A FORMAL SINO-SINGAPORE DEFENSE RELATION: MYTH OR REALITY?

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the US Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

A FORMAL SINO-SINGAPORE DEFENSE RELATION: MYTH OR REALITY? by MAJ Kelvin Koh Chi Wee, Singapore Armed Forces, 123 pages.

South East Asia (SEA) is a highly diversified region, culturally, ethnically, and religiously. Currently, territorial disputes and domestic instability make SEA a rather volatile region, masked by a seemingly benign facade.

Singapore, an island state, not endowed with any natural resources, actively engages regional as well as international nation states to maintain a balanced of power in the region to ensure its continued economic survival and sovereignty. Amid the changing geopolitical climate of SEA and China's rising influence in the region, this thesis investigates the feasibility, acceptability, and suitability (FAS) for Singapore to establish a formal defense relationship with China.

The thesis differentiates the characteristics of the various forms of defense relations; formal and informal, to provide the basis for the cost and benefit analysis and the also the FAS test. The thesis also addresses Singapore's bilateral relations with key nation states and how these will be affected by a Sino-Singapore defense alliance. The results from the analysis showed that a proposition of such nature is highly time-dependent and also geopolitically dependent. The conclusion highlights the realization of the alliance will have to be build on continued security cooperation and greater integration in the military security arenas between the two nations, capitalizing on the continued presence of Singapore's Senior Minister, touted as the cornerstone for such an alliance to be initiated.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asia Nations
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FPDA	Five Powers Defense Agreement
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLC	Government Linked Company
GNP	Gross National Product
IT	Information Technology
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDU	National Defense University
NMD	National Missile Defense
NSS	National Security Strategy
PLA	People's Liberation Army
POA	Points of Agreement
PRC	People's Republic of China
SAF	Singapore Armed Forces
SEA	Southeast Asia
SLOC	Sea Lines of Communications
WTO	World Trade Organization

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Uncertainties and Singapore

Throughout much of history the People's Republic of China (PRC)[1] has stood significantly at the center of the East Asian international system, dominating the region with its vast geographical size, large population, rich civilization, and relatively effective means of governance.[2] Underpinning these factors is the presence of a dominant military element that has endowed the government, the center, with one of the country's most effective "tools" to maintain order. As Asia marches into the twenty-first century, amid a constantly changing global and, more significantly, regional political, economic, and security scene, China is strategically placed and poised to exert its influence in the South East Asia region.[3]

The conclusion of the Cold War, the envisaged reduced United States (U.S.) military presence in the region, and an end to the perceived Soviet hegemonistic desire for the region are opportunities that China is likely to explore and exploit to establish itself as a regional political, economic, and military power in the near to mid-term and possibly as a global equivalent in the long run. In a global economic environment where resources are scarce, China with its largely untapped resources presents itself as a country with enormous potential for economic development, for both itself and also countries that are interested in it. This potential is further supported by the achievements it has made so far in the area of economics, such as the granting of permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) status by the U.S. and its likely acceptance into the World Trade Organizations

(WTO). Her growing role and participation in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions is a further indicator that it possesses the potential and intent to become a global player both in the economic and security communities. Statistically this is further reinforced by its rate of defense expenditure, which has been rising at 6.3 percent per annum since 1979, though, among the G7 countries and South Korea (ROK), China registered the lowest expenditure [HO1]ofof of only 9.8 billion US dollars in absolute terms, in 1997. [4] Continued economic developments will help ensure that China possesses both the economic and military capability to project and sustain forces to exert its influence into the South China Sea and the surrounding countries by 2020.[5]

Singapore, on the other hand, is a nation in the region that is not endowed with any natural resources (less her population) that owes much of its success to its prudent economics policies, industrious population, and sound defense strategies. With an economy that is heavily dependent on foreign investments and trade while operating in a culturally, ethnically, and politically diverse region, the continued existence of peace and stability are critical ingredients to ensure its continued economic well being and sovereignty. Since gaining independence in 1965, Singapore's twin national objectives with sustained economic growth and security have been met as a result of its constructive engagement of all regional, as well as influential international, powers through the skillful integration of bilateral relationships with multilateral arrangements. With an evolving global and regional geopolitical situation, the emerging presence of China will have significant implications for the region and for Singapore in particular. These changes may significantly alter the regional military balance of power and geopolitical climate, which may, in turn, impact its economic and security viability.

For Singapore, the ability to hedge against the security uncertainties that exist in the region by actively engaging other regional and influential global states, such as China, is vital. Current regional developments and China's rising prominence may present it as a possible "partner" for Singapore to engage militarily, to include the formalization of defense relations.[6] Singapore may be an independent and sovereign state, but as it operates in a region where the countries are historically, culturally, and ethnically linked, the notion of developing any defense relations with controversial states, such as China, will have to be carefully weighed against the possible negative impacts that such an alliance may have on existing bilateral relations with the other regional states. After all, many of these states do not see China in the same light as Singapore does.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the viability of Singapore's entering into a strategic defense relationship with China and vice versa. Though the research essentially entails a study of Sino-Singapore relations, it is, however, imperative that the study also takes into consideration the implications of such a relationship on some of the other Southeast Asia (SEA) countries, as SEA's relationship with China had been an ambiguous one.[7] In addition, in view of the strategic relationship and defense arrangements that Singapore has with the U.S. and Taiwan, respectively, the paper also examines the effects of Singapore's establishing a defense relationship with China on Singapore's relationship with these countries. A fundamental question that has to be addressed in the paper is whether the benefits of establishing such formal defense relations outweigh the costs, particularly will it damage relationships with neighboring states or the U.S., or Taiwan or is the reverse a more likely situation?

Essential Background of Southeast Asia

Geographically the region of Southeast Asia encompasses the area of East Asia that lies between China in the north, the Philippines archipelago to the east, the Indonesian archipelago to the south, and Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) together with Sumatra to the west (figure 1). While the region is largely characterized by a large expanse of water dotted with numerous islands sitting astride strategic seaways, it is also the cultural diversities and the resources that the region possesses which make it a unique and vital region.

Figure 1. Map of Southeast Asia. Source: *CIA World Factbook* (http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/reference/JPEG%20versions/802696.jpg; Internet; accessed 4 January 2001.

The region straddles three of the world's most vital sea lines of communications (SLOCs) that offer sea passage among the Pacific Ocean, North Asia, and the Indian Ocean regions.[8] These have allowed the SEA states to directly and indirectly influence any sea movements among these regions. Currently, it is estimated one-quarter of the world trade passes through these sea lanes, and this percentage is expected to rise as the East Asia region develops, especially with China's entry into the WTO and North Korea's normalization of ties with the rest of the world. In short, with China and North Korea "opening their doors," robust economic development with foreign direct investment (FDI) will follow; thus the significance of these sea-lanes cannot be understated. Of particular interest is that fact that Singapore strategically sits on the most important sea lane (of the three), a circumstance that it has skillfully capitalized upon to propel itself into a first world economy in thirty-five years. Today, the average cargo tonnage into Singapore via the Malacca Straits is estimated to be growing at a steady rate of between 3.5 to 4 percent per annum, and is expected to rise.[9]

The ten countries that make up the Association of Southeast Asia Nation (ASEAN) states are geographically and demographically diverse, especially in the area of natural resources, ethnicity, and religion.[10] These diversities have significantly determined the development of these regional countries both economically and militarily in the past and are likely to remain significant in the future. In particular, the rich resources within the region have been a source of conflicts till this modern day, as was the case in World War II when Japan, a country lacking in resources, invaded the region primarily because of the resource potential that the region offered.

In short, each of the ten countries has diverse geographical and demographical characteristics, which have complemented one another very well over the centuries, but in some instances they have caused significant antagonism between the countries. This, in turn, has significantly impacted the region's security climate. In particular, Singapore has been able to effectively, through diplomatic means, position itself to play a key role in shaping and ensuring that security and stability continue to prevail in the region. This, however, is an increasingly uphill task.

Strategic Significance of the Southeast Asia Region

The strategic significance of the region is due largely to its geographical disposition, its ability to dominate and control the three main SLOCs in the region; these being the Malacca, the Lombok, and the Sunda Straits, and the vast resources the region possesses. Evidently, control of these SLOCs allows the nation-states to exercise substantial influence in the region to further their political, economic, and military objectives. This has proven to be consistently true throughout the history of this region, be it during the era of Western colonialism or the Japanese occupation. The center of gravity for any adversaries has been to target and seize control of these SLOCs. At present, the significance of these SLOCs to SEA's economic development continues to be evident, as the more vibrant cities of the region, such as Singapore, tend to lie along the SLOCs. Collectively, the SEA states have been able to harness this geographical advantage, capitalize on it and translate it into economic gains, using it as their pillar of growth and strength. This was evident during the Asian crisis of 1997-1998, which affected many of the SEA states. The economic state of these nations remained promising

and vibrant and continued to draw the interest of the international community, China included. This greatly helped the region to recover in a very short time. In fact, less Indonesia, the region has recovered from the crisis and is experiencing positive growth again.

The vital sea-lanes aside, the region has also in recent years attracted the world's attention with the rumored discovery of rich maritime resources around the Spratly Islands. China, in particular, is convinced that the discovery of such a rich energy resource will significantly allay the energy requirement of the most populous nation in the world. The Spratly Islands have been a thorn in the Sino-SEA relationship, especially since late 1987.[11] The discovery of these vital resources will not help in resolving this age-old conflict; on the contrary it may well be a potential contributor to future conflicts in the region.

Capitalizing on its vantage location as well as its rich resource endowment, the region has consistently registered positive economic growth to distinguish itself as Asia's key growth area and in particular, characterized by the emergence of significant emerging markets. [HO2]These emerging markets are key engines of growth not only for the region and Asia, but they are also significant to major global players, such as the U.S. and China, hence attracting much-needed foreign dollars. More so with China's and possibly Taiwan's entry into the WTO, the growth potential for the region will be greatly enhanced as it leverages on the potential of the Chinese market and the strength of the Taiwanese. Singapore, an island state in the region whose economy is greatly affected by regional, as well as global, political and economic activities, has benefited from the strength of the region. Despite the crisis two years ago, it has bounced back to register

positive gross domestic product (GDP) growth. In the third quarter of fiscal year 2000-2001, the GDP has grown by 10.2 percent in real terms over the same period last year. More significantly is the fact that the GDP growth forecast for fiscal year 2000 has been revised from 7.5 percent to 9 percent,[12] demonstrating not only the depth of Singapore's economy, but also, and more importantly the collective strength of the region.[13] In particular, with respect to trade between Singapore and China, it has trebled from 2.82 billion U.S. dollars in 1990 to 8.56 billion U.S. dollars, and these positive showings are expected to improve in the future for reasons highlighted above.

Security Outlook of Southeast Asia vis-à-vis China

Since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, the region has been a seemingly benign regional security environment.[14] Overall, domestic pressures and the fact that all the regional countries belong to the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN) have helped to allay potential frictions that exist among member states.[15] Since 1980, while tensions do exist within and among the states, none have developed into outright conflicts between nation-states of the region; generally, two kinds of conflicts exist among the SEA states.[16] The first involves traditional rivalries between national states that date back to even before the formation of ASEAN. One example is between Singapore and Malaysia, is the competing claims over the island of Pedra Branca. In response, Singapore exercised restraint and avoided the use of force to take defensive actions to stake its claims, a move that could be misconstrued by Malaysia as aggressive.

A second possible source of conflict is the rise in ethnic and religious differences and a corresponding lack of mutual tolerance. This is especially evident in the current

situation that surrounds Indonesia, where Muslims continue to fight Christians in Ambon and where earlier the Muslim majority targeted the Chinese population. In a region that is both religiously and ethnically diverse, any internal conflicts resulting from ethnic, cultural, or religious differences, if left unchecked, may well affect ties among the regional states and possibly develop into regional conflicts. Some other potential areas of conflict among the SEA states are; undefined maritime and land boundaries, fishery disputes, the Philippines' long standing claim to Sabah, the perceived relative disparity (PRD) among the countries, the residual ethnic suspicions of Chinese in both Malaysia and Indonesia, and its impact on Singapore's perceived "Chineseness."[17] Although the possibility of actual interstate conflict is not high, the potential for internal instabilities to escalate and affect the overall regional tranquillity and ASEAN's unity is of the greatest concern.

China's relationship with SEA states is exceedingly complex and in a state of almost constant flux.[18] What were once warm relations with China could easily ebb over time. One such example is Indonesia, which in 1965 had diplomatic ties with China, but in a matter of two years had broken off all state-to-state relations. Since the Communist victory over the Nationalists in 1949, the Soviet Union's far superior military prowess and the U.S.' containment policies have kept China " asleep" and inward looking for a large part of the century. With the recent turn of events in the global geopolitical arena, China's increasing dominance in the areas of security and economics has led many Western nations to view these developments as progressive steps toward the establishment of Chinese hegemony and domination in Asia.[19]

"Napolean's fears are finally realized, the slumbering Chinese giant is awakening,"[20] the potential threat that China poses was apparent even during the reign of Napoleon in the eighteenth century. These concerns have been further exacerbated in present day by China's less than clear foreign policies, which seemed to change with the three leadership changes it has had since the Chinese Communists took power in 1949. While being the most populous country in the world offers enormous economic potential, China's political and military policies have been less than clear. A result of such ambiguity is an uncertainty with regard to its intent for the region. Although China has tried to be more transparent in recent times with the first ever public release of the its defense white paper for year 2000.

However, this view that China will become a regional power that will affect regional security and stability and "be a problem in the years ahead" is not shared by all the nations in SEA. [21] In fact, a persistent and potential source of tension and stress can be found among the five key founding nations of ASEAN in their differing view towards China.[22] Singapore, due to its close historical and cultural links with China, has enjoyed a "special" relationship with China since its independence in 1965. [23] It has argued and demonstrated that China will not be a threat to the region and, in fact, believes that China wants stability in the region.[24] This was also clearly articulated by Chinese President Jiang himself during the UN Millennium Summit in New York. He stated that under no uncertain terms " a developed China will play a positive role in maintaining world peace and stability, and will by no means pose a threat to anybody."[25]

The Chinese Potential

Since 1979, the world has seen China make remarkable and sustained economic growth. This is a result of the change in the leadership's mind-set, which now focuses on actively engaging the international community rather than continuing its former isolationist policies. This was most evident during the Deng Xiaoping era, which set the stage for China to begin an open door policy and economic reforms. It is because of China's extraordinary economic performance over the last fifteen years that many forecast China as a major power.[26]

With China's economic performance likely to continue its upward trend, countries will be poised and ready to explore the huge emerging markets that China possesses when it is officially accepted into the WTO. With a gross national product (GNP) estimated at 1.5 trillion U.S. dollars and expecting to grow at an average rate of 7 percent per year, its GNP may reach $3 trillion U.S. dollars in 2003 and $6 trillion U.S. dollars by 2013.[27] This perceived economic boom would present vast economic opportunities for the global economic community. Especially for countries like Singapore where labor cost is high, China's huge labor base, which is increasingly skilled and educated, will provide production options that will help make products more competitive globally. China is a technologically advanced country and has made much progress in the area of information technology (IT), and may offer IT alternatives to those offered by the European or U.S. conglomerates. Conversely, China may view these as opportunities to promote its own brand names to compete against the established names.

Besides the economic potential that China offers, it may be worthwhile for smaller nations like Tonga and the Solomon Islands in the Pacific to engage China

militarily. Such an association would not only assist these countries in developing their own military capabilities, but also to allow China to establish its presence in their Pacific region.

Research Objectives

The primary focus of this study is to examine the potential for Singapore to establish formal defense relations with China. To support this effort, the study will also look into the following list of secondary questions.

1. Are the existing ties, inclusive of the diplomatic ties that Singapore has with China reestablished in 1990, sufficient to meet the needs of the nation in this uncertain and changing geopolitical environment?

2. How does formal defense relations differ from diplomatic relations, especially in the context of strategic relationship?

3. What are the cost and benefits for either country to enter into such a relationship?

4. What are the implications to Singapore's bilateral relations with regional states and also with countries like the U.S. and Taiwan, if such a security alliance materializes?

5. Are there other alternatives to formal defense relationship and what are the corresponding implications?

Assumptions

The thesis was developed based on the following assumptions:

1. China continues its open door policy even if there should be a leadership change after Jiang Zhemin in 2003.

2. The regional balance of power remains status quo, that is Taiwan remains separate from China, and the U.S. continues to maintain its limited forward presence in East Asia.

3. The current Indonesian racial and religious conflicts still exist, but it is unlikely that Indonesia will break up.

4. ASEAN remains a relevant grouping to all ten members and China continues to be a dialogue partner in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

Limitations

This study drew its insights from current sources of information. While there exists a considerable number of books and monographs on issues related to this topic, none have captured or studied the thesis question directly. It should be noted that the latest source available to the author was an open source article analysis and Singapore's *The Straits Times*.

While a significant number of articles have been published on the relations between China and ASEAN, none have attempted to examine the impact individually, with respect to each country. As such, when examining the consequence of the proposed Sino-Singapore alliance on these countries, the conclusions drawn will be the author's own assessment.

Finally, it should be noted that the recommendations and views made during the course of the study represent the author's own perception and assessment of how the proposal should be dealt with. At no time does it represent the Singapore Armed Forces or the government's official stand on this matter.

Delimitations

To facilitate the research process, the analysis will have to be confined to studying the impact of such an alliance on ASEAN as a whole, as opposed to investigating the impact of the proposed alliance individually on each of the nine other countries. However, to bring forth salient and more critical implications, certain of the countries may be highlighted and examined in greater detail. In addition, besides ASEAN, Singapore also has many significant (economic and security) ties with other nations that do not view China with the same optimism as Singapore. As such, the study should examine the impact of such an alliance on especially Taiwan and the U.S. Finally, the proposed alliance will have an impact on a number of issues, but the thesis examines only the security and economic aspects related to such an alliance.

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[1]Henceforth referred to as "China."

[2]Harry Harding, "A Chinese Colossus?" in *The Transformation of Security in the Asia-Pacific Region,* ed. Desmond Ball (Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 1996).

[3]Henceforth referred to as "the region."

[4]Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, *China's National Defense in 2000* (Beijing: 16 October 2000). Also estimated in the paper in 1997, U.S. incurred 267.18 billion US dollars in defense expenditure, Russia 16, Britain had 35.6, France 36.7, Japan 43.0 and ROK 17.2.

[5]Assuming that the U.S. maintains her current economic growth rate, and that China maintains a conservative growth rate of 5 percent per annum, ceteris paribus, it can be envisaged that China's economy is likely to surpass the U.S. by 2015. Combing this growth rate and with the rising military expenditure, it is highly possible that China's military capabilities would have been substantially modernized to exert its influence over the South China Sea by 2020.

[6]Singapore reestablished formal diplomatic ties with China in 1990, which was suspended in 1967 when Indonesia cut off its ties with China in the same year, as a result of China's suspected involvement and support for the communist movement in Indonesia.

[7]"Chapter 3: Asia," in *Strategic Assessment* (Washington DC: National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies, 1998).

[8]The three sea-lanes are the Malacca Straits, the Sunda Straits, and the Lombok Straits. Of which the most important of the three is the Malacca Straits, which is the shortest route between the Indian and the Pacific Ocean.

[9]"Chapter 8: Asia Pacific Region," in *Strategic Assessment* (Washington DC: National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies, 1999).

[10]The ten countries that make up the South East Asia region are; Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar.

[11]Though there are several SEA states that are have laid claims to the series or part of the Spratly Islands, of particular concern to China are Philippines' and Malaysia's claim to the islands. This is because since 1987, as a result of both countries' military modernization and their continued dealings with "big powers" despite the end of the Cold War, led China to seriously consider laying competing claims to the Spratly Islands as well.

[12]Ministry of Trade and Industry Press Release, *Advance GDP Estimates for Third Quarter 2000 and Economic Outlook for 2000 and 2001* (Singapore: Media Division, MITA, 10 Oct 2000).

[13]As a region, ASEAN growth rate for 1999 was 5 percent following a contraction of 4.4 percent in 1998. Individually, most of the countries in the region are expected to enjoy positive growth rates of between 3 to 8 percent. This was from Prime Minister of Singapore, Goh Chok Tong's Speech at "ASEAN 2000 Business and Political Opportunities Conference," New York City, 7 Sep 2000.

[14]In Terry M. M. Siow, "Is a U.S. Military Presence in Southeast Asia Necessary in the Twenty-first Century," (MMAS. thesis, CGSC, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2000).

[15]ASEAN was founded on 8th of August 1967 with the Bangkok declaration. It began with five founding members, which includes Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, has since expanded to include all the ten nation-states of SEA. The latest additions included; Brunei (1984), Vietnam (1995), Laos (1997), Myanmar (1997), and Cambodia (1999). The intent behind the formation of the Association was "to foster regional economic, social and cultural cooperation and to promote regional peace and stability" as articulated in Palmer & Reckford, 1987, and a key agreement in the declaration is noninterference in each country's domestic affairs.

[16]"Chapter 8: Asia Pacific Region," in *Strategic Assessment* (Washington DC: National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies, 1999).

[17]Siow.

[18]Lucien W. Pye, "China and Southeast Asia," in *Economic, Political & Security Issues in Southeast Asia in the 1980s,* ed. Scalapino A. Robert & Wanandi Jusuf (Berkeley, California: IEAS, University of California, 1982).

[19]Chen Jie, "Major Concerns in China's ASEAN Policy," in *China, India, Japan and the Security of Southeast Asia,* ed. Chandran Jeshurun (Singapore: ISEAS, 1993).

[20]Lucien W. Pye, "How China's Nationalism was Shanghaied," in *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 20 (January 1993).

[21]In Pye 1982, he captured that fact though Indonesia has since re-established diplomatic ties with China in 1990, still views China to be a threat to the region, likewise Malaysia.

[22]Ibid.

[23]As articulated in Chen 1993, China shares a "special" relations ship with Singapore in a sense that it had turned a blind eye to Singapore's de facto official relationship with Taiwan, while protesting, and in some instances rather forcefully, about less substantive relations between other ASEAN countries and Taiwan.

[24]Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000).

[25]President Jiang Zhemin, during the UN Millennium, quoted in *The Straits Times Interactive*, 9 Sep 2000.

[26]Harding.

[27]Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Singapore operates in a region with great economic potential but shrouded by a cloud of security uncertainty and volatility. The study of a topic of this nature requires an in-depth understanding of the key intrinsic and extrinsic factors,[1] their influence on the regional geopolitical climate, and their impact on the feasibility to formulate formal defense relations between Singapore and China. A comprehensive appreciation of the extent of influence that these factors have on the proposed alliance sets the foundation to conduct a cost-benefit analysis centered around economic and security considerations to evaluate the feasibility, acceptability, and suitability of the proposed alliance. The result of the cost-benefit analysis is the proposal of three possible alternatives to address the concerns, less the shortcomings of the initial proposal. Schematically the analysis follows the approach depicted in figure 2.

Stage One

Prior to commencing with the analysis of factors, however, it is imperative that a clear and concise definition and differentiation of terms, such as “defense relations” versus “diplomatic relations” and “formal relations” versus “informal relations”, are established. Firstly, this exercise puts into perspective the current diplomatic and defense status between Singapore and China, which then leads to the next stage of identifying the delta between the desired end state and the current situation. By employing their existing

diplomatic relations established in 1990 as a control or benchmark, the analysis highlights the differences and consequently, articulates the steps or actions to be taken by Singapore or China to establish formal defense relations. Finally, from the perspective of end states, the exercise identifies the potential benefits and costs for both countries not found in the existing diplomatic and economic relationships. This first step of the analysis essentially sets the stage for step two of the analysis, where the potential benefits to be reaped from establishing formal defense relations are analyzed with respect to the intrinsic and extrinsic factors highlighted in the preceding paragraph.

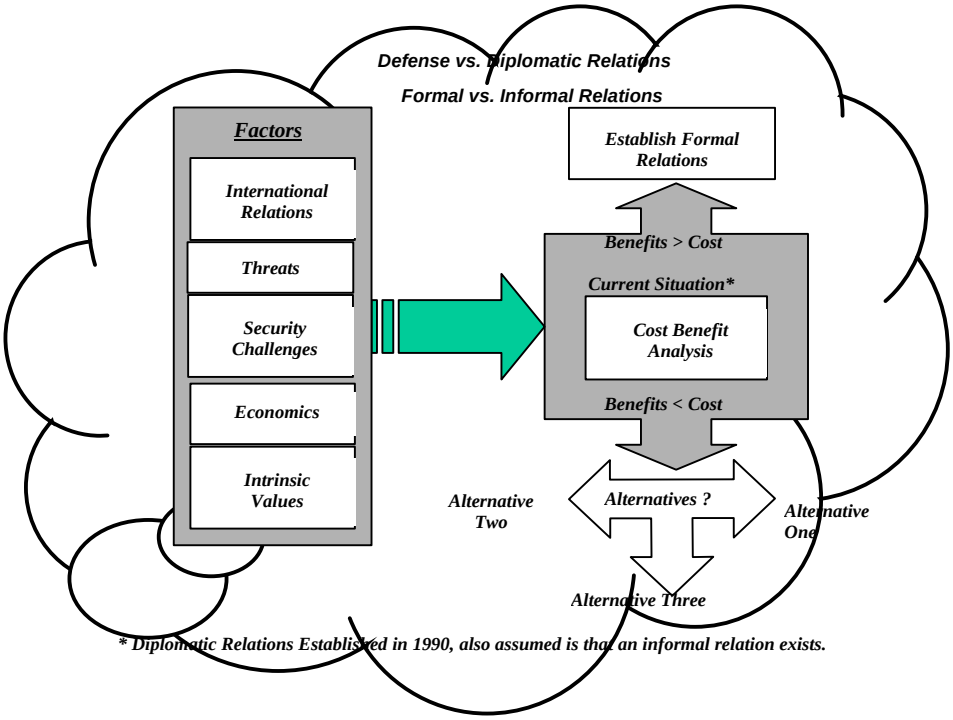

Figure 2. Approach for Analysis

Stage Two

As articulated above, in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the key motivations for both countries to establish such a formal defense alliance, an in-depth understanding of these catalytic factors is necessary. The[HO3]Tse factors include the volatility, the economic potential of the SEA region, and the diversities that exist between the ten-member nations of ASEAN. The analysis involves an appreciation of the political, economic and security diversities, and concerns that besiege the region, in so doing highlighting the threats, both internal and external, that are of concern to each of the SEA states in the region and to the thirty five year old grouping. Fundamentally, the analysis addresses and takes into consideration Singapore's economic and security interest levels, that is, national or vital, in establishing such a security alliance with China in view of SEA states' differing perception of China's rising prominence. In particular, this portion of the analysis provides a glimpse of the "disagreements" that exist among the key members of the seemingly cohesive grouping, the challenges it faces as a grouping, and the degree of differences in national priorities.

Equally important, the analysis examines mainland China’s perception and interests in the SEA region and ASEAN and its varied interests in the founding members states of ASEAN. With the conclusion of the Cold War, the cessation of Soviet's hegemonistic desire for the region, and a diminishing U.S. presence, the emergence of China and its corresponding impact on the region will be of concern to ASEAN and its member states. To further complicate matters, ASEAN member-states do not have a common view towards the potential that an emerging China brings with it, which inevitably affects China's ability to exert her influence in the region through individual

states without arousing the suspicions of others. As in the analysis of the ASEAN states, this study takes into consideration the security aspect, as well as the economic dimension.

Intrinsically, Singapore enjoys a “special” relationship with China not enjoyed with any other nation states in Southeast Asia, and this must be discussed in some detail, as it may be key in throwing some light on the intangible motivation for both countries to establish a formal defense relation. In particular, the thesis examines the shared “Asian values” that both nations subscribe to even in the face of changing geopolitical situation, which has allowed both to forge a close relationship, beginning with informal relations in the late 1970s and culminating with the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1990.

Singapore’s foreign policies with China are inextricably tied to the relations it has with the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the U.S. Both these countries continue to be key security and economic partners of Singapore since its inception as a nation state in 1965; unfortunately, they are also staunch opponents of China, especially in the area of security. Despite the thawing of relations between the U.S. and China through the economic realm, the proposed security alliance between Singapore and China will be of strategic concern to the U.S. and Taiwan. From Singapore's perspective, this analysis assesses the potential fallout versus the potential value-added to existing relations and climate between the four nations highlighted.

Stage Three

Finally, the study will consolidate the arguments from the analysis of the above factors to determine the benefits (pros) and cost (cons) for Singapore to establish formal defense relations with China, by applying conclusions from the analysis to two key areas,

namely the economic and security domains. The result of a cost-benefit analysis will set the foundation to examine the other options available for both nations to explore in order to realize the similar benefits of a security alliance without experiencing the negatives. These possibilities include maintaining the status quo but increasing informal defense exchanges, adopting a multilateral approach by including a third regional accepted partner, and finally adopting a time-phased approach, hastening the process accordingly depending on the regional and international climate at each point in time. Without conducting a detailed analysis of each of the options, at a minimum, the feasibility, acceptability, and suitability test criteria are applied to each option, while taking into consideration the implications attached to each option.

Only after the above analyses have been exhaustively conducted will the question on the need for Singapore to establish formal defense relations with China be effectively and comprehensively answered.

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[1]For the purpose of this research, the author has identified these factors to be security, economic, cultural, and key international and regional relations.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A significant limitation in conducting the research is that no literature exists that directly addresses the topic. However, a significant amount of material can be found that addresses the Southeast Asia region collectively or ASEAN as a whole, with respect to China and its future development. As articulated in chapter two, coupled with the inherent literature limitation, to effectively answer the main and secondary questions posed in the thesis, an alternate approach is to have an understanding of the direct and indirect factors that motivate or impede the development of such an alliance. As such, the available literature with respect to the factors under consideration can be divided into three main areas: (1) ASEAN's threat perception and security challenges to the region, (2) perception of China by the region states and their concerns, and (3) the U.S. factor.

Threat Perception and Security Challenges to the Southeast Asia Region

The Southeast Asia region is a "dynamic region experiencing tremendous economic and political change."[1] To understand the dynamics of this region a firm understanding of the ten-member ASEAN is essential. In particular, understanding and appreciating the reasons for its formation on 8 August 1967, its trials and tribulations, its development thus far, and the corresponding dialogue groupings will be key in analyzing the relevance of the proposed alliance. Fortunately, an abundance of literature has been

written about ASEAN since its inception. The following paragraphs examine some of these.

Overview of ASEAN-Trials & Tribulations

Ronald D. Palmer and Thomas J. Reckford, in *Building ASEAN: 20 years of Southeast Asian Cooperation*, provide a concise and comprehensive overview on the motivation and circumstances under which ASEAN was formed and gives a good historical account on its development. The book gives a good chronological account of the development of ASEAN from 1967 to 1986. Its analysis focused on a comparison of the individual economies at the time of formation until the mid-1980s, with attention given to how this pillar of strength has allowed the grouping to rise to prominence. Of particular interest to the thesis is its critical analysis of the success that the organization has enjoyed so far, which the authors attributed it to the "the achievement of the individual nations, rather than ASEAN as an institution."[2]

The authors are strongly of the opinion that the then six-member grouping was able to survive the early formative years amid a volatile geopolitical environment (specifically, the communist Soviet and Chinese support in Vietnam), driven by the common goal to achieve economic and political stability. The authors postulated, however, that due to the inherent differences; religious, cultural, and political, that exist among the nations, the possibility of ASEAN becoming a fully integrated association, like the European Union (EU), will be difficult. Besides the deep-seated differences that exist, economically the individual economies tend to be competitive rather than complementary. However, this pessimism was allayed when ASEAN, driven by its

collective goal to achieve "market integration among its members,"[3] established itself as an economic powerhouse in Asia and emerged as the "region's preeminent institution,"[4] a model for others to emulate. However, as Palmer and Reckford concentrated on a period before the 1990s, they did not examine the impact the inclusion of Indochina has had on ASEAN. Since then, the most controversial step has been the acceptance of Myanmar (formerly Burma) into the grouping in 1995. On a lesser note, the authors' focus was on the economic aspects of the grouping and did not dwell on the grouping's transformation to focus on security issues as well.

With the acceptance of Cambodia in 1999, ASEAN achieved the vision of its founding fathers: the incorporation of all Southeast Asian states into the grouping. Jeannie Henderson's *Reassessing ASEAN* (1999) captures the key developments and the challenges that confront ASEAN as it leaps into the new millennium. The author acknowledges the value added of the grouping as a defensive organization designed to reduce tension among the Southeast Asia noncommunist states during the Cold War period. However, its ability to cope collectively during the economic crisis of 1997 and 1998 led the author to believe that ASEAN is greatly "diminishing its role in managing change in the region," which she believes is due to the fact that the aggressive enlargement and engagement campaign from 1995 to1999 caused the grouping to overreach itself.[5]

Despite its inherent shortcomings, many analysts believe that ASEAN continues to be a promising economic proposition to regional states, such as Japan and Australia, which in turn translates into regional security. Alan Rix's *ASEAN and Japan: More Than Economics* (1982) focuses and elaborates on ASEAN's thriving economic relations with

Australia and Japan. It vividly captures the growing trade volume between Japan and ASEAN since the mid-1960s, paying particular attention to the trade volume that tripled between 1962 and 1971.[6]

The grouping's economic value is also articulated in Chin Kin Wah's *ASEAN in the New Millennium* (1997), which provided a futuristic outlook into ASEAN and also highlighted the challenges that ASEAN faces amid the changing regional geo-political climate. The central theme in his book is the economic concerns that ASEAN will need to consider closely, both collectively and individually, with respect to each of the other member nations, as well as the evolving regional security equation. The greatest challenge that the region will be faced with in the future is the ability to pursue a concerted economic developmental effort to help avoid an increasing rift between "the rich and the poor ASEAN nations,"[7] which has become more pronounced following the economic crisis of 1997 to 1998. On the contrary, following the crisis, the emphasis appears to have shifted from one that preaches "running at the pace of the slowest person," to one that now encourages "countries who can run faster [to] do so, they should not be restrained by those who do not want to run at all."[8]

Despite the gloomy outlook, Robert A. Scalapino (1999) provides a reprieve for the region. In his keynote address at the 1999 Pacific Symposium,[9] he sees the recent steps taken by ASEAN to make it an organization seeking to eventually encompass the larger region of East Asia as an encouraging development. The ability of ASEAN to actively engage major East Asia states, such as China, South Korea, and Japan, will be a positive step forward in improving not only the economic climate in Southeast Asia, but also the overall security of the region. Consequently, due to the shortcoming of ASEAN

to deal with security issues, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was established to provide ASEAN and other Asian states with a forum to collectively address the security of Asia. However, many regional analysts also doubt the value of forming such a forum, particularly in view of the inherent internal challenges that ASEAN is facing.

Internal Challenges to Southeast Asia

A close examination of the Southeast Asia region reveals numerous internal challenges deemed by regional experts as a bane to the organization's ability to function effectively. Heading the list of challenges is ASEAN unity or solidarity, most evident during the Asian economic crisis in 1997 to 1998 and the political upheaval in Indonesia. The grouping's inability to react collectively and effectively to these twin recent crises has greatly weakened ASEAN and has "shown how ineffectual ASEAN is."[10]

Lucien Pye's *China and Southeast Asia* (1982), Chen Jie's *Major Concerns in China's ASEAN Policy* (1993), and National Defense University's (NDU) *Strategic Assessment 1999* describe the region as one that is "impossible to speak of uniformity." [11] In particular, Pye (1982) and Chen (1993) alluded to the fact that ASEAN does not have a common stand towards many regional security issues, especially with respect to its stand toward China. Sheldon Simon's *Alternative Visions of Security in Asia Pacific* (1996) echoed the same sentiments and further added that while countries like Thailand and Singapore favored an inclusive approach in their engagement, Malaysia and Indonesia, on the other hand, favored a more exclusive approach.[12]

Many attribute the perceived disunity within the Southeast Asia region to a number of related yet diverse areas, which if not handled properly can result in bilateral

and multilateral animosities and conflicts that could punctuate the seemingly peaceful and unified region. However, Chan (1998) succinctly categorized these possible frictions into largely two key ones: conflicting territorial claims and deep-seated ethnic and religious differences. Some of the major bilateral conflicts that the region has experienced include:[13]

1. Mutual distrust between Malaysia and Singapore and contention over the ownership of Pedra Branca island.
2. Disputes over the ownership of the Spratly and Paracel islands
3. Border disputes and ethnic problems between Thailand and Malaysia
4. Territorial disputes between Malaysia and Indonesia

As alluded to by Chan (1998), the inherent distrust among the Southeast Asia states is also exacerbated by the historical, linguistic, religious, and racial diversities that characterize the region. Like Chan, many authors have also cited the region's unique diversities as hindrances to greater unity and closer integration among the member nations in the region. Among them, Leifer has managed to effectively highlight the salient issues that address historical, territorial, legitimacy, and state identity antagonisms, which are still prevalent in the region,[14] and pose an added obstacle to truly achieve a unified environment.

In addition, another area that analysts have assessed to be another Achilles heel to ASEAN's unity is the absence of a common threat. N. Ganesan's *Rethinking ASEAN as a Security Community in SEA* (1994) alluded to the fact that the absence of a common perceived threat has become a critical hindrance in regional security cohesion resulting in an "increasing state-centric policy among the ASEAN countries" that could inevitably

rekindle and "renew old disputes."[15] During the Vietnam War and Cold War, the presence of a common perceived threat, that is the spread of Soviet communism, helped to unite the grouping and downplay these potential frictions. However, with the conclusion of the Cambodian conflict, ASEAN seems to have lost its unifying theme and direction. Coupled with a prolonged period of peace and the absence of any serious threats, it has allowed the region to pursue a liberal economic program, hence raising the level of affluence in many countries, which, in turn, has allowed many countries to modernize their respective military forces. Some analysts have characterized this as an arms race, while others have termed it as an arms rush, which does not help to promote a higher level of trust and confidence among the regional states at all. The distrust is deeply rooted and Michael Leifer's *Conflict and Regional Order in Southeast Asia* (1980) aptly noted that "throughout the post-colonial Southeast Asia, there has never been a time when the internal exercise of political power has been universally regarded as acceptable or legitimate."[16]

Domestically, the varying extent of political robustness and stability within each Southeast Asia nation is often cited by some analysts as the key hindrance in achieving closer integration within the region. More specifically, Michael Richardson (2001) opined that, with the increasing instability in Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia, the armed forces of these countries may be presented with opportunities to exercise their political influence, establishing a stronger but authoritarian rule, which was prevalent in the 1980s.[17] Consequently, as alluded to by Amitav Acharaya in *The Association of Southeast Asian Nations: "Security Community" or "Defense Community"* (1991), the

lack of interoperability among various armed forces is a serious obstacle in establishing any credible defense community in the region.[18]

External Threat Perceptions to Southeast Asia

The ASEAN problems are not solely internal in nature. Perceptions of external threats to Southeast Asia have evolved over the years with the changing, uncertain, and diffuse regional, as well as international, geopolitical, and economic environment. Together with the internal problems highlighted in the preceding paragraphs, these have significantly affected ASEAN's effectiveness. Alison Broinowski's (1990) compilation of essays explores the security and economic challenges that the Southeast Asia nations face. Of particular concern to the regional states will be the "rising economic prowess of Japan and the growing military strength of China."[19] While the changing regional geopolitical climate and consequently security disposition will have significant implications on the Southeast Asian states, many authors believe that the "future dynamics of Southeast Asian security will be shaped by the nations of the region"[20] and will be internally deterministic.

Of primary concern to some authors, amid ASEAN's internal economic and political uncertainty and instability, is the region's susceptibility to the emergence of a "China threat." [21] Tim Huxley's *Insecurity in the ASEAN Region* (1993) suggested that "China's growing power and international assertiveness in the region, especially in relation to the South China Sea,"[22] is the main external security preoccupation of the regional states for the future. While Zara Dian (1994)[23] and Dana Dillion (1997)[24] echoed similar sentiments, Allen Whiting's *ASEAN Eyes China* (1997) provides a more detailed

analysis of the "China threat" from the perspective of each Southeast Asian nation. Most interestingly, like Chen (1993) and Pye (1982), Whiting (1997) also showed the perception of China tends to differ significantly among the different Southeast Asian states. However, some analysts argue that the China threat will remain unfounded in the next ten-to-fifteen years due to its projected "incapabilities."[25] But most agree that in the long run, with greater economic success and also international prominence, coupled with their military know-how, China will be able to translate this into greater military power and consequently, pose a greater security concern for the region.[26]

China and the Region

"Good bilateral relationships are the best security for any country."[27] This quote from Japanese Foreign Minister Kono in recent talks with his Chinese counterparts sums up the dilemma with which regional states are faced with when referring to China. Close examination of the numerous articles and assessments written on this subject reveal that, almost all writers, as well the regional states, acknowledge that China "is a growing influence" in the region. [28] They also remain divided in their perceptions of China's intent for the region [HO4]and can be categorically grouped under either the pessimist or the optimist banner.

Pessimist Views

Generally, the pessimists are strong believers that China, while canvassing for greater economic integration and development, will grow in economic and consequently, military stature and will be a security threat to the region, as well as the international

arena. “China’s military, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), is becoming more powerful and buying new weapons in order to modernize its forces and create a more effective military,”[29] and many analysts have linked this modernization program to China’s desire to dominate the region. This pessimism is not unfounded, specifically in Ross Marlay’s *China, the Philippines and the Spratly Islands* (1997) states that China has always seen itself as the center of the world while her neighbors are peripherals and subservient to its needs, nations of the Southeast Asia region included. This historical trend, in Marlay’s opinion, is likely to worsen as China gains greater economic and political prominence.[30]

Economically, some analysts have postulated that with the world experiencing greater economic interdependence, China included, it will significantly help to curtail China’s aggressive intent. On the contrary, analysts, such as Denny Roy,[31] opined that China’s increasingly positive economic development is likely to boost its defense budget which, in turn, will help fund its military modernization program, which has increased by more than 140 percent since 1989.[32] Of greater concern to the region, as expressed by Burstein and De Keijzer (1998), is China’s perceived need to control the oil lanes of the South China Sea. In order to fuel China’s growing economy, it will have to secure these oil lanes to ensure its continued survival, which Huntington (1996) opined to be the “primordial ooze” from which the next round of global conflict will arise.[33]

Optimist Views

The optimists on the other hand are of the opinion that China will not be a threat to the international community despite the fact that it is increasing its role in the global

military and political arena. In the December 2000 issue of *Retired Office Magazine*, Li Zhaoxing, China's ambassador to the U.S., remarked that "China has an ancient tradition of valuing peace and good neighborliness, and it loves peace, and treasures hard-won international and especially domestic stability."[34] While many "optimistic" writers are of the opinion that there is much to be gained by actively engaging China, they are nevertheless concerned with China's possible use of force in the region, especially against Taiwan, to achieve the "one China" ideology. Harry Harding in *A Chinese Colossus (1996)* is of the opinion that China is no longer the isolationist power that it was before, it now wants to be a major international player whose national objectives are declared to be "peace and economic development."[35] The article states that China is now committed to pursuing economic well being, peace, and stability in the region. Though it continues to engage in a force modernization effort for its People's Liberation Army (PLA), it is defensive in nature and will not be unleashed unless its territorial integrity is threatened.[36] Like many writers, Robert Scalapino in *China's Role in Southeast Asia--Looking Towards the 21st Century (1993)* also sees China as a possible regional power in Southeast Asia that will exert her influence in the region in the next ten years. However, unlike Harding, Scalapino takes great pains to highlight China's strategic intentions: its seemingly threatening stance, in his opinion, is due to Bejing's "over eagerness" to reduce tensions with all its neighbors.[37]

China's Concerns

While appreciating the myriad of concerns and opinions of China's perceived intent for the region, one has also to understand China's concerns that may have led it to

react the way it has or to develop certain policies which have not been readily accepted by the international community, in general.

From Burstein and De Keijzer's perspective, the key issue which China is most concerned with protecting and reclaiming its rightful territorial integrity, particularly the issues of Taiwan and Tibet. While many analysts fear that China will resort to force to compel Taiwan into unification and prevent Tibet from breaking away; however, there are also [HO5] analysts such as Burstein, De Keijzer, who think otherwise. Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's former prime minister, believes that there will be a de-escalation of tension between Taiwan and China in the coming years, and reunification is inevitable.[38]

As captured in the *China's National Defense in 2000*, China seeks to establish greater security cooperation among nations to bring about greater peace in the region, which would be conducive to foster positive economic growth. However, in China's opinion, the U.S. resolve to pursue the National Missile Defense plan (NMD) is a violation of China's sovereignty, especially if Taiwan is included in the umbrella. Particularly, as captured by Hui Zhang, China strongly feels that the reasons offered by the U.S. administration to pursue the NMD program are unfounded and the program is specifically targeted at China. Hui further highlighted the possibility of such a program providing the U.S. with greater freedom to encroach into China's sovereignty, to the extent of undermining the reunification effort between China and Taiwan.[39]

The U.S. Factor

Theoretically, Posen and Ross in *Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy* (1996) postulated that broadly, U.S. foreign policies can be classified into four possible regions; neo-isolation, selective engagement, cooperative security, and primacy or internationalism. On the one hand, a neo-isolationist will eagerly propose that the U.S. remove itself from Asia to reduce and eliminate any negative direct or indirect impacts on U.S. security. While on the other hand, the primacist or internationalist will argue that the disappearance of the U.S. from the Asian stage will only make the region less secure due to the predicted precipitation of numerous power struggles.[40] Posen and Ross further postulated that U.S. withdrawal from the region will encourage and intensify an arms buildup in the region, to include nuclear capability. However, there are writers, such as the Australian Paul Dibb, who feels that U.S. foreign policy towards Asia has been erratic.[41]

U.S. foreign policy toward Southeast Asia is by no means neo-isolationist in nature and neither does it fall into the primacy category.[42] In fact, as captured in the *National Security Strategy* (NSS) 1999, it explicitly spelled out that U.S. strategic interests in Southeast Asia center on developing regional and bilateral security and economic relationships that assist in conflict prevention and resolution, and also expanding U.S. participation in the region's economies. However, many analysts like Paul Dibb has commented that such a strategy is ambiguous and does not provide the regional states with any form of assurance; in short, each individual country must infer just what this means to that particular country. In fact the weight of U.S. priority is skewed toward the European theater, and with respect to Asia the emphasis has been

toward Northeast Asia.[43] In fact, this shift has become increasingly obvious following the end of the Cold War and Australia's efficient intervention in and handling of the East Timor crisis. At best, current U.S. policy toward Southeast Asia falls between the two categories of selective engagement and security cooperation.

However, as Southeast Asia sits astride the main SLOCs and the vital oil lanes to key economies such as Japan and China, it remains an important interest to the U.S. With over one-half of the world's maritime trade and 60 percent of oil moving from the West to the East via these key SLOCs, it is in the U.S. interest to ensure that no one regional power dominates and controls the SLOCs. In particular "it will not tolerate Chinese territorial hegemony over the South China Sea."[44]

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[1]Adm Dennis C. Blair, CINC, PACOM, "The U.S. Pacific Command Today: A New Course for Peace and Prosperity in Asia," interview Gordon I. Peterson, *Sea Power*, December 2000, 9.

[2]Ronald D. Palmer and Thomas J. Reckford. *Building ASEAN: 20 years of Southeast Asian Cooperation* (New York: Praeger, 1987), 127.

[3]Jeannie Henderson, *Reassessing ASEAN* (location: IISS, Oxford Universoty Press, 1999), 5.

[4]Ibid., 9.

[5]Ibid., 13.

[6]Alan Rix, "ASEAN and Japan: More Than Economics." *Understanding ASEAN*, ed. Alison Broinowski (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 171-172.

[7]Chih Kin Wah, "ASEAN in the New Millennium," *ASEAN in the New Asia: Issues and Trends*, ed. Chia Siow Yue and Marcello Pacini (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 1997), 153.

[8]"Singapore's Trade Initiatives Undermine ASEAN Economic Policy," *Stratfor.com's Global Intelligence Update*, 28 November 2000, available from http://www.stratfor.com; Internet; accessed 27 November 2000. Quoting from Prime

Minister of Singapore Goh Chok Tong following the conclusion of the ASEAN Informal Summit (AIS) held in Singapore from 22-25 November 2000.

[9]Robert A. Scalapino, "The American Response to a Changing Asia." Keynote address in *Pacific Symposium - U.S Engagement Policy in a Changing Asia: A Time for Reassessment?* 1999.

[10]Paul Dibb, "The Strategic Environment in the Asia-Pacific Region," *America's Asian Alliances,* ed. Robert D. Blackwill and Paul Dibb (Cambridge, Massachusetts: BCSIA Studies in International Security, The MIT Press, 2000), 5.

[11]Lucian W. Pye, "China and the Southeast Asia," *Economic, Political and Security Issues in Southeast Asia in the 1980s*, ed.. Robert A. Scalapino and Jusuf Wanadi (Berkeley, California: IEAS, University of California, 1982), 156.

[12]Simon Sheldon. " Alternative Visions of Security in the Asia Pacific." *Pacific Affairs* 69, no. 3 (fall 1996): 381-395. According to Sheldon, "inclusive approach" would entail active engagement of foreign powers, while countries subscribing to the "exclusive approach" believes in the exclusiveness of the region and hence believe to be the pursued as opposed to being the pursuant.

[13]Chan Chun Sing, "Whither A Common Security for Southeast Asia" (MMAS thesis, USA CGSC, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas,1998), 19–20.

[14]Ibid., 36.

[15]N Ganesan, "Rethinking ASEAN as a Security Community in SEA." *Asian Affairs* 21, no. 4, (winter 1995): 210-227.

[16]Michael Leifer, "Conflict and Regional Order in Southeast Asia," *Adelphi Papers*, no. 162, (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1980): 15-18.

[17]Michael Richardson, " In Jittery Southeast Asia, Fears of Military Backlash." *International Herald Tribune* (Great Britain), 2 January 2001; available from http://ebird.dtic.mil/Jan2001/s20010102jittery.htm; Internet; accessed 4 January 2001.

[18]Amitav Acharya, "The Association of Southeast Asian Nations: Security Community or Defense Community," *Pacific Affairs* 64, no. 2 (1993): 159-178.

[19]Alison Broinowski, ed., *ASEAN in the 1990s* (London: Macmillian, 1990), 148.

[20]Jonathan Pollack, "Security Dynamics between China and Southeast Asia: Problems and Potential Approaches," *China and Southeast Asia – Into the 21st Century,*

ed. Richard Grant (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1993).

[21]The economic and political instability in Thailand, Indonesia, and Philippines, which if not resolve, will detrimentally affect the security and stability of the region, is considered by many analysts as the biggest threat to the region.

[22]Tim Huxley, *Insecurity in the ASEAN Region*, (London: The Royal United Services Institute for Defense Studies, 1993) 23.

[23]Zara Dian, "The Spratlys Issue." *Asian Defense Journal*. (November 1994): 6.

[24]Dana Dillion, "Contemporary Security Challenges in Southeast Asia." *Parameters* 27, no. 3 (spring 1997): 119-133.

[25]Sheldon, 1996.

[26]Daniel Burstein and Arne De Keijzer, *Big Dragon* (New York: Touchstone, 1998), 305-310.

[27]Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono told former Chinese Ambassador to Japan Xu Dunxin during their meeting at the Foreign Ministry in December 2000.

[28]David Lamb, "Good and Bad Times for ASEAN," *Los Angeles Times* (26 November 2000); 13.

[29]Larry M. Wortzel. "Should the U.S. feel Threatened by China's Growing Role in the International Military/Political Arena? Yes." *Retired Officer Magazine*, December 2000, 34.

[30]Ross Marlay, "China, the Philippines and the Spratlys Island." *Asian Affairs* 23, no. 4 (winter 1997): 95-201.

[31]Denny Roy, "Hegemon on the Horizon? China Threat to East Asian Security," *East Asian Security*, ed. Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), 113-114.

[32]Siow, 47.

[33]Samuel P. Huntington, *Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order (*New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

[34]Wortzel, 34.

[35]Harry Harding, "A Chinese Colossus?" *The Transformation of Security in the Asia-Pacific Region, ed.* Desmond Ball (Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass. 1996).

[36]*China's National Defense in 2000*. Defense White Paper, Beijing. October 2000.

[37]Scalapino, Robert, "China's Role in Southeast Asia-Looking Towards the 21st Century," *China and Southeast Asia-Into the 21st Century*, ed. Richard Grant, (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1993).

[38]Richard McGregor and Mure Dickie, "China and Taiwan: An unstable standoff," *Financial Times*, available from http://straitstimes.asia1.com.sg/1/analysis/cpe3-1016.html; Internet; accessed 17 October 2000.

[39]Hui Zhang, "U.S. Must Consider How Missile Defense Plan will Play in China," *Boston Globe*, 18 January 2001, 18.

[40]Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* 21, no. 3 *(w*inter 1996/97): 5-53.

[41]Dibb, 13-15.

[42]According to Posen and Barry, the nature of U.S. foreign policies can be divided into four main categories, i.e., neo-isolationist, selective engagement, cooperative security, and primacy, which when measured on a level of engagement scale, they are in increasing order.

[43]Siow, 47-48.

[44]Dibb, 12.

CHAPTER FOUR

SINGAPORE-CHINA ANALYSIS

Introduction

Chapter three showed the threat perceptions and how China is seen through the eyes of Southeast Asian nations collectively. This background aptly launches the thesis into this chapter that examines the motivations for both Singapore and China to establish formal defense relations. This analysis takes a close look at the bilateral relationship between Singapore and China since the former's independence in 1965 until today. It also attempts to understand the motivations, if any, that may encourage each nation to pursue a formal defense relationship between the two countries. Prior to that, there is also a need to differentiate between defense and diplomatic relations, and between formal and informal relations, to appreciate the benefits that different relations offer. However, it is not the intent of this chapter to dwell on the intricacies of international relations between two nations of different ideologies, which is a possible research topic for the future.

Defense versus Diplomatic Relations

In the broadest of contexts, that of international relations, the establishment of relations is nothing more than identifying all possible forms of interaction among nation-states.[1] Beginning with the normalization of relations between nations, the establishment of diplomatic and defense relations between and among nations is an indication of the level of trust that one country has for the other. Be it defense or diplomatic relations, it

entails the establishment of a communications channel or link between nations, pegged at different levels of "closeness" between nations. Due to the lack of a formal differentiation among the different level of relations, for the purpose of this discussion the paper characterizes the association among the different forms of international relations as one that is progressive in nature, largely dependent on the level of trust established between nations. Hence depending on the level of relations between the nations, the communications channel could range from regular bilateral visits to the simple exchange of trade offices, to embassies, with the establishment of defense treaties. Regardless, the main aim is to ensure that the opportunity for consultation or dialogue exists between nations to resolve issues or differences, when they arise, without resorting to the use of force.

Fundamentally, the establishment of relations between nations, besides resolving differences, must also be mutually beneficial to the nations involved. Essentially the intent of establishing the different types of relations must be consistent and able to answer the interests of the nations, be they security, economic, and social concerns. However, it should be noted that the dialogue between nations need not be confined to formal channels. It can be just as effective to establish mutually beneficial relations between nations through informal channels, even without any normalization of ties. A good example of this is the informal relations that exist between Taiwan and China, at least in the economic sense. While the two countries remain at loggerheads with one another diplomatically, informally through economics Taiwan has invested some 40

billion U.S. dollars in China, which has reaped substantial returns for the former that is significantly more than the 5 percent return offered by a ten-year U.S. Treasury bond.[2]

What Are Diplomatic Relations?

The establishment of diplomatic relations essentially and automatically points to the willingness or ability of the nations in question to employ diplomacy, an instrument of national power,[3] or formal negotiations to identify common interests and areas of conflict between the nations.[4] One of the key conditions for diplomacy to be employed as an effective instrument of power is to have representation in the respective countries of concern, although it is not a necessity. Essentially, this entails establishing a mission or a staff from the sending state to represent its interest in the receiving state, this office is also vested with the power to negotiate with the government of the receiving state on issues of foreign relations. As mentioned earlier, establishing formal representation in countries, which is governed by the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations and protocols,[5] is highly dependent on the mutual interests and trust of the sending and the receiving states. Hence while it is not a necessity to establish representation in countries in order for diplomacy to work, their presence is an indication of the level of relationship and facilitates greater communication opportunities.

Fundamentally, the aim of establishing such a relation is to effect an orderly management of international relations and a means through which to effect change through established international rules, regulations, and laws. This should assist in the

promotion of friendly relations between the states and in developing close economic, cultural, and scientific relations and development between two countries.

What Are Defense Relations?

While diplomatic relations refer to the formal communication channel that exists between nations to effect the diplomatic instrument of power, then defense relations refer to the linkages dominated by the military components of the respective nations, to effect the nation's interest and goals through the military instrument of power.

For the purpose of this thesis, defense relations can be further subdivided into formal and informal defense relations, as the ensuing paragraphs will seek to clarify. However, to do so, an understanding of the differences in their underlying nature would be helpful, which can be derive at by asking eight different questions, which then consequently translates into characteristics, as depicted in table 1. The table provides a summary of the array of perceived key characteristics of either relations and its subcategories.

These eight different questions are:

1. Are they bilateral or multilateral in nature?
2. Are they secret, open, or semi-open in nature?
3. Are they treaty based or just security cooperation?
4. Do they include basing or access rights and to what scale?
5. What is the extent of training or exercise agreements?
6. Do they include technology transfer and to what extent?
7. Do they include sale of arms and to what extent?

8. What is the extent and level of military-to-military exchanges?

Regardless of the distinction, the ultimate end state that a nation seeks to attain by establishing defense relations is to defend the territorial integrity and vital interests of the state, which should be the key national objective of any state.[6] It does so by impressing upon any would-be attacker the futility of its malicious intents, for as a result of existing defense relations the attacker may have to deal with more than just one nation, both physically and also diplomatically. In short, the establishment of defense relations can be a very effective form of deterrence for any nation, depending on the degree of relations established.

Table 1: Comparison of Characteristics

CHARACTERISTICS OF RELATIONS	FORMAL		INFORMAL		
	OPEN	CLOSE	OPEN	SEMI-OPEN	CLOSE
Perceived Nature*	Multi	Bi	Multi	Bi	Bi
Alliance/Treaties	✓	✓			✓ (?)
Basing Rights (non training related)	✓	✓			✓ (?)
Training Areas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Technology Transfer	✓	✓			✓
Arms Sale	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Security Co-operations			✓	✓	✓ (?)
Regular Mil-to-Mil Exchanges	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: *For the purpose of this research, it is confined to just multilateral and or bilateral, where the former can encompass the latter but not vice versa.

Formal

With reference to table 1 and to facilitate the research, the paper will equate formal relations to the formation of alliances between nations as signatories to bilateral and multilateral defense treaties, such as the U.S.-Japan and the Five Power Defense Agreement (FPDA) treaties, respectively. This essentially translates to the establishment of a formal agreement between or among two or more nations collaborating to act together on behalf of perceived mutual security issues.[7]

By forming alliances, it is the nations' intent to draw global or regional attention to the nations' [HO6]strategic importance and to serve as warning against any nations harbouring ill intent against them. The defense pact when in effect, at a minimum, will address the mutual obligations that nations have for one another in the event of an outbreak of hostilities against either of the treaty signatories. However, it is not uncommon to find that formal defense collaboration extends beyond the requirement of the pact, which may include joint or combined military exercises, staff training, and weapons procurement, coupled with technology transfer.

Historically, it can be shown that alliances, in general, can be categorized into the following types: *secret* or *open;* they can also be bilateral or multilateral in nature. Examples of *open* bilateral or multilateral defense relations would be the U.S.-Australia alliance and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), respectively. *Secret alliances*, where details of the agreement or an entire agreement are obscured from the global community, though few and far between have existed in history and are often bilateral in nature. An example of a bilateral secret alliance was the hidden agenda within

the German-Soviet non-aggression pact, where the former would invade Poland but offers part of Poland to the Soviet Union in order to appease them, hence temporarily avoiding the opening a second front.

Informal

At the other end of the defense relations spectrum, informal defense relations encompass a wide range of military-to-military exchange possibilities: joint or combined military exercises, staff training, weapons procurement, or even simply dialogue sessions. However, it does do not include the establishment of formal alliances or defense pacts, open or secret (although it is often very difficult to detect the existence of a secret alliance). The extent and the range of activities are highly dependent on the level of relationship and trust among the countries. Essentially, the fundamental intent of such a relationship, which is governed by memorandum of understanding (MOU) or points of agreement (POA) and not treaties, is an indication to the international community of the close relationship and a high level of trust that have been established among the nations in question.

Like formal relations, informal relations can also be further subdivided into sub-categories; open, pseudo-open, and closed or secret, again the level of which is dependent on a number of issues ranging from the countries-in-question existing relations and also the global and regional geopolitical circumstances.

Open Informal. In this instance, the relationship is totally above board, and its intent is for all to know that military relations exist between two nations, which may or

may not be an indication of the development of a more formal relationship. Effectively it serves notice to the region and to the international community, that both countries are poised to improve and enhance each other's military professionalism and capabilities through increased military exchanges. Open informal relations are not solely bilateral in nature but can be multilateral as well, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

Pseudo-Open Informal. Countries in this situation publicly engage one another militarily, but the finer details of the extent of the military relation are not disclosed. This is to avoid any unwanted and unintended escalation of tension or misunderstandings due to the sensitivities that may exist in that particular region. In a world where the geopolitical and geosecurity climate is constantly changing, it is not uncommon to find that the preponderance of military exchanges between nations is of this nature. Hence pseudo-open informal defense relations are often bilateral in nature and rarely multilateral.

Secret or Closed Informal. In a secret or closed relation, it will be difficult to discern between a formal and an informal relation, as such it may contain the same characteristics as the former. Moreover, in the latter case, the intent may no longer be consistent with that prescribed under informal relations. Being secretive in nature, it may also easily result in a secret formal relation or alliance between the nations, which may not be conducive in creating a misunderstanding free environment.

What Are the Differences?

The most significant and obvious difference between defense and diplomatic relations is that they are two entirely different national instruments of power that nations employ to attain their national goals and objectives. Theoretically, though they are distinctively different, the key distinction between them tends to blur in practice. As Frederick the Great once remarked, "diplomacy without force is like music without instrument."[8] Hence, more often than not a nation will employ the military instrument of power in concert and in synchronized fashion, together with the other instruments, as opposed to employing them in isolation. However, regardless of the type of relations, the distinctiveness of each lies in both its nature and more importantly, in the end effects that each brings about. Generically, these end results, which are difficult to quantify, can be classified as economic, security, and sociopolitical impacts.

Economic

In general, the benefits that nations accrue economically need not result from the formation of either diplomatic or defense relations, this is also evident in the case of China and Taiwan. However, the formation of diplomatic relations will normally open more economic opportunities resulting in a quantum jump in mutual economic benefits to be gained by participating countries. This is most significant when government linked companies (GLCs) of countries in question are now not constrained to operate freely to reap the benefits from each other's economic potential. On the other hand, while the economic gains to be reaped from the establishment of diplomatic relations may be

significant, the *direct* gains as a result of defense relations, formal or informal, are marginal. However, the *indirect* economic benefits that nations may gain from the establishment of formal or informal defense relations will be significantly higher. An example of this disparity between *direct* and *indirect* gains is the intangible but greater investor confidence that may result from greater stability as a consequence of defense relations. Hence, economic benefits will be the greatest with the establishment of diplomatic relations as compared to the formation of defense relations.

Security

Translating the comparison to the security perspective, the reverse is likely to prevail. From the security dimension, while diplomatic relations form the starting foundation for further expansion and enlargement of relations between nations, however, it alone does not result in a quantum gain in the security of a nation, as compared with the formation of formal defense relations. In this instance, formal defense relations, bounded by alliances or treaties, a step above the level of diplomatic relations, is a natural progression that nations would engage in to reap its higher potential security dividends. Similarly, the establishment of informal defense relations does not provide the significant direct security impact as compared to formal defense relations. However, the indirect security gains resulting from the increased military exchange made possible by the establishment of informal defense relations will be greater than gains resulting from just having diplomatic relations. In addition, when considering the security benefits that nations gain from defense relations, one should also consider the significant indirect

effects on the economic viability and prosperity of the nations. Essentially, increased security or reduced uncertainty sets up a more conducive environment for foreign investments.

SocioPolitical

While the security perspective deals with largely the external aspects that determine the stability of a nation, the socio-political perspective focuses on how the different levels of relations affect the domestic social and political disposition of a nation. This in turn impacts on the stability and consequently, survivability of a nation. A direct effect of international relations on a country's socio-political climate is to instill in the local populace confidence and trust in the administration, for which they have been deemed worthy through its ability and foresight to establish different levels of relations with credible nations. While the reverse is also possible, generally the development of different levels of relations between nations will have a positive effect on the stability of a nation.[9] Indirectly, as a result of greater security and hence, a more conducive economic climate, the different levels of international relations will also determine the country's domestic socio-political climate. It is difficult to measure which is more effective in the socio-political sense, but suffice to note, defense relations may deliver a more immediate effect on socio-politics as opposed to diplomacy, but the reverse may be true when considered in terms of the quality and prevalence of such an effect.

Singapore-China Relations

Having considered the theoretical aspect of the defense versus diplomatic and informal versus informal relations, this study will analyze the crux of the matter, which is the Sino-Singapore relations and how these have transformed over the last thirty-five years. Singapore and China celebrated their tenth anniversary of bilateral diplomatic relations on October 2000. In his congratulatory note to mark the occasion, China's Premier Zhu Rongji remarked at the progress that has been made and expressed his hope to see the strong Sino-Singapore relationship develop even further and taken into new areas to achieve an even greater level of prosperity and development for the region.[10] Especially in the area of security, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to work for regional peace and stability. It was agreed that economic growth was one important condition for this, while cooperation among regional countries was needed to bring about conditions favorable for trade and investment and sustained economic growth.

While this is the current sentiment between both nations, it was, however, not always this amicable over the last thirty years. Hence the intent of this section is to examine how Sino-Singapore relations have evolved over the last thirty-five years since the independence of Singapore in 1965, amid changing global and regional geopolitical climates. In general, the evolution of Sino-Singapore relations will be categorically analyzed in three main time periods: pre-1970, 1970 to 1984, and 1984 to present.

Pre-1970

Singapore

Singapore obtained its independence under the most unfavorable conditions, when it was unceremoniously ushered out of the Malayan Federation on 9 August 1965 and was on the verge of extinction as a result of the loss of the rich hinterland of the Peninsula. For the same reason that Singapore was removed from the Federation, Singapore was also faced with the task of combating communism internally, which was becoming increasingly complicated with the Vietnam conflict and later with the Soviet-backed Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, which threatened to find its way down the Malayan Peninsula.

The spread of Soviet Communism was not the only threat to Singapore, especially in the mid-1970s, due to Singapore's predominantly Chinese population; the greater threat was the proliferation of Chinese Communism in the newly established island republic through the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), founded in 1930. Secondly, Singapore's perceived "kinsman ties"[11] with China was also a bane that significantly impaired its relations with her neighbors. They feared that Singapore was to become a satellite Chinese state, a "mini Mao" in the Southeast Asia region, which China would use as a base to expand its influence over the region, control the strategic sea-lanes, and eventually undermine the existence of Islam in the region.

From Singapore's perspective, such suspicions from its immediate neighbors did not help bolster the security and stability that it badly requires to promote entrepot trade, which is its economic lifeline. As such Singapore continuously emphasized its

distinctiveness as an independent and separate state from China. In addition, Singapore, as a member of the newly formed Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN), made a conscious effort to alleviate this unwanted suspicion by its neighbors and consciously decided to be the last of the ASEAN nation to establish diplomatic relations with China. This was despite the fact that such a move would mean that it would be deprived of the much needed economic and security assistance to build the new nation.

To aid economic development, Singapore openly welcomed and did not discriminate against any nations that were genuinely interested in trading and investing in Singapore or using its facilities. But Singapore assured its neighbors, that it would not, as a result of the assistance received, be used as a base for subversive activities. This policy, which continues to hold true today, encouraged vessels needing to sail between the West Pacific and the Indian Oceans to use Singapore as its natural port of call without undue interference from the neighbors. In particular it attracted the Soviets, which as a result of the increased level of trade that it has with Singapore also established a branch of the Moscow Narodnyi Bank in Singapore.[12] Especially toward the turn of the decade, as Singapore's economic relationship with the Soviet Union grew stronger and Soviet hegemonistic desire for the region was becoming more apparent via Vietnam, China was forced to relook and focus its attention on Singapore and the Southeast Asia region. This thus set the stage for the next period where China and Singapore strived to establish closer relations.

China

Prior to 1970, China had viewed Singapore Chinese and all overseas Chinese as citizens of China; and as such, overseas Chinese visiting the country did not require visas, based on the principle of "Jus Sanguinis" or law of the blood.[13] With 75 percent of its population being Chinese, this Chinese principle unfortunately caused many regional states, even the U.S. and the Soviet Union, to suspect Singapore of being pro-China. Suffice to note that during this period, as in the 1950s, China's communist government had painted the U.S. and the Soviet Union as hostile and intrusive powers, especially the U.S., with military bases in the region, which were a threat to China's physical security. As a consequence, China pursued a two-dimensional engagement policy toward the Southeast Asian states, including Singapore, based predominantly on China's perception of an increasingly intrusive U.S. threat and also the latter's success in developing an anti-Beijing stance and alliance among the Southeast Asian nations.[14]

Under this policy, which aims to counter the American penetration, China also sought to increase its regional influence by providing support for communist insurgencies throughout the young Southeast Asian states, and Singapore was not spared. Prior to independence, then as part of Malaysia, Singapore was viewed by China as a "neocolonialist plot" to persecute people of Chinese descent.[15] This led to China's isolating the Republic and constantly conducting pro-Chinese propaganda in the Malayan Federation through its radio broadcast and the distribution of propaganda publications. After independence, China continued to refer to Singapore as part of Malaya, refusing to recognize its existence as an independent state. It regularly condemned Singapore for its

criminal armed suppression of its people, as a result of the Singapore government's crackdown on the communist movement, especially in the mid-1960s. This cold Chinese treatment continued until 1970, when the change in the geo-security climate as a result of Soviet emergence caused China to change its stance toward the nations in Southeast Asia, especially Singapore.

1971 to 1983

Singapore

The turn of the decade saw increasing Soviet assistance for North Vietnam in its effort to unite Vietnam by force. This was also perceived by the Southeast Asian states as a move toward Soviet hegemony in the region. This development significantly changed China's policy toward the Southeast Asia states: China began to recognize them as sovereign states, but more significantly opened channels of communications among these nations. The most significant event that contributed to China's recognition of countries, like Singapore, was President Nixon's historic visit to China in 1972. This changed China's stance toward Southeast Asia, formerly termed as "running dogs of U.S. imperialism," to now "Southeast Asian bargainer states."[16] This was a key change in significantly improving ASEAN-China relations.

China's reduced revolutionary antics and also the denouncing of the "jus sanguinis" principle allayed the region's perception of Singapore being pro-China or pro-communist, and with Malaysia establishing ties with China in 1974, this set the stage for Singapore as well to establish a closer relation with China. Among the other Southeast

Asian nations, Singapore was of particular interest to China because of the significant amount of Soviet shipping that used Singapore either for trading purposes or repairs. After Malaysia's establishment of ties with China, Singapore was reluctant to do likewise and, in fact, turned down numerous invitations by the then Chinese premier Zhou Enlai to visit the country before 1976, primarily because of neighboring states' continued hypersensitivity toward Singapore's Chinese majority.

As significant as President Nixon's visit to China in 1972 was to the development of Sino-U.S. relations, the fourteen day visit to China in May 1976 by Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore at that time, was a watershed in Sino-Singapore relations. Especially significant was that the Singapore entourage was given an audience with Chairman Mao, despite the fact that it was the Republic's first visit to China and that Mao was already "mentally and physically frail."[17] This was quickly followed by a reciprocal visit by Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping to Singapore in 1978.

In both instances, Singapore continued to assert its independence and delink itself from the "kinship ties" that China had consistently tried to establish with the ethnic Chinese in ASEAN. These first two key visits by both sides set Singapore prominently on the Chinese map, both economically and geopolitically. For Singapore it was a significant achievement, especially in such a short period of time, to be able to develop such a high level of trust and respect from a country of China's stature, considering that it was given a "running dog" status by an earlier Chinese administration.

China

The rising trend of Soviet influence in Southeast Asia caused a change in China's stance toward Singapore. Briefly, China was beginning to recognize Singapore through formal invitations to receptions and stopped its public attacks against the Singapore government. China's intent was to close ranks with as many governments as possible to counter what was perceived as Soviet global hegemonistic desires as illustrated by a number of its actions in the world scene, such as its intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968, border clashes between Soviet and Chinese troops across the Amur River in 1969, and Soviet assistance to the Hanoi administration to expand it s influence into Indochina and beyond. All these caused China to review and relook its pro-revolutionary foreign policies, which, if continued, would have seriously isolated China and weakened its ability to influence future developments in the region.

Moscow was now viewed as a far more dangerous threat than the anti-China U.S. The perception that the U.S. was the greatest impediment to China's ability to "drive for greater upward international mobility"[18] soon gave way to China's welcoming an American presence in Southeast Asia to counter Soviet expansion and to allow China to exert its continued presence and influence in Southeast Asia. President Nixon's landmark visit to China in 1972 signaled a thawing of relations between China and the U.S. In addition, China was also increasingly interested in "the stronger, the better" ASEAN,[19] which would be consistent with its larger intent to establish a global united front in opposition to the Soviet hegemony. China saw value in the geographical disposition of Singapore and other ASEAN countries, which is essentially the vital geostrategic part of

the Soviet "southward strategy." Hence, China regarded ASEAN as a major force for securing peace in the region. In particular, China's relations with Singapore advanced at a rate unsurpassed by any of the other ASEAN nations, though no formal diplomatic relations had yet been established. A further indication of Singapore's importance to the overall ASEAN policy was Premier Zhao Ziyang's assurance to Singapore that China would do its part to allay the suspicions and fears of Malaysia and Indonesia toward China. In particular, to consequently alleviate the suspicions that both countries harbored toward the ethnic Chinese within their population, as well as in Singapore.[20]

It was evident that Singapore was playing a key role in China's ASEAN policy, which, in turn, was becoming more significant, especially with the decline of the Soviet threat by mid-1982.[21] By 1984, one of China's foreign policy priorities was to establish and develop a long-term, stable, good-neighborly, and friendly relationship with the ASEAN countries, and Singapore was to be a key enabler. This was to be consistent with Deng Xiaoping's "open-door policies" which was to be a significant departure from the traditional Chinese ideology of "self reliance."[22]

1984 to the Present

Singapore

By 1984, through Lee's skilful statesmanship, Singapore had fully established itself as a respectable nation in the eyes of China, despite the Republic's "de facto official relations" with Taiwan.[23] To a large extent, Lee Kuan Yew, an "old friend of China," was able to speak frankly on both China's domestic and foreign policies without fear of

retributions. More importantly China valued Lee's frank opinions, especially on economic development, and has repeatedly invited him back to Beijing on numerous occasions after the initial 1976 visit. Especially with the Vietnamese and Soviet threats in the region now effectively circumvented and with the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1990, China was now more concerned with economic development and a more selective ASEAN policy. Unlike in the earlier period, it no longer applied a general approach to its dealings with the various ASEAN states, it was discriminatory, and Singapore was positively singled out.

Singapore's relations with China continued to strengthen significantly, especially with Indonesia's normalization and establishment of diplomatic ties with China in 1990. In particular, with Deng's open-door policy, the Chinese government adopted Singapore's successful economic model, In addition, China continually sought Singapore's advice as it embarked on Deng's industrial and economic reform program. As part of China's attempt to open its economy to foreign investors, it set up numerous special economic zones along the eastern seaboard with advice from senior Singapore officials.

Economically, China was increasingly becoming a key trading partner for Singapore, and by 1999 trade between China and Singapore had more than tripled.[24] China now was Singapore's sixth largest trading partner, in terms of trade volume. More significantly, since 1992 Singapore's investment in China has been growing at an annual rate of 74 percent, and by 1997 China had become Singapore's top investment destination

and China's fourth largest foreign investor. The crowning glory of the joint investment ventures being the completion of the Singapore-Suzhou Industrial Park.[25]

China was Singapore's key geo-strategic partner especially in the early years, and in this age where security and stability of a country is increasingly linked to a country's economic viability, it had also become a key economic partner to ensure Singapore's continued economic growth into the twenty-first century. Singapore, like the rest of the region, cannot ignore China's potential. Especially if it maintains its present concentration on education and economic development, China could well be the second largest trading nation in the world by 2050. This, combined with the Japanese economy, could "move the economic center of gravity of the world from the Atlantic to the Pacific."[26] Additionally, China's projected acceptance into the WTO will be an added reason for Singapore to maintain the close relationship that it already has with China, if not further improving it.

China

With the passing of the Soviet threat and the close of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese now concentrated on national development. The visionary Deng Xiaoping understood the importance of economic development and introduced the elements of market economy, which also marked a significant shift in China's perception of Western society. Over the course of the 1980s, while China still sought "self-reliance" (but not as extreme as North Korea), the goal was modernization. While opening its doors to foreign technology, trade, and investment, China sought to better political relations with the

West, albeit still wary of Japan, and the Soviet Union. This was evidently a significant relaxation of the Maoist ideology and was to be part of Deng's economic reform plan, known as the "four modernizations," which also included the military.[27]

The Tiananmen Square incident of 1989 did not help to boost China's image in the eyes of the international community. More importantly, as a result of the worldwide condemnation, China did not withdraw into its shell and isolate itself from the world. On the contrary, Chinese President Jiang Zemin pursued an even more accelerated pace of economic reform. Having been schooled in the Soviet Union, his detailed analysis of the Soviet Union two years prior convinced him that the Soviet's centrally planned system was fraught with difficulties, especially in a dynamic international geopolitical climate. This thus encouraged China to establish a mixed economy, combining a modified capitalism with the best of a centrally planned economy and market regulation.

The "Special" Relationship

Diplomatically, Singapore may have only ten years of formal relations with China, but one could say that this special relationship really began with the landmark visit by Lee Kuan Yew to China in 1976. Arguably Singapore's ability to achieve a close relationship with China due to the personal chemistry of Lee Kuan Yew and the Chinese leaders, which over the years has established a level of trust unsurpassed by any other nations. The most evident example of this "special" and somewhat discriminatory relationship between Singapore and China is China's turning a blind eye to Singapore's de facto official relationship with what China considers a renegade province Taiwan.

There are a number of reasons that explain why such a close relationship can exist between two predominantly Chinese countries with two distinctively different political systems, but yet could not be established between China and Taiwan. Some of these reasons include:

1. Singapore's continued to support for China, despite hostilities displayed by the former's neighbors over developments in Indochina in the late 1970s and early 1980s, particularly with the China's invasion of Vietnam.

2. China was isolated internationally as a result of its "totally disproportionate"[28] reactions against the resistance put up by unarmed civilians, while Singapore expressed regret, through Lee Kuan Yew's excellent statesmanship it warned countries "not to isolate China and take a short-sighted view of Chinese reforms."

3. The Singapore government has been sincere in developing commercial relations with China and instrumental in assisting China in revamping its economic infrastructure and opening its economy to attract foreign investment.

4. Singapore is a country that understands the culture of both China and Taiwan, but remains an entirely neutral and unbiased conduit to resolve the perennial cross-straits tension between the two.

These are significant factors that helped to develop the close bonds between China and Singapore. However, those well-versed in Chinese culture would submit that the underlying reasons that have brought about the above reactions, which in turn, have helped to cement Sino-Singapore relations, is the value system which Lee Kuan Yew preached and exercised. The Chinese leaders were able to single out and associate with

these values very early in their association. Coupled with this, China's leaders placed great importance on "trust and righteousness," which they saw in Lee Kuan Yew but not in other ethnic Chinese leaders, such as Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui. [29]

The value system, more commonly known today as the Asian values, is essentially based on the ethical teachings of Confucius. They are centered on the values of thrift, hard work, emphasis on scholarship, loyalty to family, clan, the wider nation, and most of all placement of community interests above individual interest, which is manifested in the six values of *Li, Hsiao, Yi, Xin, Ren,* and *Chung*.[30] While other Asian countries such as Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, and Special Administration Region of China or formerly Hong Kong, have preached and put into practice the different aspects of these six values in varying degrees, China has associated its perception of the "Asian values" most closely with Singapore. The key similarity lies in the common belief in the existence of the individual in the context of his family, the concept of self-reliance, and respect for authority.

Since the initial contact between Singapore and China in 1976, China has closely observed the former's development over the years. Initially to ensure that Singapore survived and prospered as an independent sovereign state to subsequently take advantage of its unique position as a strategic, economic, and ethnic springboard to Southeast Asia and the rest of the world, particularly Taiwan. For Singapore, a country in its infancy, China's presence was an effective deterrent and provided protection for "a Chinese shrimp in a Malay sea."[31] However over the years of interaction, China has adopted Singapore as an economic development model[32] as the world's most populous country

opened its doors to foreign investment. In particular, China was most intrigued at how Singapore was able to absorb Western technology to develop a strong and vibrant economy, while at the same time maintaining social stability, high moral standards, and discipline in the country.

These, together with the numerous reciprocal visits by officials from both sides, most importantly, the almost yearly exchange between Lee Kuan Yew and various Chinese leaders, helped to strengthen the Singapore-China bond. While leaders in China may have changed, the established bond between the two countries has allowed the Singapore government to develop an understanding of China's motivations and ambitions. Conversely, it has also allowed China to place a high level of trust in the Singapore Government, even to the extent of agreeing to Singapore's being the facilitator and conduit for cross-strait talks between China and Taiwan, the most significant of these being the Wang-Koo talks in 1993.

Relations continue to remain very good, but many analysts have postulated that this special relationship may cease to exist with the passing of Lee Kuan Yew. Especially for a cosmopolitan and secular country like Singapore, the greatest challenge for the government is to instill in the population the very same "Asian values" that have been the cornerstone of Sino-Singapore relations. Hence the challenge for the Singapore government, post Lee Kuan Yew, is to be able to strengthen ties based on the "values" and also to explore new areas of cooperation, especially in the military arena, that will further strengthen the links between the two politically different but culturally similar nations.

The Motivators

Based on the discussion of the basis of Singapore-China relations since 1965, this section will takes a look at the motivations that each country would have to establish formal defense relations with the other.

China

China has the potential to be a global power. China may develop significant influence in the Southeast Asia region, especially in view of the strategic sea-lanes through the region. If China's current positive economic indicators continue their upward trend, it will become a global economic and consequently, military power.

Economically, its largely untapped economy would exceed that of the U.S. by 2020, assuming that China maintains a conservative annual growth rate of 5 percent and everything else remains ceteris paribus. Militarily, what China now lacks it will, with rising national affluence, be able to purchase, among other things, fund the development of military hardware to raise its military forces to standards comparable to the western hemisphere. These expansion and modernization programs for its military forces will ensure that China has a credible capability to project forces into the South China Sea.

From China's perspective, Southeast Asia is literally the backyard, much like South and Central America are often dubbed as the U.S. backyard. China places significant emphasis on maintaining stability in this region to aid its economic development, even more so now as China attempts to catch up economically with the rest of the world. From the security perspective, a stable Southeast Asia will allow China to

divert its attention and valuable resources to deal with the more uncertain Northeast Asia. This range of problems that may arise from the potential Korean reunification, the possible revocation of Japan's Article 9, which then allows the latter to rebuild an offensive military force, to perennial cross strait tension with Taiwan. From China's perspective, then, how does Singapore fit into this big Chinese puzzle?

Perception of Power

China's motivations to engage Singapore formally in the military arena may be generated from its perception that Singapore possesses the "power" [33] or ability to influence regional matters directly or indirectly. These may include the following considerations.

Geography. Situated right at the tip of the Malayan Peninsular, Singapore sits on one of the key strategic locations in the world. Together with Malaysia and Indonesia, Singapore has the potential to control the key Malacca Straits. Of concern to the world and the region is the continued assurance of free maritime traffic through the Straits of Malacca, the main maritime thoroughfare for vessels sailing between the Indian Ocean in the west and the South China Sea to the east. [34] With this strategic geographical disposition in mind, it would be in China's interests, as well as that of other global powers such as the U.S. and Japan, to actively engage these three countries to ensure the continued safe passage of vessels through these straits. Particularly, in view to their ethnic similarities, it would be easier for China to exert its influence in the Straits through Singapore as opposed to via Malaysia and Indonesia.

Economic Capacity/Capability. Singapore's lack of resources has driven it to actively invest in countries where such resources exist. Since the beginning of Sino-Singapore relations some thirty years ago, China has benefited greatly from Singapore's "outreach" economic policies. In cumulative terms, China has been Singapore's top investment destination since 1997 and is the fourth largest foreign investor in China with 33 billion U.S. dollars, after the big names of the U.S., Taiwan, and Japan.[35] Formalization of military ties would be an indication of even closer ties and a higher level of confidence. This in turn would encourage more Singaporean companies to seek out China's potential, consequently increasing the number of projects in China.[36]

Modern Military. Singapore is deemed by *Jane's Defense* to have one of the most advanced and modern militaries in Southeast Asia. Coupled with its own defense research and development arm, known as the Defense Science and Technology Agency (DSTA), this will [HO7]THSTHISTH help ensure that the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) is always at the forefront of military technology and exploit it to the fullest. Singapore's technical knowledge is not confined to local talents, but is also gathered through its extensive linkages with similar defense institutions all over the world, such as Swedish Defense Research Establishment (FOA), Direction des Constructions Navales and Research Laboratories of France, and others to help augment the SAF fighting capabilities.

For China, formal defense relations could help it gain access to defense technologies that could be of strategic importance to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) modernization effort. It also means that if indeed an alliance is established, through SAF's

credibility with foreign defense institutions, it will lend significant credibility to the PLA, whose reputation was somewhat tarnished in the 1990 Tianamen Square incident.

Respected Leadership and International Credibility. During its thirty-five years of independence, Singapore has undergone only one change of leadership, from Lee Kuan Yew to Goh Chok Tong. This was part of the government's "evergreen" effort to the keep the country's leaders young. This is in stark contrast to many of the ASEAN states, with the exception of Malaysia, which have seen as many leadership changes as there are constitutionally required elections. This is an indication to the world of the stability of the Singapore government despite its being under constant scrutiny of a well-educated and well-informed population. It is also an indication on the effectiveness of the leaders and government with respect to their ability to guide the country through continuous years of positive growth, while at the same time meeting the aspirations of the population.

These positive showings have also allowed Singapore to be an internationally recognized country with substantial credibility on the world stage. Engaging Singapore formally in the military arena can help to allay some of the fears that the Western world has of China. Such a move would also have the potential to defuse the China-Taiwan crisis, as it will allow the military of both countries another conduit for consultation without resorting to the use of force.

Values. As highlighted earlier, one of the reasons that have allowed Singapore to establish such close relationship with China is a common value system, which is manifested in the ethical teaching of Confucius. Singapore's success can be attributed to the "Asian values" that has amalgamated the diverse population to work for a common

goal. In this respect Singapore has been a model for China to emulate as it takes the long and arduous path of economic development. Following the Tiananmen Square incident, it is in China's interest to avoid a repeat of such similar incident, especially in the light of Falun Gong's rising prominence.[37] In this instance, China will be keen to study how Singapore can maintain relative social stability while constantly striving for greater economic growth and also how the military has been effectively employed in the whole process of nation building while not degrading its warfighting capabilities. Singapore may also be regarded as a base for China to maintain and promote Chinese culture and values within the Chinese community in Southeast Asia.

Singapore

Having studied the possible motivators that may encourage China to pursue formal defense relations, this study now examines the possible motivators for Singapore, a democratic country, to associate itself militarily with a country that is politically and ideologically different. The key to understanding and singling out these motivators lies in understanding Singapore's long-term strategic objectives.

Essentially, Singapore's key national security objective is to protect and ensure the continued economic viability of the Republic. With a nary of natural resources, Singapore is very reliant on the trade that its strategic location has brought it. While globalization and technology have alleviated the Republic's reliance on trade to some degree, its economy continues to be dependent on the safe passage of vessels through the vital sea-lanes which are in close proximity to the island Republic. Hence being a major

entrepot of the world, the physical security of the Straits is key to the continued free and safe passage of vessels through the Malacca Straits. In addition, it is also in the Republic's interest that regional peace not be disrupted, for any disturbances will detrimentally affect investors' confidence in the region and, consequently, in Singapore.

Finally, in addition to ensuring that regional stability prevails, equally important is that the country maintains domestic stability. Hence, for an ethnically and religiously diverse country, like Singapore, it is critical to ensure that no one particular group or religion is marginalized or discriminated against. More importantly to also deter any external forces, state and non state actors alike, from deliberately exploiting this aspect of Singapore's culture and instigating racial or ethnic violence to undermine the stability of the Republic.

China's Value

In view of the above national security objective, coupled with Singapore comprehensive national foreign policy centered on the twin towers of deterrence and diplomacy, Singapore's national interests are best met by constructively engaging all regional powers, including China. Hence some of the motivating factors that would encourage Singapore to engage China militarily are as follows.

Stability and Security. For the "Chinese island in a Malay Sea,"[38] the presence of China contributes to the multipower balance in the region, which will be conducive to Singapore's continued security and stability. Given China's potential to be the dominant regional player, a formal strategic relationship would add stability to the region, as well

as a strong deterrence against any nation with ill intents that threatens the survivability of Singapore.

Economic Potential. On the economic front, greater cooperation with China will lead to greater economic benefits, given the abundance of resources that it possesses and the sheer potential of its economy. There are already substantial economic links with China, as highlighted earlier. China is currently the Republic's sixth largest trading partner. However, with the past record of a 300 percent increment in trade over the past thirty years as an indicator for future potential, it will be in Singapore's interest to broaden relations, beyond the diplomatic level. Corollary, it is critical for Singapore to tap further and quickly into China's economic potential ahead of other nations and to secure an economic foothold for itself, in view of China's impending acceptance into the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Military Might. Despite the seemingly benign security climate at the macro level of Southeast Asia, the inherent sensitivities of neighboring states to a Chinese-dominated Singapore still exist. In forging a greater strategic partnership with China, Singapore can greatly benefit from China's technological know how in the military arena, which will help its continued military modernization program as part of its deterrence policy. At the same time this will also serve as a deterrence against any state or non state actors haboring ill intentions against the nation. In particular, a formal defense relation will potentially give rise to two key possibilities:

1. Possibility of new training areas with basing rights. Local training areas are shrinking rapidly as land originally used by the military is reallocated for other purposes,

such as urbanization. To maintain and improve Singapore's operational readiness in the midst of these developments, it must conduct more training and exercises overseas. China, with its vast and varied landmass, has the potential to provide the much needed training areas. The establishment of a formal defense relationship would hence allow Singapore access, in the long term, to new land, air, and sea areas to meet its future training needs. Though the same can be achieved through informal relations, formal relationship may result in basing rights as well.

2. Opportunities for technology transfers. China currently builds and maintains its own aircraft. It has also made significant progress in areas, such as missile and rocket development. Formal defense ties may facilitate greater defense industry cooperation, which, in turn, may provide Singapore with more opportunities for such technology transfers significant for its long-term interest in areas, such as submarine and antisubmarine warfare (ASW).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a theoretical perspective of the nature and end effects that characterize formal defense, informal defense, and diplomatic relations. It has differentiated and provided an appreciation on how each different level of relationship impacts the nations concerned. Superimposing the theoretical foundation on the Sino-Singapore relations that have grown in strength over the last thirty-five years, and, in particular, the circumstances that were catalytic in bring about this evolution, this study allows the benefits for both nations in pursuing a formal defense relation.

Essentially, the key motivator to embark on such a relationship lies in their national interest. From Singapore's perspective, the promise of greater and better security disposition in the region, coupled with indirect economic gains, will be the main motivator for establishing this relationship. From China's perspective, the key motivator lies in the credibility and the strategic location of Singapore. As China strives to be an internationally recognized and credible nation, the presence of Singapore will help to significantly allay the fears that the Western world harbors against China. In particular, Singapore may prove to be an effective conduit to resolve the cross-straits tension between China and Taiwan.

The next chapter examines the cost to both nations to establish a formal defense relation and will also subject the hypothesis to the feasibility, suitability, and acceptability (FAS) test.

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[1]Graham Evans and Jeffery Newnham, *Dictionary of International Relations*, (England: Penguin Books, 1998).

[2]Mark T. Fung, "Rumblings from Taiwan" *Christian Science Monitor* (10 January 2001), available from http://ebird.dtic.mil/Jan2001/s20010110rumblings.htm; Internet; accessed 10 January 2001. The article essentially points to the fact that the economic dealings between China and Taiwan will be the key to greater stability between the two countries, and the current economic weakness in Taiwan could easily escalate into a strategic crisis.

[3]Ted Davis, Robert H. Dorf, and Robert D. Walz's "A Brief Introduction to the Concepts and Approaches in the Study of Strategy," (CGSC Course Reading for C500, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2000). As highlighted in the article, the other three instruments of power that a nation possesses are: information, economic, and military. Theoretically, they seem distinct and different, but in practice they are very closely interlock and interdependent.

[4]Evans and Newnham, 129.

[5]Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and Optional Protocols., Chapter 6, Vienna, 18 April 1961.

[6]Evans and Newnham, 117.

[7]Ibid., 15.

[8]Ibid., 129.

[9]This is greatly determined by the credibility and also the ideological disposition of the country(s) with whom a country is establishing relations with, this in turn will degrade or raise the country-in-question own political credibility and foresight, which will consequently affect its own stability both indirectly and directly. An example, which will be deliberated in subsequent sections of the analysis, is the early relations between Singapore and China, where the former was portrayed to be a "mini China" or "kinsman country." Though untrue, such a perceived perception was not well received by especially the local Muslim population as well as the anti-communist sections of the population. This essentially led to numerous unrest that were racially motivated as well as incited along ideological differences.

[10]Bites of the Week--30 Sep to 6 Oct 2000 (Singapore), Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA), 6 Oct 2000, available from http://www.mita_news.gov; Internet; accessed 9 October 2000.

[11]Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), 579.

[12]Ibid., 578.

[13]The principle essentially states that any person overseas or otherwise, descended from a Chinese father was automatically deemed to be a Chinese national. Lee, 577.

[14]Parris H. Chung and Deng Zhiduan, "China and Southeast Asia: Overseeing the Regional Balance," *Regional Hegemons*, ed. David J. Myers (Boulder, Colorado: 1991), 195.

[15]Lee, 574.

[16]Chung and Deng, 197.

[17]As described by Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew in his book during his May 1976 visit to China. Subsequently, Mao Tze-tung was to pass away in 1976, leaving Deng Xiaoping to consolidate his power.

[18]Ibid., 198.

[19]Deng Xiaoping made these remarks to Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, during the latter's visit to China in 1980. During that visit, Deng sought helped through Lee to convey to Malaysia and Indonesia that it was too populous and too preoccupied with economic and social development and does not possess any hegemonistic intent or racially discriminate both predominantly Muslim countries. Lee, 606.

[20]This was Premier Zhao Ziyang assurance to Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, during the latter's visit to China in 1980. Lee, 605.

[21]When Vietnam invaded and occupied Cambodia, China invaded into North Vietnam, which was aimed at teaching the Vietnamese a lesson, but indirectly it was also a warning to the Soviets. Though the Chinese suffered enormous losses, it served notice to Soviets to reconsider its "southward strategy" in view of China's military capability. This, together with the increased U.S. presence in the region was perceived to be the turning point in Soviet threat towards the region. Though it continue to support Vietnam, it was heavily burden doing so.

[22]Fareed Zakaria, "Culture is Destiny," *Foreign Affairs*, (1994), 219-233. In the article Lee specifically that "Asian Value" is an Asian or non-western virtue developed based on the "family unit." The "family unit" is deemed as the basic building block of society, and as, "governments will come, governments will, but this (family values) endures"

[23]This was a term coined by China to describe Singapore's relationship with Taiwan. Though recognizing China as the "One China" as prescribed in the policy, Singapore actively engages Taiwan both economically as well as militarily. While many other ASEAN nations have been reprimanded even for bilateral visits, China has taken a relaxed approach and discriminatorily tolerated Singapore's close relations with Taiwan. Chen, 146-154.

[24]Tay Hong Seng, "China in WTO: more business for Singapore," *The Business Times* (Singapore), 27 Sep 2000, available from http://business-times.asia1.com.sg/3/news/nsing01.htm; Internet; accessed 26 September 2001.It was reported in the article that trade between Singapore and China reached 8.56 billion U.S. dollars in 1999, which was more than three times the value of 2.82 billion U.S. dollars in 1990.

[25]This is a key joint economic project between Singapore and China to develop a high-technological industrial park to boost China's image as a technologically viable economy, at the same for Singapore to enjoy the cheaper cost of production.

[26]Quote taken off Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew's address to the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia Forum in Kuala Lumpur on 16 August 2000.

[27]Michael Parks and Gregory F. Treverton, "North Korea Considers Going Chinese," *Los Angeles Times*, 26 January 2001, available from http://ebird.dtic.mil/Jan2001/s20010129northkorea.htm; Internet; accessed 29 January 2001.

[28]This was the sentiment express in an official statement issued from the Prime Minister's Office of Singapore, a day following the 4th of June Tiananmen Incident. Lee, 626.

[29]A comment by President Jiang Zemin to Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew in 1994, when highlighting the fact that China did not feel that Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui's proposal of setting up a trilateral shipping company between China, Taiwan, and Singapore, to help resolve the tension, was sincere. Lee, 642.

[30]Herlee G. Creel, *Chinese thought, from Confucius to Mao Tse-tung* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

[31]Chen, 153.

[32]In 1992, Deng Xiaoping challenged the major cities to study the Singapore model and out do the island Republic. Lee, 645.

[33]John Spanier, *Games Nations Play*, 8th edition. (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Inc, 1993). In the book, the author alluded to the fact that international relations are developed the way it is today is due largely the perception of power that each nation state has for the other. In "calculating" this level of perceived power, Spanier recommends that a thorough consideration be given to the nation's tangible components as well as its intangible components.

[34]John H. Noer's *Chokepoint: Maritime Economic Concerns in Southeast Asia (*Washington D.C.: National Defense University, 1996), 3. As noted, together with the other two key straits of Lombok and Sunda that "wriggles" through the Indonesia archipelagos, they command more than 34 percent of the world's maritime trade by tonnage or 60 percent of Japan's oil requirement. In particular, maritime traffic through

the Malacca Straits is several times greater than through either the Suez or Panama Canals.

[35]Peter Chen, Singapore's Senior Minister of State for Trade & Industry and Education at the *5th Chinese New Tear Gathering for Singaporeans Working in China* on 26 January 2001. Singapore.

[36]Ibid. Currently Singapore companies have committed over 1.6 billion U.S. dollars in more than 400 projects in he first 9 months alone. This is an increase of 39 percent compared to the corresponding period in 1999.

[37]Falun Gong which roughly translates, as "Law Wheel spiritual exercises" is a spiritual body that practices the ancient form of *qigong* that seeks to refine the body and mind through special exercises and meditation. The group has been classified as a cult by the Chinese government, formed to undermine the security of the nation.

[38]William E. Berry Jr. "Threat Perceptions on the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore," *INSS Occasional Paper* 16 (Colorado: USAF Institute for National Security Studies), 1997, 29.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FUTURE OF A SINGAPORE-CHINA DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP

Introduction

As articulated earlier, for any genuine international relationship to be effective and enduring, it must be mutually beneficial to all the nations participating. In short, it cannot be a zero sum game, where some countries benefit at the expense of the others. At a glance, it would seem obvious that, in this proposed alliance, Singapore would be the main, if not the sole, beneficiary. However, examining each country's overall national interest as highlighted in chapter four, China does stand to gain from this David and Goliath relationship. Based on China's perception of Singapore's "power,"[1] there are significant direct and indirect benefits to be reaped by the former if indeed the level of Sino-Singapore relationship is raised from the diplomatic domain to the higher military dimension.

However, from a larger perspective, such an initiative could also incur significant tangible, as well as intangible, costs, particularly in a region where the demographics, economics, and security are so closely interrelated and interdependent. Any elevation of Sino-Singapore relations, especially in the military domain, is likely to be of concern to regional states such as Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as those out of the region with strategic interest in the region, such as the U.S.

The central idea of this chapter is to conduct a simple cost and benefits analysis. The study will then assess the soundness of such a proposal through the application of the feasibility, acceptability, and suitability (FAS) test. Closely linked to the motivators that

were addressed in chapter four, the next section addresses the benefits that both nations will accrue.

Singapore's Goldmine

Balance of Power. Singapore has a geographically and demographically similar disposition to Israel; they are both small multiethnic nation-states surrounded on all sides by Muslim countries and both have experienced or are still experiencing racial unrest between Muslims and the rest of the country. However, while Israel's survival as a nation-state has never been assured since its independence,[2] Singapore, on the other hand, has been able to coexist peacefully with neighboring Muslim states, free of armed conflicts. This has been a result of the Republic's relentless effort to establish close economic, diplomatic, and security relations with its neighbors so as to hedge against the uncertainties with which the Republic is constantly faced. As the regional geopolitical climate remains uncertain and under constant change, it is unwise for Singapore to take for granted the peace that it has enjoyed. On the contrary, recalling its twin national security policies of deterrence and diplomacy, Singapore should continue its cooperative security approach by constantly engaging regional states and powerful nation-states, such as the United States and China, to achieve a balance of power in the region.

Specifically, Singapore's ability to establish formal defense ties with China would be a positive step forward in maintaining the power equilibrium in the region that would be conducive to ensuring its continued ability to achieve its national objectives. In addition, engaging China formally would also help to allay the uncertainties resulting

from the ambiguous U.S. foreign policy toward Southeast Asia, which has resulted in the "erratic way it defines and defends its interest in Asia."[3] In short, "Singapore advocates a big power balance in the region,"[4] and China is regarded as a positive factor that can contribute and play a significant role in maintaining the balance of power in the region.

Economic Spin-Off. Cheap labor and vast resources are but two reasons behind China's rise in the global economic scene. This has resulted in many countries, including Singapore, flocking to China with much needed foreign investment. Particularly, because of its significantly lower capital cost and a large domestic market, Singapore has gained much from the economic relationship formed thirty years ago. Touted to be the next growth region in Asia, China is an integral part of Northeast Asia and is "better placed for higher economic growth than Southeast Asia."[5] The formation of a formal defense relationship between Singapore and China, would result in greater mutual trust and coherence, would further strengthen the existing close economic relationship, and bring about greater economic benefits for Singapore. In addition, a formal defense alliance would raise Singapore's involvement in China's economic development, and these economic ties could include defense procurement or development.

Strong Deterrence. Surrounded by the "Malay Sea,"[6] the establishment of a formal defense relationship with China would be a significant deterrence against any potential threats planned against Singapore. Being predominantly an ethnically Chinese nation, the rise of radical Islamic fundamentalist groups from the neighboring states, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, could threaten Singapore's sovereignty. As such, the presence of a formal defense relationship with China would serve as a warning

or deterrent against such groups or nations trying to exploit racial differences to undermine the sovereignty of Singapore. In addition, the alliance would also help to provide a longer-term solution to Singapore by helping to raise its military capability to deal with such a situation unilaterally[HO8].

Regional Influence. Increased defense ties with China will allow Singapore to enhance its status in the international geopolitical scene. As China sees Singapore's strategic importance as a significant factor to aid its economic development program, it would then be in China's interest to ensure that Singapore's sovereignty is not threatened by any regional powers. In short, increasing China's interest in Singapore would boost the latter's regional influence and leverage, allowing it greater diplomatic maneuvering space in the international and the regional arenas. This would be most significant if Singapore becomes the de facto honest broker for the cross-straits tension between China and Taiwan.

Training Areas. The SAF is faced with the perennial problem of providing essential and relevant training space for its military training. Domestically, as more training grounds are being acquired by the government for economic and urban development, Singapore has to look beyond her shores in search of training areas. China, with its vast and varied landmass is one possible location where Singapore could potentially enlarge its training areas. The establishment of a formal defense relationship would hence provide the SAF a new areas to exploit to train for its required combat capabilities.

What does China stand to gain?

Enhancing Economic Development. As China develops economically in the future, it will require continued foreign investment to support and sustain its economic growth. In particular, additional financial assistance and developmental economic expertise, which could help in its economic expansion. Deng's open market policy, introduced some twenty years ago, has since attracted numerous foreign countries, including Singapore, to invest in China.

Over the years, Singapore has provided China with much needed foreign direct investment (FDI) and the economic development expertise to help make China a more conducive destination for investors. Singapore's tried and tested economic policies and experience, which have so successfully propelled it from a Third to a First World country in thirty-five years, is much sought after by China. These initiatives by Singapore have played a vital role in the economic development of China, and would continue to do so in the future. Should the formalization of defense ties between Singapore and China become a reality, this would provide China with continued access to Singapore's economic formula for success but, more importantly, would indirectly open China to further economic cooperation with other countries through the free trade areas (FTAs) that Singapore has established. One country which is of particular concern to China and which is in close proximity to Singapore is Australia. Like Singapore, Australia is deemed by China as a desirable strategic partner that is non-threatening and has a developed economy rich in natural resources, and, most importantly, access to modern Western defense technology.

Gaining International Credibility. Developing formal defense ties with Singapore, with its credible international standing, would allow China to explore employing Singapore as a foothold from which to springboard and establish economic and financial ties with countries both in and out of the region. As a result of Singapore's extensive economic links with the international community, the realization of a formal defense relationship would boost the international community's perception of China, which could, in turn, positively impact on its economic development as well. As China continues to progress in her open-market economic policies, gaining the confidence and acceptance of the international community is essential. However, these linkages need not be confined to just the economic or financial arena. Diplomatically, China should exploit Singapore's vast contacts to develop greater diplomatic influence in the Southeast Asia region and also around the world, specifically in Taiwan.

Greater China. China is fully aware of Singapore's precarious security position in the region. Singapore's failure to defend itself or deter aggression would significantly affect China's ability to influence the region. Strategically, establishing formal defense ties with Singapore would help enhance Chinese influence in the region, particularly over the vital sea-lanes of communications. In addition, in view of both countries' close cultural ties and shared values, China sees Singapore as a base to promote Chinese culture within the Chinese community in the region. Especially with Singapore's internationally respected leadership, closer ties between the two countries would help raise China's credibility in the international community, hence providing greater Chinese diplomatic leverage.

Confidence Building. China's willingness to establish formal defense ties with Singapore is an indication of its progressive shedding of its self-reliance stance. This would project to other countries in the region and subsequently to the world, China's willingness to establish security links with peaceful intentions. The establishment of formal defense ties with Singapore would give the international community the added confidence that China does not possess any malicious intent toward any country, but rather wants to be a responsible and reliable member to preserve international security and order.

Mediator. The close informal ties that Singapore has with Taiwan may be invaluable in bringing about a peaceful resolution to the China-Taiwan unification issue. Forming a defense alliance with Singapore could help to hasten the unification process, or at least prevent existing tensions from escalating. As an internationally respected nation, coupled with its close tie with China, Singapore's role as a mediator would not be confined to the Taiwan issue alone, but could also help appease any international displeasure toward China. On numerous occasions, Singapore, particularly in the form of Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew's persuasive demeanor, has helped China maintain its credibility in the international community. Most evident was during the 1989 Tiananmen incident when, against tremendous international condemnation, Lee spoke up for China, advising countries not to isolate China and take a shortsighted view of Chinese reforms. In short, a formal Sino-Singapore defense relationship would result in greater Singaporean support for China, which, in turn, could enhance China's standing in the international community.

The Costs of Forging a Formal Sino-Singapore Relation

The benefits to be reaped by both Singapore and China from such an alliance are obvious; however, these should not be seen in isolation and taken at face value. The establishment of such a formal defense relation is not cost free. In view of the highly delicate relations that exist among the various regional states, it is only prudent that this paper examine the impacts of such a tie on Singapore's key neighboring countries and key non-regional states.[7] In addition, the study will also examine other factors that could also affect the outcome of the proposal. In this analysis, cost is seen in terms of the alliance's effect on security, political stability, economic well being, and level of international relations among each of the key strategic nations, China, and Singapore.

From the Singapore perspective, mindful of the region's colorful but turbulent history with respect to China, any Sino-Singapore defense policy would have to consider the sentiments and sensitivities of their impact on Singapore's neighboring countries, Indonesia and Malaysia. Beyond the regional boundaries, coupled with Singapore's close political and economic global linkages, the impact of such an alliance on countries, such as Taiwan, the United States, and Japan, all non-Southeast Asian countries, would have to be considered. As an island state with no natural resources, Singapore's security, political, and economic disposition are highly dependent on the region's geopolitical situation. Without the warm relations that Singapore has established with the above mentioned nations over the last thirty-five years, it might not have become what it is today.

Historically, China is viewed by many of the key strategic nations as a "big dragon."[8] The establishment of an alliance could rekindle the suspicions that the regional

states harbored of Singapore in the latter's early formative years, due to its extensive Chinese lineage. While formal defense ties would produce benefit both for Singapore and China, if the intent of such an initiative is not clearly articulated, it may be misconstrued by neighboring countries. This, in turn, may detrimentally affect Singapore's ties with these countries. Correspondingly, this may affect the overall regional security climate. This would be contrary to Singapore's national objective of maintaining regional peace and stability. Similarly for China, such a development may reinforce the Taiwanese and the American perceptions of a real Chinese threat to the East Asian region. This would be directly opposite to China's overall intent of engaging the global community to improve the regional security climate to aid its ongoing economic development and modernization drive, and to double its GDP by 2010.[9]

In short, for both Singapore and China the benefits of establishing such a formal alliance are tempting. However, the cost of establishing a formal defense relationship would require a comprehensive examination. In particular, this chapter now examines the sensitivities and impact of such an initiative on the key strategic states that have substantial dealings with Singapore and China.

Indonesia

Historically, Indonesia has regarded China as its main security threat as a result of the latter's strong support for the Parti Kommunist of Indonesia (PKI) in the 1950s and 1960s. This suspicion unfortunately resulted in violence with an estimated one-half million ethnic Chinese killed. Alleged communist supporters and activists, who were

predominantly ethnic Chinese, were attacked over a period of one year from 1965 to 1966.[10] Indonesia views Singapore, with its Chinese majority, as a mini-China and its (Indonesian leaders and people) feelings are "inextricably tied to their feelings toward their Indonesian ethnic Chinese."[11]Any moves on Singapore's part to develop formal defense relationships with China may arouse Indonesia's suspicions and possibly raise unfavorable sentiments and rhetoric against the Republic. While Indonesia is also fully aware of Singapore's economic significance and the integral role the latter could play in assisting its economic development effort, Singapore remains a convenient "whipping boy" whenever there is discontent in Indonesia, especially if this is ethnically linked.[12]

Indonesia's greatest fear is of China's using Singapore as a springboard to penetrate the region, thereby undermining the security of the Muslim state and consequently the Islamic religion. Singapore's current relations with Indonesia are warm and broad based. Though it has gone through periods of cool relations, the good relations that exist between the then-President Suharto and Senior Minister Lee helped establish good political, defense, and economic ties. Most significantly, with the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) closely aligned and loyal to President Suharto, the SAF and TNI enjoyed a period of close defense relations beginning in the mid-1980s. With the ouster of President Suharto and the increasing political influence of "self-consciously observant" Muslims in the Indonesian government,"[13] there has been a significant cooling in relations between the two states. In particular, during the height of the Asian economic crisis from 1997 to 1998, racial tension rose, which resulted in the Indonesian resorting to force to express their resentment toward the economically better-off ethnic Chinese. The

current precarious situation in Indonesia is of great concern to Singapore, particularly the spate of violence centered on racial lines.

Indonesia's military potential, threat perception, and historical experiences with Singapore and China may become significant constraints against Singapore's move toward greater defense ties with the latter. However, these constraints are not insurmountable as long as the Singapore government is sensitive and continues to show deference to Indonesia on matters involving China and the region. Since the normalization of ties between China and Indonesia in 1990, there have been improvements in relation between the two countries. This has helped to alleviate some of the concerns that the Indonesians harbored against China, such as the dispute over the Natuna's oilfields. While this may signify an improvement in Sino-Indonesia relations, it would be prudent for Singapore to take a gradual approach in establishing this formal defense relation with China. Ideally changes should move at a measured pace so as not lead Indonesia in its development of defence ties with China.

Despite its current domestic quagmire, Indonesia remains a key member in ASEAN. Any unilateral move by Singapore to engage China militarily could be perceived by Indonesia, as well as other ASEAN states, as an attempt by Singapore to break away from the group and go its own way. Singapore should be wary of such perceptions arising, over the long run the undermining of the grouping's unity could be counterproductive to Singapore's national policies.

Malaysia

The stigma of battling the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) still lingers in the minds of many older generation Malaysians. The possibility of CPM's resurgence, the fear of Chinese domination remains a key concern to Malaysia's security. Anxiousness on Singapore's part to establish defense ties with China may be perceived by Malaysia as China's attempt to reawaken the communist movement, with Singapore as a convenient springboard for the movement.

Like Indonesia, Malaysia views Singapore's presence as a "Chinese nut in a Malay nutcracker" or a wedge in an otherwise contiguous Muslim landmass.[14] Excessive canvassing of a Chinese presence could rekindle a sense of uneasiness in the Malay state, which was prevalent in the early-to-mid-1960s time frame. Especially with the PLA's modernization effort in recent times, this may be perceived as China's attempt to dominate the region.

While Singapore's relations with its northern neighbors remain close and cooperation has increased in many areas over the years, the potential for conflict between the two countries remains. These tensions remain attenuated as long as the Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir's Vision 2020 economic development program takes precedence and continues to produce positive results. In June 1974, Malaysia recognized China's economic possibilities and was the first ASEAN country to establish formal diplomatic relations. However, the two countries continue to compete for parts of the disputed Spratly Islands. The Malaysian government believes that the best way to alleviate the

tensions and resolve its differences with China is through active engagement, particularly in the economic and security arenas.

Like Singapore, Malaysia recognizes the importance of ensuring stability and security within the region to ensure continued economic progress. China, like the United States, is an integral player to this process of ensuring stability. In view of the growing ties between Malaysia and China, Malaysia is unlikely to react adversely to Singapore's move toward greater defense ties with China. However, an overzealousness or precipitous approach on Singapore's part to develop formal defense relations with China may produce counterproductive results.

Taiwan

Taiwan is one of Singapore's more important international economic and military partners, despite the fact that no formal diplomatic relations exist between the two. Since 1975, Singapore has established extensive military training interests in Taiwan and has also made significant inroads into bilateral defence technology cooperation. The close relations that Taiwan and Singapore have forged are not confined to the defense arena alone. Economically, Taiwan is Singapore's fifth largest trading partner, and its economic value to Singapore lies in its high technology industry.[15] Additionally, Singapore has benefited economically by being the conduit for trade between China and Taiwan, where overt direct trade has been limited.

One of Singapore's key concerns when considering the formation of a formal defense relation with China is the effect on the trust that has been established between Taiwan and Singapore over the years. Recognizing the need for a small country to train

its army, Taiwan was the first to offer training facilities to the SAF for training. In recent times, because of the change of political sentiments in Taiwan and Kuomintang's (KMT) political decline, SAF troops in Taiwan have not been well received. Local sentiments against the SAF's training on their homeland may take a further plunge with the establishment of formal defense relations between Singapore and China. The impact on Singapore may not be significant, as it has diversified its overseas training venues to include Australia and other overseas locations. However, the level of trust and bond that has been established between the two states and between the two militaries could be detrimentally affected. Taiwan is a key state in maintaining a long-term stability in East Asia.

More specifically, this initiative by Singapore may be perceived as a breach of faith on the part of Singapore, first forged under President Chiang Kai Shek. This relationship continues to exist with current President Chen Shui Bian, who sees Lee Kuan Yew as a "true old friend of Taiwan."[16] This resentment would be greatest especially if one recalls that Taiwan was one of few nations to offer both economic and security assistance to Singapore when the latter was suddenly thrust into nationhood by Malaysia. In short, Taiwan was instrumental in helping Singapore establish itself during the latter's formative years in the 1960s and early 1970s, and has also allowed itself to develop a high level of trust with Singapore not found with any other country other than the United States. Naturally, such a move by Singapore to court China in the military arena would have to be carefully thought through and managed to avoid a situation whereby a close and trustworthy relationship is lost at the expense of strengthening another.

The key challenge for Singapore with respect to Taiwan is to pursue a position where the former can enjoy the benefits of an enhanced defense relationship with China, while at the same time not compromising the status quo with Taiwan. In this regard, when initiating defense relations with China, special efforts must be made to manage Taiwanese sensitivities, as well as its suspicions.

From China's perspective, such an initiative would have both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, should Taiwan and China continue to engage each other and enlarge their engagement possibilities following the success of the "three mini links" initiative,[17] the Singapore-China formal defense relations initiative could help to further alleviate the tensions between the two countries.

In view of Singapore's close relationship with Taiwan, such a move opens up yet another channel for both countries to address their grievances over the issue of reunification. However, on a negative note, popular politics in Taiwan could view such a move as China's increasing aggression via the defense-diplomacy channel through third party states to force and hasten the reunification issue. Instead of helping to alleviate the instabilities, this proposed alliance could set back the progress that China and Taiwan have achieved since 1996.

The United States

U.S. policies toward China have been varied and remain ambiguous, depending on the administration that is in office. They have shifted, for example, from the "strategic partner" relationship during the Clinton administration to potentially a "strategic

competitor" perception in the new Bush administration.[18] Regardless of the policy, the United States recognizes that China as a potential economic and consequently a military powerhouse. As the PLA modernization program continues and with a 17.7 percent increase in its defense budget announced during the recent National People's Congress session,[19] China is increasingly being portrayed by the United States as its main threat in East Asia. Although there are also other regional issues that would detrimentally affect U.S. influence in East Asia, such as the potential reunification of the Koreas and changes in the Japanese defense policy, the impending rise of China remains the key U.S. concern in Asia.

Over the years, Singapore has built up substantive defense cooperation with the United States. In particular, in an effort to modernize its armed forces, Singapore has technologically and professionally benefited from a close U.S.-Singapore security cooperation climate. A move on Singapore's part to formalize defense ties with China if not articulated clearly could cause the United States to misread Singapore's intentions, consequently impair the close relationship. This would not be economically or militarily beneficial to Singapore. Complicating the matter further, the U.S. security community may also perceive such a move as a potential leak of U.S. defense capabilities and technology to China via Singapore. Secondly, the U.S. is well aware that Singapore's strategic value lies in its geographic position as the key chokepoint on the main sea lines of communications (SLOC) between the Indian and the Pacific Ocean. The security and safe passage of vessels along this SLOC is of vital interest to the United States. This ensures continued American commerce in the region and the continued ability to power

project its forces between the perceived two areas of conflict: Southwest Asia and the Korean Peninsula.[20] From the U.S. perspective, such an initiative would allow China to exert its presence and compete for control over the vital Malacca Straits, which would be a direct threat to the U.S. vital interest.

From Singapore's perspective, with the U.S. being its second largest trading partner,[21] Singapore's reliance on the United States for its commercial and financial development cannot be overemphasized. In addition, as demonstrated so often in recent times and most evident during the stock market crash in 1985, Singapore's economic performance is closely tied to U.S. economic indicators. Any slowdown in the U.S. economy will have a direct impact on Singapore's economy. While Singapore wishes to establish closer ties with China, this cannot be at the expense of succumbing to the wrath of U.S. economic and military relations.

The United States has always adopted an even-handed approach in its dealings with Singapore. It is unlikely that Singapore will receive any special treatment in any unforeseen eventuality. While the former may not applaud and be concerned with such a move, it would not do much, beyond rhetoric, that would affect the status quo between the two countries, given its security and economic interests in Singapore. Singapore continues to value the U.S. presence in the region and would not want to jeopardize the counterbalancing force in Singapore's balance of power equilibrium by formalizing defense relations with China.

Japan

Such a proposal would have a significant impact on China's eastern neighbor, Japan, which, in turn, would impact Singapore. Like the United States, Japan is one of Singapore's principal trading partners. Singapore must be wary that an initiative to formalize defense relations with China could arouse the Japanese suspicions of China's intent to dominate East Asia. This could significantly hamper Singapore's economic well being in view of the fact that Japan is Singapore's largest trading partner.[22]

From China's perspective, while relations between China and Japan have improved significantly since the days of the Second World War, China has not forgotten the Japanese invasion in 1895,[23] or the more recent atrocities of World War II. Recent Chinese military modernization efforts and its missile arsenal have heightened Japanese. In turn, China is concerned about the possible revival of Japanese militarism, especially in view of Japan's joint research with the U.S. on ballistic missile defense and its relatively higher defense budgets.[24] While establishing formal defense relations with Singapore could result in closer ties with Japan through the Singapore channel, it could also aggravate mutual suspicions. The implications of such an initiative could also hamper existing economic cooperation between Japan and China, where the former provides more than four billion U.S. dollars for China's economic development.[25]

Other Factors of Consideration

When contemplating a Sino-Singapore defense alliance there are other factors that should also be taken into consideration. These are:

Leadership Uncertainties. Within the next few years the region is likely to see major changes in the leadership of key states. Of particular concern to both the region and the world is the change in Chinese leadership in 2003. The leadership changes are likely to affect the current web of regional relationships between China and the other states. This will be a likely cause of future uncertainties. Likewise, the passing of Singapore's Senior Minister Lee in the future may have significant impact on the existing international relations that Singapore has forged. The mutual trust that the Singapore leadership, particularly Senior Minister Lee, has forged with key Chinese leaders, such as Deng and Jiang, remains favorable and will be instrumental in bringing about a win-win situation for both nations.

However, it is not only the leadership changes in China or Singapore that will affect the alliance initiative. Changes in U.S. leadership or policy will also have a significant influence on the initiative, both directly and indirectly. Complicating the current situation is the Bush administration and its vague stand toward China. Instead of helping to alleviate the notion of a Chinese threat, the ambiguous U.S. policy has further blurred the geopolitical climate, raising regional states' concerns of China's expansionist fervent, which would significantly deter Singapore from embarking on such a relationship.

The Cross-Straits Situation. Recent events in the Taiwan Straits, such as the establishment of the "three mini links" and President Chen's acceptance of Lee as a mediator, have strengthened Singapore's position as an honest broker of China-Taiwan relations. In light of these recent developments, the window of opportunity for Singapore to increase defense interactions with China and, consequently, formalize the relationship is gaining momentum.

While Singapore may be construed as an opportunist, it would be difficult for Taiwan to protest or be suspicious of Singapore's intent and loyalty. This was especially evident during the escalation of tension between China and Taiwan in 1996. When faced with the possibility of being misunderstood by China and, thereby, risking its relationship with it, Singapore displayed its continued support and resolve for Taiwan by not cancelling its large-scale exercises on Taiwan.

U.S. Asian Policy. The new Bush administration continues to confirm its key policy making political appointees. The world and region anxiously wait for the United States to unveil its policies toward Asia, China in particular. Some of the issues that would be of concern to China are the U.S. decision on the sale of advanced state-of-the-art weapon systems to Taiwan, the retention of China's PNTR status, and the national missile defense (NMD) initiative. These are critical questions that need to be answered, as they would significantly alter the geopolitical situation in Southeast Asia, which, in turn, would have a bearing on the cost of establishing the alliance. For example, any unfavorable decision, such as the sale of the Arleigh Burke class destroyer equipped with Tomahawk missiles and Aegis radar system to Taiwan would seriously set back the

progress that China and Taiwan have made, which could destabilize the entire region. Such a decision could also significantly affect Singapore's relationship with the United States and China.

It is difficult to predict U.S. policy in Asia, especially when the U.S. decision-making process is torn between congressional and presidential prerogatives. The situation was more conducive for greater engagement during the Clinton era. However, a deviation in the Bush administration's stance toward China could seriously hamper the possibility for the alliance to be struck in the next four years.

An Analysis-A Question of Timing

The historical baggage associated with Indonesia and Malaysia is fading. The emotions that reside within the populace of the two ethnically different groups of countries--Muslim-dominated Indonesia and Malaysia, and Chinese-dominated Singapore will linger. These racial issues remain subtle, but are by no means inconsequential factors that could complicate relations between Singapore and its northern and southern neighbors even today. The initiative to establish formal defense relations with China, aimed at bringing about greater stability in the region, could on the other hand be counterproductive and may heighten the many differences that still exist between these nations.

The impact of this Sino-Singapore defense initiative will not be confined to Indonesia and Malaysia alone. The other ASEAN nations also have a stake as well. From Singapore's perspective, it is the impact of such an alliance on its northern and southern

neighbors that warrants the most attention. In addition, Singapore does not believe that the unity of ASEAN will be undermined as a result of the alliance with China. On the contrary, Singapore's commitment to ASEAN remains one of its key priorities. The alliance could also propel Singapore into a honest broker role to help resolve the numerous territorial disputes between China and several of the ASEAN states. As economic development and rejuvenation is the main preoccupation of many ASEAN nations and as long as regional stability and security are not threatened, increased defense relations between China and Singapore will be of lesser concern for many of the ASEAN nations.

With respect to Taiwan and the United States, timing and clever political maneuverings will be needed to allay their uneasiness and manage the sensitivities. For the Taiwanese scenario, contrary to many Western speculations of a possible Chinese invasion to unify Taiwan by force, many Eastern analysts believe unification is an inevitable eventuality. The catalyst that could trigger such a move would be a change in the governmental culture toward a more favorable communist-led government that currently resides in China.[26] A peaceful unification of Taiwan with China will remove the major stumbling block to better Sino-U.S. relations. Likewise, with respect to the relations between Japan and China, timing is critical for both nations to display greater transparencies and clarity in their policies toward one another and to allay the suspicions that each harbors for one another.

If there is a specific time window imposed on Singapore to establish an alliance with China, it would be most effective and more easily achieved while Senior Minister

Lee is still alive. In view of the earlier analysis, it is obvious the current good relations that Singapore has with its regional neighbors, as well as the United States., can be attributed to Lee's close personal links with the past and present leaders of each of these countries. Indonesia may be an exception, where Lee's close relationship with the country may not be significant enough to allay deep-seated discrimination against ethnic Chinese. The increasing instability and precarious situation in Indonesia pose a serious impediment to Singapore's establishing relations with China at this point in time.

As articulated in chapter four, Singapore's national objective is to be able to protect and ensure its continued economic viability, through deterrence and diplomacy to ensure that regional stability and peace prevail. Thus, in view of the enormous cost that would be associated with the alliance initiative, ultimately it may not be beneficial for either country to further pursue the initiative. However, to provide a more in-depth analysis, the paper employs the FAS test in the next section to further scrutinize the proposal.

The Feasibility, Acceptability, and Suitability (FAS) Test

The benefits of a formal defense relationship between Singapore and China are indeed encouraging for both countries. However, at this point in time the cost of establishing such an alliance tends to outweigh the benefits. However, to determine whether if timing is indeed a significant catalyst in tilting the cost-benefit balance; such that the benefits could outweigh the cost in favor of the proposal in the future, the analysis takes a further step by applying it to the FAS test.

Feasibility. In view of the current relations between Singapore and China, especially the progress made in the economic arena, it is logical for both countries to contemplate and further expand their bilateral relations into the area of security and defense. Singapore and China share much, especially culturally, which would make defense assimilation rather seamless and natural. As a result of that common understanding and virtues that both countries share, work attitudes are likely to be similar, making defense cooperation easier. Unlike Taiwan, the only other ethnically Chinese-dominated country in the region, Singapore does not have any territorial or sovereignty disputes with China, which tends to make such a formal defense initiative more feasible.

Acceptability. Herein lies the Achilles heel in the proposal. Based on the current time frame, the resultant cost of establishing such a relationship would make this proposal unacceptable to both countries, but especially Singapore. Firstly, the current ethnic and leadership debacle in Indonesia does not make it conducive for Singapore or acceptable for Indonesia to initiate or accept such a relation. Even though Indonesia's relationship with China and Singapore has improved significantly, the ethnic dilemma and tensions continue to linger, making a Sino-Singapore defense initiative unacceptable. Such sentiments are not confined to Indonesia, but are also applicable to Singapore's northern neighbor, Malaysia.

With respect to China, the cross-straits tension is constantly going through a series of troughs and peaks. Tensions are not likely to be resolved as long as the United States continues to back Taiwan militarily. Taiwan views Singapore as a sovereign state

free to chose its alliances. However, in this instance, Taiwan may not accept a Singapore--China alliance. In fact, the Taiwanese would deem such an initiative a breach of trust between the "two remaining free Chinese governed countries left in the world."[27] As a consequence, such a move may be detrimental to Singapore's credibility as an honest broker in the ongoing cross-strait tension that began with the Singapore sponsored Kang-Woo talks in 1993.

Suitability. Particularly for Singapore, such an alliance would signal greater regional stability. This would be a significant boost to its economic development efforts. Conversely for China, Singapore's international credibility and reputation are the key benefits that it would derive from such an alliance, China would gain greater opportunities to engage the international community and, in so doing, improve their international image. For Singapore and China a formal alliance would be a suitable approach for both to achieve their respective national security objective.

Specifically, from the Indonesian and the ASEAN states' point of view, such a proposal at this time could be deemed as insensitivity on the part of Singapore. Internationally, this could send a negative signal to the world that ASEAN's unity is in doubt, which, in turn, could cause international confidence in Indonesia to further plummet. Likewise for China, improving relations with Taiwan would make this proposal acceptable from the Taiwanese point of view.

In Review

. It is evident from the above section that establishing formal relations with China would no doubt be beneficial for Singapore in the long term. However, it should also be apparent that this initiative, though beneficial to both, also has significant negative implications for Singapore and China if not managed properly.

Many believe that with China's economy expected to grow at 7 percent per year, its gross national product would reach six trillion U.S. dollars by 2013. [28] At this rate of growth, it is expected that China's economy will surpass that of Japan and the United States by the second decade of the twenty-first century.[29] Singapore is fully aware of China's economic potential and also realises that China's PLA will be the main military force in the East Asia region, and no combination of forces in ASEAN could stand up to it in a military confrontation. It is in Singapore's national interest to explore alternatives to circumvent the negative aspects of such a potential and build upon the positive aspects, while waiting for the right time to form the alliance.

Alternatives to Advance Sino-Singapore Defense Relations

The thesis has established the fact that the decision for Singapore to establish formal defense relations with China is highly dependent on timing. While the current time frame may not support such an initiative, the potential economic and security benefits to be reaped remain promising for Singapore to explore other alternatives to eventually bring about the formation of formal defense relationship.

The next section will present three possible alternatives that Singapore could explore. The central idea in all these three alternatives is to first establish a foothold while awaiting the right period to eventually establish a formal defense relation with China. These three alternatives are: maintaining the status quo, time-phased approach, and a multilateral approach.

Status Quo

In this first option, Singapore would maintain the current level of relations with China, mainly in the economic domain. The main assumption in this option is that the perceived geopolitical situation remains bleak, and there is little indication that any effort by Singapore to engage China militarily would not be misconstrued by the key regional players as a threat to the region or ASEAN. In this option Singapore's priority of effort is to continue to help improve the regional situation, to prevent further destabilization, and eventually to revive the proposal at a later date when there is improvement in the region's geopolitical situation.

Singapore would continue to broker unification talks between China and Taiwan to help prevent an escalation of destabilizing activities that may result in a costly and unnecessary conflict that would be detrimental to the entire region. With regards to Indonesia, due to ASEAN's non-interference policy, Singapore would continue to provide financial and economic assistance as it had done during the economic crisis of 1997. The proposed alliance would be shelved indefinitely until there is a significant improvement in the geopolitical situation. In the meantime, with respect to security

matters, Singapore would continue to engage China formally at already established forums, such as the ARF, while defense cooperation would be confined to low-level visits, with possible reciprocal student exchanges between each other's staff colleges.

Time-Phased Approach

In the second alternative, the intent is to exploit Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew's continued presence and capitalize on the close relationship that he has established with the regional states as a result of excellent statesmanship. Essentially, the aim is to appease any protest that may arise and establish a foothold within China. As mentioned earlier, Singapore's excellent foreign relations and power-balanced diplomacy have been possible because of Lee's personal links with China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the United States. Thus, the basis of such an option is that it would be easier to establish some form of initial or foothold defense relations with China and also appease protesting states, such as Indonesia or the United States, against such a move while Lee is still around. Thereafter, future leaders can expand on the foothold that has been established when the situation improves, without wasting precious time.

Such a time-phased approach would also allow both nations to reap some of the projected benefits ahead of time and at the same time provide continued assurance to the key states that the alliance was not formed for any malicious intent. Consequently, when the situation presents itself to formalize the defense relationship, it would not be a shock to the regional states and the impact would be significantly reduced. Some of the initiatives may include:

Formalizing Soft Defense Interactions. This is the first step and a short-term objective, which could be gradually built up over the next five years. The aim is to harness greater goodwill and better cultivate China, so as to present Singapore as a favorable channel for China through which to establish further confidence-building measures with the rest of the region and vice versa. Such interactions could take the form of regular visits by service chiefs and senior staff, establishment of joint military-to-military conferences,[30] participation in courses and exchange programs by all three services, and joint naval passage exercises.

Training Exchanges and Access to Training Areas. This would a longer-term objective. The scope of this level of interaction would depend heavily on the comfort level of both sides. The most obvious form for such interactions would be the conduct of bilateral exercises. The eventual aim of such exercises would be to set up a joint training conference to establish long-term training agreements and MOU, leading to the eventual conduct of bilateral exercises between China and Singapore, including the establishment of training bases by either countries or joint peace operations.

Multilateral Approach

While the last two alternatives have been confined to the bilateral level, this third alternative explores the possibility of including a third or fourth party in the alliance. The central idea of this last option is tailored along similar lines and characteristics of the time-phased approach, but in this case expanded to include one or two more key nations to marginalize some of the cost highlighted earlier.

Although difficult to achieve, it is possible to conceive that, as security cooperation would not be confined to the bilateral level. Such an initiative would be forward looking and would also be a positive indicator to the world that China is genuine in its effort to create and bring about greater regional stability. For example, a multilateral approach involving Indonesia would alleviate the suspicions that exist among the three nations. In addition, such a move, if successful, would help to stabilize the situation in Indonesia from the economic perspective, and afford significant credibility to China from the Islamic communities' perspective. Overall, as a result of this multipronged approach to tackle the problem areas associated with the formal defense relationship, a multilateral time-phased approach would take a shorter time for China and Singapore to arrive at the ultimate end state, as compared to the other two alternatives.

Conclusion

Given its potential, China is likely to emerge as a dominant regional player in this century. A strategic partnership with China will, therefore, be advantageous for Singapore. This pact could result in greater security assurance and continued economic gains. Despite having established diplomatic ties in 1990 and the fact that Singapore's neighbors have already started interacting militarily with China, Singapore has confined its defense relations with China to strictly informal visits, with very minor areas of defense cooperation.

In light of recent geopolitical events, such as increased tensions across the Taiwan straits, rising instabilities in Indonesia, and leadership uncertainties in the region, it may

not be the right time for Singapore to formalize defense relations with China. With the long-term aim of further bonding Singapore's strategic relationship with China and allowing the former to achieve its national objectives, a two-step approach is recommended.

Despite the unfavorable conditions that currently exist, it is prudent that Singapore adopt a two-step approach to engage China, with the eventual goal of establishing a formal defense relation. The goal essentially is to first establish a foothold, and thereafter increase the level and scope of relations at a rate conducive to both nations, but more [HO9]importantly, it is at a rate acceptable to the other regional states, paying special attention and making additional efforts at all times to carefully manage the sensitivities of the key strategic players in the region.

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[1]A description of what China perceived to be Singapore's power or strength was provided earlier in chapter four.

[2]Since 1948, the Israelis have fought four major, full-scale wars and a number of lower level operations, such as the 1982 Operation Peace for Galilee, with its Arabic neighbors primarily for self-preservation reasons. The four major wars are: the 1948 War of Independence, 1956 Sinai Campaign, 1967 Six-Day War, and 1973 Yom Kippur War.

[3]Paul Dibb, "The Strategic Environment in the Asia-Pacific Region," in *America's Asian Alliance*, ed. Robert D. Blackwill and Paul Dibb (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 2000), 27. This was best seen in the indifferent U.S respond toward the Southeast Asian states during the Asian economic crisis in 1997-98, and most recently in their lukewarm respond to the Indonesian Government forced suppression of East Timor.

[4]Chen Jie, "Major Concerns in China's ASEAN Policy" in *China, India, Japan and the Security of Southeast Asia*, ed. Chandran Jeshurun, ISEAS (Singapore: ISEAS, 1993), 153.

[5]Keynote address by Singapore's Senior Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, at a lecture organized by Malaysia's Institute of Strategic and International Studies at Kuala Lumpur, as reported in *The Straits Times* (Singapore), on 17 Aug 2000.

[6]Chen, 165.

[7]For the purpose of this study, the key countries that will be examined are Malaysia, Indonesia, U.S., Taiwan, and Japan, which will be termed hereafter as the key strategic nations or states.

[8]Especially during the height of the Cultural Revolution in China, there was a real perceived threat that the Chinese Communist ideology would spread throughout Asia. Hence the phrase "big dragon" coined to describe the geographically and demographically large Chinese state. In Burstein and De Keijzer, 45.

[9]*The Straits Times Interactive*, Singapore, 5 March 2001. As reported in the article, during the recent National People's Congress (NPC) session, China's Premier Zhu Rongji announced that in the next five years China will and must unswervingly pursue reform, open itself wider to the outside world, and break down the institutional obstacles to the development of productive forces, and hope to double its GDP by 2010.

[10]It is the Indonesian government belief that Indonesian Communist Party, with China's support, was the key agitator in the attempted coup of 1965. Hence discriminately and methodically, the local Chinese populace was murdered. Lee, 261-263.

[11]Lee, 270.

[12]Ibid.

[13]*Jane's Sentinel: Security Assessment of Southeast Asia*, 4th Update, Coulsdon, Surrey; Alexandria, VA: Jane's Information Group, 1999.

[14] Ibid.

[15] "The Far East and Australasia 2000", *Regional Surveys of the World*, London: Europa, 2000, 1127.

[16]*The Straits Times Interactive* (Singapore), 4 Oct 2000. A Comment by President Chen Shiu-bian of Taiwan on Lee Kuan Yew following the latter's visit to Taiwan in September 2000.

[17]*AFP, 13 December 2000*. Under the "three mini-links" initiative, Taiwan will start in January 2001 to allow direct trade, transportation and postal services between two of its fortified outlying islands, Kinmen and Matsu, and the mainland.

[18]Murray Hiebert and Susan V. Lawrence, "Dangerous Brinkmanship," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (15 March 2001).

[19]"China's Confident Bow," *The Economist*, 8 March 2001, available from http://www.economist.com; Internet; accessed 8 March 2001.

[20]*A National Security Strategy (NSS) for a New Century*, December 1999.

[21]Since 1996, the U.S. has been Singapore second largest trading partner after Japan. In "The Far East and Australasia 2000." 1127.

[22] Ibid.

[23]Witold Rodzinski, *A History of China*, Vol. 1, (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979), 349. In the 1860s, following the Chinese defeat at the hands of the Japanese, its conqueror together with seven other foreign powers embarked on a "carving up the Chinese melon." This was to be the prelude to the Boxer Rebellion in China between 1898-1990. Essentially, it was an attempt by European nations and Japan collectively termed by China as "foreign devils" to divide China among themselves following a similar operation in Africa.

[24] In relative terms, the Japanese defense budget with respect to the country's GDP is significantly lesser than China's, however when compared in absolute terms, it surpasses the Chinese budget by approximately two and half times.

[25]Mary Kwang, "Chinese Military Spending Worries Japan," *The Straits Times Interactive* (Singapore), 31 Aug 2000, available from http://straitstimes.asia1.com.sg/asia/ea1-0831.html; Internet; accessed 31 August 2000.

[26]Revzin, Phil; Michael Vatikiotis, David Plott, and Ben Dolven. "Lee: The Cruel Game," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 163, no. 23 (8 Jun 2000). Senior Minister opined to the effect that western powers (the U.S.) instead of encouraging Taiwan to think of itself as a separate state. Rather the effort should be to convince Taiwan that unification with China is inevitable. This notion is further reinforced by the Taiwanese opinion that the current from of Chinese government is not yet the type that Taiwanese people are prepared to live in.

[27]Mr. Liu Jiaying of Taiwan, interview by author, 22 November 2000, Leavenworth, Kansas, email interview.

[28]Premier Zhu Rongji articulated this at the recent National People's Congress session as reported in the *Economist*'s article "China's Confident Bow" dated 8 Mar 2001.

[29]Harding, 106.

[30]This could be modeled after the Joint Australia-Singapore Coordination Group (JASINCG) meetings, aimed at increasing understanding, as well as to discuss possible defence cooperation activities (less intelligence matters) between the SAF and PLA.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

Since 9 August 1965, when Singapore attained its independence under the most unanticipated circumstances, its sovereign status has never been in doubt. However, with hardly any natural resources, Singapore's resolve to survive as a nation was put to a stringent test. After thirty-five years, not only has Singapore survived as a nation, it has achieved remarkable economic success unsurpassed by any of the Southeast Asia nations. In East Asia, Singapore's economic achievement ranks closely with that of South Korea, Taiwan, and the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong. In particular, Singapore's sound economic and financial management infrastructure have allowed it to weather the impact of the acute financial crisis of 1997 that struck East Asia with contagious effects better than many of the other East Asian nations. However, Singapore cannot take for granted the economic success and relative peace the nation has experienced for the last thirty-five years.

Singapore lies in the heart of the contiguous Malay-Indonesia archipelago, a position of strategic importance critical to regional economic growth. Inherent structural and social differences that exist among the three nations on this landmass, with its ethnic differences and economic disparity, are an innate vulnerability that Singapore will continue to face in the future. In recent years, through leadership changes and an evolving regional geopolitical, geo-economic, and geo-security disposition that have brought about

greater economic and security interdependence among these nations, Singapore remains to be the Chinese shrimp in an enormous Malay sea.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait reinforces the need for Singapore to apply sufficient vigilance, lest the same fate befall it. This event is a constant reminder to Singapore that it needs to pursue active deterrence policy and diplomacy measures to mitigate against the vulnerabilities arising from uncertain geopolitical circumstances. Over the years such innate vulnerabilities have significantly molded Singapore's foreign policy developed around the precept of balance of power.

The thesis sought to determine if Singapore should establish and, consequently, formalize a defense relationship with China, in light of the former's desire to maintain a regional geopolitical balance to protect its interests. Throughout the course of the analysis, the intent was to identify the differences between a formal and informal defense relationship and the between defense and diplomatic relations, and to derive the motivations for Singapore and China to pursue a formal defense relationship. This is fundamental because it provides the analysis with a basis to assess the benefits and limitations or cost of establishing a defense alliance between these two countries.

To recapitulate, the main motivators for Singapore and China to formally engage one another in the military arena are predicated by each nation's national agendas and perceptions.

1. For China, is the agenda rests on the power that Singapore is perceived to have by virtue of the following factors:

    a. Economic capacity and capability,

    b. Modern military,

c. Respected leadership and international credibility,

d. Shared common values, and

e. Strategic geographical disposition.

2. Singapore's motivations are mainly driven by its national security objective to protect and ensure the continued economic viability of the Republic, aligned with a balance of power foreign policy. Singapore sees the following virtues that China possesses that will help it achieve this objective.

a. A Chinese big brother

b. Economic potential

c. Military potential

d. Technological know-how

e. New training areas and facilities

Having established the motivators, the analysis then proceeded to conduct a cost benefit analysis and applied a FAS test to the proposal. The results from the first test indicated that, while the initiative does possess indisputable benefits for both nations, especially from Singapore's perspective, and also in view of the current uncertain regional geopolitical situation, at present the cost or limitations outweigh the benefits. However, the FAS test provided some consolation, as the findings from this second test indicated that timing is the key determinant in the realization of such an initiative, taking into consideration the following factors.

1. The inherent sensitivities and suspicions of Malaysia and Indonesia restrict Singapore's relationship with China. While relations among these four nations have improved significantly since the 1950s and 1960s, the debris of East Asian history and

the fear of Chinese hegemony in the region that might undermine the survival of Islam is too deep-seated and continues to be a sensitive issue. This sentiment is made worse by the rise of racial tensions in both countries in recent times.

2. The current balance of power equilibrium in the region is based on the United States being the main countervailing force. A Sino-Singaporean defense proposition of such nature may be unsettling if the U.S. position in the region is challenged by a Chinese expansion. As a corollary, this could result in more regional countries, such as Japan, challenging for control over the region to protect their own national interests, inevitably causing the region to become unstable. Singapore has benefited significantly from U.S. continued presence, hence an absence of U.S. presence in the region would not be acceptable.

3. Singapore's credibility and the level of trust with key regional players, such as Taiwan, or even non-regional players, such as the United States, may be tarnished as a result of such a move. Singapore's rising recognition in the international arena has been premised on its non-corrupt, trustworthy, and credible government, one that has been in power since its independence in 1965. This will be an important factor for Singapore to consider, as its economic growth becomes increasingly dependent on external forces.

4. Leadership changes in the region in the coming years and the uncertainties that are associated with it will be a key primer in the initiation of such a proposal. Such changes will have significant impact on the geopolitical circumstances in the region. However, the presence of Lee Kuan Yew should be taken advantage of to mitigate some of the uncertainties associated with leadership changes around the region.

5. As mentioned earlier, being the main counterbalancing force in the region, the United States' Asian policy, especially toward China, will have a significant impact on the geopolitical disposition of the region. In particular, a deviation from one that is engagement-centric to one that is more confrontation-centric could set off a domino effect, detrimentally affecting the possibility for Singapore to effect the defense alliance with China.

Conclusion

From the analysis, it can be summarized that a formal Sino—Singapore defense relation is not an acceptable foreign policy option for Singapore to pursue in the immediate future. However, from a long-term perspective, a formal alliance between the two countries is both a suitable and feasible option that is consistent with Singapore's balance of power approach toward regional foreign policy formulation. Singapore's security and stability are highly dependent on its active deterrence and diplomatic efforts to create an environment that continues to be conducive to its economic development. Hence, Singapore continues to search for bilateral or multilateral foreign policy options to achieve this end and, consequently, its national security objectives.

In view of this, the analysis proposed three options that Singapore can adopt and build on over time, awaiting the right moment to be able to establish a formal alliance with China. The three alternatives are:

1. Status quo approach
2. Time-phased approach
3. Multilateral approach

The central idea in all three options is to establish an initial foothold in China in the military arena at present, while waiting for the appropriate time to finally establish a formal defense relationship with China. These options are predicated on the fact that Lee's continued presence in the Singapore government would help to allay some of the fears and suspicions that regional, as well as key non-regional, states may have toward such a move. With respect to the options, the status quo approach presents itself as the most obvious and natural choice. However, this approach does not help to hasten the process of setting the conducive conditions to initiate the defense alliance proposition. These conditions are strengthening defensive ties with China and reducing or allaying fears in neighboring states.

The second option, the time-phased approach, is essentially aimed at gradually increasing the defensive ties between Singapore and China, but like the first option it does not actively seek to allay third party fears and suspicions that make the alliance unacceptable to the neighboring states. Finally, in the author's opinion the best solution to explore is the third option, which addresses the need to both engage China gradually in the defense arena and find a way to hedge against the fears, sensitivities, and suspicions that exist in neighboring states. The key difference here is that it is a multilateral as opposed to bilateral approach. This is a difficulty in itself, as it introduces new considerations, to include deciding which third or fourth party to invite without rousing further sensitivities. In short, adopting a multilateral approach by identifying a third or fourth nation to be included into a larger defense alliance with China and Singapore is the best option, provided the concerns raised could be sufficiently addressed. Essentially, this option, while striving to build on the existing good relations that Singapore has with

China, more importantly postulates the engagement of a third party to dynamically help to mitigate against the some of the inherent vulnerabilities.

Possible Questions for Further Research

The related questions that could be further studied include:

1. Which regional country, besides China, would be a suitable alternative for Singapore to engage formally in the defense arena so as to hedge against the uncertainty that exists in the region, hence allowing Singapore to experience continued success in achieving its national objective in the long run.

2. What are the possibilities for a regional, multinational defense alliance to be forged with China as one of the anchor nations?

3. How does a U.S. China containment or engagement policy affect Singapore's subsequent Sino-Singapore security policy options?

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