiwan to Singapore by APL, a Japanese owned container shipping firm. This equipment was detained by Hong Kong

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<sup>41</sup> "Singapore Takes No Position on South China Sea Claims, Calls for Restraints," The Straits Times. July 12, 2016. <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/southeastasia>.

<sup>42</sup> Minnie Chan, "Chinese defence adviser turns up heat on Singapore over South China Sea row", South China Morning Post, October 2, 2016. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2024158/chinese-defence-adviser-turns-heat-singapore-over-south>

<sup>43</sup> Chong Koh Ping, Jermyn Chow, Joyce Ling, "China Airs Views on Seized Armored Vehicles as SAF Team Reaches HK," The Straits Times. November 26, 2016.

customs authorities on November 26, not PRC authorities. The ship's first stop was in the PRC port of Xiamen. Beijing, however, preferred to have Hong Kong national authorities conduct the seizure. Singapore, responding to specific Hong Kong actions, indicated it had no intention to violate Hong Kong regulations.

From China's point of view this was a(n) direct/indirect signal of displeasure in an ongoing and mutually beneficial relationship between Singapore and China. Negotiations between Singapore and Hong Kong authorities dragged out for several weeks in an orderly and non-threatening fashion. At one point, though, Defense Minister NG Eng Hen described the seizure a "low point" for Singapore from a "defense perspective." These negotiations resulted in the ship carrying the equipment being released with its cargo and continuing home to Singapore.

At one point during the detention of the Terrex Infantry Carriers, a second incident occurred in August 2017 – the Controller of Immigration cancelled the entry and re-entry permits of Professor HUANG Jing and his wife Shirley Yang Xinping on August 4, 2017.<sup>44</sup> Professor Huang had served as the Director of the Center on Asia and Globalization and as Lee Foundation Professor on U.S.-China relations at the LEE Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. He was charged with providing Singapore and academics with privileged information to influence Singapore's foreign policy, resulting in the adoption of a strong pro-China foreign policy. Professor Huang and his wife covertly and deliberately represented the People's Republic of China. "The clear intention was to use the information to coerce the Singapore government to change its foreign policy. Huang and his wife's continued presence in Singapore was "judged to be undesirable...both were permanently banned from Singapore." Singapore Prime Minister LEE Hsien Loong made a three-day trip to Beijing in September 2017 to smooth the waters. Lee and Chinese President XI Jinping reaffirmed the longstanding bilateral relationship between the two countries, with President calling the visit "a reflection of the closeness of the two countries' relations."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Royston Sim, "LKY School professor Huang Jing banned, has PR cancelled, for being agent of influence for foreign country", The Straits Times. August 4, 2017. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/lky-school-professor-huang-jing-banned-has-pr-cancelled-for-being-agent-of-influence-for>

<sup>45</sup> Christopher Bodeen, "Recent developments surrounding the South China Sea", The Associated Press. September 25, 2017. <https://www.apnews.com/3801f989a2ce436a96b242841d451618>

## B. Malaysia

The joint investment and economic development programs between Malaysia and Singapore have the potential for increasing political and economic tensions. Foremost is the High Speed Rail (HSR) linking Singapore with Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. Singapore has already spent US\$182 million (S\$250 million) on the project and will spend another S\$40 million by the end of 2018. Singapore's Transport Minister said "taxpayers' money" already spent is "wasted expenditure" if the project is cancelled. A concern was as of July 10, Kuala Lumpur had not replied and Singapore expenditures were continuing. By July 10, Singapore had received no clarification and consequently was continuing with the project and appropriate expenditures.

In June, Singapore expended \$6 million and planned to spend the same amount in July. The Singapore portion is that the HSR was a binding agreement and if not fulfilled will require Kuala Lumpur to repay Singapore the expended funds. As of early July 2018, Singapore had already spent S\$250 million and anticipated another S\$40 million by the end of 2018.<sup>46</sup>

Complicating this issue is Prime Minister Mahathir's review of mega-project deals such HSR involving China which were signed by the now defeated Barisan Nasional government. Chinese firms were expected to secure most of the construction, overpriced, rising Chinese labor, and "irregular financial practices."<sup>47</sup>

International investment and trade with China may be changing under the Mahathir government. It is worth noting China was Malaysia's most important trading partner under the previous government led by the UMNO dominated National Front under the leadership of Najib Razak (currently under arrest), a former protégé of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

Some Chinese economic activities in Malaysia, should they come to fruition, would cause harm to Singapore's economy. Rail shipments within the regions with goods headed to China when earlier planned China-funded put construction and the reopened East Coast Railway on expansion are completed, as anticipated, two years ago under the Mahathir

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<sup>46</sup> Christopher Tan, "Khaw: S'pore has already spent over \$250m on HSR project - Another \$40m will be spent by year-end; a significant sum will be wasted if project does not proceed", *Business Times (Singapore)*, July 10, 2018.

<https://infoweb.newsbank.com/resources/doc/nb/news/16D128P974B36CBO?pzWorldNews>

<sup>47</sup> Tang Siew Mun, "China's Infrastructure Strategy under Review in Malaysia," ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, June 18, 2018. <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/medias/commentaries/item/7734-chinas-infrastructure-strategy-under-review-in-malaysia-by-tang-siew-mun>



national government in Kuala Lumpur. The double track East Coast rail lines, anticipated to be completed in the early 2020s, is/was funded by Beijing and scheduled to be completed by a PRC state-owned construction company. One port and logistics consultant summarized the challenge to Singapore as it existed in January 2017:

This is a dream of a lifetime for Malaysia to eventually stop cargoes transiting through Singapore, with the generous inflow of direct investment and expertise from China now. In ten years or so, Malaysia can say bye-bye to Singapore.<sup>48</sup>

Clearly, Singapore-China issues were partly at least impacted by Malaysia-China interaction under XI Jinping in mid-2018. It was reported that China intended to invest US\$7.2 billion in Malacca, a small port city on the Strait of Malacca, which would become a new deep sea port that ultimately would draw substantial business from the Port of Singapore. A deep sea Malacca port ultimately would also provide China with significant access and input on the functioning of the Strait of Malacca. It was also reported that by 2018 China committed to import Malaysian goods worth US \$2 trillion over the coming five years, an 800% increase over 2016 imports. China was the largest importer of Malaysian goods from 2009-2017.<sup>49</sup>

The defeat of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO)-dominated Alliance and the victory of the Pakatan Harapan led by Mahathir Mohamad, who previously served as Alliance Prime Minister from 1981-2003, brought an end to Chinese economic and political expansion in Malaysia. It should be noted that there were hidden costs in the Chinese contracts which led to significant cost inflation. It was subsequently reported that the next election winners received offers to cut the cost of the High Speed Rail project by 50%.<sup>50</sup> The Malaysian intrigues are compounded by Chinese discussions with Thailand to vet a Panama-

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<sup>48</sup> Ho Wah Foon, "China Projects to Hit Singapore," *The Star*, January 15, 2017. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2017/01/15/china-projects-to-hit-singapore-the-giant-republics-aggressive-investments-in-ports-and-rail-links-i/>. See also Jonathan Lim, "The Canal That Will Sink Singapore's Maritime Trade Dominance is One Step Close to Fruition." This article further stated "If nothing falls through, the Kra Canal could be a reality in 10 years at the cost of US \$36 billion.

<sup>49</sup> "China wants this Malaysian port to rival Singapore (and that's not all)" *Today*, July 24, 2018.

<https://www.todayonline.com/world/asia/chinese-money-pouring-malaysia-could-help-najib-votes>  
<sup>50</sup> Shannon Tech, "HSR could be revived if cost is cut: Malaysia finance minister Lim Guan Eng", *The Straits Times*, July 11, 2018. <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/hsr-could-be-revived-if-cost-is-cut-guan-eng>

type canal through the Kra Isthmus—a significant economic threat to the Port of Singapore.

While Malaysia adjusts its policy toward China and Chinese investment, it is relevant to note, that three years ago, under the UMNO dominated government, which just lost power, Washington and Kuala Lumpur were discussing increased monitoring of Chinese activities in the South China Sea.<sup>51</sup>

### C. United States

Singapore continues to have close important relations with the United States in terms of investment, trade and national security. Balancing these with its China interactions is crucial for Singapore. It is noteworthy that while Singapore recognizes China's importance in Pacific Asia, security is grounded on the United States and friends maintaining a favorable power balance in Pacific Asia.

An important fact underlying the Singapore-China relationship is a military association between Singapore and the United States dating back to November 1990. That November, an agreement was reached allowing the United States access to Singapore's Paya Lebar airfield and the use of existing facilities at Sembawang port. In January 1995, Singapore announced it would build a new harbor with U.S. specifications. Subsequently, a deep-draft pier was constructed at Singapore's expense at Changi Naval Base, which now accommodates U.S. aircraft carriers, as well as naval aircraft from other countries, including China. The new deep vessel pier at Changi Naval Base includes four miles of wharf space. This has made it possible to provision and service large U.S. warships, including battle ships and aircraft carriers. A facility this large is not required by the Singapore Navy, which at that time had no ship larger than a frigate. This construction provides critical support to the U.S. Seventh Fleet.

The Commander Logistics Group, Western Pacific (COMLOG WESTPAC), was established in Singapore in 1992, providing food supplies, ordinance, fuel, and repair parts for the U.S. Seventh Fleet. The United States regularly patrols 51 million square miles of the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

The United States signed a "Strategic Framework Agreement" with Singapore in 2005. Though not a formal treaty, it allows the U.S. military

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<sup>51</sup> Josh Rogin, "Malaysia and U.S. in Talks to Ramp Up China Spying," Bloomberg, September 3, 2015. <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2015-09-03/malaysia-and-u-s-in-talks-to-ramp-up-china-spying>

(ships and aircraft) access to Singapore for repair and resupply, etc. This was the first time such an agreement was signed with a foreign country. Access by U.S. surveillance aircraft, with a focus on the South China Sea, is substantial and is a critical component of U.S. defense policy in Asia. These arrangements exist principally to traverse and monitor, hopefully, thereby restrain the PRC's sustained efforts to expand its activities in the South China Sea and Pacific Asia. An enhanced cooperation agreement was agreed upon between Singapore and the United States in 2015 as PRC activities continued to increase.

U.S. military planes for several years have made rotational deployments from Singapore's Paya Lebar Airbase. The U.S. Navy's deployment of the P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft began in December 2015. The P-8 is excellent for maritime surveillance (particularly over the South China Sea). There also have been a number of aerial incidents with Chinese forces. The P-8 has multi-mission capabilities, including over-the-horizon missile targeting and anti-submarine warfare. "The P-8's role in hunting submarines stationed on Hainan Island and in challenging Beijing's South China Sea claim" has often been talked about.<sup>52</sup>

One of the key pillars of Singapore-United States defense cooperation is joint military exercises, the largest and most well-known being the Rim of the Pacific Military Exercises (RIMPAC). As an organizational entity, RIMPAC dates back to 1971 and initially involved four nations; Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. Today, the Pacific Rim biennial exercises include up to twenty-one nations, from Europe, Latin America, Israel, Canada, to the United States. These military trainings include both sea and land exercises. The supporters of RIMPAC say the principle reason d'être is to train for war and thus ultimately prevent war.

Singapore has participated regularly in RIMPAC's biennial military exercise. During the July 2016 Exercise RIMPAC, the Singapore Military of Defense spoke with pride that Singapore was joining with assets from 25 other countries. "This is the third consecutive time RIMPAC that the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) is commanding a task unit."<sup>53</sup>

During the 2018 exercises held at Pohakuloa Training Center on Hawaii Island, land forces from Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Japan,

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<sup>52</sup> Swee Lean Collin Koh, "Viewing the U.S. Navy's P-8 Deployment to Singapore in Perspective," *Foreign Policy Journal*, December 11, 2015, p. 3. See also "497th Combat Training Squadron", <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/usaf/497cts.htm>

<sup>53</sup> MINDEF Singapore, News Release, RSN Takes on Bigger Leadership Role in Exercise RIMPAC, 17 July 2016.

Australia, South Korea, the Philippines, New Zealand, Tonga, Chile, and the United States conducted a week of war games.<sup>54</sup> China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) participated in the 2014 and 2016 exercises but, as noted, was "disinvited" in 2018 because of China's "militarization" of the South China Sea.<sup>55</sup>

Although Singapore does not have a formal defense security treaty with the United States, there is no doubt, however, that Singapore is a U.S. military ally in the quest for a shared peaceful Pacific Asia and Asia generally. As an early model of a globalized state, Singapore's policy of free trade as well as soliciting foreign investment and investing opportunities abroad means Singapore desires a peaceful and non-threatening international environment. As nearly as possible, Singapore seeks harmonious interaction with as many states as possible. The United States' presence in Pacific Asia is considered as the core of a security policy which facilitates commercial and diplomatic interaction worldwide.

However, an overt friendship policy with as many countries as feasible is one component in the objective of a peaceful Asia. A longstanding and stable military association with the United States is a cornerstone in Singapore's promotion of a peaceful order and stable interaction. Part of the strategy to achieve these goals of economic and cultural interaction is a wide range of military associations with a variety of countries. These interactions facilitate Singapore's acquisition of updates and top-tier knowledge and practices. To these ends, the Singapore government identifies eleven countries with which the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) conducts bilateral and multilateral exercises with militaries around the world:

The foreign environment often allows the SAF to conduct training at a larger scale, scope and complexity that it cannot achieve in land-scarce Singapore and enables the SAF to advance its operational capabilities and train its soldiers in a realistic and tough environment.<sup>56</sup>

The eleven states Singapore militarily interacts with individually or in groups include Australia, Brunei, China, Germany, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa, Thailand, and the USA. Singapore strategy and tactics are improved and refined and the possibility of

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<sup>54</sup> In Letman, "RIMPAC Makes Its Mark in Hawaii," *The Diplomat*, July 25, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/07/rimpac-makes-its-mark-in-hawaii/>

<sup>55</sup> Lolita C. Baldor, "James Mattis warns China over 'militarization' of South China Sea" *The Washington Times*, June 2, 2018.

<sup>56</sup> "SAF Exercise" Singapore: Ministry of Defense, June 30, 2018. <https://www.mindef.govt.sg>.

subsequent hostile confrontation is reduced. See Table 13 for a list of bilateral and multilateral defense exercises that Singapore regularly participates in.

**Table 13: Singapore Foreign Defense Exercises**

Exercise	Partner Countries
Agni Warrior	India
Airguard	Brunei
ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus Exercises	Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, the Philippines, China, Russia, South Korea, Thailand, United States, Vietnam
ASEAN-China Maritime Exercise	The Philippines, China, Thailand, Vietnam
Bersama Lima*	Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, United Kingdom
Bold Kurukshetra	India
Brightfire	South Africa
Camar Indopura	Indonesia
Chandrapura	Indonesia
Cooperation (planned for 2019)	China
Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT)	Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka Thailand
Cope Tiger	Thailand
Cobra Gold	Thailand
Daring Warrior	United States
Elang Indopura	Indonesia
Forging Sabre	United States
Green Flag East	United States
Kakadu	Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Cook Islands, Fiji, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua

	New Guinea, China, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, Tonga, United Arab Emirates, United States, Vietnam
Kocha Singa	Thailand
Lightning Strike	United States
Lion Walk/Kiwi Walk	New Zealand
Maju Bersama	Brunei
Malapura	Malaysia
Matilda	Australia
Milan	Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, New Zealand, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, Vietnam
Panzer Strike	Germany
Pitch Black	Australia, Canada, France (New Caledonia), Germany, India, Indonesia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Thailand, Malaysia, United States

*Source:* Singapore Ministry of Defence, The Straits Times, and others

\*These exercises are a component of the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), which are a series of defense relationships between Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom.

## V. CONCLUSION

Economic and political change and adaptation continues apace. The overall record of economic growth, political liberalization, leadership transition, and adaptive policies remains impressive. The continuing challenges posed by China's hegemonic policies require continual vigilance. To date, Singapore's military association and interaction with numerous governments has maintained the necessary economic and security stability. Singapore remains a model of development, both economic and political. Many current government programs and policies are worthy of adaptation by political systems around the world.

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