

**MAJOR POWERS AND SINGAPORE'S SEARCH
FOR SECURITY**

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PREFACE

India's relationship with the South-East Asian countries has been of long standing and has strong social, cultural, religious, political and economic dimensions. Malaysia and Singapore were both under British rule and their administration, security and economy were linked to India before India's independence in 1947. Singapore has some special importance for India in view of the latter's defence and security interests. The Straits of Malacca can be considered India's first line of defence and in view of this fact India, in recent years, has started a re-evaluation of her policy towards the Straits as well as the South-East Asian countries.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the policy of Singapore vis-a-vis the major powers and the Republic's appreciation of its security and economic interests in its relationship with the major powers. The regional as well as extra-regional powers figure in Singapore's strategy of inviting a major power as well as the major Indian Ocean power having definite interests in the peace of the region, is included in the study. Yet India's role, so far, is passive and based on the policy of non-involvement in power-politics which precludes her from Singapore's power-balance strategy at present. But her role and potential in near future is considered significant by Singapore as well as other world and regional powers.

The study was undertaken in the South-East Asian Division of the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University,

New Delhi, for the partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Philosophy. Before actually selecting the topic of this dissertation the author was impressed by Singapore's appreciation of the problems of small states in security, economic and political matters and by its advocacy of a new cult of small-nation diplomacy. The appeal of the Singapore leaders to take up the study of small-nation diplomacy¹ together with their advocacy of the right of the small states to adopt the balance-of-power strategy as a technique for their security and survival also impressed the author in choosing the small-nation diplomacy and Singapore's foreign policy as a subject of study.

It is my duty to express my deep regards and thanks to Professor Vishal Singh, Head of the Division of South-East Asian Studies and Chairman, Centre of South, South-East and Central Asian Studies at the School of International Studies under whose supervision this study was completed. But for his academic guidance, affectionate behaviour and sympathetic understanding of certain extra-academic problems, I could have hardly been able to complete the M.Phil. programme as well as this dissertation. My thanks and regards are also due to

1 For example S. Rajaratnam, Singapore's Foreign Minister, has observed: "Perhaps the time has now come for more systematic study of what should be considered a distinct branch of international relations -- small nation diplomacy." Quoted from The Mirror (Singapore), vol. 8, no. 29, 17 July 1972.

Prof. M. S. Agwani, the ex-Dean and Prof. Bimal Prasad, the present Dean of the School of International Studies. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude and deep regards to Shri M. Zuberi, Head of the Disarmament Division of the School of International Studies who helped me in various ways after I joined this University and who kept my interest and knowledge both alive and up to the mark in a subject dear to me -- namely, History. I also thank with due regards to Dr P. K. Das, Associate Professor in the Division of South-East Asian Studies and my teacher in M.Phil. for his kind help and guidance. My thanks and regards are also due to Mr C.D. Paliwal, Assistant Professor in the School of Languages, who taught me Bahasa Indonesia, Dr B. D. Arora, Documentation Officer of South-East Asian Affairs as well as my teacher and Shri J. N. Bhatta, Research Assistant in the South-East Asian Division as well as a respected friend. Dr S. S. Bhattacharya of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses needs special mention for the academic help to me and friendly benevolence and affection he has shown towards me.

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given to me every assistance and help in various matters but also provided a friend circle where a man can forget his agonies and worries of day-to-day life. Their contribution to my academic performance, therefore, cannot be less important and needs due acknowledgment. Other fellow students of the South-East Asian Division and especially A. Mughalib, Mohan Ram, B. K. Behra and Miss Archana need special mention for their help and co-operation during my studies.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies (London)
FEER	Far Eastern Economic Review (Hongkong)
JMBRAS	Journal of the Malayan (later Malaysian) Branch of Royal Asiatic Society (Kuala Lumpur)
JSEAH	Journal of South-East Asian History (Singapore)
JSEAS	Journal of South-East Asian Studies (Singapore)

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

Singapore, with a population of 2249900 and an area of 584.3 square kilometres, is one of the smallest nations of the world. Yet its economic growth during the last decade and the measure of stability it has achieved during this period have impressed world businessmen, multinationals, governments and policy-planners alike. Its achievements are quoted as ideal not only in the developing countries but also in the most advanced countries. Its GNP is rising speedily. It has risen to S\$12,302.1 million in 1974 from S\$6,813.3 million in 1971. Official foreign reserves have shown a spectacular increase from S\$4,094.8 million in 1971 to S\$6,502.9 million in 1974.¹ These can be rather astonishing figures for those who, after Singapore's separation from Malaysia in 1965, had opined that it would crumble economically without the Malaysian hinterland. The separate identity as a nation and the degree of political stability it has achieved was a welcome surprise for its Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew himself who had said during the United Nations Colonial Committee debate in July 1961 that the idea of a separate and independent Singapore "is a political, economic and geographical absurdity."²

1 Figures taken from Singapore-1975 (Singapore, Ministry of Culture, 1975), pp. 238 and 255.

2 Quoted from Alex Josey, Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore, 1968), p. 233.

Yet the basic factor behind Singapore's survival and such spectacular performance is geography. It is geographically located at a place where vital interests of the extra-regional powers meet and, often, merge. Whenever it is otherwise, Singapore's security and survival becomes a problem. For its very geographical position invites other eyes. The Straits of Malacca, which Singapore commands, is the most vital passage which links the Indian and Pacific Oceans and is the major channel through which east-west trade must pass. It was so even before 15 centuries. It remains so even today. Singapore's importance for the maritime powers and their stake in its independence would remain at a high level so long as the Straits of Malacca remains important for them and its security and independence is assured.) Thus, Singapore can well hope to survive as a nation up to a considerable time.

Geo-Economic Setting

Singapore is sometimes called the heart of Southeast Asia - economically, geographically and even politically. It lies 77 miles north of the Equator precisely at the point where "the monsoons meet and where the Straits of Malacca lead into the South China Sea", forming, thus "the strategic focus of the region."³

3 W. Gordon East, O. H. K. and C. A. Fisher, eds., The Changing Map of Asia: A Political Geography (London, 1971), p. 226.

Its mean annual temperature is 80°F and the annual rainfall averages 95.7 inches.⁴ It acquires the focal position as the "crossroads between two oceans and two continents" and naturally becomes "the meeting point of the local and the through shipping routes."⁵ Historically, it has inherited its position as a trading and business centre of South-East Asia and possesses "the deepest harbour and dock facilities within a thousand miles radius."⁶ With this situation it naturally becomes the linch-pin of S. E. Asia.⁷

Besides its superb geographical position its other major asset is its hard-working, highly skilled and multi-racial population. Out of its 1975 total population of 2,249,900, there were 1,712,800 Chinese, 338900 Malays, 155200 Indians and 43100 persons of other racial stocks.⁸ Thus, although numerically it has a majority of the Chinese, historically its population has inherited an immigrant zeal which bestows the people with the qualities of hard work and togetherness in extremely difficult and ever-changing circumstances. This fact paradoxically enough, has contributed to the economic development of Singapore and in its establishment as separate and independent nation.

4 Taylor, Alice, ed., Southeast Asia (Newton Abbot, 1972), p. 169.

5 W. G. East, et al, eds., n. 3, pp. 251 and 240.

6 E. H. G. Dobby, Southeast Asia (London, 1950), p. 144.

7 Ian Buchanan, Singapore in Southeast Asia (London, 1972), p. 266.

8 Singapore-1975, n. 1, pp. 222-23.

Geographically, Singapore is the centre of S. E. Asia and as Lee Kuan Yew had pointed out on 9 October 1966 in a seminar on international relations at the University of Singapore, "both the geographic and the socio-political factors make Singapore a crucial point."⁹ Singapore, like Hong Kong, is a city state and as such has no natural resources. This fact forces Singapore to play a predominant role in the regional as well as world economic activities. Its geographical position gives it a freedom of action and choice in political, social and economic matters as Lee Kuan Yew has once remarked:

We are not landlocked. We are a centre of great communications. The crossroads between the northern and southern hemispheres, between the East and the West ... all centres of great traffic become centres of great culture, learning and civilization. And it is this factor which we must exploit. (10)

Historical Interests of the Major Powers

The history of Singapore, known as Singapura and Tumasik in the past, must have actually begun with the Chola raid of A.D. 1025.) The empire of the Maharaja of Srivijaya was ^{at} its zenith at the beginning of the 11th century. It commanded the major passages of what were to be called later, the Straits of Malacca and Sunda. Moreover, it also possessed the land routes passing through the Malayan Peninsula and thus, was "absolute master of the traffic between the West and the China Sea."¹¹ The invasion of

9 Quoted from Josey, n. 2, p. 510.

10 Quoted from *ibid.*, p. 641.

11 G. Coedes, The Indianised States of Southeast Asia (Honolulu, 1968), p. 204.

Srivijaya, in 1025, by Rajendra Chola I was undertaken in view of far-reaching commercial and imperial aims.) The Cholas wanted to weaken Srivijayan hold over the land routes and to open the Straits for international commerce. The port of Kadaram or Kedah was the greatest outpost of the Srivijayan empire from where the entire commerce passing through land routes and the Straits was regulated on the terms suitable to the Maharaja.¹²

According to the Tanjore Inscription of Rajendra I, the Cholas attacked Kadaram, Madamlingam,¹³ Maliyuer,¹⁴ Ilangasoka (Langkasuka),¹⁵ Ilamuridesan, Manakkav^aoram¹⁶ and Palembang along with various other Srivijayan strongholds. Rajendra Chola's expedition was not aimed at the total destruction of the Srivijayan empire. His aim was to destroy Srivijayan authority from the Southern Malayan Peninsula in order to keep open the Straits for the passage of Indian and foreign commercial vessels engaged in trade with China. Most of the places attacked by the Cholas were situated on the main route between India and China which passed by way of

12 See R. C. Majumdar, Suvarnadwipa, II (Dacca, 1937), p. 163.

13 Tambralinga, which together with Langkasuka faced both the Straits of Malacca and the Gulf of Siam - K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Cholas (Madras, 1975), p. 217.

14 Gerini locates it "at the southern end of the Malayan Peninsula and precisely at the northern shore of the old Singapore Strait". G. E. Gerini, Researches on Ptolemy's Geography of Eastern Asia, 2nd edn. (New Delhi, 1974), pp. 533-34.

15 Lamuri of Marco Polo, later Aceh.

16 Nicobar Islands, Sastri, n. 13, p. 217.

Nicobar islands to Kedah, thence to Palembang and thence to Kwang Chou (Canton).¹⁷ After the expedition of A.D. 1025 there were continuous contacts between the Chola empire and the Chinese. In 1033 Rajendra I himself sent an embassy to the Chinese court.¹⁸

To understand the nature of the post-Chola expedition arrangements, reference should be made of the second Chola invasion of about 1067 by Vira Rajendra Chola.¹⁹ This second invasion marked the end of the Srivijayan empire. It was aimed at the establishment of Chola authority at the very heart of the Srivijayan empire, i.e., Palembang. It seems that the Straits were opened for international commerce by the Cholas in 1025,²⁰ yet the entrepot of Palembang was still the greatest meeting point of east and west and the profits derived from this entrepot trade were sufficient enough for the Maharaja to think of re-establishing his regional hegemony and to invite Chola envy. This time the Maharaja had to accept a permanent viceroy, appointed by the Chola monarch, at Palembang itself. The first viceroy was Prince

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- 17 Wang Gungwu, "The Nanhai Trade", Journal of the Malayan Branch of Royal Asiatic Society (Kuala Lumpur) vol. XXXI, 1958, p. 103.
- 18 K. A. N. Sastri, A History of South India (Madras, 1968), p. 184. Sastri here suggests that Rajendra I had sent a diplomatic mission to China in 1016. The Maharaja (of Srivijaya) had tried to obstruct the Chola intercourse with China in 1016. This perhaps became a cause of Chola attack on the Maharaja in 1025.
- 19 Sastri, n. 13, p. 332.
- 20 See J. V. Mills, "Arab and Chinese Navigators in Malaysian Waters in about A.D. 1500", JMBRAS, vol. XLVII, pt. 2, 1974, p. 7, for the resumption of Arab trade with China at about this date.

Kulottunga, who, as Rajendra Deva Kulottunga, later ruled the Chola empire for a long period of 49 years, from 1070 to 1119. His appointment at Palembang and succession, in 1070, to the Chola throne has misled many historians. Thanks to Tan Yeek Seong who, in 1964, after a careful reading and interpretation of the Canton Inscription of 1079, made it possible to readjust the broken threads of the history of various countries.²¹

According to this inscription, the Paramount Chief Ti Hua Ko-Lo, Lord of the land of San Fo-tsi, sent Chih Lo Lo as his representative for the reconstruction of a temple at Canton. Ti Hua Ka Lo was the name known to the Chinese of Rajendra Deva Kulottunga.²² Kulottunga probably retained his hold over his overseas dominions throughout his reign.²³ He must have appointed as his successor in the Far East - "The Paramount Chief" and the "Lord of the land of San Fo-Tsi" - some one who must have been a high dignitary of the Chola empire or probably a prince of royal blood.²⁴ The purpose of this viceroy at Palembang was to keep

21 Tan Yeek Seong, "The Srivijayan Inscription of Canton - A.D. 1079", Journal of South East Asian History (Singapore) vol. 5, no. 2, 1964, pp. 17-24.

22 "We learn from this inscription that Ti Hua Ko Lo was one and the same person as king Ti Hua Ka Lo of Chui Lien or Rajendra Deva Kulottunga of the Great Chola." Ibid., p. 20.

23 His inscriptions speak of costly tributes from foreign lands. See Sastri, n. 13, p. 316.

24. He was called "The Controller of the State Affairs". His headquarters were at Palembang and his daughter sent a tribute mission to China in 1082, probably after the viceroy had declared himself the sovereign of San

the trade routes open and to keep a check over the powers of Srivijaya centred at Jambi from the early 1080s. This arrangement worked well until the time when an indigenous power threatened the entire system from within and succeeded, partly, in consolidating a commercial empire. That power was Java, first under Kritanagara in the last quarter of the 13th century and then under the Majapahit empire in the 14th century. When Kritanagara sent his famous expedition in Sumatra in 1275, it was not only aimed at establishing Javanese authority over the indigenous kingdoms - chief among which was that of Jambi - but also to oust the foreign elements from Sumatra. It so happened that, at that time, the only foreign power based in Sumatra was at Palembang, firmly established there since 1067.

The history of Singapura during the medieval period was a product of these developments of 11th-13th centuries. The story regarding Sri Tribuana's departure from Palembang in the *Sejarah Melayu* should be dated at about A.D. 1275. Palembang was evacuated en masse by the foreign elements and it created a scene which the *Sejarah Melayu* has described in the following words: "So vast was the fleet that there seemed to be no counting it...." ²⁵ Although it is difficult to agree with Wolters, "that

(previous footnote contd.)

Fo-tsi in theory as well as in practice and had forced the Sailendras to transfer their capital to Jambi some time between 1079 and 1082. See Tan Yeok Seong, n. 21, p. 21. For the date of the transfer of Srivijayan Capital to Jambi, see O. W. Wolters, The Fall of Sri Vijaya in Malay History (London, 1970), p. 42.

26 Quoted from O. W. Wolters, n. 24, p. 76.

the first three rulers of Singapore were fictitious,"²⁶ we cannot accept, chronologically, the facts as reported by the author of Sejarah Malayu. For this other sources and contemporary situation must be taken into account. Raffles MS 18 (of Sejarah Malayu) clearly states that Sri Tribuana left Palembang to inspect the sea to found a city.²⁷ The author here makes one thing most clear that his mission was to "inspect the sea" for a place which would be strategically more suitable for his capital. It is also clear from this passage that Palembang had become unimportant for Sri Tribuana and to understand why Palembang lost its importance, we must examine contemporary political circumstances.

Palembang was an entrepot throughout the 12th century.²⁸ The 13th century witnessed the rise of various other entrepots and Jambi itself became a centre of trade and commerce.²⁹ The Javanese entrepots were also developed by this time.³⁰ Moreover, by 1150, China had become a sea-power; by 1178 Chinese merchant ships were going as far as India and up to Aden by A.D. 1286.³¹ The Arabs had re-started their direct trade with China from the beginning of the 11th century and during the 12th and the 13th centuries they often bypassed Palembang and took the direct route to Canton through the

26 Ibid., p. 108.

27 Ibid., p. 77.

28 G. Coedes, "The Empire of the South Seas", The Siam Society 50th Anniversary Pub., vol. II (Bangkok, 1954), p. 151.

29 By 1178 Chinese ships were visiting Lamuri and Jambi. Wolters, n. 24, pp. 42 and 78.

30 Chou Ju-kua quoted by Wolters, *ibid.*, p. 42.

31 Mills, n. 20, p. 3.

Straits of Malacca and Singapore.

These developments revealed that Palembang was no more suitable to invite international trading vessels and to keep a hold over the Straits of Malacca. The Arabs and the Chinese, by preferring the shorter and direct route, had revolutionized politico-strategical concepts of Southeast Asia. Therefore, when Sri Tribuana went to 'inspect the sea', it was in pursuance of the Chola policy which had placed high importance to the safety and command of the China route which passed through the Straits of Malacca. The attainment of that objective was no more possible now from Palembang as a base. Only a more strategically located base at the southern entrance of the Straits of Malacca could have served this purpose. Sri Tribuana went first to Bentan (in the Rhio archipelago) and then to Tumasik.³³ His course would remind us of the attempts made by Maj. Farquhar and Raffles, who, similarly, searched for a suitable base first in the Rhio archipelago and then landed at Singapura, following Sri Tribuana after nearly 550 years.

When Kritanagara started the subjugation of Sumatra in 1275 the only course open to Sri Tribuana was to retire to a suitable place from where he could better accomplish his original objective of keeping the Straits of Malacca open for Indian and foreign ships. If this would be possible, the Javanese would not

32 Ibid., pp. 8-9.

33 Wolters, n. 24, pp. 77-78. See also Swettenham, British Malaya (London, 1955), p. 13; and Marsden, William, The History of Sumatra (Kuala Lumpur, 1966), p. 327.

get the same commercial and strategical advantages which Srivijaya enjoyed nearly for three centuries and, consequently, would not become omnipotent. Sri Tribuana's landing at Tumasik and foundation of Singapura should be dated some time in 1275-76,³⁴ immediately after his departure from Palembang. After the foundation of Singapura Sri Tribuana must have recognized that for the defence of his island capital and protection of India-China trade route, possession of the southern part of the Malayan Peninsula was essential. Political situation of the Peninsula³⁵

34 Linehan (see Summary of his thesis in Wolters, n. 24, pp. 79-80), though accepting the contents of the *Sejarah Malayu*, has placed the foundation of Singapura by Sri Tribuana in A.D. 1299. This, however, does not fit in with the political situation which existed in 1299. By that time Kritanagara was already dead (in 1292) and after the Mongol attack of 1292 Java had become a scene of anarchy and civil wars. In 1299 there was no power which could have forced Sri Tribuana to evacuate Palembang. Again, our hypothesis is also based upon the fact that by 1295 Sri Tribuana had already consolidated his power in the Southern Malayan Peninsula, with his capital at Singapura, and had successfully checked the advances of the Thai king Rama Khambeng into the Malayan Peninsula which has been recorded in the Yuan-Shih thus: "In the first year of the reign of Yuan Chen (1295) ... on account of the wars between Siam and Ma-li-yu-r in the past, the Emperor gave an order that no Siamese should kill the people of Ma-li-yu-r...." Quoted from Prof. Hsu Yun-Ts'iao, "Notes on the historical position of Singapore," K. G. Tregonning, ed., *Malayan History: Papers submitted to the first International Conference of Southeast Asian Historians, Singapore, January 1961* (Singapore, 1962), p. 230. See also Coedes, n. 11, p. 202. Therefore Singapura's foundation cannot be placed later than 1275-76. See also W. Linehan, "The Kings of 14th Century Singapore", *JMBRAS*, vol. XX, pt. 2, 1947, pp. 117-27.

35 O. W. Wolters, "Tambralinga", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies (BSOAS)* (London), vol. 21, 1958, p. 600, points out that during the second half of the 13th century the power of Tambralinga was already weakened.

must have provided him ample opportunity to occupy this "no-man's land" without much difficulty and the power vacuum was filled by him by the time the Thais started their onslaught in that direction. This can be judged by the fact that, despite their constant attempts after 1280 onwards, under King Rama Khamheng, the Thais were not able to penetrate deep into the Peninsula and during Khamheng's long and successful reign of over 40 years, the Sukhotais were successful in establishing their authority only up to Nak'on Si Thammarat (Ligor).³⁶

By the last decade of the thirteenth century there must have been some Power placed in the Southern Peninsula who successfully checked Rama Khamheng's further advance deep into the Peninsula after the acquisition of Si Thammarat by the Thais. This power could not have come either from Java or Sumatra. The coming of the Javanese does not seem logically possible in view of their internal situation after 1292. That power could not have been from Sumatra, as according to Polo, the island of Sumatra (Java Minor) was divided into eight kingdoms, each having its own King,³⁷ weak and mutually hostile. This power could only have been a solid bloc of Indo-Malayan people under the leadership of Sri Tribuana. Here a most logical question can confront us. If it was Sri Tribuana who checked Thai advances into the Peninsula, this was perhaps his greatest achievement and such an adventure could have hardly missed from the narration of the

36 Wood, W. A. R., A History of Siam (Bangkok, 1924), p. 54.

37 See Ricci, Aldo, The Travels of Marco Polo, 3rd edn. (London, 1960), pp. 281-2.

genealogist who has rather exaggeratedly narrated his other more inconspicuous deeds. Here we must recognize that the genealogist was writing in 1436 and not in 1300 A.D. By 1436 the political situation of the Peninsula had undergone considerable changes and it was completely transformed by 1612 when the Raffles MS was composed by the Bendehara of Johore. The Thais had established their authority, as would be shown later, in the entire Peninsula by A.D. 1360; by 1436 they were a Power against whom a chronologist, faithful to a dynasty ruling from Peninsular Malaya, would not have dared to write anything, and by 1612, they were virtually the overlords of all the peninsular kingdoms. 38

Political circumstances, no doubt, helped Sri Tribuana in founding a kingdom which flourished soon and became an entrepot visited by the Indian, Chinese, Arab and Southeast Asian traders. Geographically, the site of his capital was situated on the great trade route and his tight control of the Straits must have provided an assurance to the merchants who flocked to the great city of Singapura with their goods and exchanged these with the products of the Peninsula and the Archipelago. Southeast Asian trade always depended on great entrepots and the absence of any great entrepot during the century preceding Malacca's foundation can well lead us to believe that Singapura had taken the place of Kedah and Palembang during the first half of the fourteenth century. It can be, however, doubted, that a place which

was hardly known to anybody before 1275 could have developed so soon. Geography shapes history and history often repeats itself. The development of Singapore, after its foundation by Raffles in 1819, within no time suggests that the main factor behind the quick development of Singapore was always its geographical location on the great trade route and at the southern entrance of the Straits of Malacca. This factor decided the shape of things, after 1275 as well as after 1819.

Sri Tribuana, after a long reign of 48 years, died in A.D. 1323.³⁹ He had well established his hold over the southern Malayan Peninsula and his island capital became an entrepot and population centre of the region.⁴⁰ Sri Tribuana's successor, Paduka Pikrama Vira, who ascended the throne after his father's death in 1323, ruled for 15 years and died in 1337. It seems that even during his reign conflict with the Thais still continued and, writing in 1350 A.D., Wang Ta-yuan had made a mention of the war between Tumasik and Siam.⁴¹ The kingdom of Malaiur and its capital Singapura (known to the Javanese as Tumasik) had attained a regional status and was considered worth occupying by the Javanese is clear from the text of 'Pararaton' which mentions it

39 The period of rule given in the Sejarah Malayu for all Singapura rulers can be accepted but should be counted after placing its date of foundation some time in 1275-76.

40 De Barros, quoted in Sir Henry Yule, The Book of Sir Marco Polo, vol. II (London, 1929), pp. 281-2.

41 See Coedes, n. 11, p. 230.

when Gajah Mada, the famous Chief Minister (Pati) of Majapahit took an oath to conquer various kingdoms including Thumasik in 1331.

From 1350 onwards Southeast Asia was in a process of falling into the domination of two opposing poles. This process was already started by Gajah Mada in the 1330 and 1340s. After 1350 Thailand again became an expansionist power. The Thais wanted to acquire a command of the northern shores of the Straits of Malacca so that they could compete and bargain on equal terms with the Javanese whenever the question of reviving a Sri Vijayan-type hegemony came to the political forefront. Their aim, at least during the reign of Rama Tibodi (1350-69) was the extension of their flag as far as possible, for they, and the Javanese too, well understood the polarization trend of Southeast Asia under these two powers.)

By A.D. 1360 Rama Tibodi had conquered Malayan peninsula as far as Ujong Tanah (Johore) and Malaka.⁴² Although Malacca was not founded by this time it can be accepted that by the year 1360 Thai forces had completely taken the mastery of the Peninsula, driving the ruler of Singapura to take shelter in his island capital. By 1360 what the fourth descendent of Sri Tribuana, Sri Maharaja - who had ascended the throne in 1351 - possessed was only his island capital of Singapura and that fortress, due to its sound defences⁴³ withstood all the pressures of the invading Thai forces.

42 This is according to the 'Kot Monthieraban' or Palatine Law of Siam. Gerini, n. 14, pp. 531-32; Majumdar, n. 12, p. 381.

43 See Coedes, n. 11, p. 230 who records contemporary evidence regarding Singapura's fortifications and defences.

It was perhaps immediately after the fall of Singapura's Peninsular possessions to the Thais that Singapura acknowledged Majapahit overlordship. After the conquest of the Peninsula up to Johore by the Thais, Singapura had lost any hope of its defence and the only way out was to accept the status of vassal to ^aMajor Power that was situated far away and could not have imposed any harsh terms on Singapura due to its distance. Vassalage, for Singapura, then, meant big-power alliance and a guarantee, in effect, of its survival and security. The enemy had reached its gates and they had forced it to embrace Majapahit system as there could have been no other alternative for its survival.

Singapura in 1360, survived by accepting a major power guarantee. But here was the complete transformation of the policy it had hitherto followed. Its foundation was a result of the consistent need of the immigrant population and its home base to keep the straits open for international commerce. But by the year 1360 the basic objective of Singapura's separate identity had lost its ground, and that too in India, not in Southeast Asia. Southern India had gone under Muhammadan domination, and a powerful Sultanate (the Behmani Sultanate) was founded there. Singapura dynasty had lost its purpose and now its own survival became the primary interest of its rulers rather than the maintenance of Chola policy overseas or protection of Indian commercial and imperial interests. Their imperial mission in Southeast Asia was over. They knew well that there would be no Rajendras or Kulottangas coming to their aid. They had now become an indigenous power and with the realization

of this they immediately became a tiny principality compared to which both Siam and Majapahit were far superior powers. Their continued existence and survival always needed a backing from outside, a base across the seas.

Majapahit must have recognized Singapura as its vassal almost immediately, although knowing well that it would hardly be possible to defend it from any Siamese attack. Siam controlled the Peninsula as far as Johore and defence of Singapura against Siam, in that situation was impossible. Javanese motive, here, was to establish a test case for their command of the Straits. If it commanded Singapura and Sumatra it would acquire a legal claim over the southern entrance of the Straits. There could, in future, be established a Majapahit base at the tip of the Peninsula and then the ouster of Siam, at some suitable opportunity in the future, from the Peninsula would come within the technical competence of Majapahit. Siam, perhaps immediately, realized the far-reaching consequences of the Javanese policy and for the protection of her imperial interests final acquisition of Singapura became essential for her. The action was not delayed, as it was given highest priority, and in 1363 Siam finally attacked and occupied Singapura.⁴⁴

Thus ended the glorious attempt of an immigrant population who, under Sri Tribuana, had established a nation of migrants.

44 Again according to the length of reigns given in the Sejarah Melayu for Singapura's fourth ruler Sri Maharaja who ruled for 12 years and if he ascended throne in 1351 his rule ended in 1363.

Its population comprised of Indians, Chinese, Malays of the Peninsula as well as of Malayu-Jambi and people of the archipelago. It flourished due to its geographical location on the great trade route. Definite evidence of its flourishing trade and its being a meeting point of east and west can be gathered from various sources. The Chinese and the Imperial Court of China referred to it as Ma-liyu-R and Polo has also used the same word to describe it.⁴⁵ Although Singapura never sent any tributary mission to China, the Chinese knew about it and respected its sovereignty and directed the Siamese not to wage war against it.⁴⁶ Perhaps during the Yuan period there was no need of sending a tributary mission to China as the Mongols favoured private trading and Singapura's quick rise as a trading centre can also be attributed to the open door policy of the Yuan emperors. The presence of the Chinese and the Chinese merchants in Singapura has been accepted almost from its foundation.⁴⁷ The Arabs knew it by its very name Singapura and also as Singapur.⁴⁸

The Thai attack of 1363 had not destroyed Singapura city and its port and an administrator was perhaps appointed there. What happened to the ruling Singapura king, Sri Maharaja, cannot be ascertained positively. But some of his family members, including

45 Hsu Yun, Tsiao, "Singapore in the Remote Past", JMBRAS, vol. XLV, pt. 1, January 1973, p. 2.

46 Hsu Yun Ts'iao, n. 34, p. 230.

47 See Wolters, n. 24, p. 49.

48 See B. F. Colless, "The Ancient History of Singapore", JSEAH, vol. X, pt. 1, 1969, pp. 5-7.

49 See Mills, n. 20, pp. 25, 31 and 55.

Prince Parameswara, survived and made their escape to the neighbouring islands. As this dynasty had recently acknowledged Majapahit suzerainty, their destination, obviously, became Java. Parameswara hoped for a suitable compensation when he arrived at the Majapahit court. He was a young man of 19 years at that time and must have been given a welcome by the court. ⁵⁰

(It seems that the Portuguese, coming after 150 years have picked up the story from here. D'Albuquerque's son and Tom Pires ⁵¹ both mention that Parameswara had married a Javanese princess. It can be accepted that a Majapahit princess was married to him and then he was appointed to rule over Palembang as a vassal of Majapahit. Palembang was previously ruled by his ancestors and his appointment there indicates that the Javanese thought that they would thus establish a legal claim of overlordship, both over Palembang and Tumasik. The fall of the Yuan dynasty and the foundation of the Ming dynasty by T'ai tsu (1368-98) again changed the political climate of Southeast Asia. The Ming emperors revived the policy of tributary trade and this news "carried the promise of returning prosperity under the auspices of an overlord

50 Sir Winstedt has suggested that Parameswara was born in 1344 and died at the age of 80, in 1424. R. O. Winstedt, "The Malay Founder of Medieval Malacca," SSOAS, vol. XII, no. 2, 1948, pp. 726-39. Also see, "Malay Rulers of Malacca", Malaya in History (Kuala Lumpur), vol. VII, no. 2, July 1962, p. 6.

51 See Coedes, n. 11, p. 245; and Winstedt, n. 50, p. 728.

in Jambi or Palembang." ⁵² Parameswara must have taken this opportunity to shake-off his dependence of Majapahit and establish his independent kingdom at Palembang. It was on account of the existing political conditions in Sumatra, a change in the Chinese imperial policy under the Mings, downfall of Siamese power after the death of Rama Tibodi in 1369 and his desire to satisfy the feelings of his large Chinese subjects that Parameswara decided to send an embassy to the Chinese court in the year 1374 from Palembang. ⁵³

This action of Parameswara angered the Javanese. He was their vassal and they considered his embassy to China as an act aimed at repudiating their claims not only from Tumasik and Malaiur but also from Palembang. So it was, that in the same year or next year (1375) the Javanese probably attacked Palembang and expelled Parameswara. After this expedition they claimed the overlordship of the whole of Sumatra and when the Chinese emperor sent a mission to grant investiture to the king of Malayu-Jambi in 1377, it was way-laid by the Javanese and all its members were killed by them. ⁵⁴

52 Wolters, n. 24, p. 48.

53 This mission remained in the Chinese court from 8 October to 4 November 1374. The mission was well equipped with interpreters who must have been the Chinese residents of Palembang. See *ibid.*, pp. 57-58. Wilkinson and Linehan saw a possibility that the toponym 'Tamasek' was incorporated in the style of this ruler who is described, by the Ming Shih as 'Tan-na-lai-sha-na-a-chih.' For their views see *ibid.*, p. 79.

54 *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

He came to Tumasik with his ships. Thai power had declined after the death of Rama Tibodi and the country was in the grip of a bitter civil war.⁵⁵ By some trick or direct assault he captured Singapura and murdered the Sang Aji, a representative of the Thai King there.⁵⁶

After the reacquisition of Singapura Parameswara was not allowed to rest by his enemy, the Majapahit emperor. Hayam Wuruk Majapahit emperor had recognized a potential enemy in him and since the Javanese were the supreme naval power at that time they attacked Singapura and expelled Parameswara from there in about A.D. 1378.⁵⁷

55 Wood, n. 36, pp. 69-77.

56 Winstedt, n. 50, p. 727.

57 Linehan (quoted by Wolters, p. 79) has accepted that the Javanese attacked Singapura in 1375-76. If the expulsion of Parameswara from Palembang is placed at about 1375, it is quite reasonable to believe that he occupied Singapura in 1376. According to the Sejarah Melayu he ruled at Singapura for 3 years and was expelled by the Javanese from that city. D'Albuquerque's son attributes his expulsion from Singapura to the chief of Patani (Majumdar, n. 12, p. 385) and Tom Pires, ascribing him 5 years' rule at Singapura, writes that he was expelled from that place by Siam (Winstedt, n. 50, p. 727). Under the above mentioned political circumstances his expulsion from Singapura by the Javanese would be more acceptable. Javanese were certainly more powerful than the Siamese in 1379-80, and they had a grievance against Parameswara. 1379-80 were the years when they were establishing their authority and overlordship in the archipelago and South-east Asian waters and were defying even the Chinese emperor. As Parameswara was a rebel against the imperial power of Java, punishment to him must have been regarded as an urgent task to discourage other similar rebellions and the action against him must have been

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This time the Javanese completely destroyed his capital so that the treatment would serve as an example to other vassals. After more than a decade of wandering, Parameswara, in about 1392-93, settled at a place which later became known as Malacca and was recognized as an independent kingdom by the Chinese in 1403.⁵⁸

Thus ended Singapura's existence and separate identity after a brilliant survival for more than a century. It was located at the best geographical position in Southeast Asia and so witnessed survival for such a long period. It flourished under a power-vacuum and defended itself against its enemies due to its command of the Southern Peninsula. But when the polarization of Southeast Asia under Siam and Majapahit started, its survival was impossible without accepting any one system. Though it embraced Majapahit system, the loss of its hold over the Peninsula could not have enabled it to survive for a long time against a southern invader. By embracing Siamese system it would have lost its theoretical as well as practical independence due to the presence

(previous footnote contd.)

taken at its earliest. So, the version of the Sejarah Malayu that he ruled at Singapura for 3 years and was expelled by the Javanese should be accepted.

58 Historians have accepted the date of Malacca's foundation from the year in which the Chinese accorded recognition to it. This question has been scholarly dealt by Professor Wang Gungwu in his article "Malacca in 1403", Malaya in History, vol. VII, no. 2, July 1962, pp. 1-5. On the evidences given by him Malacca's foundation must be placed a decade earlier than A.D. 1403.

of the Siamese forces across the Johore Straits. It could have flourished and survived in a system which was not guided from within the region. But in those days extra-regional powers were made uninfluential due to their geographical distances. The presence of Chola navy or later, Mongol navy, and the continual interests of these two powers in the safety and continuity of international trade were the only factors which shaped the destinies of Southeast Asian small states and protected them from bigger neighbours. But this was possible only after the dismemberment of Sri Vijaya by the Cholas and before the rise of Majapahit and Thai empires. The Chola power and the Mongol power succeeded in breaking the continuous era of hegemonies for only about three centuries (i.e., from 1025 to about 1350). Yet they failed to change the commercial and political trend of Southeast Asia. Southeast Asian history is a history of great commercial and political hegemonies - Sri Vijaya, Majapahit, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British - all acted in the same direction.

Chapter II

SINGAPORE: THE BASTION OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE AND OFFENCE

Chapter II

SINGAPORE: THE BASTION OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE AND OFFENCE

The foundation of Singapore by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles was undertaken mainly due to the major power rivalry in the Orient. Its another reason was the importance of the China trade route for Great Britain and the need for its protection.

The European Triangle

During the second half of the 18th century, for commercial and strategical reasons, the Britishers repeatedly tried to acquire a forward base east of the Bay of Bengal. The command of the Bengal, Corommandal and Malabar Coasts was maintained from the fortified British bases of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. Yet French power in the Orient was not broken despite the command of these bases by the British. Mauritius (Ile de France), Bourbon, Madagascar, Mahe - all located on India's route from Europe - were in the French hands and the Britishers were never allowed rest in India until the French stayed on in these strongholds. From 1687 onwards the French had recognized the importance of bases to the east of the Bay of Bengal. In 1687 a French fleet was sent to occupy Mergui, on the Tenasserim coast of Burma, which was considered "vital for French trade with the Corommandal coast in particular and India in general...."¹ Mergui and Acheh were the ports from where the French continuously harassed the British in India and often threatened Calcutta.

1 D. G. E. Hall, A History of Southeast Asia (London, 1964), pp. 345-6.

Orient and they also had their bases in the Indian Ocean. Their most important base was the Cape of Good Hope which was considered as the Gibraltar of India.² Their another base in the Indian Ocean was Trincomalee in Ceylon which held "the Bay of Bengal at its mercy" and afforded "every facility of overawing and controlling the navigation of the Straits of Sunda and Malacca."³ Batavia was their most forward base in the extreme East from where they commanded the trade routes to China and the trade itself.

Up to the end of the 18th century the British were not the masters of the Indian Ocean. They had become a territorial power in India but their communication lanes with Europe were in the hands of their rivals, the French and the Dutch. India was the pivot of Great Britain's policy in the Orient. Their growing interests in the China trade were a supplementary development of their superior position in the sub-continent and also due to their concern for the defence of India which might well have jeopardized if any other European power succeeded in monopolizing the China trade.

Strategically, the British always viewed their China connection with the defence of India. Trade, of course, was a factor. But it was not less important for them that no other power should command the Eastern sea lanes connecting the Indian

2 Gerald S. Graham, *Great Britain in the Indian Ocean: A Study of Maritime Enterprise 1810-1850* (London, 1967), p. 24.

3 Lord Macartney to Dundas, 10 July 1797, quoted from *ibid.*, p. 26.

Ocean with the South China Sea. If this happened they would not only lose their China trade but also India's defences would then become a two-front affair.

(The foundation of Singapore was a by-product of the British command of the Indian Ocean. This command was gained, unexpectedly, by Great Britain during the Napoleonic wars.) By 1810 she had occupied the Cape, Ceylon and Mauritius and retained these after the Peace Treaties. With these she became master of the Europe-India-China trade route and the Indian Ocean truly became a British lake. With these the British felt themselves secure in India and in the Indian Ocean and only then their attention was diverted in the direction of monopolizing the India-China trade by acquiring strategically located bases on that route.⁴

(The occupation of Penang (1786) was the only isolated British venture in this direction throughout the 18th century.) Before 1763 the British had little or no trade with the East Indies and very little with China.⁵ Bencoolen, occupied in 1685, was the

4 See Nicholas Tarling, "British Policy in the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago, 1824-1871", JMBRAS, vol. 30, pt. 3, 1957, p. 1. Prof. Graham has neatly summed up the theme of British policy in the Eastern Seas: "India was the heart of the British empire. All eastern sea lanes led to the subcontinent that had become in two centuries the strategic centre of a commercial network that covered the whole Indian Ocean and the South China Sea." Graham, n. 2, p. 16.

5 John Bastin, "Historical Sketch of Penang in 1794", JMBRAS, vol. 32, pt. 1, 1959, p. 5.

only British outpost in West Sumatra utterly useless to give them any advantage in the East Indies or China trade. The foundation of a British settlement at Penang was undertaken mainly due to strategical reasons.⁶ The decision to acquire some base in the vicinity of South-East Asia was taken in 1767 by the Court of Directors. Within 20 years of this crucial decision attempts were made to establish a base at various places, i.e., "Acheh and Kedah in 1772, Balambangan in 1773, Cochin China in 1778, Rhio in 1784 and finally at Penang in 1786".⁷ Long before Penang was occupied strategists had given top priority to some post in the archipelago of Rhio from where a control of the Malacca straits could be assured, China trade route could be protected and which could be made a nucleus of an empire to be extended in the archipelago and the Malayan Peninsula.⁸ Francis Light had described Rhio as "the key to the Straits of Malacca" and it was only after the failure of Forrest's mission of Rhio in 1785 that Penang was occupied as a second choice.⁹

6 See H. P. Clodd, Malaya's First British Pioneer: The Life of Francis Light (London, 1948), pp. 4-5.

7 K. C. Tregonning, The British in Malaya: The First Forty Years, 1786-1826 (Tucson, 1965), p. 6.

8 Francis Light to Andrew Ross, 1 February 1769. Quoted in S. N. Dasgupta, "Captain Forrest in Rhio", Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 16th session, Waltair, 1953, p. 315.

9 Nicolas Tarling, Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Malay World, 1780-1824 (Sydney, 1962), p. 13.

Even Acheh was given priority to Penang for a base and in 1781, 1782 and 1784 the Bengal Government had unsuccessfully tried to acquire a settlement there.¹⁰ When Penang was occupied the Directors made it clear that it could not serve the purpose of a naval base needed for the protection of the Bay of Bengal.¹¹ For this Acheh and Andaman both were preferred as these could have given the Royal Navy greater mobility to extend British authority in the West coast of Sumatra and thence to the entire island, commanding, ultimately, the southern shores of the Straits of Malacca. Secondly, Andaman was favoured because of its proximity to Bengal.¹²

Penang, as Raffles later remarked, was "outside the gates"¹³ of the Dutch Eastern empire and the French could have easily outflanked it from their possible bases at Acheh and Mergui. Yet in 1795, Major Kyd's report favoured a naval station at Penang rather than at Andaman.¹⁴ Therefore, in 1802, the First Lord of Admiralty, Lord St. Vincent, laid down a plan for "making the island a naval arsenal for the building and repairing of His Majesty's ships."¹⁵ In 1805 it was constituted as a separate Presidency of India (fourth,

10 S. N. Das Gupta, "Some Aspects of the History of Penang from 1786 to 1805", Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 9th sess., Patna, 1946, p. 346.

11 Hall, n. 1, p. 468.

12 Bastin, n. 5, p. 7.

13 Hall, n. 1, p. 468.

14 Bastin, n. 5, p. 7.

15 Das Gupta, n. 10, p. 344.

after Calcutta, Madras and Bombay) to prepare its way to become the Bombay of the East. In the same year the British Eastern Fleet was divided into two parts, one based at Bombay and the other at Penang.¹⁶ Yet in the end, the scheme was abandoned and all material was transferred to Trincomalee in 1812.¹⁷

(The proposal of Lord St. Vincent of 1802, to build a naval base at Penang opens a new phase in the British oriental policy. Thenceforth, the Straits of Malacca became a vital passage for Great Britain and its defence was considered essential for British imperial and commercial interests in the Orient.) The choice of Trincomalee, in 1812, only meant that from Trincomalee India's defences could be more assuredly guaranteed than from Penang. It also meant that the hold over the Straits of Malacca could be maintained from Trincomalee. This choice implied that the defence of the Straits was also of the utmost importance for the British, only secondly to the defence of India proper. For that reason a base was favoured at Trincomalee and not at the Cape or Mauritius or Bourbon or Mahe all of which could have given the British a greater control over the entrance of the Indian Ocean and, hence, a decisive advantage over their rivals in Europe as well as in the East.

16 M. Stubbs Brown, "The Failure of Penang as a Naval Base and Ship-building Centre", JMBRAS, vol. 32, pt. 1, 1959, p. 28.

17 Ibid., pp. 32a-32b.

The need for a base from where to command the Straits of Malacca was already accepted by the year 1802 and the diplomatic developments of the years between 1805 and 1818 ultimately left the British with no alternative other than the foundation of Singapore. Raffles' action of January 1819 was upheld and Singapore was retained by the Directors for strategical reasons which related to its commanding position at the southern entrance of the Straits of Malacca rather than its entrepot role in Southeast Asia which it later acquired.¹⁸ Singapore was the British answer to the demands by which they were being confronted due to the major power rivalry in the Orient.

(Although the Dutch were directly responsible for the foundation of Singapore yet they were not the main power feared by the British at that time. In fact, the Kingdom of Netherlands, as it existed after the Congress of Vienna, was a product of British policy and protection¹⁹ rather than any source of trouble and fear. She adopted, immediately after Vienna, an anti-British commercial policy forced upon her by the legacies of the Napoleonic wars and the Vienna settlement itself.²⁰ In 1818 the British were not so much concerned about the power of the Dutch or that of the French but about another rising power of the Western Hemisphere, the United States, which, until 1776, were British colonies.

18 Tarling, n. 9, p. 146.

19 Graham, n. 2, p. 335; and Tregonning, n. 7, p. 146.

20 Harry J. Marks, The First Contest for Singapore, 1819-24 (The Hague, 1959), pp. 7-8.

The American Connection

The fact that the US fought its war of independence in alliance with France remained a decisive element in the formation of British foreign policy in general. Although President Washington had issued his famous Proclamation of Neutrality on 22 April 1793 towards the Anglo-French war in Europe, American attitude generally favoured revolutionary France against monarchical forces of Great Britain.²¹ The Directory of Paris had terminated on 2 July 1796, the Franco-US alliance of 6 February 1778, to show its anger towards the Anglo-US Treaty of 19 November 1794 (also known as the Jay Treaty). Yet the relations between the US and France strengthened after the ascendancy of Napoleon to power who, by a Treaty of 30 April 1803, agreed to transfer Louisiana to the U.S.²²

The US had threatened to break the commercial monopoly of Great Britain in the Orient. Moreover its commercial policy was aimed at undermining the political authority of Great Britain in this area. When the Empress of China - the First American vessel to go to the Chinese port of Canton - returned from her voyage on 12 May 1785, James Madison - who later became US President - wrote from Boston: "Most of the American merchants here are of the opinion that this commerce can be carried on, on better terms from America than Europe, and that we may be able not only

21 R. B. Howat, The Diplomatic Relations of Great Britain and the United States (London, 1925), p. 30.

22 Ibid., pp. 32-33.

to supply our own wants but to smuggle a very considerable quantity to the West Indies.²³ The Americans had immediately realized that China tea trade would become the most coveted commercial enterprise within no time and they entered it with so much zeal that by the end of the first decade of the 19th century they emerged as the strongest and only competitor of the Britishers in bringing tea from China. Table I would show that their growth in this field was sufficient to cause genuine worry to the officials of the East India Company. The tea which they imported from China was more than they actually needed for their home-markets. The surplus was smuggled to the West Indies and Britain's European enemies, thus, undermining Britain's commercial as well as political and strategical interests.

The Americans were more interested in trade with the East Indies and India than with China proper. This was because of the proximity of these areas as their route to the Orient passed through the Cape thence to India thence to Canton through the Straits of Sunda.²⁴ The presence of the American ships in the Indian Ocean and South East Asian waters naturally worried the British. The US activities in the Indian Ocean during the years 1790 to 1818 bear the mark of commercial as well as political encroachment. It was the beginning of a new kind of imperialism which took its definite shape in the later half of the 19th

23 Quoted from Tyler Dennett, Americans in Eastern Asia (New York, 1922), p. 7.

24 See Graham, n. 2, pp. 19 and 21.

Table I

American, British and Continental Clearances
of Ships Exporting Tea at Canton²⁵

Season	American ships	British ships	Continental ships
1799-1800	18	14	4
1800-1	23	17	7
1801-2	31	25	1
1802-3	20	38	12
1803-4	13	44	2
1804-5	31	38	3
1805-6	37	49	4
1806-7	27	58	2
1807-8	31	51	2
1808-9	6	54	None
1809-10	29	40	None
1810-11	12	34	None
Total 12	278	562	37

²⁵ Quoted from Dennet, n. 23, p. 45.

26
 century. They had followed the practice of European nations in monopolizing trades of the Asian ports. (Sumatra soon became the sphere of American traders and "in the spring of 1803 there were 21 American vessels on the north-east coast of Sumatra after pepper. The Americans came to have practically a monopoly. In 1820 it was asserted that the Americans were sending 40 vessels, of about 200 tons each, to Sumatra annually."²⁷ The US Government appointed consuls at every important Indian and South East Asian port. They preferred to deal directly with the native rulers rather than through the European powers who were the *de facto* sovereigns of these regions.²⁸ Captain O'Donnell had asked for authority to negotiate trade agreements with "the principal independent powers of Asia" which he named as "Tippo Saib (of Maysor), the Marattas of the coast of Malabar, the King of Acheea in Sumatra, and the Malay King of Ternati."²⁹

(Thus, it can be seen that the Americans had envisaged a political role for the US in the Orient right from their first contacts with Asia.) So long as they came through the Atlantic and the Cape, they could have been effectively checked by the Britishers before they entered the Indian Ocean. But they might choose another route - the route through the Pacific and the

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- 26 See James W. Gould, "American Imperialism in Southeast Asia before 1898", *JSEAS*, vol. 3, no. 2, September 1972, pp. 306-14.
- 27 T. Dennett, n. 23, p. 31.
- 28 Ronald Spector, "The American Image of Southeast Asia, 1790-1866; A Preliminary Assessment", *JSEAS*, vol. 3, no. 2, September 1972, p. 303.
- 29 T. Dennett, n. 23, p. 28.

Straits of Malacca - for India. This prospect must have bothered the British and Singapore was the most effective solution of this problem.³⁰ Although the US policy was usually that of non-interference in the domestic affairs of Asian states, it was always prepared to protect and uphold its rights even by force whenever required. During the Anglo-American war of 1812-14 the US Government had sent the "Essex" under Captain David Porter³¹ to the Pacific in November 1812. Even before that, in 1800, the same frigate was sent to the Straits of Sunda "against British deprivations of American trade in Southeast Asia" while in 1815 the warship "Peacock" was sent into these waters which indulged in a skirmish with the ships of the Royal Navy in the Javanese harbour³² of Anjer.

Subsequent events prove that Great Britain feared US presence in the Pacific Ocean. The attempts of Great Britain to check the US from occupying Texas and California in the first half³³ of the 19th century were connected with these fears of Britain.

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- 30 Although the West Coast of the US was not yet opened but trend towards it was already started. The voyage from Europe to the Straits of Malacca and Suma was about 90 days, from the West Coast of the US it was only half that time. See Graham, n. 2, p. 21.
- 31 See Allan S. Cole, "Captain David Porter's Proposed Expedition to the Pacific and Japan 1815", The Pacific Historical Review (Los Angeles), vol. IX, 1940, pp. 61-65.
- 32 Gould, J. W., Article, n. 26, p. 307.
- 33 See Norman A. Graebner, "American Interests in California, 1845", The Pacific Historical Review, vol. VI, 1942, pp. 13-27.

The foundation of Singapore at the southern entrance of the Straits of Malacca was meant to hold these straits for ever in British hands not against any European power coming through the Indian Ocean but against any power - the US, Russia or Japan later - coming from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean and thus it was essentially an act undertaken in view of strengthening India's defences in case of any attack coming from the Pacific side.

HAFFLES AND HIS POLITICAL CHILD

Thomas Stamford Raffles was an unknown company official until 1811, when he was appointed Lt. Governor of Java by Lord Minto, the Governor General of India. He held this post from the 18th September 1811 to the 11th March 1816. He always remained a problem child for the Directors of the Company but "had it not been for his determined disobedience to orders in all human probability the Malay Peninsula would have become a Dutch Colony."³⁴ He was relieved from his post at Java when it was returned to the Dutch under the Anglo-Dutch Convention of 13 August 1814. He spent two years in England and returned to Bencoolen on 22 March 1818, as its Lt. Governor.

After his return he complained of the Dutch monopolistic attitude and their acts of exclusion of British commerce from the East Indies. He visualized a "line of stations", starting at Aceh, Western Borneo, Rhio, as a necessary safeguard to British

34 L. A. Mills, "British Malaya, 1824-67", JMBRAS, vol. 33, pt. 3, 1960, p. 60.

commercial interests. "The Dutch," he wrote, "possessed the only passes through which ships must sail into the Archipelago, the Straits of Sunda and Malacca, and the British have not an inch of ground to stand upon between the Cape of Good Hope and China, not a single friendly port at which they can water and obtain refreshment."³⁵ By the end of October 1818, he had already convinced the Governor-General Lord Hastings, who, in his memorandum of 25 October wrote that the Dutch commanded both the Straits of Sunda and Malacca and "not only our trade with the Eastern Islands, but our commerce with China is thus at their mercy" and to secure that, he desired the command of the Straits³⁶ of Malacca and Singapore by the British. Raffles received his formal instructions on 28 November 1818 which said:

... it appears to the G.C. in Council to be an object of essential importance to our political and commercial interests, to secure the free passage of the Straits of Malacca, the only channel left to us ... but the most material point to attain, and that which will indeed constitute the only effectual means of accomplishing the object of securing a free passage, is the establishment of a station beyond Malacca, such as may command the southern entrance of those straits. (37)

Even before these instructions the British had tried to establish their authority somewhere at the southern entrance of the Straits of Malacca. Major William Farquhar, the Resident of

35 To William Ramsey, 14 April 1818, quoted from C. E. Wurtzburg, Raffles of the Eastern Isles (London, 1954), p. 433.

36 Farling, n.9, p. 91.

37 Quoted from Marks, n. 20, p. 31.

Malacca, had signed treaties with Rhio and Siack (Sri Indrapura) on 19 August and 31 August respectively. ³⁸ In the Malay Peninsula too the British had tried to establish their control and treaties were signed with Perak and Selangor in July-August 1818. ³⁹ But by the end of November 1818 the Dutch had denounced all British treaties asserting Dutch superiority at all these places. The mission of Raffles was thus the last attempt taken up by the British to keep the Straits of Malacca open for their commerce. Sailing from Calcutta on 7 December 1818 Raffles arrived at Penang wherefrom he took Maj. Farquhar with him. The Dutch were closely watching his moves in the Straits of Malacca. Bannermen, the Governor of Penang, had already informed him about the Dutch re-establishment at Rhio and this left Raffles with no other alternative but to negotiate with the Sultan of Johore. ⁴⁰ ⁴¹

Raffles knew about the previous history of Singapore and also about its strategical importance long before his arrival there, as he himself has confessed: "But for my Malay studies I should hardly have known that such a place existed: not only the European but the Indian world was also ignorant of it." ⁴² He must

38 Ibid., pp. 22-23.

39 Ibid., pp. 21-22.

40 Trengonning, n. 7, p. 149.

41 His orders of December 5, 1818 said: "In the event of previous occupation of Rhio by the Dutch ... it might be expedient to establish a connection with the Sultan of Johore", Quoted from Marks, n. 20, p. 32.

42 To Col. Addenbrooke, 10 June 1819, quoted from Graham, n. 2, p. 341.

have studied about the history and location of this island while working on his history of Java.⁴³ Yet Singapore was founded because "Raffles had no simple alternative to play with. The decisive factor in the choice of Singapore was the Dutch occupation of Riau."⁴⁴

When Raffles landed at Singapore on 29 January 1819, he found there only "two or three small huts near the Temenggong's house" and "two or three huts of the sea Gypsies, the Orang Laut".⁴⁵ His treaty with the Temenggong, signed on 30 January gave him the right to build a factor⁴⁶ at Singapore. The Treaty of 6 February signed between Raffles and Tengku Long, Sultan Husain Shah, gave the de jure sovereignty over the island to the British.⁴⁷

As Raffles had expected, for more than four years the contest over Singapore was in full swing between Great Britain and the Netherlands. The East India Company received the island in full sovereignty by the treaty of 17 March 1824.⁴⁸ Singapore was

43 See H. J. Marks, n. 20, pp. 36-37.

44 Graham, n. 2, p. 341.

45 Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, The Hikayat Abdullah, A. H. Hill trans. (Hongkong, 1970), p. 144. Abdullah, wrongly, has mentioned that Maj. Farquhar, and not Raffles, landed at Singapore on 29 January.

46 See details in Marks, n. 20, p. 41.

47 Abdullah, n. 45, pp. 154-7. See Marks, n. 20, p. 42 for details of the Treaty.

48 Marks, n. 20, p. 255.

kept by the British due to the personal interest taken by the Foreign Secretary, Canning, in its retention.⁴⁹ The Anglo-Dutch negotiations between 1820 and 1824 show that the British were determined to keep Singapore. The Dutch, as Irwin notes, at these negotiations "used Singapore more as a bargaining point than as a battle cry." As a result, the British "were not pressed as closely as they expected about (their) title to Singapore."⁵⁰

Singapore: The Fulcrum of British Power in the East

The British were convinced of the strategical and commercial value of Singapore. In June 1819, Raffles wrote: "It is by far the most important station in the East, and, as far as naval superiority and our commercial interests are concerned, of much higher value than whole continents of territory."⁵¹ In the same month he wrote: "...it is a child of my own--our object is not territory, but trade; a great commercial emporium and a fulcrum, whence we may extend our influence politically as circumstances may hereafter require."⁵² "Singapore", he wrote, "is everything we could desire ... with this station along I would undertake to counteract all the plans of Mynheer; it breaks the

49 Emily Hahn, Raffles of Singapore (New York, 1946), p. 511.

50 G. Irwin, Nineteenth Century Journal, p. 61, quoted from Tregonning, n. 7, p. 163.

51 Quoted from Graham, n. 2, p. 343.

52 To Col. Addenbrooke, quoted from Emily Hahn, n. 49, p. 472.

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ties." ⁵⁷ Singapore was well placed for British naval operations into the Chinese waters from that place. Moreover, some thought was also given to "the possible utility of Singapore as a port of trade with the Chinese, should the British be driven from Canton; a revival of the 18th century idea of a base for Chinese trade not in China." ⁵⁸

(Raffles' policy of free trade, though originated from ⁵⁹ the political motive of destroying Dutch monopoly, made Singapore the greatest free port in the Indian Ocean and "the fulcrum of British power Eastward of India." ⁶⁰ The Dutch commercial monopoly could have been broken through commercial activities only. Singapore was "convenient to three great areas of trade", namely ⁶¹ the Archipelago, the Malay Peninsula and Indo-China. As a matter of fact, "commercially, it was in a position to blanket Java, it was also a springboard for the further penetration of Southeast Asia. In fact, Singapore was to exert a far greater influence on the navigation of the China Sea and the eastern Indian Ocean than ⁶² Malta ever exercised on the trade of the Levant." Singapore was

57 Herbert J. Wood, "England, China and the Napoleonic Wars", The Pacific Historical Review, vol. IX, 1940, p. 140.

58 Tregonning, n. 7, p. 171.

59 John Bastin, The Native Policies of Sir Stamford Raffles in Java and Sumatra: An Economic Interpretation (Oxford, 1957), p. 139. Also Tregonning, n. 7, pp. 153-4.

60 Graham, n. 2, p. 342.

61 Tregonning, n. 7, pp. 154-5.

62 Graham, n. 2, pp. 342, 343.

spell; and they are no longer the exclusive sovereigns of the Eastern seas." "What Malacca is in the West that may Singapore become in the East."⁵³ The Calcutta journal wrote on 19 March 1819, rejoicing about Singapore's occupation which would become "a fulcrum for the support of our Eastern-and China-trade and from whence we can extend our commercial views...."⁵⁴

Another factor which contributed to the retention of Singapore was its sudden growth as an entrepot and population centre. Its population grew to 4727 in 1821 and 10683 in 1824.⁵⁵ By 1824 British trade with China had grown to such considerable proportions that the retention of Singapore was considered essential for commercial as well as strategical purposes. After 1820 the British had almost a monopoly over the China tea trade. More-over England's exports to China were growing steadily.⁵⁶ In connection of their China trade, Singapore could have provided the British one more additional advantage. This trade required the presence of the vessels of the Royal Navy into the Chinese waters. British naval vessels patrolled the high seas but "the presence of even one warship in Chinese waters, obnoxious as it was to the Chinese Government, often involved the company's official agents, known as the Select Committee, in serious disputes with authori-

53 Sir Reginald Coupland, Raffles of Singapore (London, 1946), p. 91.

54 Quoted from Emily Kahn, n. 49, p. 488.

55 Walter Makepeace, et al, eds., One Hundred Years of Singapore (London, 1921), vol. I, p. 355.

56 See Marks, n. 20, p. 11.

described as his "political child" by Raffles and he envisaged a great political role for Singapore. Besides "supplanting Malacca as the main emporium on the route to China" it also became "a gateway to Malaya and Burma" for the British. From the naval point of view it "was the only safeguard ... to the China fleet's passage through the Straits of Malacca." Prof. Graham observes:

British naval strategy overseas was determined by the need to protect the main trade routes to India and China. By establishing well cited bases and attaching small squadrons to detachments, it was possible to provide continuous local command to focal sea areas through which the bulk of the trade passed. A focal sea area is an area where several or many sea routes are compelled by geography to converge, and the most important strategic meeting point in the eastern seas lay in the neighbourhood of Singapore. (66)

(Singapore became a centre of entrepot trade right from its foundation.) Its trade grew every year as is shown by Table II below.

Table III would show that Singapore's major trade partners remained its neighbours - including India and China - plus Great Britain whose colony it was.

63 Coupland, n. 53, p. 97.

64 Tousaint, Auguste, History of the Indian Ocean, translated from French by June Guicharnaud (London, 1966), p. 189.

65 Emily Hahn, n. 49, pp. 511-12.

66 Graham, n. 2, p. 342.

67 Extracted from the Table given by Won Lin Ken, "The Trade of Singapore 1819-69", JMBRAS, vol. 33, pt. 1960, p. 254.

68 Rearranged from *ibid.*, pp. 255-6.

Singapore became so important for British commercial interests that it remained the third major trading unit of the

Table II

Total Trade of Singapore (in Spanish dollars)

Year	Imports	Exports	Total
1823-24	6,560,153	4,856,883	11,417,036
1829-30	9,977,728	8,914,629	18,892,357
1834-35	7,031,580	7,412,354	14,443,934
1839-40	10,579,215	9,375,874	19,955,089
1844-45	11,759,817	10,498,317	22,258,134
1849-50	13,315,018	10,457,072	23,772,090
1854-55	17,704,342	15,144,487	32,848,829
1860-61	25,891,706	18,654,230	44,545,936
1866-67	37,204,949	29,679,681	66,884,630
1872-73	47,880,090	41,752,145	89,632,235

British empire.⁶⁹ After the occupation of Hongkong (1842) the importance of Singapore for the British China trade dwindled but it remained a flourishing entrepot relying more "on the

69 The first two being India and Canada. See Charles B. Buckeley, An Anecdotal History of Old Times of Singapore (Kuala Lumpur, 1965), p. 789.

Table III

Proportion of the Trade of Singapore with Various
Countries 1824-1869

Countries	1823-24	1826-27	1829-30	1832-33	1835-36	1838-39	1841-42	1844-45
1. United Kingdom	18.18	18.00	30.79	26.73	14.11	19.70	17.43	19.94
2. Indian Ports - Bombay, Calcutta Madras and Ceylon	23.72	19.88	16.76	18.48	19.12	19.72	26.84	20.92
3. Peninsular Malaya and Archipelago	20.41	13.79	22.87	32.62	43.87	38.77	26.55	28.42
4. Mainland Southeast Asia	4.94	5.12	3.76	3.51	4.11	5.29	5.24	4.73
5. Continental Europe	-	2.09	0.10	0.73	1.26	1.32	1.52	2.25
6. China	11.65	14.47	23.52	16.35	12.61	11.50	19.76	21.65
7. Other countries	21.10	26.65	2.59	1.56	4.91	3.69	2.66	2.45

(contd....)

Countries	1847-48	1950-51	1853-54	1856-57	1859-60	1862-63	1865-66	1868-69
1. United Kingdom	14.70	15.62	21.23	19.18	22.22	17.30	18.46	21.22
2. Indian Ports - Bombay, Calcutta Madras and Ceylon	20.38	18.64	14.47	12.31	6.03	14.26	18.00	10.53
3. Peninsular Malaya and Archipelago	35.81	30.61	31.04	32.91	30.17	34.50	29.29	32.81
4. Mainland Southeast Asia	6.86	7.36	5.19	9.99	9.13	9.93	12.17	13.58
5. Continental Europe	3.37	4.58	5.00	4.29	4.12	3.75	3.79	3.66
6. China	14.01	16.51	16.05	15.94	13.58	17.26	14.09	12.40
7. Other countries	4.87	6.68	7.02	5.40	14.77	3.01	4.20	5.72

markets and the products of South East Asia", and in this role it soon "attained the commercial domination of South East Asia."⁷⁰

The transfer of Singapore from the India Office to the Colonial Office was demanded from the early 1840s in order to place it directly under a "representative of the sovereign of Great Britain charged with full powers and supported by an adequate marine force...."⁷¹ This was achieved in April 1867 when the Straits settlement became a crown colony and Singapore became the seat of the Governor and Executive and Legislative Councils.⁷² From 1867 onwards Singapore became the political centre of British activities in Southeast Asia from where British advances into Malaya were guided from 1874 to 1914 and the entire Peninsula came under British control.⁷³

Singapore's Problem of Security in the 20th Century

After 1819, with Singapore in their hands, the British were securely the masters of the Straits of Malacca. Throughout the 19th century there was no power which could have threatened their supremacy in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. During the last

70 C. D. Cowan, Nineteenth Century Malaya: The Origins of British Political Control (London, 1961), pp. 21-22.

71 See John Anderson's letter, 3 July 1840, quoted in N. Tarling, "British S. E. Asian Interests in the 19th Century", JSEAH, vol. 7, no. 1, March 1966, p. 99.

72 See C. D. Cowan, n. 69, pp. 26, 28-31.

73 See *ibid.*, pp. 176, 212, 238.

decade of the 19th century, three powers - Japan, Russia and the U.S. - emerged as Pacific Powers. The politics of the Pacific region affected British strategic interests in the Indian Ocean and the Australasian region. Singapore was originally planned to protect their China trade and to check Dutch dominance of South East Asia. From the last decade of the 19th century its role was transformed according to the changed politico-strategical needs. It now became the advanced British outpost to defend their Indian, South East Asian and Australasian empire from the opposite direction, i.e., from the Pacific side.

The Sino-Japanese war (1894-95) resulted in the emergence of Japan as a great power but this status was temporarily withheld from her by the combined action of the European powers. As a result of this action Russia became the greatest danger for Great Britain as "the Russian battle fleet based at Port Arthur was at that time the largest concentration of naval power in the Far East."⁷⁴ Therefore, when Lord Lansdowne signed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance on 30 January 1902, he was, in effect, making a move for the protection of British interests in the "extreme East."⁷⁵ The purpose of this alliance was best summed up by Mr Bertie, an official of the Foreign Office in his memorandum: "...the yellow danger would be

74 James Leasor, Singapore: The Battle that Changed the World (London, 1968), p. 60.

75 A. L. P. Dannis, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance (University of California, 1923), p. 6.

kept in check by Russia and the Russian danger by Japan...."⁷⁶
 Besides, during 1901, there was a possibility of a Russo-Japanese Alliance which would have united these two powers against Great Britain in the Far East.⁷⁷ After the Russo-Japanese war (1904-5) Japan emerged as a predominant power in the Pacific. A new treaty was signed between Great Britain and Japan on 12 August 1905, which placed South East Asia and India ^a along with the Far East within the field of Anglo-Japanese co-operation in matters of defence.⁷⁸

With this alliance British interests were considered secure. Even then, after 1905, it was felt in Great Britain that for the "protection of British Far Eastern interests, Japan was the nation that mattered most."⁷⁹ From this time, also, Japanese alliance became the cornerstone of British oriental policy and it was renewed on 13 July 1911, for ten years. During the First World War Japan remained the custodian of British possessions and interests in the Far East and South East Asia. She escorted the Anzac forces to Europe, helped in "quelling the mutiny of Indian

76 Quoted in Chang, Chung-fu, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance (Baltimore, 1931), p. 77.

77 See A. L. P. Dennis, n. 74, p. 5.

78 Ibid., p. 101, Articles 1 and 2.

79 Russell Grenfell, Main Fleet to Singapore (London, Faber and Faber, n.d.), p. 26.

troops at Singapore" in 1915 and sent destroyers to the Mediter-
ranean to help the Royal Navy.⁸⁰

(After the First World War public and official opinion in
Great Britain turned against Japan.⁸¹ The fears of Japanese
imperialism and its consequential danger to their Indian, Austral-
asian and South East Asian empire led the British to establish a
first class naval base at Singapore.) Admiral Jellicoe had recom-
mended in 1919 a naval base at Sydney with an advanced outpost at
Singapore. The Committee of Imperial Defence approved Singapore
as a naval base and this decision was also approved by the cabinet
on 16 June 1921. The reasons given for this choice were: "Singapore
was geographically the best place ... from which to guard Britain's
trade routes and also it was strategically placed for the defence
of Malaya, Burma, Australia and New Zealand."⁸² This decision was
taken well before the Washington conference and therefore Singapore
was "expressly excluded from the scope of the Five Power Treaty
of the Limitation of the Naval Armaments of February 6, 1922 by
which no naval base was to be constructed by an outside power in the
Pacific area."⁸³

(From 1922 onwards Singapore became one of the most important
(yet to be fortified) bases of British empire. More important,

80 See Maj. Gen. F. S. G. Piggot, Broken Thread (Aldershot, 1950), p. 110.

81 See Roger Louis, British Strategy in the Far East, 1919-39 (Oxford, 1971), pp. 17 and 46.

82 Leason, n. 73, p. 77.

83 Lord Strabolgi, Singapore and After: A Study of the Pacific Campaign (London, 1942), p. 3. Also see Roger Louis, n. 80, p. 236.

Singapore, henceforth, became the gateway to the Indian Ocean for the Japanese and it remained so in their strategy until 1945 when Japan was finally defeated. The construction of the naval base was leisurely carried on and after nearly two decades it was finally declared open on 15 February 1938. A sum of £60,000,000 was spent over it.⁸⁴ This, the British thought, would "guard the gate into the Indian Ocean", and "supply the requisite jumping-off⁸⁵ place for any military action" into the Pacific.

The Singapore base was not constructed, from the beginning, keeping in view a situation of world war. It was thought that "in the event of trouble the main fleet would reach Singapore within 70 days."⁸⁶ Since the French held Indo-China and also the Jungles of Malaya were impenetrable, it was thought, the Japanese would not attack Singapore from the Peninsular side.⁸⁷

Throughout the 1930s Japan was assured that the base would not be used against her but as a "link in imperial communication securing the red line of defence from India to Australasia."⁸⁸ Yet the construction of the base was closely watched in Japan and "Singapore" was a frequent headline in the Japanese press.⁸⁹

84 John Toland, The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-45 (New York, N.Y., 1970), p. 197; and Lesser, n. 73, p. 106.

85 Hubbard, G. E., British Far Eastern Policy (New York, 1943), p. 34.

86 Russell, n. 78, p. 65.

87 See Strabolgi, n. 82, pp. 49-50.

88 Roger Louis, n. 80, p. 210.

89 Piggot, n. 79, p. 197.

F.S.G., Broken Thread (Akershot, 1950), p. 197.

For the British Armed Forces, as Lord Ismay writes: "The defence of Singapore soon became one of the stock exercises at all military academies, and I was first introduced to it as a student at Quetta Staff College in 1922."⁹⁰ The Japanese danger was made so evident in Britain and other parts of the empire that the common public had developed a sense of insecurity in Malaya and Singapore. Singaporean civilians certainly preferred the Anglo-Japanese Alliance to the naval base and felt more secure with that Alliance and without a naval base.⁹¹

The mood of Japan during the 1930s was similar to that of Hitler's Germany. The Japanese thought themselves leaders and liberators of Asia and advocated the Asian Monroe Doctrine which had "East Asia for its field of operation" and envisaged "what may be termed East Asia continentalism".⁹² By the mid-1936 they had planned combined action against the USSR and Great Britain and had concluded that when "Russia and Britain surrender, it will be an appropriate time to begin the basis of friendship between Japan and China. That means we will lead and co-operate with East Asian nations. We will plan a resurgent development of strength and prepare for a great decisive war against the

90 Quoted from Lessor, n. 73, p. 104.

91 Piggot, n. 79, p. 260.

92 See Kamikawa Hikomatsu, "The American and Japanese Monroe Doctrines", reprinted from Contemporary Japan in Joyce C. Libra, Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in World War II: Selected Readings and Documents (Kuala Lumpur, 1975), pp. 24-30.

United States."⁹³

The defence of Malaya was never considered essential for the defence of Singapore by the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. He believed that the active support of the US was essential to defend the British empire in the East.⁹⁴ His strategy was based on deterrence. In a letter he wrote to President Roosevelt: "...I am looking to you to keep the Japanese dog quiet in the Pacific, using Singapore in any way convenient."⁹⁵ On 10 September 1940 he told his Chief of Staff Gen. Ismay:

The prime defence of Singapore is the fleet.... The defence of Singapore must therefore be based on a strong local garrison and general potentialities of sea power. The idea of trying to defend the whole of the Malay peninsula cannot be entertained. (96)

The Prime Minister was still thinking of deterrence when he wrote to Roosevelt: "...whether at this time a simple action might not speak louder than words. Would it not be possible for you to send an American squadron, the bigger the better, to pay a friendly visit to Singapore.... Anything in this direction would have marked deterrent effect upon a Japanese declaration of war."⁹⁷ This strategy reflects a need to keep Singapore in a

93 Draft of the General Principles of National Defence Policy, Army General Staff Headquarters, Second Section, 30 June 1936, quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

94 Russell, n. 78, pp. 90-91.

95 Churchill to Roosevelt, 15 May 1940, quoted from Francis L. Loewenheim *et al*, eds., Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret War Time Correspondence (New York, 1975), p. 95.

96 Quoted from Leason, n. 73, p. 130.

97 Churchill to Roosevelt, 4 October 1940, quoted from Loewenheim, n. 94, p. 115.

position of vulnerability by joint action which would reveal to the invader that the losses sustained in an attack on Singapore would be greater than the gains and that it would face the opposition of various powers. This was, in effect, the strategy of big power presence and interest in Singapore so that the danger to it might be checked by their mere presence. But until the Second World War, war and peace depended on strategy rather than on deterrence. The Japanese had evolved a better strategy by which they hoped to knock out both the British and the U.S. navies from the Pacific in a surprise blow. Once they had the naval command of the Pacific all British and US possessions into those waters came within their reach.

(Surprise action was the keynote of Japanese success in the Second World War. On 22 June 1940, the decision of a surprise attack on Singapore was taken in a joint meeting of the Army General Staff and the War Ministry at Tokyo. ⁹⁸ The second reason ⁹⁹ of Japanese success was planning and its implementation. The essential requirement for Japanese campaign against Singapore was the occupation of southern Indo-China. The Japanese were in northern Indo-China from September 1940. Soon they started pene-

98 Toland, n. 83, p. 60.

99 The Singapore campaign was planned by Col. Masanobu Tsuji whose pamphlet "Read this alone - and the war can be won" gives lengthy instructions to the soldiers and officers of the Japanese army. See Col. Masanobu Tsuji, Singapore: The Japanese Version (Sydney, 1960), Appendix I, pp. 295-349.

tration into southern Indo-China and established their naval headquarter at Saigon.¹⁰⁰ Near Saigon they had built aerodromes which brought them within striking range to Malayan airfields.¹⁰¹ Singapore was their main target and was considered "the pivot for the mastery of the East." "All else," they thought, "could be gathered in easily enough once Singapore fell."¹⁰²

On the contrary the strategic importance of Singapore for Great Britain gradually dwindled) and it was at its bottom when Churchill told Ismay on 20 January 1942: "As a strategic object, I regard keeping the Burma Road open as more important than the retention of Singapore."¹⁰³ The Prime Minister, until 30 November 1941, believed in paper declarations and verbal threats to the enemy when he requested Roosevelt to declare "that any further act of aggression by Japan will lead immediately to the gravest consequences."¹⁰⁴

(On 8 December 1941, the Japanese bombarded Singapore and landed their forces at Singora in southern Thailand. Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, Commander-in-Chief of the Far East, issued the following order the same day: "We are ready. We have had plenty of warning and our preparation are made and tested....

100 Ibid., p. 57.

101 See map in *ibid.*, p. 75.

102 Leason, n. 73, pp. 153-54.

103 Quoted from Saul Rose, Britain in S. E. Asia (London, 1962), p. 91.

104 Churchill to Roosevelt, 30 November 1941, quoted from Lowenheim, n. 94, p. 167.

We are confident."¹⁰⁵ Despite this confidence the British forces surrendered on 15 February 1942 only after 77 days of fighting and with it the entire peninsula and Singapore passed into Japanese hands.) Churchill, accepting the decisive defeat, wrote: "We have suffered the greatest disaster in our history at Singapore and other misfortunes will come thick and fast upon us."¹⁰⁶

The battle of Malaya and Singapore was lost on the very day it started. In August 1941 Sir Brooke-Fopham had devised a plan for the defence of Malaya - known by the code name "Matador" - which required a pre-emptive British movement on Singora and Patani so that the Japanese landing could be checked there.¹⁰⁷ This plan was never carried out and once the Japanese achieved a safe landing the challenge passed to the navy. With the sinking of the Prince of Wales and Repulse on 11 December the "final deterrent to victory in Southeast Asia had been eliminated at the cost of four planes."¹⁰⁸

(Singapore fell because the British ad hoc strategy was no match to the well-planned strategy of Japan.)¹⁰⁹ The inability of British and American navy and army to prepare a combined defence strategy also contributed to its fall.¹¹⁰ The reason for this

105 Quoted from Toland, n. 83, p. 231.

106 Churchill to Roosevelt, 4 March 1942, quoted from Loewenheim, n. 94, p. 184.

107 Leason, n. 73, p. 164.

108 Toland, n. 83, p. 243.

109 Strabolgi, n. 82, p. 96.

110 Ibid., p. 17.

diaster was the fact that "the Far East came last on the list of official priorities", as General Percival, the GOC of the British and Allied forces which surrendered to Gen. Yamashita on 15 February 1942 at Singapore, told James Leasor in a personal interview.

"The choice was made and Singapore had to suffer."¹¹¹

After the acquisition of Singapore Japan became the master of the Pacific and threatened the Indian Ocean and British Indian empire. With Singapore Japan acquired the tail of the integrated air operation system which was guided from the U.K. through Gibraltar, Egypt, Aden, Karachi, Bombay, Trincomalee, Calcutta, Rangoon, the Malayan airfields and Singapore.¹¹² The conquest of Singapore facilitated the capture of Rangoon and Java within a month and with the surrender of the Americans in the Philippines on 6 May 1942,¹¹³ entire Southeast Asia passed into Japanese hands. The Japanese were not defeated in the battlefield but through a mean scientific device of Atom Bomb. They lost the war in 1945 but "as if by magic, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma, the Dutch East Indies, and the Philippine islands one after another gained independence overnight. The reduction of Singapore was indeed the hinge of fate for the peoples of Asia."¹¹⁴

Post-War Singapore

The British returned to Singapore in 1945. With their

111 Leasor, n. 73, p. 71.

112 Strabolgi, n. 82, p. 71.

113 Saul Rose, n. 102, p. 96.

114 Tsuji, n. 98, p. 281.

return total war between them and the communists started. The British, guided by the general security interests of their empire and dominions, were reluctant to hand over power to the communists in Malaya and Singapore.) The Malayan Communist Party was dominated by the Chinese and as Singapore had a majority of Chinese population it soon became the base of communist activities. For strategical reasons Singapore, in 1946, was separated from the mainland under the Malayan Union Scheme. This was a step in the direction of giving Malaya independence while retaining Singapore under British control.¹¹⁵ In 1954 the People's Action Party was founded by Lee Kuan Yew who opposed British imperialism and demanded representative government in Singapore.¹¹⁶ After more than a decade the British were able to defeat the communists. On 31 August 1957, Malaya became independent.

(Limited self-rule was granted to Singapore in 1954 and on 4 June 1959 Lee Kuan Yew became the Prime Minister of Singapore.) He again demanded complete independence for Singapore and its merger with Malaysia. Malaysia came into being on 16 September 1963 which comprised Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak. (It served Britain's purpose of "decolonization in Southeast Asia without endangering her vital security interests in the region.")¹¹⁷

115 See V. Suryanarayan, Singapore-Malaya Relations, 1957-65 Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis submitted in the School of International Studies, New Delhi in 1968, for a general account of post-war development in Singapore and Malaya.

116 Alex Josey, Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore, 1968), p. 6.

117 Suryanarayan, n. 114, p. 141.

Lee Yuan Yew believed that Malaysia was the only permanent solution to Singapore's problem of security and its alternative, as he said, was "the Balakanization of Southeast Asia."¹¹⁸ (He wanted a big-power guarantee for Singapore in matters of defence and this he got from Great Britain under the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement (1957) which remained operative even after the formation of Malaysia.)

The Confrontation and Separation

But defence did not remain a purely extra-regional affair for Malaysia under the changed international circumstances. Indonesia had emerged as one of the powerful regional countries and took direct interest in thwarting the Malaysia plan by branding it a neo-colonialist plot. Even before its formation, on 30 December 1961, the Partai Komunis Indonesia, one of the most powerful political parties of Indonesia, had denounced Malaysia scheme as anti-Indonesian.¹¹⁹ President Sukarno started his "Crush Malaysia" campaign immediately after its formation and total war started between Indonesia and Malaysia. But the forces involved in the confrontation were not only of the two sides directly concerned. From the very beginning Indonesia got support of the communist countries - especially that of China. On the other side forces of Australia, New Zealand and United Kingdom were involved with the backing of

118 Josey, n. 115, p. 273.

119 Ibid., p. 222.

the United States. In the end the "Crush Malaysia" plan failed and Sukarno himself lost power in September 1965.

The survival of Malaysia during the confrontation depended upon the presence of the forces of Australia, New Zealand and United Kingdom (ANZUK) and their active participation in battles against the Indonesian army. Various nations supported Malaysia because they did not like that Indonesia - so much friendly to China - should become dominating factor in the geopolitics of that vital region. The Malaysian scheme was a British device to check Indonesian and, with it, Chinese power in the region. But the scheme came to an abrupt end. Due to the internal politics of the Federation Singapore was expelled from it and became an independent republic on 8th August 1965.¹²⁰

(Thus, after 146 years of its foundation by Raffles, Singapore entered the community of free nations. It emerged, due to its geographical position, as a relatively advanced country of Southeast Asia and soon became the linch-pin of the region establishing, simultaneously, its independent identity. Yet its search for security was not over with its independence. Actually, it started after 1965 and in that search, all the major powers of the world became crucial in its strategy for security and survival instead of only one power - Great Britain.)

Chapter III

THE MAJOR POWERS

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(After its independence on 9 August 1965, Singapore Government tried to evolve a foreign policy based on national security, survival and economic prosperity. The leaders of Singapore viewed the newly independent state as a small state facing acute security problems from within and without. In both these presumptions major world powers were considered involved.) The President of Singapore, Inche Yusof bin Ishak had summed up the problem of Singapore's security and its connection with the major external powers when he said: "In the next five to ten years, issues of life and death will be determined more by factors around, rather than within Singapore."¹

(The approach of the Singapore Government to major external powers was determined by its desire of achieving an independent national identity, security from external as well as internal dangers and national survival through profitable economic relationship with them.) Singapore is a small island nation and a city state. A small state is always open to various dangers and cannot exercise freedom of action at all times. There are various limitations before such a state in formulating its foreign policy including its strategic location.² A small

1 Singapore, Parliamentary Debates, vol. 27, no. 1, 6 May 1968, col. 12.

2 See A. P. Barston, ed., The Other Powers: Studies in the Foreign Policies of Small States (London, 1973), p. 19.

state always has a special kind of relationship with its immediate neighbours and regional powers which is often reflected and to some extent influence its relationship with other major powers. A major power is not essentially a Super Power. A major power role for a nation is not always based upon economic or military position of that country but several factors - strategical, geopolitical, even social and cultural - may some time inspire and even force a country to play a major power role under given circumstances for a given country or region. Singapore's Foreign Minister S. Rajaratnam has defined a Major or Big Power as one which has at its disposal:

...effective instrument of power. And power translated into concrete terms means a number of things, a highly industrialized society, economic resources translatable into actual wealth, a sophisticated technology which enables a country on its own to produce and afford modern instruments of war and the military, economic and political capacity to exert influence and pressure on a global scale. (3)

In this study the following countries have been included as major powers on the grounds of their population, their military and economic capacity and their importance in the scheme of things for Singapore in view of its security and economic needs.

3 Quoted from The Mirror (Singapore), vol. 9, no. 29, 17 July 1972, p. 1.

No.	Country	Population	Estimated GNP in 1975
1	China	850-900,000,000	\$245 bn.
2	India	610,930,000	\$89.7 bn.
3	Soviet Union	255,580,000	492.4 bn roubles
4	U.S.A.	215,310,000	\$1,498.8 bn.
5	Indonesia	133,110,000	\$29.2 bn.
6	Japan	112,540,000	\$502.5 bn.

Source: The Military Year Book, 1976-77
(London, 1976)

(The countries included as major powers in this study) have a population above 100 million. (The US, USSR, China and Japan are considered due to their military and economic superiority. Indonesia is included in the study due to her special kind of relationship with Singapore based on mutual foreign policy postures and economic as well as security interests. India is included due to her role in the non-alignment movement (of which Singapore is also a member) and her proximity to Southeast Asia as well as her Major Power position among the Indian Ocean nations.

Singapore's Geo-Strategical Position and Chances of Survival - A Singaporean View

Singapore is a small state which has essential limits in exercising its foreign relations. Its size, location and domestic as well as economic needs impose certain restraints upon its foreign policy planners. Its geographical location at a strategically important point and amidst a region dominated by nations

of Malay race - Indonesia and Malaysia - and an overwhelming Chinese population of the Republic are the factors which profoundly influence its foreign policy. The ethnic composition of its population makes it a multi-racial nation and the feelings of the Malay and the Indian minorities are always taken into account by the foreign policy planners. Creation of a Singaporean identity or nationality has been a constant theme of its foreign and internal policy and, moreover, this aspect determines survival as well as the problem of security for Singapore.

Singapore's geographical location at the Southern entrance of the Straits of Malacca and its development as a business centre of Southeast Asia makes it all the more important in the strategical and economic calculations of the major powers. It is situated where the Indian and the Pacific Oceans meet and is a place of "convergence and divergence in the world's circulatory system for transit, tourism and trade."⁴ Its location gives it a predominant role in the economic field. Until the end of 1940s Singapore, like Hongkong, had the character of entrepot carrying distributive, financial and transportation⁵ functions. But after 1950 the changes in their hinterlands posed a question of survival for both Hongkong and Singapore. However, the two city-states continued to flourish due to their

4 Peter Lyon, "Reorientations in South-East Asia", The Round Table (London), no. 246, April 1972, p. 231.

5 Theodore Geiger, Tales of Two City-States: Hongkong and Singapore (Washington, D.C., 1973), p. 7.

survival techniques which required an entrepot economy on a broader basis - on world basis. In this process Singapore became a trading and processing centre for maritime Southeast Asia.⁶ Singapore now considers itself as an important broker between the broader international economic system and that of Southeast Asia as a whole. It prefers international rather than regional role and supports "the relatively open international economic system"⁷ which at present is composed of the non-communist states.

Although Singapore is economically a fairly advanced country in Asia, its economic well-being is dependent on others. Its economy is not self-contained and as such its chances of resisting the pressures from outside are limited. Under this situation a small state cannot always remain neutral.⁸ Singapore leaders are aware of this fact and think that on occasions "Singapore would have to surrender absolute freedom in the pursuit of her national interests."⁹ This means that Singapore's foreign policy would not deviate substantially from Malaysia, Indonesia, the US, Japan and other Western countries who are its trading and

6 See Bruce Brown, ed., Asia and the Pacific in the 1970s (Canberra, 1973), p. 50.

7 Jerry Mark Silverman, "The Domino Theory: Alternatives to a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy", Asian Survey (Berkeley), vol. 15, no. 11, November 1975, p. 923.

8 See Fox, A. B., The Power of Small States (Chicago, 1959), p. 184.

9 See Nataratnam's Statement, Parliamentary Debates, Singapore, vol. 24, no. 6, 17 December 1965, cols. 287-8. Here quoted from Chan Heng Chee, Singapore - The Politics of Survival 1965-67 (Singapore, 1971), p. 43.

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economic partners, and secondly, that there are limits to its neutrality as imposed by its economic demands and prosperity.

Singapore has, however, shown independent views and assertion of national interests in relations with its immediate neighbours, for example the execution of Indonesian marines, question of Malacca Straits, question of Timor, etc. On the other hand Singapore's economic prosperity makes its involvement in world politics rather inevitable as economic development is one of the two major factors (the other being size) determining a nation's

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foreign policy involvement. Its developed economy makes it imperative for its leaders to safeguard its economic interests

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above everything.

Singapore's strategical position makes the presence of all the major powers around it a physical necessity while its economic interest requires their presence in the city-state itself. All those powers who have interests in the Indian-Pacific Ocean zone must require a passage through the Straits of Malacca via Singapore - which is considered to be the busiest straits

10 As was once observed by Rajaratnam: "If the truth must be told, were there to be a severance of economic links between our region and the West, then it is not the West but Southeast Asian societies that would collapse". The Straits Times (Singapore), 15 December 1975. See also Chuan Heng Chee, n. 9, pp. 43-44.

11 See Rummell, R. J., "Some Empirical findings on Nations and their Behaviours", World Politics (London), vol. 21, 1969, p. 234.

12 See Chuan Heng Chee, n. 9, p. 42.

after the Straits of Dover. Thus Singapore becomes a "potential transit point for commercial or military traffic" between the Indian and the Pacific Oceans.¹⁴ Keeping in view the open geographical position of Singapore, Inche Mahim Ishak, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, has said in the Parliament: "We must therefore be flexible in our policies towards other governments and states. We cannot afford to be one-track minded. Indeed we have to adopt a policy of open mindedness in our relations with other governments and states."¹⁵ But in practice, due to its economic and security needs Singapore has always looked towards the West and, moreover, had made no secret of this policy.¹⁶

Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's Prime Minister, has pointed out the dilemma which Singapore faces while addressing the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Ottawa on 3 August 1973:

...I am not so fortunately placed. Singapore is at the southern tip of Asia, the crossroads between the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, the

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- 13 George G. Thomson, "The Malacca Straits: Who Has the Last World?", The Pacific Community (Tokyo), vol. 3, no. 4, July 1972, p. 663.
- 14 Yuan-li Wu, "Planning Security for a Small Nation: Lessons from Singapore", The Pacific Community, vol. 3, no. 4, July 1972, p. 663.
- 15 Parliamentary Debates, Singapore, vol. 28, no. 3, 12 December 1968, col. 162.
- 16 See Lee Khoon Choy's Article in C. V. Devan Nair, ed., Socialism that Works: The Singapore Way (Singapore, 1976), p. 108.

half-way point between Northern Asia and Southern Australasia, and a key communications Centre. It is not due to any special virtue or attractiveness of my people that we receive considerable attention from the Americans, the Soviet Union, the Chinese and the Europeans.... I hope they will continue to be interested and may add to a more stable balance of influence. I have to face reality, otherwise I must perish. (17)

Similarly, Foreign Minister Rajaratnam, while advocating the importance of Southeast Asia for the great powers, has said: "And Singapore by virtue of its position it occupies in the region is a convenient look-out tower from which to view the changing political landscape of Southeast Asia."¹⁸

Singapore is aware of its strategical weaknesses and its foreign policy is greatly affected by this fact. It knows that its existence depends greatly upon external help. It also counts the fact that twice in the recent past it has been on the defensive and that it is vulnerable to any foreign attack. One of the considerations of merger with Malaysia, from Singapore's side, was that it considered separate nationhood as an absurdity. Even after the separation Singapore leaders considered the defence of Malaysia and Singapore as "indivisible."¹⁹ But after some years changes in Singapore's security planning emerged. With less hostile regime at Jakarta it considers less danger coming from

17 Quoted from The Mirror, vol. 9, no. 35, 27 August 1973, p. 1.

18 The Mirror, vol. 8, no. 38, 18 September 1972, p. 8.

19 See the Independence of Singapore Agreement, 1965, Art V, quoted in Peter Boyce, ed., Malaysia and Singapore in International Diplomacy (Sydney, 1968), p. 32.

South. Malaysia does not constitute any threat for Singapore because both of them are partners in a multi-power defence arrangement known as the Five Power Defence Agreement which was concluded in November 1971 by Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Malaysia and Singapore for the defence of Malaysia and Singapore.²⁰

Singapore's Security Planning

After its separation from Malaysia in 1965 Singapore evolved a security plan which consisted of the following premises:

1. Evolution of an indigenous defence capability.
2. Balancing the major external and regional powers in view of safeguarding the security interests of the Republic by attempting to attain a check and balance situation among the principal major powers which would lead towards peace and security in the region.
3. Advocating the presence of the Western Powers in Thailand, South Vietnam and Cambodia so as to protect these rim states against communist takeover so as to check communist advance into the Malayan Peninsula.
4. To achieve the situation of a separate identity and nationality in Singapore and to enlarge the chances of its survival by forging unity, nationality and stake in the prosperity of the Republic into its multi-racial population.
5. To maintain constant friendly relations with Jakarta.

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See text in T. B. Millar, "The Five Power Defence Agreement and Southeast Asian Security", Pacific Community, vol. 3, no. 1, January 1972, p. 343.

6. To develop a regional image by participating in the regional affairs, particularly through the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).)

After its independence Singapore had tried to postpone the shouldering of the responsibility of defence by relying on the presence of British troops on the island. But soon after the declaration of the Labour Government to withdraw its forces from the region, Singapore was forced to plan its own defence strategy and to achieve a degree of self-sufficiency in its defences. Lee Kuan Yew, on his return from London after discussing the matter with the British Government, had argued in the Parliament about the necessity to develop independent defence capacity before the 1970s.²¹ While looking forward to a defence agreement with interested countries he hoped that before 31 December 1971, "we will have developed a sufficient defence capability to make us a dependable and desirable partner in any defence arrangement."²² The Ministry of Defence was strengthened after British declaration and a time bound programme to acquire self-sufficiency in defence matters was evolved. Simultaneously the Five Power Defence Agreement was concluded in November 1971, which gave Singapore a kind of vague security assurance. Despite the Agreement, Lee Kuan Yew has said in 1973: "I do not ask my colleagues from Australia, New Zealand or Britain to defend me.

21 Singapore, Parliamentary Debates, vol. 26, no. 3, 8 September 1967, col. 173.

22 Ibid., vol. 26, no. 13, 24 January 1968, col. 1105.

They cannot. It has been painfully demonstrated in Vietnam.
 This problem we will face ourselves."²³

Lee Kuan Yew, who had made an emotional appeal to Britain in 1968 not to withdraw its forces, had changed a great deal since then. A significant factor behind this is the development of a sufficient force which can hold the island against an attack from a minor power. Singapore had employed Israeli experts to train its forces and the system of compulsory military service (24-30 months) gives it a reserve and standing army of considerable significance. It is estimated that by 1980, Singapore would be able to mobilize 140,000 men on short notice.²⁴ It was due to the top priority given to defence that the defence ministry was able to declare in 1972: "The urgency over our defence build-up has lessened as we now have some defence capability."²⁵ In 1976 Singapore had 31,000 troops which consisted - Army 25,000; Navy 3,000; Air Force 3,000 with 97 combat aircraft. During 1976-77 S\$840m.²⁶ were allotted to defence expenditure. Goh Keng Swee, Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister, had declared in 1974: "We have worked hard in the intervening years to build up our defence forces and today they are adequate for our protection."²⁷

23 Quoted in Ilsa Sharp, "Singapore: Early Withdrawal Symptoms", Far Eastern Economic Review (Hongkong), vol. 84, no. 24, p. 29. 17.6.1974.

24 See Frank B. M. King, "Singapore's Foreign Policy", a Chapter in N. P. Barston, ed., n. 2, p. 273.

25 Singapore, Parliamentary Debates, vol. 32, no. 1, 12 October 1972, col. 13.

26 The Military Balance 1976-77 (London, 1976), p. 60.

27 Bangkok Post, 14 July 1974.

Singapore's defence strategy has also a demonstrative aspect as Lee Kuan Yew observed once: "The strange thing is that the more people know you are prepared to fight and can fight well, the less likely is it necessary to do so."²⁸ The Prime Minister has further explained Singapore's defence strategy as follows: "All we need do is to have the capacity to ward off any sneak attack for a week to a fortnight and the U.N. Security Council can intervene."²⁹

Singapore's strategical location makes it essential for it to strive for a major power presence and power-balance in the Indian-Pacific Ocean zone and this consideration has largely determined its foreign policy. S. Rajaratnam while advocating balance of power strategy as a survival technique for small states like Singapore, has once observed: "...the small nations could successfully adopt some of the techniques of the Big Power diplomacy - balancing the powers."³⁰ Rahim Ishak Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, has also remarked:

Therefore, the best way to ensure that no single power or coalition of powers exercise hegemony over Southeast Asia is to have a multiplicity of external great powers involved in the region, balancing each other. With such a state of affairs, there are better chances for a power equilibrium to emerge, allowing small states in Southeast Asia greater room for manoeuvre. (31)

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- 28 The Mirror, vol. 8, no. 31, 31 July 1972, p. 1.
 29 *ibid.*, vol. 8, no. 35, 28 August 1972, p. 5.
 30 *ibid.*, vol. 8, no. 29, 17 July 1972, p. 6.
 31 *ibid.*, vol. 9, no. 17, 23 April 1973, p. 1.

The policy of inviting the presence of all the major external powers is guided by the economic interests of Singapore and it believes that the competition of the major powers is essentially that of an economic nature.³²

In Singapore's security considerations Thailand, South Vietnam and Cambodia have special position. It is because all three countries were somehow or other associated with the Japanese attack on Malaya and thence on Singapore during World War II. At the Bombay Socialist Conference in May 1965, Lee Kuan Yew has said: "We know that if the communists are able to advance their frontiers to envelop South Vietnam, it will be only a matter of time before the same process of emasculation by military and political techniques will overtake the neighbouring countries."³³ After the Communist victory in Vietnam and Cambodia, Singapore leaders diverted their attention towards Thailand and thenceforth that country became their principal concern. Even before that the US was asked to give full psychological and material support to ward off communist success in that crucial country which, according to Lee Kuan Yew, played as the buffer between the communist and non-communist countries in Southeast Asia.³⁴

One of the constant themes of Singapore's strategy for

32 See Rahim Ishak's Statement, Parliamentary Debates, Singapore, vol. 31, no. 3, 2 August 1971, col. 106.

33 Quoted from Chuan Beng Chee, n. 12, p. 44.

34 See The Mirror, vol. 3, no. 45, 6 November 1972, p. 1.

survival and independence is to evolve a Singaporean identity and national consciousness so as to develop a greater unity among the different races of Singapore's population. There was a feeling of racial separateness among the different racial stocks of Singapore's population. From 1965 onwards the government faced the problem of nationality building - rather than nation building - so much so that observers called the post-separation years as the era of survival.³⁵ From the beginning of its nationhood Singapore faced the dilemma of being called Third China and its survival depended on the creation of a viable national identity within the region as well as in international arena. Rajaratnam has once warned Singapore citizens of Chinese origin that they are being watched by the region and that:

"There are some people who claim that Singapore Chinese are Chinese first and Singaporeans second.

"Unless we can convince them that the 80% Chinese population in the Republic regard themselves primarily as Singaporeans and not Chinese, they will go on thinking this.

"You may be a Lee, a Tan, a Ching or Chong but the fact that you are a Singaporean must come first." (36)

The present leadership of Singapore has played a great role in building a Singaporean identity and nationality among its people. After its independence they declared Singapore to be a secular country without a state religion. Lee Kuan Yew has criticized those who call Singaporean Chinese as overseas Chinese while the Americans, Australians and New Zealanders are not called

35 See Chuan Heng Chee, n. 9, full.

36 The New Straits Times (Kuala Lumpur), 9 July 1975.

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 overseas British. Lee has constantly warned his clansmen in Singapore that they must create a stake in Singapore and feel that they are Singaporeans first and Chinese afterwards: "For neither China, nor any other country or government will protect us or our interests, just because we happen to be ethnic Chinese." 38
 One of the reasons of delaying diplomatic relations with China is the fact that the majority of its population belongs to the Chinese race and the government, as Mr Rajaratnam pointed out, "...must be satisfied that in the event of China setting up an embassy here, it will be treated like the rest of embassies." 39

With the correction of the traditional image of the overseas Chinese and their assimilation into the newly evolved multi-racial society of Singapore, the leadership has also tried to develop a regional image of Singapore and regional identity of its population. The three communities - the Chinese, the Malays and the Indians - have now developed a stake in the prosperity and independence of the Republic. In 1971, the President of Singapore had declared that after six years of its independence Singapore has proved that its separate existence is viable. 40
 Lee Kuan Yew and S. Rajaratnam both have asserted that after seven years of independence a majority of Singaporeans have developed a

37 The Straits Times (Singapore), 27 August 1974.

38 The Mirror, vol. 8, no. 33, 14 August 1972, p. 3.

39 The New Straits Times, 9 July 1975.

40 Singapore, Parliamentary Debates, vol. 31, no. 2, 30 July 1971, col. 66.

Singaporean identity and a stake in Singapore's prosperity and survival.⁴¹ The Chinese connection is now being interpreted on the terms of relationship between two independent sovereign states and their people. During his visit to China in March 1975, Rajaratnam had stressed upon Southeast Asian bearings on the political system and outlook of Singapore, despite the fact that it was "predominantly Chinese in ethnic content and culture."⁴² Lee Kuan Yew himself has clearly shown his preference when he spoke in English in the Great Hall of the People during his China visit in May 1976.⁴³

After 10 years of its independence the first and foremost achievement of Singapore was, as one expert commented: "...the clear emergence of Singapore identity, discernible in what it is as well as what it is not."⁴⁴ As early as 1970 it was proved by a sample survey that Singapore nation has become "a long term political reality in Southeast Asia" and the three main communities have developed a sense of Singaporean national identity.⁴⁵

41 See The Mirror, vol. 8, no. 33, 14 August 1972, p. 3 and vol. 8, no. 52, 25 December 1972, p. 7.

42 The Straits Times, 15 March 1975.

43 See FEER, vol. 92, no. 20, 14 May 1976, pp. 22-23.

44 Chuan Heng Chee, "The New Identity that is in the Making", FEER, vol. 89, no. 33, 15 August 1975, p. 6.

45 See John A. MacDougall, "Birth of a Nation: National Identification in Singapore", Asian Survey, vol. 16, no. 6, June 1976, pp. 510-24.

Independent nationhood was forced upon Singapore during the period of confrontation with Indonesia. In fact the confrontation itself was a major cause of Singapore's expulsion from the Federation of Malaysia. Sukarno's Indonesia was hostile towards it because of its relationship with the British and also because of Sukarno's grand designs in the region. After the October 1965 coup in Indonesia and subsequent rise of Gen. Suharto in that country, its relationship with Singapore gradually improved through better understanding of each other.

Now Indonesia has become the cornerstone of Singapore's foreign policy. Singapore wants a friendly and adjusting regime at Jakarta. After the end of the confrontation Singapore took a cautious approach towards Indonesia and more cautious towards Indonesia-Malaysia combine equation. The post-confrontation era witnessed a suspicion of Singapore among the Malay dominated nations of the region due to its image projected by its leaders. It was considered that Singapore would have to live in a hostile atmosphere all around it and it was thought, as President Inche Yusof bin Ishak had pointed out, that the dangers would be external rather than internal.⁴⁶ Apart from the fact that Singapore became the target of Indonesian confrontation, the underlying distrust of Indonesia was mainly because of Sukarno's advocacy of the Maphilando concept based on Malay racial identity among the Southeast Asian countries. The Maphilando concept, according to Lee Khoon

46 Singapore, Parliamentary Debates, vol. 27, no. 1, 6 May 1968, col. 12.

Choy, Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, "created a sense of fear, suspicion and insecurity to a smaller nation like Singapore."⁴⁷

Singapore's geographical location places it within the grasping range of a big country like Indonesia which fact bears security implications for Singapore. Moreover, Singapore's economic prosperity is derived out of the profits of Indonesian trade for which no official account is maintained. This trade has shown a constant upward trend ever since the end of confrontation in 1960.⁴⁸ In the security calculations of Singapore the region around the Straits of Malacca must remain calm and the inter-oceanic trade must flourish so that Singapore can get due economic profits. For regional peace and stability Indonesia's role has been accepted as positive and constructive not only by Singapore but even by the US upon whose policy Singapore's major security calculations depend.⁴⁹

Indonesia's stature is that of a giant in regional terms. With a population of 133,110,000 and having armed forces numbering 246,000 and a defence expenditure (for 1975-76) of \$1108m.,⁵⁰ Indonesia bears special importance for a small neighbouring country like Singapore which places high importance to the

47 See The Straits Times, 1 February 1975.

48 See ibid., 20 May 1974.

49 See The New Straits Times, 7 July 1975.

50 See The Military Balance 1976-77, n. 26, p. 55.

balance of power and power vacuum theories. Indonesia can be the potential regional power having stabilizing capacity after the departure of Great Britain and the US from the region.

Singapore's priority policy these days seems to be the projection of a regional image so as to wipe away the traditional distrust of the overseas Chinese now residing in Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. Obviously, Singapore is avoiding to project itself as the leader, well wisher and protector of the Nanyang Chinese. Thus it has adopted the policy which shows an about turn from its pre-independence and even immediate post-independence policy. But Singapore's regional vision is not a recent development. As late as in 1968, Inche nahim Ishak had said: "We believe that the pursuit of regionalism is in the interest of all of us in Southeast Asia."⁵¹ The government's early policy of projecting Singapore as the Israel of Southeast Asia alienated the Republic from intra-regional co-operation as its two immediate neighbours have predominantly Muslim population. It also faced opposition from its Malay minority⁵² which naturally got popular support in Indonesia and Malaysia.

51 Singapore, Parliamentary Debates, vol. 28, no. 3, 12 December 1968, col. 167.

52 A group called the Singapore Muslim Action Front had issued a statement in Kuala Lumpur in January 1974, on the eve of the Islamic Foreign Ministers' Conference there, saying: "the government has adopted the Israeli tactic in dealing with the Muslims in Singapore as they have imported many Israeli advisers". Hongkong Standard (Hongkong), 23 January 1974.

The basic reasons behind Singapore's regional orientation were the considerations regarding its security and economic prosperity. History has shown that Singaporean and Malaysian defence is indivisible. Singapore's security bears a direct relationship with Indonesia as an immediate neighbour, a regional major power and an anti-communist country. Thailand is also considered important while planning Singapore's security from communist advances from Indo-China. When the ASEAN was formed in 1967 its long term goal, perhaps, was the creation of a solid bloc of Southeast Asian non-communist countries against the expanding communism by direct or indirect methods in that area. Singapore placed more importance to ASEAN in its economic as well as security considerations after the successive events of British withdrawal and America's debacle in Vietnam, so much so that ASEAN has now become a major pillar of Singapore's foreign policy. It is now possible to agree with Lee Khoo Choy who writes: "However Singapore remains part of the region by the facts of geography, history, economics, as well as of politics. It has continued its efforts to identify itself more closely with the region.

Internal Dimensions of Singapore's
Relationship with the Major Powers

Singapore has a plural society but almost 78% of its population is of Chinese origin. There are sizeable Malay and

Indian minorities. Therefore it can fairly be called a Chinese city-state and, as observed by an expert, "The conspicuous Chinese character of its population in a region of Malay races have compelled Singapore leaders to maintain an active interest in international affairs."⁵⁴ The fact that Singapore's security and stability was threatened by a Chinese dominated Malayan Communist Party during 1948-60 makes Singaporean leaders suspicious about the role of China in Singapore. Their low-key postures towards the People's Republic of China are founded on their belief that a closer relationship with China may result into a challenge to Singapore's separate identity due to cultural and ethnic relations of a majority of population with China. Moreover, this fact, as has been suggested, "may even encourage mainland China in the belief that it enjoys a special advantage in dealing with, and through, Singapore in the pursuit of its interests."⁵⁵ Speaking about the establishment of diplomatic relations with China, Lee Kuan Yew has summed up Singapore's position in the following words:

"We have made our position clear. When our immediate neighbours, Malaysia, Indonesia have diplomatic relations, we will have diplomatic relations.

"Just like China, we calculate what is in our interest. And our interest is best served by not taking first or second place.

54 Chuan Heng Chee, n. 9, p. 41.

55 Yuan-li Wu, n. 14, p. 663.

"There are many reasons. First, the long standing suspicion that we are 75 plus per cent - actually 78 per cent by the 1970 census - ethnic Chinese." (56)

The diplomatic relationship between Singapore and China has not yet been established and Singapore, even after the visit of Lee Kuan Yew to China, still prefers to wait for Indonesia.⁵⁷ Even the Chinese leaders have appreciated this policy and during Rajaratnam's visit to China in March 1975 they "repeatedly expressed understanding of regional sensitiveness that suggested Singapore should wait for its closest neighbours before establishing diplomatic relations."⁵⁸ Besides, regional misunderstanding of Singapore-China relationship, it can also affect major power strategical considerations in world balance of power as is proved by the following observation of Lee Kuan Yew which he made while addressing the Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference in Ottawa on 3 August 1973:

When the Prime Minister of Australia said that because Singapore has a large ethnic Chinese population, therefore, the Soviet ships could not come to Singapore, the Soviet Union immediately diverted four Soviet tenders, feeder ships to Singapore for repairs, to see whether we are Chinese or Singaporeans. I would ask him not to provoke the Soviets, for the next time they will send, not a feeder ship, but a missile destroyer or even nuclear vessel. (59)

More intriguing is the fact noted by an observer in May 1971:

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- 56 Quoted from The Straits Times, 27 August 1974.
- 57 See Rajaratnam's Statement, The Straits Times, 15 April 1976.
- 58 The Straits Times, 22 March 1975.
- 59 The Mirror, vol. 9, no. 35, 27 August 1973, p. 1.

Singapore ... is especially concerned over the psychological impact of China's emergence as a great power. The youthful nature of the Republic's population (more than 50% are under 21 years) and the ties of kinship ... increase Singapore's vulnerability to China's influence. (60)

Similarly, relations with India can also affect Singapore's internal politics. India's links with Singapore are historical and Singapore leaders are conscious of strong cultural links with India. During his visit to India in May 1966, Lee Kuan Yew had remarked: "We have borrowed many things from India - the secular state, the multiracial society, the multilingual community...."⁶¹ The fact that India gave her unequivocal moral and diplomatic support to Malaysia and Singapore during the confrontation makes the ties more than diplomatic. Besides, ethnic relations of 7% of Singapore's population with India is of some importance and has been reflected in the policy of Singapore vis-a-vis the major powers.

With Malaysia and Indonesia, due to 15% of Singapore's population belonging to these racial groups, Singapore's relationship can be reflected in its internal politics. The racial background of Singapore's population makes it increasingly desirable for it to opt for a line of neutrality so as to secure internal harmony and its own security and independence.

Democratic socialism of the ruling People's Action Party and the de facto one party democracy in Singapore provides

60 Miss Fang Cheng Lian in Asia Research Bulletin (Singapore), May 1971, 15c.

61 Quoted from Alex Josey, Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore, 1968), p. 503.

the leadership to take drastic actions in the domestic politics so as to ensure national survival and maintaining a just power balance in the Republic. The Singapore Government can arrest and jail any number of communists belonging to any ethnic group without much internal trouble. Such acts enhance the prestige of the Government in the eyes of Western major powers who are more interested in trade and investment in Singapore. The PAP has given clean, effective administration and stable government and thereby opened the city state for foreign investment and trade.

Singapore in the Strategical Calculations of the Major Powers

Singapore was founded at the height of major power rivalry in the Orient. Today its strategical importance for the major powers has increased further and no major power can afford to see it joining the opposite bloc. In April 1973 Lee Kuan Yew argued, before an American audience at the Lehigh University, that Singapore's strategic location - on the sea passage between the Indian and Pacific Oceans - is of immense importance for world powers. Moreover, he said, Singapore is the gateway for Southeast Asia "which produces 85% of the world's natural rubber, 69% copra, 64% tin and 39% palm oil and possess 6.9% of the world's forest reserves and potentially a higher proportion of the oil reserves." ⁶² This made Singapore, in Lee's opinion, too important to be left alone.

⁶² Quoted in FEER, 23 April 1973, vol. 84, no. 24, p. 12.

Because Singapore is situated on a point which can control the most important oceanic route of the maritime powers, all trading countries are interested in the fate of the Republic. Singapore accepts that the presence of the Major Powers in and around Singapore cannot be avoided, as Rajaratnam once observed: "Singapore believes that whatever principles we might declare big powers will be here." The interests of the major powers in Singapore are not only strategical but also economic. However, there are divergent interests of the major powers, often clashing with that of other powers. Similarly, Singapore has different position for them in their strategical calculations. A study of each power would further clarify the situation.

The United States

The US had strongest influence as well as interest in Southeast Asia. After World War II the US took security responsibilities of various countries in East and Southeast Asia. After British declaration of withdrawal from Southeast Asia, the US naturally felt concerned. In June 1969 Brezhnev declared a plan of collective security for Asia and in July 1969 President Nixon declared his Guam Doctrine. Both these plans had diverse

63 See D. P. Singhal, "Imperial Defence, Communist Challenge and the Grand Design", India Quarterly (New Delhi), vol. 18, April-June 1962, p. 135.

64 The Straits Times, 17 May 1975.

65 See International Affairs (Moscow), July 1969, pp. 3-21 for details of Brezhnev Plan.

66 See details in the Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1969, 234009.

objectives but there was one similarity in their origin that in both of these an existence of power vacuum was taken as granted after the British withdrawal. Both the US and the Soviet Union conceived the schemes of fulfilling that vacuum by a system favourable to their originators.)

But with these diplomatic offensives, the US (and later the Soviet Union also) started to take some practical steps in the direction of filling the so-called vacuum in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. This made the position of Singapore of utmost importance for the US.) After the fall of Sukarno in Indonesia the US got additional importance in the region and its growing influence in island Southeast Asia made Singapore most important as a look out tower for the US. (The race between the two Super Powers to have a command of the Indian Ocean enhanced the importance of Singapore for both but much more for the US as its Seventh Fleet had to pass through the Straits of Malacca when it entered the Indian Ocean.)

The Straits of Malacca is considered most important in the US strategical calculation as was once observed by John Connally, President Nixon's special envoy: "The US is of course interested in being assured that the Straits of Malacca will always be open to its commerce and its warships." ⁶⁷ Efforts of Malaysia and Indonesia to declare the Straits of Malacca as an internal waterway made Singapore's role more important for both the Super Powers as well as Japan, for Singapore, due to its own

⁶⁷ Quoted in The Mirror, vol. 8, no. 31, 31 July 1972, p. 4.

advantages, just took note of Malaysian-Indonesian concept of the Straits without accepting it and without its support the idea might have failed as it is also a littoral state of the Straits.⁶⁸

(US interests in Singapore are economic as well as strategic. During the Indo-Chinese wars Singapore had provided entertainment facilities to the US combat troops in Vietnam during their recreation leave. Now, as the US troops have been expelled out from Indo-China, Singapore has become one of the principal Southeast Asian countries where the US has sizeable economic interests.) Philip Habib, US Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern and Pacific Affairs had observed during his visit to Singapore after the liberation of Vietnam that the interests of the US were not confined to security matters only but also economic matters.⁶⁹ On security and strategical front, one expert has noted Singapore's importance for the US as follows:

Singapore's strategical importance is likely to grow. The American 'loss' of Indo-China has not resulted in any real reduction in US involvement in Asia, but rather in a shifting away of the locus of American might from Vietnam and land armies to a more fluid strategic concept of mobile naval power in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. As the Seventh Fleet grows in importance and Diego Garcia expands into a major naval base, Singapore will

68 For Singapore's policy on the Straits see, Singapore, Parliamentary Debates, vol. 31, no.11, 17 July 1972, cols. 730-33.

69 The Straits Times, 31 May 1975.

again find itself in the centre of a US military power span, stretching from Okinawa and Subic bay in the Pacific to Diego Garcia and Iran in the Indian Ocean. (70)

The U.S.S.R.

In the 1970s, it seems, the Soviet Union has many strategical drawbacks. It is difficult to agree that all these are the results of the Sino-Soviet rift but, most of them are. The Pacific is of utmost importance for the Soviets as it is the meeting point of four major powers, each of whom plays the chess game to the disadvantage of others and an absence of any one from the scene may either mean a clash between the remaining three or a compromise at the expense of the remaining one. Secondly, it seems that in the 1970s the Soviet Union has started playing the role of containing China which was played by the US in the 1950s and 1960s. Thirdly, the Asian and European parts of the Soviet Union are connected, in actual sense, through the vast Oceans. Importance of Singapore for the Soviets can be grasped by the fact that during 1973 alone more than 850 Soviet commercial vessels passed through the Straits of Malacca⁷¹ compared to only 250 American merchant ships. Moreover, Singapore, due to its population ratio, is most vulnerable to Chinese influence in Southeast Asia and that makes it all the more important for the Soviet Union to checkmate Chinese influence in that region.⁷²

- 70 Lee Ching Ming, "A Poisonous Fish in a Dangerous Ocean", FEER, vol. 89, no. 33, 15 August 1975, p. 9.
- 71 A. O. Ghebhardt, "Soviet and US Interests in the Indian Ocean", Asian Survey, vol. 15, no. 8, August 1975, p. 675.
- 72 See Robert C. Horn, "Soviet Influence in Southeast Asia: Opportunities and Obstacles", Asian Survey, vol. 15, no. 8, August 1975, p. 666.

In Soviet naval and commercial strategy the Indian and the Pacific Oceans have become most important. In its strategy Singapore has the tremendous importance for the Soviet Union as has been observed by one expert:

For the Soviet Union, Singapore is perhaps of greater strategic significance than it is for the US. There is ample evidence that the Soviet Union wishes to link up its black sea naval forces with its Pacific Fleet based on Vladivostak. This can be done ... if freedom of passage via Singapore is secure. (73)

Strategically, the Straits of Malacca is more important for Soviet Union as her land and air routes from European to Siberian Russia can be threatened by the Chinese while the route through the Straits of Malacca cannot be interrupted by them at present. ⁷⁴ (Singapore thinks that only the US and the USSR are the global naval powers at present and both of them would essentially be interested in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore as well as the Republic itself.) ⁷⁵

China

China has historical influence in Southeast Asia. Her relationship with the region is determined by the geographical location of both China and Southeast Asia. During the confrontation China had described Malaysia as a "neo-colonialist plot."

73 Yuan-li Wu, n. 14, p. 672.

74 George G. Thomson, n. 13, p. 695.

75 See the speech of Rajaratnam before the Conference on "New Directions in the International Relations of South-east Asia", on 3 July 1972 in The Mirror, vol. 8, no. 31, 31 July 1972, p. 4.

and Singapore's merger with Malaysia as "phoney". But after the fall of Sukarno and more evidently after the end of Cultural Revolution China's Strategic calculations vis-a-vis Singapore have undergone considerable changes. (China is now a major power hostile to one Super Power, the Soviet Union and friendly to another, the USA.⁷⁶ The Chinese policy in Southeast Asia is said to have three objectives: "The checkmating of expanding Soviet influence, the neutralization of potential hostile neighbouring states and the maximisation of Peking's own influence."⁷⁷ In this perspective, to attain all three objectives, Singapore seems to be a natural choice for China.) In August 1974 Singapore's foreign minister S. Rajaratnam had given the following reply to a question asked by an interviewer:

"Q. What is your estimate of the way in which the rulers in Peking view Singapore - is their main aim to limit Russian influence?

"Rajaratnam: I think that like any other great power, China would certainly try and limit any influence which it regards as hostile to China, whether it is Russian today or American tomorrow...." (78)

After China occupied the Paracel Islands in January 1974, it became obvious that she was "in" for the naval race in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, looking for bases and friendly countries in

76 See former US Defence Secretary James Schlesinger's Statement that military aid and know-how to China are strictly considered and that China is a "quasi-ally" of the U.S. The Statesman (New Delhi), 13 April 1976.

77 Richard Butwell, "China and Other Asian Lands", Current History (Philadelphia), vol. 63, no. 373, September 1972, p. 137.

78 FEER, vol. 85, no. 31, 9 August 1974-Singapore 1974, p. 6.

the region. In that case, Singapore must acquire the pivotal position for China due to its location at the mouth of the Straits of Malacca. Moreover, Singapore could give China an edge over her rival, the Soviet Union, as China has psychological advantage in Singapore due to her ethnic ties with the major^{ity} of its population.

China's interests in Singapore have been widened since the Soviet Union started diplomatic offensives - like the Asian Collective Security Scheme - to curtail Chinese influence in the region.⁷⁹ China is reported to be more "pre-occupied with Singapore's connections with Moscow" rather than any other country including Taiwan. One expert has described it as follows:

Viewed from Singapore Peking's paramount interest is to make sure it is no longer excluded from the evolving power balance in Southeast Asia and that it can make its influence, felt, especially vis-a-vis Moscow, on Singapore's policy-makers. (80)

After US defeat in Vietnam China's concern over Southeast Asia has increased and, as Lee Kuan Yew has observed, Peking cannot afford to see increased Soviet influence in the countries "surrounding the Southern rim of China's boundaries, including Singapore and Malaysia."⁸¹

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- 79 See Victor C. Funnell, "China and ASEAN: The Changing Face of S. E. Asia", World Today (London), vol. 31, no. 7, July 1975, pp.
- 80 Harvey Stockwin, "Lee: Path-finding in the Forbidden City", FEER, vol. 92, no. 20, 14 May 1976, p. 23.
- 81 The Straits Times, 6 May 1975. After the Vietnam war China has started renewed attacks on Soviet intentions in Southeast Asia. In a commentary on Soviet Union's Collective Security Scheme in Asia a Hsinhua Correspondent

(footnote contd.)

Moreover, the Straits of Malacca could become in the long run, the first line of defence for China as has been observed by Yuan-li Wu: "Singapore and Taiwan ... constitute two major points of strategic importance to Peking if it desires to exercise a greater leverage against Japan and frustrate Soviet efforts to woo Japan."⁸²

Japan

The Straits of Malacca is the life line for the miracle economy of Japan wherethrough 90% of her oil comes. It is stated that there would be no light, heat or power if the 240m. tons of crude oil which Japan imports annually is interrupted at the Straits. It was due to this fact perhaps that a senior Japanese military officer had stated that Japan and Singapore "share a common fate in keeping the sea lanes open in the Pacific area."⁸³ The attempts of Malaysia and Indonesia to declare the Straits as an internal waterway were resented in Japan and her Foreign Minister Takao Fukuda declared in the Japanese parliament on 17 March 1972, that Japan would insist on the principle of free passage in the Straits.⁸⁴ Yuan-li Wu, while noting Japan's interests in Singapore

wrote that "the Soviet Union has threatened and undermined the independence and sovereignty of countries in South-East Asia" and that Moscow has "hegemonic stand toward these countries." See "Soviet Social-Imperialists Covet South-East Asia" by a Hsinhua correspondent, Peking Review, 15 August 1975, pp. 20-21.

82 Yuan-li Wu, n. 14, p. 673.

83 "Japan: Building up a Naval Force" Article reappeared in the Mirror, vol. 9, no. 29, 16 July 1973, p. 7.

84 See George G. Thomson, n. 13, p. 692.

writes: "...the interests of the U.S. and Japan are quite clear and, to a degree parallel. Japan's interest in Singapore is based on the country's need to secure its trade lanes."⁸⁵

Japan has emerged as an economic global power during the last decade and Singapore is the distributing centre of her goods in Southeast Asia. Further, Japan is presently engaged in checkmating the influence of the Super Powers in the economic field and Singapore is the place where all the rivals of economic field meet to compete. Japan by Article 9 of her constitution, is barred from developing military forces. Yet she is emerging as a potential military power. Her defence expenditure of \$5,058 m. in 1976-77⁸⁶ is a pointer in this direction. By occupying Singapore in February 1942, Japan commanded entire island Southeast Asia along with mainland Malaya and Burma. This strategical importance of Singapore is still fresh in the minds of the Japanese and in their economic offensive the place of Singapore remains similar to its place in their military adventures during Second World War - that of central point from where Southeast Asia or its market can be commanded.

India

The Straits of Malacca is the first line of defence for India. This fact was well understood by the British and the foundation of Singapore was one of the results of the British concern for the defence of India. After the independence the leaders

85 Yuan-li Wu, n. 14, p. 672.

86 See The Military Balance 1976-77, n. 26, p. 56.

of India underestimated this aspect of India's defence. They were, however, painfully reminded of the strategical importance of the straits for the defence of India by the threatening appearance of the Seventh Fleet into Indian waters during the Indo-Pakistan war of December 1971.) India is not a global power but she views with concern the growing rivalry of the superpowers in the Indian Ocean which is antagonistic to her security and peace of South and Southeast Asia. India's recent off-shore oil findings along her coasts may demand additional attention of her defence planners for the security of oil installations.

(Moreover, Southeast Asia watches India's development with interest as she can emerge as a stabilizing factor within the region, thus, pre-empting the super powers.) One observer has pointed in this direction "Having come out victorious in a war with Pakistan in 1971, India underscored its claim to great power status in 1974 by exploding several sic atomic devices.... For Southeast Asians, the question is what India can do to assert its interest in the future in the Indian Ocean." ⁸⁷ Moreover, India's recent economic and foreign trade offensives make Singapore a suitable landing ground for her in Southeast Asia.

Indonesia

For Indonesia, Singapore is most important for her security and peace of the region for which the present leadership in

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Donald E. Nuechterlein, "Southeast Asia in International Politics: A 1975 Perspective", Asian Survey, vol. 15, no. 7, July 1975, p. 679.

Indonesia expresses much concern. One of the reasons of the confrontation with Malaysia was to frustrate the birth of a unified, powerful and economically advanced country in the neighbourhood of Indonesia. The present leadership, however, is not against Malaysia or Singapore as such. But the leaders still count the possibility of Singapore becoming the Third China or going in the lap of any one super power. Singapore can also emerge, in Indonesian views, as a communist cradle and/or an adopted child of Communist China. As a prominent member of the ASEAN, Singapore is important to show the unity and solidarity of anti-communist countries of Southeast Asia which aspect is most important for the present rulers of Indonesia. For these reasons and for the strategical importance of Singapore for her security, Indonesia watches every development in Singapore and its foreign policy with an attentive eye.

Major Powers and National Security

Singapore's security planning has influenced the foreign policy of the Republic. The greatest architect of the entire strategy is the Prime Minister himself who has evolved a distinct style in international affairs by openly advocating the presence and rivalry of the major powers in the region so as to create a "stable balance of influence."⁸⁸ In a speech early in 1968 Lee Kuan Yew had said:

88 See Lee's Statement, The Mirror, vol. 9, no. 35, 27 August 1973, p. 1.

In the next 100 years we shall have to live with the fact that two probably three super powers (America, China and Russia, put in alphabetical order and not in the order of influence) will contend to so order the political and economic life in the region to the maximum national advantage of each super power. The eventual fate of South and Southeast Asia will be more dependent upon their resultant policy decisions than on the decisions of the dozen or so governments in the region. (89)

Rajaratnam also believed that the presence of the major powers and their peaceful competition in the region are inevitable.⁹⁰ On 28 June 1976, he said in Bangkok:

We accept the existence of great powers and their rivalries as an immutable fact of international life.... We do not subscribe to the prevailing belief that great powers are necessarily wicked, dangerous and immoral. They are no more these things than are small nations. Since we cannot wish away great power rivalries in the region, then, in Singapore's view, the next best thing for small nations is the presence of all great powers. (91)

Behind this strategy Singapore's security problems play a dominant role. (The Republic is painfully aware of the limitations of its military capability. It still considers defence of Malaysia and Singapore as indivisible.) On 19 March 1966 Lee Kuan Yew had said at the Rotary Conference at Singapore: "If Malaysia goes under and goes either to the extreme right or to the extreme left, then my survival as a separate and independent entity at the tip of the Malayan Peninsula becomes problematical."⁹²

89 Josey, n. 61, p. 645.

90 See The Straits Times, 17 May 1975.

91 Quoted in and from Lee Khoo Choy, n. 16, p. 110.

92 Josey, n. 61, p. 454.

After its separation from Malaysia, Singapore had no defence alliance with any country although the ANZUK forces remained stationed on the island. In 1965, immediately after independence, Singapore leaders believed, with sufficient reasons that the Britishers would stay there, at least up to the final solution of the Vietnam problem. The leaders of independent Singapore thought that total alignment with the Anglo-US bloc would not be beneficial to the Republic's prosperity, trade and security. The final blow to Sukarno had not yet come and Indonesia was still at war with both Malaysia and Singapore. Under such circumstances Singapore was extremely open to dangers from both within and outside the region.) Rاجاراتنام has appropriately stated on 4 November 1966, before taking off for Moscow: "We cannot defend ourselves. If Britain withdraws from her base in Singapore we must make new defence arrangements. They could be with Russia, they could be with somebody else." 93

Singapore's existence without the backing of a major power or combination of powers was unthinkable for its leaders, as Lee Kuan Yew once remarked: "It is power which decides what happens and, therefore, it behoves us to ensure that we always have overwhelming power on our side." 94

93 Quoted from Vishal Singh, "A Report on Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia", India Quarterly (New Delhi), vol. 24, no. 4, October-December 1969, p. 348.

94 Josey, n. 61, p. 511.

After its independence Singapore started looking towards India for alternative security arrangements in case the British withdraw from the region. There were several reasons behind this move, the strongest being India's policy throughout the period of confrontation. Besides, there were the reasons of geographical proximity and the historical fact that Singapore's defences were always tied up with India during the British period. During Lee Kuan Yew's first state visit to India in September 1966 he suggested that India "should make a significant contribution towards enforcing a Monroe Doctrine for Asia", as a long term policy objective.⁹⁵ It has been suggested that Lee's objective was "to enlist Indian support for an organization of nations in the region to co-operate against certain obvious pressures."⁹⁶

Strangely enough, the superpowers have no place in Singapore's defence calculations except that of balancing each other. Its partners in this field would, essentially, be the middle range powers.) During his visit to the US in October 1967, Lee Kuan Yew is reported to have said that he "did not have an American guarantee for Singapore's security, nor did he seek any."⁹⁷ From the very beginning, Lee decided not to offer the Americans a foothold on the island even if the British decided to withdraw.⁹⁸ In July

95 See Saroj Kumari Pathak, "India's Policy in S. E. Asia", International Studies, vol. 14, no. 4, October-December 1975, p. 626.

96 Chan Heng Chee, n. 9, p. 47.

97 Josey, n. 61, p. 593.

98 Chan Heng Chee, n. 9, p. 43.

1972 Lee told an American interviewer that he would like the US to have sufficient presence in the area "to prevent any other single power, or any group of powers, from gaining complete hegemony over the area. But I don't think you need bases and troops to do that. The Russians don't have bases and they are extending their influence all right."⁹⁹

(Yet there can be no doubt that in the defence strategy of Singapore the US has a complimentary role to play - indirect but very significant. Singapore wants a positive US military involvement in the region defending the outer ridge of Singapore's defence, constituting Thailand, the Southern part of Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia. The role of the US in defending Thailand from Communist takeover was emphasized by Lee when he said that this was essential for the security of Malaysia and Singapore.¹⁰⁰ Lee Kuan Yew, while hailing the Nixon Doctrine, emphasized on the new role of the US in maintaining peace and stability in the region by making the regional countries self-

99 Quoted in and from Pang Cheng Lian, "Singapore: Watching Moscow", FEER, vol. 78, no. 44, 28 October 1972, p. 29.

100 See Mirror, vol. 8, no. 45, 6 November 1972, p. 1. Prof. Vishal Singh has, however, emphasized more on the US interests in Thailand. In support of his views he has quoted the following statement of Admiral John S. McCain, Jr., Special Assistant to the Chief of the Naval Operations in the Pentagon, published in the U.S. News and World Report, 23 October 1972, p. 31: "The real concern for the U.S. is Thailand, because if Thailand ever fell, the Communists could take all of the South East Asian peninsula. Thailand is the keystone to the entire area." Vishal Singh, "The End of the Conflict in Vietnam and South East Asian Prospects", International Studies, vol. 12, no. 4, October 1973, p. 554.

reliant in matters of defence while, simultaneously, providing a "shield" against nuclear attack from a super power.¹⁰¹ The idea of disengagement from Asia, under the Guam principles, was adopted only after putting emphasis on the need for "rapid deployment" of US men and material to trouble spots in the Pacific and elsewhere....¹⁰² The United States performance in this region since January 1973 may have disappointed Lee Kuan Yew.

After the defeat of American forces in Indochina and their subsequent withdrawal from Vietnam and Cambodia Lee Kuan Yew took some hectic trips to the US and the ASEAN countries. In Washington Lee described the defeat of the US in Vietnam as "an unmitigated tragedy" and called upon the US to restore confidence among the non-communist countries of Southeast Asia by declaring that "the American government can and will act swiftly ... in any case of open aggression" where the US "have a treaty obligation to do so." Such a step, Lee argued, would discourage communist insurgents and as a result "the world will see less adventurism."¹⁰³ Speaking at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference at Kingston Lee asked the US not to withdraw immediately from Southeast Asia because, he said, "If this withdrawal takes place precipitately, it could give the Soviet Union the chance to move into areas China

101 Richard Butwell, "The Nixon Doctrine in Southeast Asia", Current History, vol. 61, no. 364, December 1971, pp.322-23.

102 William Shawcross, "We have no intention of withdrawing from the world", FEER, vol. 89, no. 27, 4 July 1975, America in Asia Number, p. 5.

103 The Straits Times, 10 May 1975.

considers vital and so force China's hand."¹⁰⁴

President Ford had assured Lee Kuan Yew, during their meeting in the White House that the US would honour commitments in Southeast Asia and elsewhere though it had a tragedy in

Indochina.¹⁰⁵ A few days after Lee's meeting with President Ford, Philip Habib, Assistant Secretary of State, toured Southeast Asian non-communist capitals and assured the leaders about continued US presence in the region. He also backed ASEAN which could play a significant role in checking the growing communist influence.¹⁰⁶ Again in December 1975, Habib visited Singapore and

briefed Lee Kuan Yew about the new Pacific Doctrine of President Ford which included "a strong US military presence in the Pacific, embracing Japan as a pillar of US strategy in Asia and a continuing US stake in the stability and security of Southeast Asia."¹⁰⁷ In March 1976, US Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, during his visit to Singapore, reassured the leaders that "the US remains firmly committed to participating in the maintenance of stability and security in Southeast Asia."¹⁰⁸

Singapore's strategy for security now invites US floating force of the Seventh Fleet to be always present in the Pacific and Indian Oceans so as to checkmate Russian naval presence in these powers would benefit Singapore in economic matters as well as re-

104 Ibid., 7 May 1975.

105 Ibid., 10 May 1975.

106 Ibid., 31 May 1975.

107 Ibid., 11 December 1975.

108 Ibid., 29 March 1976.

assure its security because of the presence of both the powers.

Singapore's relations with Japan are purely economic in nature. Yet Singapore thinks that Japan would certainly develop military capacity to protect its economic interests. Japan's economic interests in Southeast Asia and Singapore are worth protecting and she has tremendous stake in the free passage through the Straits of Malacca.) During his visit to Tokyo in May 1973 Lee Kuan Yew had suggested that "a joint naval task force constituting of American, West European, Japanese and Australian units would contribute to peace and security in South East Asia."¹⁰⁹ Although Japanese Premier Tanaka rejected the idea as it was against the Japanese constitution, the contents were thoroughly examined in various interested capitals. Pravda on 13 May 1973, remarked remarked: "Mr Lee's way of thinking is wrong through and through."¹¹⁰ In Indonesia the idea was criticized in military circles, so much so that when Lee went to attend the Bali Summit Singapore had, as an observer noted, "quietly dropped its proposal for multinational task-force to patrol the Indian Ocean, including the Straits of Malacca - a suggestion which the Indonesian generals once ridiculed as ineffective."¹¹¹

At one time it was aired that Singapore would cooperate with Japan in protecting the Straits of Malacca for their common interests, as had been observed by a commentator, "Japan hopes to

109 Asia Research Bulletin, May 1973, 1831B.

110 Ibid., May 1973, 1831B.

111 Ho Kwon Ping, "ASEAN: Lee Takes a Sifter Line", FEER, 26 March 1976, p. 28.

persuade the US to provide the know-how while it finances construction of naval vessels in Singapore shipyards. This would enable Singapore to protect the Straits of Malacca while entering into some sort of alliance with Japan.¹¹² After the US and Japan, the ANZUK powers were important in Singapore's security planning until the defeat of the western powers in Vietnam. British motives behind joining the ANZUK and retaining token presence in Southeast Asia were more diplomatic than moral and Great Britain's concern was, as has been stated, "not so much, to defend the region as to show its solidarity with the US.... The US needed a show of British support to give it heart in its political loneliness in Vietnam."¹¹³ The Five Power Defence Agreement¹¹⁴ was never taken seriously by either of the signatories. Yet it gave some hope to Singapore when President Ford invited the five leaders of the ANZUK countries for security talks after US defeat in Vietnam.¹¹⁵ But soon the reluctance of the extra-regional partners of the Agreement became evident (116) and Singapore turned its attention towards some kind of security arrangements with its ASEAN partners.

112 "Japan: Building up a Naval Force", reproduced from The Daily Telegraph in The Mirror, vol. 9, no. 29, 16 July 1973, p. 7.

113 A correspondent, "A Farewell to the British Tommy", FEER, vol. 88, no. 14, 4 April 1975, p. 30.

114 See The Mirror, vol. 9, no. 2, 8 January 1973, p. 7.

115 See The Straits Times, 6 May 1975.

116 See, for example, the Statement of Mr L. A. Hayner, President of the British Business Association, in The Straits Times, 28 October 1975.

Singapore has great faith in the idea of survival through the ASEAN and Lee Kuan Yew was able to declare, while speaking at the dinner given in his honour by President Ford at the White House in May 1975, "I am happy to tell you, Mr President that my immediate neighbours and I have not been lost. Indeed we have every intention to coordinate our actions and policies to ensure that we will not be lost."¹¹⁷ Lee did not think that after US defeat in Vietnam the ASEAN countries would "succumb to insurgents."¹¹⁸ The victory of the Vietnamese, Lee thought, has united the ASEAN countries and their leaders, as Lee remarked, "have never been more conscious that the future of ASEAN countries is so interwoven."¹¹⁹

In its regional framework Singapore still thinks that Indonesia as a major ASEAN power would be the cornerstone of any future security arrangement. This type of arrangement would necessarily be backed by the Western countries - the US, Japan and Australia in particular and may even have support of China. When President Suharto of Indonesia visited the US in July 1975, his talks with President Ford covered Southeast Asia after the Vietnam war and, as Presidential press Secretary Ron Nessen told reporters, "Mr Ford attaches particular importance to Indonesia and to the

117 The Straits Times, 6 May 1975.

118 Ibid., 14 May 1975.

119 Ibid., 26 July 1975.

contributions it is making to peace and stability in Southeast Asia...." ¹²⁰ The special importance given to Indonesia by the US in maintaining peace and security in the region serves the purpose of ASEAN member countries and is also accepted by them.

India's contribution to the regional security problems of Southeast Asia cannot be estimated at present. But the special position it enjoys due to geographical proximity and its tremendous potential as a military power cannot be underestimated by the ASEAN countries as a whole and Singapore particularly.

Singapore, Communism and the Communist Powers

Singapore sees a threat to its security not by communist powers but communists aided by any one of the communist powers. The early attempts of the communists to capture power in Malaya and Singapore is given to be the reason behind such a thinking. On the home front Lee Kuan Yew has always tried to suppress communists and boasts that he is the only leader in the world who has defeated communists not by bullet but by ballot. Yet Singapore is exposed to dangers of communist revolutionary wars and although Peking's policies in supporting indigenous revolutionary wars in Southeast Asia have lately been modified, the ASEAN leaders fear an attempt by Hanoi to create trouble in their countries by supporting the local communists. Although immediately after the end of Vietnam war. Lee Kuan Yew, during his T.V. interview in

Washington on 12 May 1975 had said that Vietnam, even after her victory, would not make any attempt elsewhere in Southeast Asia to export revolutions.¹²¹ Yet when the Foreign Ministers of the ASEAN countries assembled in Kuala Lumpur in May 1975 they showed "extreme concern" over the events in Indo-China and their bearings on their own security and survival.¹²² Lee Kuan Yew himself had said at Kingston that within 18 months the people would know "how swiftly China, Vietnam, and the Soviet Union have moved to consolidate their respective positions" and increase their influence in the region.¹²³ Although showing his confidence against communist advances, Lee accepted that "the fall of Saigon to the Communists marked in a dramatic way the decline of western dominance vis-a-vis the communists, the Soviet Union and China."¹²⁴

The fear psychosis among the ASEAN countries quickly took the shape of confidence and during the Bali Summit in a "hands-off" warning to Hanoi, Rajaratnam declared that "no amount of confrontation" could destroy the ASEAN countries. He said, "Indo-china can choose to be communist, but we have the right to be non-communist. Don't interfere with us."¹²⁵ However, Singapore's

121 Straits Times, 13 May 1975.

122 Ibid., 14 May 1975.

123 Ibid., 7 May 1975.

124 Ibid., 2 May 1975.

125 Ibid., 1 March 1975.

policy towards Vietnam is that of co-existence and even co-operation in economic field. In his speech at Tokyo Lee Kuan Yew has hoped to co-exist with the Indochinese states and said: "At least we can have friendly and constructive relations with them, because we did not participate in the Vietnam war unlike Thailand and the Philippines."¹²⁶

(Singapore is not against the presence of communist powers in Southeast Asia. It has diplomatic relations with all communist countries except China and China's presence in Singapore is felt by the Singaporeans even without any kind of formal relationship. China's psychological presence in Singapore was thought to be dangerous a decade ago. But now it has been accepted without any special importance paid to "her capacity to assist indigenous rebellions"¹²⁷ perhaps because Singapore has passed through the transitional period of nationality building and achieved a degree of stability and viable nationhood.)

In 1970 Rajaratnam had said in the Singapore Parliament that China did not recognize Singapore and as such "it is extremely difficult to be friendly with a government which appears to believe that the state of Singapore does not exist."¹²⁸ Although technically the two countries still do not have diplomatic relations

126 Mainichi Daily News (Tokyo), 23 May 1975.

127 Melvin Gurtov, China and Southeast Asia: The Politics of Survival (Mass., 1971), p. 176.

128 Singapore, Parliamentary Debates, vol. 29, no. 7, 27 January 1970, col. 168.

the stand of China has been changed. When Rajaratnam paid a visit to China in March 1975, he was not pressed for diplomatic relations by the Chinese and they even "went out of their way to stress that they respected the Republic of Singapore's independence and that Singaporeans had an identity distinct from that of other Chinese overseas."¹²⁹ Even when Lee Kuan Yew visited China in May 1976, the question of diplomatic relationship was not raised by the Chinese and Chinese Premier, while welcoming Lee Kuan Yew to China, for the first time spoke warmly about the ASEAN in public.¹³⁰ This enhanced the prestige of Singapore in other ASEAN capitals and gave a great feeler to Indonesia to adopt a modified line towards a modified China.

However, China is accepted in Singapore as an extra-regional power which has tremendous interests in the politics of the Pacific Ocean as well as of the Indian Ocean.¹³¹ Singapore is ready to deal with China on the following terms, as Lee Kuan Yew said in the banquet given to him by the Chinese Premier, Hua Kuo Feng:

Premier Hua says that being a socialist country China supports the revolutionary struggle of all countries. But Premier Hua also states that China does not interfere in the internal matters of other countries and that how the Singapore government deals

129 The Straits Times, 22 March 1975.

130 Harvey Stockwin, "Lee Lays it on the Line", FEER, vol. 92, no. 23, 4 June 1976, p. 14.

131 See Rajaratnam's speech, The Mirror, vol. 8, no. 31, 31 July 1972, p. 4.

with its communists is a matter for the Singapore Government to decide. Based on non-interference I believe that we can develop our relations. (132)

Lee Kuan Yew has stressed that Southeast Asia's relationship with China must be taken as granted and the region should "learn to live with China" whose "immediate interest in South-east Asia is to check Soviet influence increasing at her expense."¹³³ At the Kingston Commonwealth Conference also Lee asked the leaders of Southeast Asia not to "offend the Chinese" who were "the more benign of the communist powers."¹³⁴ Singapore has so far acted in co-operation with its immediate neighbours--particularly with Indonesia--in dealing with China. It has also believed that the Sino-Soviet rift is a genuine one and Lee Kuan Yew warned Southeast Asian leaders, that "Nothing is more likely to bring on Chinese wrath and an actively-stoked up insurgency than to allow Soviet influence to increase."¹³⁵

In January 1976, Lee Kuan Yew said that Singapore has every kind of relationship with China except diplomatic recognition and that Singapore would be the last of the ASEAN countries to establish diplomatic relations with China.¹³⁶ This is perhaps to give due respect to a big brother and an ASEAN partner -

132 Quoted in and from Harvey Stockwin, n. 130, p. 14.

133 Mainichi Daily News, 2 June 1974.

134 The Straits Times, 7 May 1975.

135 Ibid., 6 May 1975.

136 Ibid., 7 January 1976.

Indonesia. China also thinks that it would be better if Singapore waits and encourage Indonesia to 'de-freeze' the Sino-Indonesian diplomatic relationship. Lee's advocacy to accept China as a world power and with definite interests in Southeast Asia, may some day influence Indonesian leaders also. Meanwhile, China has established herself in the diplomatic and security calculations of Singapore, as has been said by Lee Kuan Yew when he entertained US Vice-President Rockefeller over a state banquet in Singapore:

Some are uncertain whether in the intermediate and longer term it will be a balance between two or three powers. We know that the Soviet Union, a super power, formerly excluded from the region has made its presence felt. We also know that China has become a major factor. She is a part of Asia with abiding interests in this region. (137)

(Soviet Union has been accepted in Singapore as a super power having global interests. Its role is desired as that of a great balancing factor against the US, Japan and China in the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. All these four powers are Pacific powers having vital interests in the Indian Ocean as well as the Straits of Malacca. Unlike China, the Soviet Union has diplomatic relations with Singapore from 1966. Their relationship is said to be cordial in spite of Singapore's repeated invitation to the US and other western powers to keep naval presence in the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. ¹³⁸ Although Singapore has not accepted

137 Harvey Stockwin, "Lee: Path-finding in the Forbidden City", EEKK, vol. 92, no. 20, 14 May 1976, p. 22.

138 See The Hindu (Madras), 11 November 1974.

the most significant diplomatic move of the Soviet Union, that of Brezhnev plan of collective security in Asia, it accepts the legitimate rights of the Soviet ^{Union} as well as other powers to maintain a naval presence in the oceans.) Singapore, while accepting Sino-Soviet differences thinks that the region should do nothing to please the Russians otherwise the Chinese would be unhappy. ¹³⁹ Lee Kuan Yew said to an Australian journalist that the Sino-Soviet rivalry had become a global phenomenon but Southeast ¹⁴⁰ Asian countries should be spared from this rivalry. Singapore is happy at the growing stake of the Soviet Union in the Straits of Malacca which would in turn develop a Soviet stake in the republic itself so much so that the Soviet Union would not tolerate any change in the status quo at least in the Straits of Malacca and its littoral states. This would also give Singapore protection against its immediate neighbours as well as other extra-regional major powers.

(With its objective of maximum number of friends to its side, Singapore is striving to invite major power presence in the region so that all the powers would balance one another and Singapore's chances of survival as well as its options for security arrangements may increase and be diversified.)

139 See Lee's Statement, The Straits Times, 6 May 1975.

140 Times of India (New Delhi), 20 November 1975.

Chapter IV

SINGAPORE'S BALANCE OF POWER STRATEGY

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The leadership of Singapore conceives that a favourable power-balance in Southeast Asia may give the Republic peace and security. During the confrontation with Indonesia, Malaysia survived because there was a power-balance in the region - the Eastern bloc supporting Indonesia and the Western countries along with some non-aligned countries supporting Malaysia. This situation prevented a global war on that issue. After its independence Singapore's policy continued to be of inviting the presence of all the major powers in and around the Republic and balancing them in the interests of its security and economic prosperity.

The Five Plus Two Powers and Their Presence

Singapore leaders believe that the five major powers of the world would be - and should be - present in Southeast Asia for their own security and commercial interests. During his visit to Australia in 1973, S. Rajaratnam had pointed out that the United States would be compelled "to take part in the new Southeast Asian balance of power game along with the Russians, Chinese, Japanese and the Europeans of the EEC bloc."¹ Talking with a group of financial editors in Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew had hoped for the presence of the five major powers in the region so that, he said:

1 Asia Research Bulletin, December 1973, 223A.

We can plug into North America, Japan or Western Europe or China or the Soviet Union as we wish, whichever partner we find to be the one most likely to assure us of progress. (2)

The presence of these five powers is not seen as a five-cornered balance. Instead, some are considered as supplementary to some other power or powers. Moreover, Singapore gives due importance to the economic presence of some of these five powers, e.g., Japan and the EEC - in its strategy for security and survival. Its leaders think that the presence of major powers in the region is a historical necessity.) Rajaratnam has observed in a speech he gave in New York on 27 September 1973:

Southeast Asia, we believe, will continue to be, as it has been in the past, an arena for great power competition. In fact, the post-Vietnam era will see an increase in the number of contestants in Southeast Asia. Hitherto the principal contenders have been the US and China. But today, the Soviet Union is a serious contender for influence. Before the decade is over, Japan too must enter the arena. Even the former imperial powers, reincarnated in the EEC, are manifesting a renewed interest in an area where they held sway over palm and pine. (3)

The EEC or Western Europe is considered a weak link in the otherwise sound and inevitable phenomena of five-power presence and competition in the region. Singapore leaders think that at least the remaining four, i.e., the U.S., China, Japan and the U.S.S.R. would become permanent actors in the

2 Straits Times, 30 October 1975.

3 S. Rajaratnam, "Southeast Asia After Vietnam", Asia (New York), no. 31, Autumn 1973, pp. 2-3.

power-balance game which would be silently played in the region in near future.⁴ In his emotional speech at the Lehigh University in April 1973, Lee Kuan Yew had pleaded for a continued American presence in the region because, he said: "Japan and China are integral parts of Asia and they will, in the long run, willy-nilly exercise their influence in East and Southeast Asia. Russia is completely open in her pursuit of influence as a global power."⁵

(Japan, furthermore, is not considered by Singapore as an important military power at present and hence, the role of the remaining three powers viz., China, the US and the USSR become most important in Singapore's strategy.) Lee Kuan Yew has observed while addressing the Commonwealth Heads of Governments meeting at Kingston in May 1975:

...it is power, and the use or non-use of power that will decide the destiny of the world.

It is the power of the Americans and the Russians and later the PRC and how they restrain themselves and their allies, that will decide the framework of peace plus competition for influence.

Within this context in Southeast Asia, we have to chart our future, especially after Vietnam. (6)

By this statement it becomes clear that even China is not considered as a significant force at present. It is

4 See Lee's Statement, Straits Times, 18 January 1974.

5 Asia Research Bulletin, 1973, 1956A.

6 Straits Times, 2 May 1975.

perhaps because of China's military weakness and her reluctance to enter, actively, the power balance game by refraining from projecting herself as a power centre or pole.) Lee Kuan Yew had once observed in a Press Conference in May 1975 that the US, China and the Soviet Union would "form a triangle in competing for influence in the Southeast Asian region", but China, he said, "will be the short side of the triangle, because it isn't as strong as the other two."⁷ China is not considered a global power although her status in relation to Singapore is significant due to the Chinese component of Singapore's population. The global status is reserved for only two powers - the US and the USSR - and these two got this status due to their naval superiority and capacity to cover all the high seas by their naval forces. Rajaratnam, while conceding the super power status to the US and the USSR, has observed during his address before the Conference on "New Directions in the International Relations of Southeast Asia" in Singapore on 3 July 1972: "In fact what today distinguishes a super power from a great power is ... the possession of naval power."⁸

Thus, Singapore's policy of inviting the presence of the major powers in the region is based on its appraisal of the power, interests, proximity and global politics of various powers. But at its bottom only two powers - the US and the USSR - are considered as global powers who would, necessarily,

7 Bangkok Post, 23 May 1975.

8 Quoted from The Mirror, vol. 8, no. 31, 31 July 1972, p. 5.

under their strategy of balancing each other, be present in the region. The presence of both China and Japan is considered desirable by Singapore for its own security and economic interest and, it is also thought, that their presence would also serve their own strategical, commercial and ideological interests. The fifth presence - that of the EEC or West European Powers - is also considered as desirable for the commercial and security interests of Singapore who sees security through numbers and considers that the weight of Western Europe must be put in favour of the US and Japan, just to balance the USSR. Lee Kuan Yew has observed at a Press Conference in Jakarta on 27 May 1973 that he believed in President Nixon's proposal of a "new Atlantic Charter in which the US, West Europe and Japan would share a new understanding in economic and security matters in tripolar world made up of China, the USSR and the US."⁹

Besides these, two regional powers - Indonesia and India - are considered as important actors in the power game which is continuously being played in Southeast Asia by the major powers for their own security and economic interests. Singapore has a special relationship with Indonesia through ASEAN and its security and economic interests are deeply connected with Indonesia's policy towards the Republic. During the Bali Summit of the ASEAN heads of governments in February 1976, the need for bilateral security arrangements between the members of the

⁹ Asia Research Bulletin, May 1973, 1831B.

organization was felt and also reiterated in the Bali declaration.¹⁰ President Marcos of the Philippines has made it more clear. When asked about defence co-operation among the ASEAN countries during his visit to Singapore he observed in a Press Conference: "Since you insist, may I say there is actually co-operation in these matters right now."¹¹ Even before US debacle in Vietnam, Rajaratnam has observed in August 1974: "Though ASEAN has been and still is primarily an economic organisation, it has also become an organization for sorting out and harmonizing political and security policies in this region on an ad hoc basis."¹² In the above mentioned framework Singapore looks favourably to Indonesia as a partner in a security arrangement on a bilateral basis especially after the decline of the importance of the Five Power Defence Agreement of November 1971 and after the departure of US troops from the region.

Although Indonesia strongly supports the neutralisation proposal declared after the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Conference at Kuala Lumpur in November 1971, her attitude towards its

10 See Lau Teik Soon, "ASEAN and the Bali Summit", Pacific Community, vol. 7, no. 4, July 1976, p. 544. The Declaration of ASEAN Concord (the Bali Declaration) of 24 February 1976 explicitly said: "Continuation of co-operation on a non-ASEAN basis between the member states in security matters in accordance with their mutual needs and interests." Indonesia Times (Jakarta), 26 February 1976.

11 Straits Times, 29 January 1976.

12 Quoted from Lau Teik Soon, "Singapore and its Neighbours", a chapter in Seah Chee Meow, ed., Trends in Singapore (Singapore, 1975), p. 49.

practicability and feasibility is rather doubtful. Soedjatmoko, one of Indonesia's prominent diplomats and publicists, has observed that under the new circumstances Southeast Asian countries would be required to develop "a spectrum of multiple balance of different mixes" so as to accommodate major world powers.¹³ This attitude, though not an official one, may reflect Indonesia's desire to adjust herself according to the needs of time by accepting the presence and competition of all the major powers in Southeast Asia as a tolerable - if not a desirable phenomena. In the long run Singapore may hope to convince Indonesia of the advantages of major power presence and competition in the region which may provide the regional countries with security and economic prosperity in an atmosphere in which the extra-regional powers would balance one another not only in military and political field but also in economic activity so that the regional powers may get more options not only in security matters but also in political and economic matters leading to peace, stability and economic prosperity of the region.

India is officially not considered as an essential factor in Singapore's balance of power strategy. Yet the proximity of India to the region and her historical links with it are the factors which make her presence inevitable. In Singapore, India is accepted as a major power who is reluctant to share

13 Soedjatmoko, China's External Policies: Scope and Limitations (London, 1972), p. 18. Quoted by Justus M. Vander Kroef in "ASEAN's Security Needs and Policies", Pacific Affairs, vol. 47, no. 2, Summer 1974, p. 154.

the responsibilities of that status. A major power status for India is considered due to her large potential and capacity in counterbalancing the growing influence of certain major powers.) Lee Kuan Yew had remarked as early as in 1966: "The Indians decided that they just could not any longer afford to be other than what they believed they could be; big fish, and the process has started."¹⁴ As the Indian Ocean becomes increasingly the centre of world power politics and as India day-by-day emerges stronger at the economic, political and military fronts, her importance for Singapore in its balance of power strategy would be increasing.

Singapore realises that India can help smaller nations of South and Southeast Asia in their economic and industrial development. For a small country like Singapore which has no mineral resources and raw materials India becomes more important when the former thinks about the worst possible eventuality in which a Malaysia-Indonesia combination may turn hostile to the independence and survival of the Republic. Singapore considers that India would naturally be interested in the geographical location of the Republic at the southern entrance of the Straits of Malacca wherethrough the 7th Fleet passed during the Indo-Pakistan war of December 1971 and had sailed into the Bay of Bengal wherefrom it could have threatened India's defences as well as her commercial sea-ports. Recent attempts of developing a naval base in the Andamans by the Indian Navy may be a pointer

14 Alex Josey, Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore, 1968), p. 480.

towards India's anxiety for safeguarding her first line of defence. Thus, Singapore's strategical importance for India may remain considerably high in near future and she may try to keep a direct presence in and around the Republic, both economic and political. Besides, India, although not a nuclear power, has emerged as a major regional power especially after the December 1971 war. In this respect India's future role would be of decisive importance as K.R. Narayanan, one of India's prominent diplomats, has observed:

In the future the destiny of Asia will be determined by the relationship among China, Japan and India. In the balance of Asia the countries of Southeast Asia occupy a very important place. It is in this area that the three great Asian powers will meet in co-operation or conflict or mere co-existence. The fact that there are potentially three great powers in Asia would ensure that none of them will dominate Southeast Asia. (15)

The presence of all the major powers, especially the above mentioned powers, is considered to be an inevitable condition by Singapore leaders.) Rahim Ishak, Singapore's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs has observed in a speech in April 1973:

Singapore recognizes that the major and super powers are likely to continue to take an interest in the region. Competitive co-existence is now more probable than ever before, between Moscow and Washington and between Peking and Tokyo.

15 K.R. Narayanan, "New Perspectives in India Foreign Policy", Round Table, no. 248, October 1972, p. 462.

It is highly improbable that the rivalries of external powers will cease simply because some in Southeast Asia ask them to get out. (16)

Despite the fact that he was a party to the neutralisation declaration by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers in November 1971, Rajaratnam has observed in May 1975: "Singapore believes that whatever principles we may declare big powers will be here. one day China may be here or Japan may be here."¹⁷ The neutralisation proposal was thought to serve the purpose of the ASEAN countries by excluding the major power rivalry in the region but not their presence. Lee Kuan Yew has once observed that the neutralisation proposal "has its positive psychological effect as a long term hope."¹⁸ But for the present the idea seems to be impracticable and unless the big powers give a guarantee to honour the proposal, the ASEAN countries, as Lee Kuan Yew observed: "are whistling in the dark, through the cemetery of Indochina."¹⁹ Although he hailed detente among the great powers as a good sign of peace for coming generations, the Singapore Prime Minister has declared that it would not mean a withdrawal by the major powers from the areas of their interest and, as he said, "Nor will the new phase mean that the

16 quoted from The Mirror, vol. 9, no. 17, 23 April 1973, p. 7.

17 Straits Times, 17 May 1975.

18 Times of India (New Delhi), 20 November 1975.

19 The Mirror, vol. 9, no. 35, 27 August 1973.

super and major powers will not continue to exert their influence on events within the region."²⁰

Singapore thinks that the presence of the major powers is essential for the economic prosperity of the Republic. The Republic is dependent on the major powers for investment and supply of trading goods. Its principal source of income is redistribution of goods produced by those major powers who want to sell their goods in Southeast Asian markets. They prefer business through Singapore because of the relatively stable political conditions in the city-state and also because of its traditional role as an entrepot and trading centre of Southeast Asia. Therefore, Singapore accepts and advocates at least an economic competition among the major powers which leads to the economic advantages of the Republic. Rahim Ishak, in one of his major policy statements in Singapore Parliament after President Nixon's announcement to visit China, has said:

Singapore's attitude is that as a small power our policy is to adjust to big realities created by the big powers. Singapore does not want to be under the influence of one power. There are, in any case, many powers around us which want to pursue their economic and other interests. The competition amongst big powers is for markets and security which are in fact legitimate objectives to pursue. Essentially the competition is of an economic nature. Most countries in Southeast Asia are interested in economic development and one more power, in this case China, would be welcome. (21)

20 Ibid., vol. 9, no. 3, 15 January 1973.

21 Singapore Parliamentary Debates, vol. 31, no. 3, 2 August 1971, col. 106.

The Sino-Soviet Rift and
Singapore's Options

In Singapore's strategy of security and balance of power, the Sino-Soviet rift is taken as a permanent phenomena and the entire strategy is based on this fact. It is perhaps only because of the realisation of the seriousness of the Sino-Soviet rift that China is not as much feared in Singapore now as she was a decade earlier. The cautious approach towards Peking is more due to Singapore's considerations of Jakarta's feelings than the fears of any subversive activities in the Republic of China. The pre-Cultural Revolution debate and the subsequent emergence of pro-Mao policy after the Cultural Revolution decided two trends in China's future policy. One was that the US was more acceptable to Peking than the Soviet Union and the "Soviet challenge" was considered so dangerous in Peking that foremost attention and efforts were thought to be required to contain it.²² And secondly, the post-Cultural Revolution policy of China suggested, as an expert has noted:

...not the image of an Asia dominated by China, which will have expelled other extra-regional influences but rather the image of a more stabilized, less tense Asia, subsisting in a more ramified, multipolar environment with which China could live more comfortably than it has in the past. (23)

Singapore leaders have repeatedly stressed on the Sino-Soviet rift and considered it as an essential variable in the

22 See V.P. Dutt's Comments in "China's New Diplomacy: A Symposium (II)", Problems of Communism (Washington, D.C.), vol. XXI, January-February 1972, p. 52.

23 A.M. Halpern in *ibid.*, p. 56.

Southeast Asian international relations and security conditions.)
 Lee Kuan Yew has observed in a speech before the Commonwealth
 Heads of Governments meeting at Ottawa on 3 August 1973:

China for its own reasons also wants detente
 with America. Then it will have only one
 front. It also wants friends all over the
 world to outdo and isolate the Soviet Union.
 China openly exhorts the EEC to succeed.
 Then the Soviet Union will be kept busy in
 the West and have two fronts to keep it
 busy. (24)

The above speech of Lee Kuan Yew shows that Singapore
 has given due consideration to the following two possible re-
 sults of China's changing attitude in foreign and defence poli-
 cies. First, her preference to coexist with the US rather than
 with the Soviet Union and second, her new role in international
 politics of containing the Soviet Union. With such an approach
 China, quite naturally, started initiatives in Southeast Asia
 where she could have, most successfully, checked the growing
 influence of the Soviet Union which was expanding more vigor-
 ously after the decline in US military presence in the region.²⁵
 Singapore's Prime Minister was perhaps the first ASEAN leader
 who understood and even declared that "China's immediate inter-
 est in Southeast Asia is to check Soviet influence increasing
 at her expense."²⁶ Lee Kuan Yew has also advocated that the

24 Quoted from The Mirror, vol. 9, no. 35, 27 August 1973.

25 See Robert C. Horn, "Soviet Influence in Southeast Asia: Opportunities and Obstacles", Asian Survey, vol. 15, no. 8, August 1975, p. 656.

26 Mainichi Daily News, 2 June 1974.

Southeast Asian nations should not offend the Chinese whom he described as "the more benign of the communist powers."²⁷ Lee suggested that to attain a rapprochement with China the Southeast Asian nations should not tilt towards the Soviet Union because, he said: "Nothing is more likely to bring on Chinese wrath and an actively-stoked insurgency than to allow Soviet influence to increase."²⁸

Soviet Union's collective security scheme was not acceptable to the Southeast Asian countries because it was considered anti-Chinese in its nature and content.²⁹ One expert from Singapore has commented on the Soviet proposal as follows:

The Soviet proposal for an Asian Collective Security System though vague in concept could only be regarded as an attempt by that super power to extend its security presence from the Indian Ocean to Southeast Asia, to fill in the vacuum in the event of American military withdrawal and to seek the support of Southeast Asian states against the PRC. Hence, Singapore and its ASEAN partners have remained non-committal towards the Soviet proposal. (30)

But Singapore has considered the Soviet Union as one of the essential factors in its balance of power strategy especially in balancing China and Japan and in checkmating their political

27 Straits Times, 7 May 1975.

28 Ibid., 6 May 1975.

29 See Arnold L. Horelick, "The Soviet Union's Asian Collective Security Proposal: A Club in Search of Members", Pacific Affairs (Vancouver), vol. 47, no. 3, Fall 1974, pp. 278-80.

30 Lau Teik Soon, n. 12, pp. 47-48.

and economic influence in the region, which has already become a Soviet policy objective.³¹ Lee Kuan Yew thinks that both the Soviet Union and China should "police each other" in Southeast Asia to the benefit of the regional countries.³²

China's policy of containment of the Soviet Union may be beneficial to the Southeast Asian countries who fear a drive by Hanoi against the ASEAN countries by supporting communist insurgencies in the region. In this context China's understanding with the US may give additional advantages to China against the Soviet Union as one expert has noted:

In the rapprochement [with the U.S.] China gained a great power for leverage against the USSR and facilitated a sizable redeployment of Chinese troops from the Taiwan Straits area to the Russian border. The US also facilitated a possible later conjunction of Chinese and American policies to contain Soviet and North Vietnamese influence in Southeast Asia. (33)

The combination would certainly benefit not only Singapore but other ASEAN countries as well. Not only this, Singapore has gained another important leverage from the Sino-Soviet rift as has been noted by an other expert: "If Singapore should become insecure as a result of changes in China's policy, or

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- 31 See Robert C. Horn, "Changing Soviet Policies and Sino-Soviet Competition in Southeast Asia", *Orbis* (Philadelphia), vol. 17, no. 2, Summer 1973, pp. 494-95.
- 32 Robert W. Barnett, "The Sino-Soviet Variables in Pacific Area Strategies", *Asia*, no. 31, Autumn 1973, p. 74.
- 33 William O. Oberholt, "President Nixon's Trip to China and Its Consequences", *Asian Survey*, vol. XIII, no. 7, July 1973, p. 709.

Indonesia's actions, it could well decide to encourage Soviet influence in order to balance Chinese pressures."³⁴ Singapore would like to take advantage of the Sino-Soviet rift by playing one power against the other. It is because of this fact that the two communist giants are not considered dangerous in the otherwise strongly anti-communist Singapore. Singapore has, thus, regained the leverage which it had lost due to the detente between the Soviet Union and the United States and also, due to the withdrawal of the US from active involvement in Southeast Asia.³⁵

The Pacific Ocean and Its Power
Politics: Singapore's Priorities

The Pacific and the Indian Oceans occupy highly important positions in Singapore's policy towards the major powers. One clear reason for it is that Singapore, as an island nation, is highly sensitive to the possible danger to its security from an extra regional power which may come through these oceans. The Pacific Ocean scenario has been given top priority in Singapore because the island was attacked and occupied during the Second World War by a Pacific Ocean power - Japan. Before the Second World War Singapore was within the political and military

34 Donald E. Muechterlein, "Southeast Asia in International Politics: A 1975 Perspective", Asian Survey, vol. 15, no. 7, July 1975, p. 582.

35 Refer Rajaratnam's speech of 30 June 1972 in New York in which, while commenting on detente, he had observed that as a result of it "the leverage of small nations on Big Powers diminishes and almost vanishes", The Mirror, vol. 8, no. 29, 17 July 1972, p. 6.

influence of the Indian Ocean powers and the powers coming from across that ocean, i.e., the European powers. In the ancient times as well as in the recent past Singapore had its economic, political and defence links more with the Indian Ocean countries or European countries which came through the Indian Ocean, rather than the countries across the Pacific. But after the Second World War Singapore's priorities shifted to the Pacific and its power politics. Besides its own security requirements, another reason which makes Singapore to watch the Pacific scene with purposeful intent is the fact that this Ocean washes the shores of the four greatest powers in military and economic arena - namely, the US, USSR, Japan and China - and they take active part in the power politics of this vast region for their own military, political, economic and ideological interests. In this connection Rajaratnam has observed:

Since World War II, power politics has been seen almost wholly in terms of the Pacific Ocean. Since Pearl Harbor, the Pacific Ocean and its control have been the central objective of power politics.... The war in Vietnam was an extension of Pacific politics into the Southeast Asian region. (36)

The four Pacific Ocean powers have acted as friends and foes of one another at different times and all four have "vital" strategical and economic interests in the Pacific region and Southeast Asia. The relationship of these four powers in the Pacific as well as elsewhere influence, if not decides, major

36 Quoted from Denzil Pieris, "Enter the Resilient Society", PEER, vol. 89, no. 33, 15 August 1975, p. 4. (Singapore 1975 number).

events in international politics and they are, for their national interests "playing one force against another."³⁷ Rahim Ishak, Singapore's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, has, in a speech on 6 April 1973, pointed out the interests of the four major Pacific powers in Southeast Asia and their policies in the region:

China, while undergoing internal changes leading to a more pragmatic diplomacy abroad, will not abandon its ideological proclivities overnight.

The Soviet Union, eager to disengage the West in Europe has an immense interest in Southeast Asia building up because Moscow, in exerting any influence in Southeast Asia may bear Peking in mind.

The US ... cannot be expected to give up its political aims of maximizing or maintaining its power in the region for ideological as well as, more importantly, for economic and strategic reasons.

And then there are the Japanese, a big question mark for the future. Southeast Asia is increasingly becoming vital to Japan's interests, as a source of raw materials, as a potential market for Japanese goods and as a conduit for oil supplies from the Middle East.(38)

These four powers, Singapore believes, would try to extend their influence in Southeast Asia in order to control the region's riches and raw materials upon which future industrial progress would depend. Singapore's objective is to balance these four in such a fashion that none of them becomes omnipotent

37 C. Edmund Clubb, "China and the West Pacific Powers", Current History, vol. 71, no. 419, September 1976, p. 81.

38 quoted from The Mirror, vol. 9, no. 17, 23 April 1973.

and none of them withdraws its presence.) The four Pacific powers are understood to keep a vigil on one another and extend their area of presence and competition so as to include South-east Asia in it. With the historical and psychological presence of China in the region, naval and economic presence of the US, USSR and Japan is considered desirable by Singapore.

Singapore's obvious orientation towards the Pacific power politics is not due to the reasons of ethnic relationship with China which also happens to be a Pacific power having high stakes in the Pacific power politics. Rather, the reasons for this attitude are economic considerations which are based on the fact that Singapore's two top trading partners - Japan and the US - are essentially the Pacific Ocean powers.³⁹ Secondly, it is because Singapore's foreign policy is more West-oriented and the US and Japan are the two bastions of the Western world.⁴⁰ Thirdly, Singapore's defence and security considerations require an active interest in the Pacific Ocean politics - this being more so after the defeat of US forces in Vietnam and acquisition of millions of dollars worth of US weapons by the Vietnamese.⁴¹

39 Japan and the US topped the list of Singapore's trading partners in 1974 having the following turnout: Japan - exports S\$3653.9 m. and imports S\$1610.5 m. The US exports S\$2858.1 m. and imports S\$2,100.7 m. Singapore Year Book, 1975, p. 248.

40 As an expert has commented: "Singapore is a non-aligned nation which 'leans to one side' - the West", Frank H.H. King, in R.P. Barston, ed., The Other Powers: Studies in the Foreign Policies of Small States (London, 1973), p. 264.

41 See Lee's statement given at Kingston, Straits Times, 2 May 1975.

Vietnam, it is feared, may again become a stepping stone to attack Malaysia-Singapore as she had been in 1941. This consideration, above all, forces Singapore to keep constant interest in the political and military development of that Ocean.

The Indian Ocean, World Powers and Power Politics: Singapore's Advantages

The Indian Ocean is considered to be an arena of major power rivalry by Singapore. It is the interest of the major powers in this ocean which make them interested in Singapore and its fate. Singapore was founded mainly due to the major power rivalry in the Indian Ocean and to safeguard British strategical and commercial interests in this vital region. Singapore thinks and hopes that the Indian Ocean would become and remain an area of major power concern. It is this Ocean which washes the shores of several Afro-Asian countries and there is no littoral state who can play a stabilizing role in the politics of the area except, perhaps, India.)

Rajaratnam has observed that the era of Pacific Ocean politics has ended and henceforth: "The Indian Ocean will be the major arena of big power politics ... Russian and American stakes in the Indian Ocean are growing."⁴² (Singapore takes the view that Southeast Asia cannot be free from the Indian Ocean power equations, and the nations of this region must take into account the situation which exists today and would exist in foreseeable future in this ocean while planning their security and economic

42 quoted from Denzil Pieris, n. 36, p. 4.

strategies.) In July 1972, Rajaratnam had observed in a speech:

But more immediately the Indian Ocean will be the major arena of big power politics. Indian Ocean politics will impinge more and more on the affairs of our region. Because of its geographical and strategical situation it is the fate of Southeast Asia to be buffeted by the politics of the Indian as well as the Pacific Oceans. (43)

(The reasons behind the extraordinary interests of Singapore in the fate and power politics of the Indian Ocean area are commercial as well as strategical. The Republic wants the expansion of the four cornered power politics of the Pacific to the Indian Ocean so that the position of Singapore for all the four powers may become strategically so important that every power would take interest in the fate of the Republic.) This situation may provide Singapore with additional vantage-point for survival since every power would like to accept and maintain the status quo in that vital lane which provides them passage to the Indian Ocean from the Pacific, namely, the Straits of Malacca. Singapore's survival at the most important strategical point of the Straits, may, then be assured. The Republic can thus also enhance its chances of survival against an attack by any extra-regional as well as regional power.

Singapore's policy is not in tune with the idea of declaring the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. At his Press Conference at Colombo after visiting India and Sri Lanka in December 1972, Rajaratnam had observed that Singapore accepted the

concept of a peace zone in the Indian Ocean but, he said, the implication of the concept was difficult to achieve. The practical course, he said, would be to formulate certain rules for the major power game in that ocean.⁴⁴

(Singapore believes in the power-vacuum theory in the Indian Ocean) and Rajaratnam has gone to the extent of declaring that "...when in 1968 the British announced their withdrawal ... this Ocean was put up for auction."⁴⁵ (This vacuum, Singapore thinks, must be filled by various powers and not by a single power. A single power would try to dominate while a number of powers would balance one another.) When asked about Singapore's views on great power rivalry in the Indian Ocean, Rajaratnam had replied to Harvey Stockwin, a correspondent of the FEER, "...if there is going to be a great power presence, whether rivalry or otherwise, in the Indian Ocean, then either all should be present here or none. The latter is a very impractical position. Therefore, we say, let all the powers be here."⁴⁶ On another occasion he has categorically rejected the idea of establishing a peace zone in the Indian Ocean.

I do not see the logic of it. A pull out by the big powers does not automatically make it a zone of peace.

44 The Mirror, vol. 8, no. 52, 25 December 1972.

45 Ibid., vol. 8, no. 31, 31 July 1972.

46 Quoted from FEER, vol. 85, no. 31, 9 August 1974, (Singapore, 1974), p. 7.

Throughout the ages it has been the ocean for the whole of mankind. So we say we want the big powers to be present like everybody else. (47)

The idea of establishing a peace zone in the Indian Ocean is not opposed due to any partiality or hostility to any country by Singapore. In fact the power presence and rivalry is accepted because of the self-interests of the Republic. Its apparent acceptance of a US base at Diego Garcia is not due to any kind of special relationship with that country but for the simple reason that the base would lead to an active Soviet presence and then a Chinese, a Japanese, an Australian and European presence. This increase in numbers would help Singapore in planning its security through balancing these powers and also - and which is more important - help the Republic in accumulating money by supplying oil and providing repair facilities to the ships of these powers. One can, thus, witness economic and other type of self-interests in Singapore's advocacy of major power presence and rivalry in the Indian Ocean. Another reason could be the suspicions of the Republic that its two neighbours may declare the Straits of Malacca as an internal waterway which could adversely affect the economic interests of the Republic. Singapore seems to believe that if the four-cornered power-balance and rivalry of the Pacific can be extended in the Indian Ocean, the four powers will naturally oppose Malaysian-Indonesian moves of nationalising the Straits and thus serve the interests of the Republic.

Singapore's relationship with the oil exporting and importing countries greatly shapes its policy vis-a-vis the Indian Ocean. The Republic believes that its oil industry can only flourish if the great powers are present in the Indian Ocean, some of whose littoral states are the greatest oil exporters of the world. When the Shah of Iran paid a visit to Singapore in September 1974, the Singapore President Sheares had said that the Republic shared the views of the Shah that the Indian Ocean "should remain free and readily accessible to all nations, that it should be an area of stability free of restrictions and barriers."⁴⁸ This statement may lead one to conclude that Singapore thinks that there should be no restrictions even on the establishment of military bases in the Indian Ocean by extra-regional powers.

Singapore hopes that the strategic vacuum, left after the British withdrawal would be filled by the Russians and Americans. "Even China", as Rajaratnam observed, "though she today lacks a naval capacity to assert herself in the Indian Ocean, has shown a growing interest in the Indian Ocean politics."⁴⁹ Japan's interests are quite obvious and its entire prosperity and economy depends on the oil exported from the littoral states of the Indian Ocean. Singapore's long-term policy objective seems to be that any power which would mingle itself in the politics of the Indian Ocean would have to intermingle in

48 Straits Times, 20 September 1974.

49 The Mirror, vol. 8, no. 31, 31 July 1972.

the Pacific Ocean politics also.) This simple equation would force that power to take interest in the fate of the island Republic because of its location at a highly important strategic point. If there is only one such power commanding both the oceans, Singapore's survival becomes impossible or at least depends on the mercy of that power. But if there are more than one powers, its security and survival would be assured. Moreover, the two oceanic politics and rivalry of the major powers would help Singapore in increasing its economic prosperity.

Singapore's Balance of Power Strategy

The leadership in Singapore conceives that a favourable power balance for Singapore in Southeast Asia may give the Republic peace and security. For Lee Kuan Yew, balance of power is a normative concept - a policy desirable, but not an end in itself. It is a means to achieve the end. And the end for Singapore is always peace and security. Lee has described his long-term hope as follows in a press conference at the end of his visit to Sweden in May 1966: "The best way to maintain peace and security in Southeast Asia would be for the major powers to agree to leave Southeast Asia as a neutral area in which no major power would use any of the smaller countries in the area as an extension of its own might...."⁵⁰ On May 23, 1973, Rajaratnam has also said in an interview with the Kompas (Jakarta), that what Singapore wanted was not to invite interference but to

⁵⁰ Josey, n. 14, p. 476.

maintain "the balance until the countries in the region" are⁵¹
 "able to possess their own strength."

Singapore is also suspicious of super and major power intentions. It believes that the major powers do not keep any benevolent intentions in their hearts for the smaller nations. In his New Year message for 1973, Rajaratnam had said that the detente did not deny "competition for power and influence or the absence of sharp conflicts or interests." He also observed, "there is nothing in their detente guaranteeing respect for the integrity and security of smaller nations."⁵² And, as Lee Kuan Yew has put it in his speech of 8 January 1973 at Bangkok, "Nor will the new phase mean that the super and major powers will not continue to exert their influence on events within the region."⁵³ For these reasons Singapore believes that any threat to its security would come mainly from the major powers and as such Singapore would "continue to play on big power rivalries and conflicts to ensure its survival."⁵⁴

Behind its elaborate strategy of balance-of-power Singapore has its security dilemma. The essential feature of this strategy is an inevitable presence of all the major powers in the region. Rajaratnam has observed during his speech before

51 Asia Research Bulletin, May 1973, 1831B.

52 The Mirror, vol. 9, no. 2, 8 January 1973.

53 Ibid., vol. 9, no. 3, 15 January 1973.

54 Rajaratnam's statement in the Parliament of Singapore, 6 February 1972, quoted in Asia Research Bulletin, February 1973, 720B.

the 8th ASEAN Ministerial Conference at Kuala Lumpur in May 1975: "If pressure comes from only one, we will succumb to it. If the choice is between the two, invariably we will side with one or the other. It is easier if there are more big powers."⁵⁵ Thus, Singapore gives high importance to the number game. Rajaratnam has observed during a speech in Bangkok on 28 June 1976:

...in Singapore's view, the ... best thing for small nations is the presence of all great powers ... when there is a multiplicity of suns the gravitational pulls of each is not only weakened but also, by a judicious use of the pulls of gravitational forces, the minor planets have a greater freedom of navigation. (56)

This scientific principle, Singapore thinks, also works in international relations and the smaller nations can enhance their survival and security possibilities by establishing themselves in the position of minor planets in a world of major suns which balance each other to the effect that the smaller planets get due benefits out of this balance by not falling within the orbit of anyone of them. In international relations, it is believed that a power balance would give greater manoeuvring power to small states as has been observed by Rahim Ishak in one of his speeches:

...the best way to ensure that no single power or coalition of powers exercise hegemony over Southeast Asia is to have a multiplicity of external great powers involved in

55 Straits Times, 17 May 1975.

56 quoted from Lee Khoo Choy, "Foreign Policy", A Chapter in C.V. Devan Nair, ed., Socialism that Works: The Singapore Way (Singapore, 1976), p. 110.

the region, balancing each other. With such a state of affairs, there are better chances for a power equilibrium to emerge allowing small states in Southeast Asia greater room for manoeuvre. (57)

Singapore has thus evolved a cult for small nation diplomacy. The acute problem of security and survival which the small nations of the world are facing today can be minimized, Singapore thinks, through the balance-of-power strategy. The strategy is not new for the small states but its implementation has been provided with a scientific and practical basis by Singapore. The balance-of-power strategy is definitely a big power game but it can help the smaller nations also and had already helped them, as Rajaratnam had observed in a speech in New York on 30 June 1972: "...the small nations could successfully adopt some of the techniques of the Big Power diplomacy - balancing the powers. And on the whole the small nations played that game fairly successfully and very profitably."⁵⁸

In the balance-of-power strategy of Singapore one essential thing is the multiple power presence so that the Republic can balance those powers. Rajaratnam has described Singapore's policy in this regard as follows:

At least my Government believes that for us, small countries, the more big powers are around in this area, the better for us because our options are bigger.

But if through some unhappy accident we have to contend and chose only between two powers then life becomes more difficult.

57 The Mirror, vol. 9, no. 17, 23 April 1973.

58 Ibid., vol. 8, no. 29, 17 July 1972.

Worse still if we have no choice but to come to terms with one power. Then that is disaster. (59)

Southeast Asia is considered to be the arena of vital interests for the major powers. Singapore accepts the reality and feels that the powers will not get out of the region by simply asking them to do so. Instead they would try to extend their political and economic interests in the region. This extension of influence may lead, some day, to ultimate take over of smaller countries by these big powers as was done during the colonial expansion and imperial era by the European powers. The history of western imperialism and colonialism shows that wherever a single power was dominant the entire area became either a colony or a part of the empire of that dominant power. India, Southeast Asia, Australasia and parts of America and Africa became parts of British and other European empires because there were no competitive powers at all or because a power emerged dominant after colonial wars. But China, Thailand and Afghanistan are the cases where no European power was successful in establishing its claims of suzerainty because no power was able to emerge as a dominant power. These territories maintained a kind of independence, though a restricted one, due to a power-balance among the various interested powers. Rajaratnam observed in a speech before the Asia Society of New York on 27 September 1973 that:

In this vastly shrunken world small nations must accept the fact of great power influence and even manipulation. Like the sun, the great powers will by their very existence radiate gravitational power. But if there are many suns, then the smaller planets can, by judicious balancing of pulls and counter-pulls, enjoy a greater freedom of movement and a wider choice of options than if they had only one sun around which to revolve. The alternative to one power dominance of the region is free and peaceful competition by a multiplicity of powers. It is good for the great powers. It is good for nimble footed small nations who understand the game. It is good for peace. (60)

The greatest pre-occupation of Singapore is peace because the Republic knows well that since it is the most advanced country of the region it would suffer most if there is any kind of turmoil in the region. Secondly, Singapore is most interested in the maintenance of the status quo in the region. It is a small power with no territorial ambitions and it would strive to maintain the status quo in and around it so that no ambitious neighbour can claim a right over its territory or try to occupy its territory by force. Thirdly, its prosperity is derived from the fact that it is situated on the major trade lane of the world and derives its profits from the inter-oceanic trade which gives its inhabitants relatively prosperous life. For this it would like to keep these trade lanes open. Fourthly, it is a trading nation, an entrepot which plays a significant role in the economic and political life of Southeast Asia and would like to play this role in future to its advantages.

All four of the above mentioned goals can be achieved through a power-balance in the region and a stake by the powers in the fate of the Republic. Peace and security for the small states cannot be achieved through huge military expenditure but by judicious policies which give due weight to and proper regard to the legitimate interests of the outside powers in the region."⁶¹ An expert in political and diplomatic affairs and Singapore's present senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Lee Khoon Choy has described Singapore's objectives for the balance-of-power in the region as follows:

Singapore ... believes that a multipolar balance in Southeast Asia is the only practical alternative. A balance of a number of big powers would provide more room for manoeuvre, more breathing space and hence more independence for the smaller states of the region than a situation wherein there is hegemony of one power or a bitter conflict for hegemony between two. (62)

Singapore's policy of balancing the major powers for its security and independence is derived from the economic necessity of the Republic to keep its doors open for trading countries for its prosperity. Rahim Ishak has advised the Asian countries to "maintain an open door policy to all powers interested in maintaining peace, security and stability in the region."⁶³

61 See the joint communique of Lee Kuan Yew and Kukrit Pramoj, Thai Premier, issued at Singapore, Straits Times, 28 July 1975.

62 Lee K.C., n. 57, p. 110.

63 Quoted from Vishal Singh, "The End of the Conflict in Vietnam and South East Asian Prospects", International Studies (New Delhi), vol. 12, no. 4, October 1973, p. 557.

Behind its strategy of balance-of-power in the Indian-Pacific Oceans zone the main objective of Singapore is economic prosperity which depends on external trade. Lee Kuan Yew had said in December 1968: "We would like to see a friendly naval presence all around South East Asia. It keeps the trade routes open."⁶⁴

One essential feature of Singapore's strategy for security and independence is inviting investment by the major powers in the Republic. The reason given behind this is that after their investment the major powers would automatically develop a stake in the fate and independence of the Republic. But here again Singapore adopts the policy of balancing the major powers. Its policy is that no single power should become dominant in investment in the Republic. All powers should have equal rights and opportunities of trade and investment.

Singapore's fears of communism and insurgencies also lead the Republic to invite a major power presence and power balance in the region. Singapore thinks that three under-currents of communist world are working in Southeast Asia. These communist forces in the region would remain, in near future at least, disunited. First and most powerful communist force would be that of the Soviet Union which is a super power already. The second and third are China and Vietnam respectively. The most feared communist power in Singapore is Vietnam which, in

64 Quoted from Vishal Singh, "A Report on Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia", India Quarterly, vol. 24, no. 4, October-December 1969, p. 348.

Singapore's opinion, may try to extend its influence across the Malayan peninsula and up to Singapore at least. Both the Soviet Union and China may balance each other and thus the third force, that of Vietnam, may become formidable. Singly it cannot be so dangerous but backed by any one of the communist super powers the Vietnamese can play havoc. For this situation and to avert a direct attack of the communist powers, Singapore considers the active naval presence of the US as an essential factor for the survival of the small and medium sized non-⁶⁵ communist states of Southeast Asia.

Lee Kuan Yew and other ASEAN leaders do not see any possibility of insurgencies in their countries for they think that they can overcome these by their existing security arrangements. Simultaneously, Lee Kuan Yew is confident that Vietnam would not try to expand communism in the non-communist countries for several years.⁶⁶ Singapore also views the ASEAN as a stabilizing force in the region and a power-pole in itself. In its balance-of-power strategy ASEAN is considered to give psychological protection to the Republic. For, no external power can attack Singapore without attacking some bigger ASEAN power first. This situation, Singapore thinks, would force the ASEAN countries to face the aggression unitedly. On the other hand ASEAN minimizes Singapore's fears from its immediate neighbours

65 See Lee Kuan Yew's speech in New York in Straits Times, 14 May 1975.

66 See Lee Kuan Yew's statement during Face the Nation TV Programme of the Columbia Broadcasting Corporation in Washington on 12 May 1975 in Straits Times, 13 May 1975.

which prospect had haunted the Republic for more than a decade. With ASEAN and the presence of the communist and western powers in the region Singapore enjoys the prospects of security and independence which were denied to it during the last decade. In this reference the departure of the US troops from Vietnam has not seriously affected Singapore's sense of security because it is confident of survival and independence through the power-balance in the region especially after it has been assured by the US that the latter is not withdrawing completely from the region.

What prompts Singapore to invite a major power presence and power balance in Southeast Asia? For Singapore it means security and survival and for that reason the policy is justified. Singapore leaders seem to believe in the condition of "neither war nor peace" always existing in Southeast Asia, as has been described by Peter Lyon.⁶⁷ Such a condition would automatically attract major powers - rather force them - to participate in the events as a part of their global strategy of check and balance. But Lee Kuan Yew, though personally inclined towards Western bloc does not see any gain for Singapore in a preponderance of Western Powers in the region. On the contrary he seems to have belief in the following proposition of David Vital: "Competition among the great powers, though it may bring small states into the conflict, may also provide small states

67 Peter Lyon, War and Peace in Southeast Asia (London, 1969), p. 5.

with a means of influence." ⁶⁸ Small states can acquire a suitable bargaining position vis-a-vis the super powers as Young has described:

In general, it is the very political competition between the super powers which allows the lesser powers to gain influence beyond their physical capacities by bartering their political orientations and allegiances. (69)

What is somewhat Clausewitzian or traditional in Singapore's approach is that it thinks in terms of military presence and only military presence. What Lee Kuan Yew has observed in his Lehigh University lecture has something significant to note:

The security and stability of the region can, for the time being, be provided only by an American presence. Russia's naval presence cannot, and will not, be excluded from the region. If it is the only presence then a single super power hegemony will be established changing the whole geopolitical picture. (70)

Thus, Lee Kuan Yew seems to be still thinking and believing in Ranke's philosophy regarding Great Powers and balance of power put forward by the latter before one and a half centuries in his famous essay 'The Great Powers'. But, given the geopolitical situation of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew and his associates have every reason to develop such a strategy. They may be thinking in terms of what Quincy Wright has described, "one

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- 68 David Vital, The Survival of Small States: Studies in Small Power/Great Power Conflict (London, 1971), p. 124.
- 69 U.R. Young, Intermediaries and Interventionists, quoted from P.J. McGowan, The Comparative Study of Foreign Policy (Beverly Hills, 1973), p. 175.
- 70 Asia Research Bulletin, May 1973, 1956A.

factor tending to reduce the frequency of war has been the probability that a war will result in mutual destruction unacceptable to either side."⁷¹ This can be called "balance of terror" but it may be a strange example of a third party, which is a small power too, inviting and striving for a balance of terror among the super and major powers for its own survival and security. Here also Singapore has its own reasons. The Republic, as a very small power devoid of any military significance, is incapable of "holding the balance" which is a precondition of peace in a region where major power rivalries are acute. But chances of peace can be maximised if a balance of terror can be created. Such a situation can also increase Singapore's chances of resisting the pressures of the great powers as, according to Fox, that of a small neutral power are increased when:

- (1) The more numerous the great powers with conflicting demands who are concerned about the small power and who could give effect to their concern - i.e. more complex the balance.
- (2) The more equal the balance of military strength among the contending great powers in the region of the small states. (72)

Thus Singapore has evolved a different strategy for its security and independence. The strategy depends wholly on the assumption that there would be always a multiple power presence in the region. It is also assumed that the major powers would

71 Quincy A. Wright, A Study of War (Chicago, Ill., 1964), p. 146.

72 A.B. Fox, The Power of Small States (Chicago, Ill., 1959), pp. 183-4.

play a balancing role in relation to one another and would not disturb the peace, stability and status quo of the region. The status quo would be maintained when there would be no compromise among the major powers regarding the fate of the regional countries and no division of the spheres of influence or interest. The compromise among the major powers can be checked only when there are more than two powers. It would be profitable if the number of the powers contending for influence is increased. A multiplicity of powers would, thus, assure the security and survival of small states like Singapore.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

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Singapore's history and its development as a trading and population centre was greatly shaped by the geographical location of the island. Located at the southern end of the Straits of Malacca and the southern tip of the Malayan peninsula, the island has always invited the attention of major trading countries. The fate of the island was also decided by the fact that it is situated at the meeting point of the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. In the remote past when trade between these two oceans was carried through the land route of Malayan peninsula, the Straits of Malacca was not a busy thoroughfare. This situation also affected the Singapore island and it did not develop as a port or entrepot as long as the overland route remained operative.¹

During the tenth and the eleventh centuries the Straits of Malacca became important for the extra-regional powers when they realized that the Srivijayan hold of the Straits deprived their traders of the profits which they could have derived by trading directly with China. Srivijaya played the role of a mediator in China's commercial contacts with the Indian and the

1 The prospects of a route bypassing Singapore or the Straits of Malacca still haunts the Singapore leaders. See Rajaratnam's Statement in the Singapore Parliament regarding the Kra Canal Plan. Singapore Parliamentary Debates, vol. 32, no. 13, 12 March 1973, col. 674.

Arab traders. This important position was acquired by it by extending its hegemony over the Malayan peninsula as well as the archipelago. The attacks of Chola Rajendra I in 1025 and Chola Vira Rajendra in 1067 on Srivijaya were aimed at destroying the latter's hold over the sea route of the Malacca Straits and the land route of the Malayan peninsula. Their objective was to establish a direct trade contact with China as well as to curtail the power of Srivijaya and destroy its hegemony over Southeast Asian Trade routes which linked the Sinitic world with the Indian Ocean countries.

Singapura was founded in the 13th century by a fugitive Prince Sri Tribuana who was perhaps a descendant of the Chola viceroy of Palembang. His aim was to protect the inter-oceanic trade route which passed through the Straits of Malacca. He also wanted to derive profit out of this trade by developing Singapura itself as an entrepot as well as a major sea-port on the India-China trade route. Singapura flourished in a power vacuum during the 13th-14th centuries and because of the fact that no regional power was capable of establishing a Srivijayan type hegemony over the India-China trade and trade routes. The Arab, Chinese and Indian merchants preferred the Malacca Straits route from the 13th century onwards and bypassed the major Southeast Asian entrepot of Palembang to cut short the length of their journey. They passed through the Straits of Singapore within the vicinity of the island itself which enhanced the value of this deserted island and soon it invited the attention

of a prince who was interested in safeguarding this route and who established a kingdom in the Southern Malayan peninsula with ~~capital~~ at the island-city of Singapura. Thus, Sri Tribuana's successor ~~kingdom~~ apt was an outcome of the revolution made by the Arabs and the Chinese merchants by preferring direct route to China through the Malacca and Singapore Straits by avoiding the entrepot of Palembang. The foundation of a population and trading centre on the island was due to the geographical location of the island on the India-China trade route.

Soon after its foundation Singapura invited traders from far off countries and also became a population centre. Its population comprised of various races and nationalities, viz., Indians, Chinese, Malays, Javanese, and other people of the archipelago. The rise of Thai and Majapahit power in the area made the separate existence of the kingdom rather problematical as it was buffeted by the two regional major powers who were engaged in extending their domains so as to re-establish a Srivijayan type hegemony over the area. The city first fell to the Thais and the Crown Prince of the Singapura dynasty, Parameswara, went to the Majapahit Court and acknowledged the suzerainty of the Majapahit emperor. After a renewed but short-lived attempt by Parameswara to develop Singapura to its old glory, the city fell before the Javanese and was perhaps destroyed by them. Parameswara then founded the kingdom of Malacca and got separate investiture from the Chinese emperor.

When the Europeans came to Southeast Asia, Malacca was perhaps the busiest port and entrepot. The strategic position it occupied due to its location at the India-China trade route and absence of any other entrepot on the shores of the Straits of Malacca made it automatically a centre of population and trade. After its possession by the Portuguese it lost the position of the only entrepot and various other trading centres were developed in the archipelago, notably, by the Dutch. When the Dutch occupied Malacca they established, in practice, a Srivijayan type hegemony over the trade and trade routes of South-East Asia. This position invited the attention of another European power who had already emerged dominant in the Indian sub-continent and who was interested in the China trade as well as the trade of the archipelago. That power was Great Britain.

The foundation of Singapore by Raffles in 1819 was mainly the outcome of Great Britain's consolidation of her position in the Indian sub-continent and her emergence as a supreme naval power in the Indian Ocean. The Napoleonic wars had established Great Britain as the supreme power in Europe as well as a dominant colonial and imperial power elsewhere. The Kingdom of Netherlands got the possession of the Southeast Asian archipelago, yet it lost its supreme position due to the loss of its naval power. After 1815 it was only Great Britain who could have claimed mastery over the high seas on account of her superior naval capacity. In the Atlantic and the Indian

Oceans British man-of-war commanded the waters and the British were now eager and capable of extending their naval hegemony to the Pacific Ocean so as to capture the tea-trade of China.

Netherlands saw a threat to her commercial interests in the rise of British power. The Dutch policy was very much similar to the Srivijayan policy of establishing a monopoly through mediation over the east-west trade and with this aim they started to capture the principal trade lanes and passages which linked the Indian and the Pacific Oceans. Their attempts to capture the strategically important posts in the Malacca Straits invited counter-moves by the British who had shown keen interest in the most profitable China trade and in protecting the trade route to China. It seems that the British concern for India's defences also played a dominant role in formulating Great Britain's policy in the strategically important passage of the Straits of Malacca.

Raffles' attempts were more directed against the Dutch when he founded Singapore. But it was the concern for India's defences as well as protection of China trade route that guided British policy-makers to retain Singapore after a bitter paper war with the Dutch which continued for five years. It was again the geographical location of the island which decided its fate. It was not the importance of the island but that of the Straits of Malacca which decided the course of events. Great Britain wanted to check Dutch commercial hegemonic intentions and ensure the defences of India and India-China trade route. All these three objectives could have been easily attained by

retaining Singapore. One factor which decisively shaped the events was Great Britain's possession of India and the great importance attached to this fact by the British policy-planners.

Singapore thus became the advance outpost of British commercial and imperial interests. It helped in establishing British empire in Southeast Asia, Australasia and some other outposts in the Pacific. But for the open door doctrine declared by the US in 1898 and 1900 and accepted by other major powers, Singapore would have become an important stepping-stone together with Hong Kong in establishing British sway in China or at least a major part of that vast country. Singapore's development as the linch-pin of Southeast Asia may be attributed to the global role of Great Britain as well as the decline of Dutch political and commercial power. As the Dutch attempted to close the doors of the archipelago Singapore's importance for the nations trading in Southeast Asian goods increased for it alone remained an open port in that area. Its strategical importance increased after the First World War and especially after the Washington Conference of Naval Disarmament in 1921-22. The decision by Great Britain to develop a huge naval base at the island invited the interest of another Pacific Ocean power - Japan - in the island so much so that Singapore base became a prime objective in the Japanese thinking. The attack by Japan on the Malayan peninsula and Burma was guided by her long term strategy to attack India. But Singapore could have remained peaceful and would have even been bypassed by the Japanese but for the huge naval and military concentration on the island plus its strategical

importance for Japanese designs on the Dutch East Indies. The attack on Singapore was more a pre-emptive move made by the first striker rather than any other military pre-occupation. The advantage gained by Japan by occupying Singapore was more psychological than real. Yet the fall of Singapore heralded the end of an era - the era of Western imperialism and dominance.

After the defeat of Japan in the Second World War the colonial powers returned to the Southeast Asian scene with the hopes of re-establishing their imperial systems. But this time they witnessed an awakening in the Asian masses who demanded the rights of independence and self-government. The Dutch were the first to depart. The British faced opposition from the Communists in the Malayan peninsula and Singapore. When independence was given to Malaya Singapore was retained as a Crown Colony. Lee Kuan Yew and his People's Action Party demanded Singapore's merger with Malaysia as only this arrangement could have convinced the British to leave Singapore and grant it independence. In this scheme British interests in the Straits of Malacca as well as the Pacific and the Indian Oceans were thought to be served and communism was understood to be contained. The British departure immediately opened Singapore as well as Malaysia to a new kind of danger. This time the threat to Singapore's security came from a regional power - Indonesia. The confrontation with Indonesia lingered for two years but Malaysia and its parts including Singapore survived because of the presence of Commonwealth troops comprising of British, Australian and New Zealand units and their participation in the war against

Indonesia. However, it is difficult to believe that Malaysia could have survived if the challenge from Indonesia would have been more concentrated and real. The confrontation, however, revealed a painful truth before the Malaysian and Singaporean leaders - that they were unable to defend themselves without the aid of extra-regional powers.

The confrontation ended after the October 1965 coup in Indonesia but even earlier to that Malaysia was unable to retain its unity and Singapore had been expelled from it on 9 August 1965. On that day Singapore became an independent nation and then onwards it started its search for security and survival. The coup in Indonesia and the subsequent rise of Suharto in that country gave a sense of relief to Singapore. Yet the problem of security and survival for Singapore was many faceted. It had to create a sense of nationality in its immigrant and plural population. It had to wipe away the image of the 'third China' or 'a Chinese outpost in a Malay World' which was thrust upon it by its critics. It had to develop an indigenous defence capability and search, simultaneously, for extra-regional as well as regional defence partners. It had to create an image of a nation which, though comprising of extra-regional racial stocks, was deeply involved in regional understanding and regionalism. It had to save itself from Communist insurgences which took inspiration from a country who possessed the psychological leverage to impress 78 per cent of its population, namely, China.

It is difficult to ascertain whether Singapore has succeeded in overcoming all these problems or not. But it certainly

is true that it has survived and emerged triumphant in the most difficult moments during these years. It has proved its validity and viability as a nation. It has now developed itself as a country distinct from the country to which the majority of its population belong, fitting itself in the regional framework. It has given due consideration to the feelings of Indonesia to remove misunderstandings. It has, furthermore, evolved a set of foreign, economic and domestic policies which has impressed various experts and students of small nation policies and diplomacy.

(The essential feature of its foreign and economic policy is the open door policy. If something more can be added to this general term, it may become 'balance in the open door.') For economic and commercial needs it keeps its doors open for all trading and investing countries. With its doors open it balances these major powers to serve its security and economic interests. (Its security interests are automatically considered as served if a country, preferably a major power, takes interest in it. The interest may be economic through investment or trade, political by keeping a presence in the republic or military while deploying naval units in the adjacent waters. Singapore considers all these as plus points for its security, survival and economic prosperity.) The Singaporean approach runs like this - if a major power keeps its political, economic and military presence in and/or around the republic, it would automatically invite - rather compel - the same kind of presence by other powers. It is good for the republic if the number is

not limited to one, two or three powers. Many powers would give many options to Singapore while a single or even two powers may force the Republic to surrender or compromise its national interests and even its independence.

Singapore's strategy of security and survival requires regional peace as a pre-condition. The Republic is aware of the fact that the disruption of peace or even tension in the region may result into a change in the status quo. It views itself as a satiated country which has no territorial ambitions. Simultaneously, it requires a constant increase in its economic prosperity and industrial progress. The two objectives are interwoven with each other. Both of them can be attained only when there is peace in the region. The concept of regional peace does not, perhaps, apply to the Indo-Chinese area. Singapore's survival and economic profits were assured during the Indo-Chinese conflict and the Republic enjoyed a kind of self-satisfaction in security matters, although vague, during that conflict. The involvement of the US and various other Western powers in that conflict was thought to provide time to the non-communist countries in the region so as to develop their own security devices, sort out and overcome their economic and political problems so that they can face any external and internal challenge posed by Communist advances - direct or indirect.

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This time again theory of Singapore was based on the presumption

2 As Lee Kuan Yew had pointed out in December 1968 during his talk at the Colombia University: "The enormous expenditure of American resources will only

(footnote contd.)

that the Western powers are helping those Southeast Asian non-communist countries who were not directly involved in the Indo-Chinese conflict by an indirect way. Singapore's first line of defence started from the Eastern borders of Thailand and it was thought that the Western powers are protecting those borders by their mere presence in the Indo-Chinese conflict and by diverting the attention of Vietnamese Communists which fact also affected, psychologically, the movements and actions of Communist guerillas in Thailand and Malaysia - countries thought to be most important in Singapore's security planning.

Singapore's strategy for survival and security has passed through various stages. The first stage was during the immediate post-independence period when the Republic was considered to be open to various security threats from within the region and from its immediate neighbours.) The solution to it was sought in the development of an Israel type of defence system and the Republic's strategy of a poisonous shrimp in a dangerous water. When the British declared their intention to withdraw their military presence from the region the Republic sought to develop more vigorously its own defence capacity, simultaneously, looking for a defence agreement with certain power or powers

(previous footnote contd.)

have been worthwhile if this is at least partially achieved, if the solution achieved in Vietnam buys time for these other countries to make the economic, social and political changes for their own survival. Quoted from Vishal Singh, "A Report on Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia," India Quarterly (New Delhi), vol. 24, no. 4, October-December 1969, p. 349.

which could at least give her immigrant population a sense of psychological relief in security matters. This was partially achieved through the Five-Power Defence Agreement of November 1971. The post-1971 period witnessed two currents running simultaneously in Singapore's strategy for security and survival - one was its balance-of-power strategy and the other was the strategy of regional collective defence with the non-communist countries which comprised of the members of the ASEAN.

Singapore's strategy of the balance-of-power invites and seeks the presence of all the major powers in the region as a precondition for a successful power balance scenario. The Republic wants the extension of the Pacific power politics - in which the US, USSR, Japan and China are actors - into the Indian Ocean so that it can derive advantages from its geographical location. In that case, it would, it is thought, become important for all the major powers and they would, automatically, take interest in the fate of the island. This condition would also benefit Singapore in another way. No major power would tolerate a change in the status quo in the Straits of Malacca and thus the Republic would have no fears from its immediate neighbours as any attempt by them to change the status quo in the Straits would be strongly opposed by the extra-regional major powers. The presence of various powers would also help the Republic in its security calculations as the powers would balance one another and Singapore would not be forced to accept terms or conditions dictated by any one power or two powers which may compromise with its independence. Singapore may also get benefits in its

economic and industrial calculations through a multipolar presence and balance. Since the US debacle in Vietnam Singapore is more receptive to the idea of some co-operation in security matters among the member countries of ASEAN. This has included both bilateral co-operation and exchange of information about security matters.

In the post-Vietnam era Singapore has completely lost confidence in its previous strategy of security through extra-regional Commonwealth partners. The Five-Power Defence Agreement is not considered viable and capable of providing anything like a security umbrella. The stress now is more on regional understanding in security matters among the ASEAN partners, though on extra-ASEAN basis through bilateral defence arrangements between the ASEAN members. Singapore's own security calculations however, rests more on its strategy of inviting major power presence and then balancing these powers to the best of the Republic's security and economic advantages.

Thus, the major world powers are considered essential in Singapore's strategy for security and survival. This strategy requires a major power presence in and around the Republic in such a way that no power may dominate the scene. This, essentially a balance of power strategy, would, it is thought, give the Republic peace, security and economic prosperity.

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