

SINGAPORE'S FOREIGN POLICY: BEYOND REALISM

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Abstract

This thesis argues that Singapore's foreign policy seeks to maximise order, and not power. Hence, it proposes that the English School theory, with its focus explaining why a high degree of substantive order exists in an anarchical context is therefore a more appropriate tool to analyse Singapore's foreign policy. To substantiate this point, this thesis examines Singapore's foreign policy towards Malaysia, Indonesia, China, and India to show how this city-state has managed to conduct its relations with them within the framework of an international society. Japan is excluded because this thesis focuses on states that have the greatest potential to affect Singapore by virtue of three main considerations – geographical distance, future impact on regional geopolitical developments, and ethnicity. Due to their geographical proximity, Malaysia and Indonesia are arguably the states most important to Singapore. China and India, as the rising powers, constitute unknown variables since the nature and effects of their rise are still not clear, and Singapore's foreign policy needs to be sensitive towards developments there. At the same time, Singapore is a predominantly ethnic Chinese state with a sizeable Malay minority that constitutes the majority in the region as well as a significant Indian minority, a demographic reality that has influenced its foreign policy as well. Japan is an important actor. However, compared with these four states, Japan has comparatively less impact on Singapore in these areas, and so it is not included. Literature on Singapore's foreign policy is almost entirely based on Realism. Consequently, the resultant focus is on the conflictual, adversarial, and anarchical aspects, and associational aspects are overlooked. According to Realist theory, Singapore would be dominated by these larger states. This thesis draws attention to the fact that inter-state relations are not moderated solely by material considerations such as geographical and population sizes as depicted by Realism. Associational aspects are present as rules, values and norms also matter, which allows small states such as Singapore to interact with these larger states, both bilaterally and multilaterally, on the basis of formal equality. This shows that Singapore is able to influence the terrain in which its foreign policy is being conducted, which is apparent in its pursuit of a stable balance of power that involves all legitimate actors. As a result, a high level of order characterises its foreign policy, and this congruence justifies the use of the English School theory in this context.

Thesis Declaration

Name: Ming Hwa Ting

Program: Doctor of Philosophy

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due references have been made in the text.

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To other International Relations theorists who are tempted to speak before reading and to judge before knowing, it is worth revisiting Montesquieu's plea Morgenthau made in the preface to the second edition of *Politics Among Nations*: "I beg one favour of my readers, which I fear will not be granted me; that is, they will not judge by a few [hours'] reading of the labour of [the past three years]; that they will approve or condemn the [thesis] entire and not a few particular phrases."

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List of Abbreviations

APT	ASEAN plus Three
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASW	Anti-Submarine Marine
BIMP-EAGA	Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CECA	Closer Economic Cooperation Agreement
CM	Chief Minister
DCA	Defence Cooperation Agreement
EAS	East Asia Summit
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EIC	East India Company
ET	Extradition Treaty
FSO	Foreign Service Officers
HINDRAF	Hindu Rights Action Force
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IN	Indian Navy
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NEFOS	New Emerging Forces
OLDEFO	Old Emerging Forces
PAP	People's Action Party
PAS	Partai Islam SeMalaysia
PRM	Parti Rakyat Malaysia
PSA	Ports of Singapore Authority
RSN	Republic of Singapore Navy
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SEATO	Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation
SIIA	Singapore Institute of International Affairs
SIMBEX	Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise
SIP	Suzhou Industrial Park
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Cooperation
WTO	World Trade Organisation