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OCAS 3040: THE INDO-PACIFIC, WHAT STRATEGY VIS-À-VIS CHINA?

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Question: Is the Singaporean model of foreign relations a tenable model for smaller nations in the Indo-Pacific?

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In March 2022, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Republic of Singapore, in a surprise move, unequivocally, and in extremely strong language for diplomatic circles, condemned the invasion and reiterated its support for Ukrainian sovereignty and independence. In the days since, the tiny Republic also voted in the United Nations with an overwhelming supermajority of the international community to censure Russia, and joined in the international sanctions regime against Russia. These actions were unusually aggressive for Singapore, which generally prefers to not "rock the boat" – and resulted in the city-state being put on the Russian government's list of unfriendly states. The moves are particularly notable given the rest of Southeast Asia's muted response to the invasion. Observers around the world have sat up and taken notice, that such a small state would take such aggressive measures in the conduct of foreign affairs – which is representative of Singapore's outsize influence in global affairs.

Small states are often overlooked in the conduct of international affairs. Singapore is one state that not only bucks the trend, but has proven itself time and time again to be a powerhouse in the Indo-Pacific. Since the late 2010s, Singapore has also been increasingly comfortable in a role as potential interlocutor of international affairs with examples such as hosting and securing the Trump-Kim summit. Given its position in Asia as a major economic powerhouse and reputation for prudence, caution, and stable policy, Singapore is also sought after for counsel by major powers in the areas of diplomacy, trade and commerce, defence relations, and the conduct of international relations in the Indo-Pacific. While some of its influence is no doubt derived from its economic power, Singapore also works to show itself as a military force to be reckoned with, abiding by Theodore Roosevelt's maxim of "walk softly and carry a big stick." Given the recent attention paid to Singaporean foreign policy and its efficacy, one must question if such a model of foreign relations is a tenable model for smaller nations in the Indo-Pacific. This essay will argue that such a model is not only tenable, but indeed necessary in an era that is once again being characterised by strongly polarised international politics. The model will be broken down into four parts: Singaporean Realism, strategic autonomy in defence policy, a preference for institutionalism and multilateralism, and economic interconnectedness.

Section I - Singaporean Realism and the "global city"

Singapore's foreign policy is the product of the Republic's early leaders – Lee Kuan Yew (first Prime Minister), Sinnathamby Rajaratnam (first Foreign Minister), Dr. Goh Keng Swee (first Defence Minister), Professor Tommy Koh (former UN representative and current Ambassador-at-large), to name but a few. Alan Chong describes their approach to foreign policy as "abridged realism" which may more accurately described as a form of proto-realism. As Chong notes, unlike classical and empirical realists, the founding fathers of Singaporean foreign policy did not adhere strictly to all the tenets of realism.[1] Though they maintained massive support and respect for notions of sovereignty, self-help, economic independence and an anarchic international system, Chong also describes the policy set forth by those founding fathers as such: "faithful conformity with classical realist precepts falls short when one considers both official enthusiasm for upholding the present neo-liberal global political economy and its fervour for fostering initiatives for institutionalized inter-regional dialogues such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit, Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), and the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC)."[2]

[1] Alan Chong, ″Singapore's Foreign Policy Beliefs as ′Abridged Realism′: Pragmatic and Liberal Prefixes in the Foreign Policy Thought of Rajaratnam, Lee, Koh, and Mahbubani," International Relations of the Asia-Pacific 6, no. 2 (2006): pp. 269-271

[2] Chong, *Abridged Realism*, 274

Rajaratnam also maintained the idea of a "global city" – the notion that Singapore would be a cosmopolitan hub that would play "a nodal role larger than the theoretical imaginings of small-state actorness," according to Chong[3]. In Rajaratnam's own words, this cosmopolitan dream "is the child of modern technology. It is the city that electronic communications, supersonic planes, giant tankers and modern economic and industrial organisation have made inevitable. Whether the Global City will be a happier place than the megalopolis out of whose crumbling ruins it is emerging will depend on how wisely and boldly we shape its direction and growth."[4] In other words, this "global city" would be a kind of neoliberal fever dream, upholding free trade and globalisation – hardly in line with traditional realism.[5] It is this nexus of realism, liberal institutionalism and neoliberal economics that serves as the jumping off point for our discussion.

Section II - National Service and the Poison Pill: a Singaporean realist's lesson in strategic autonomy

Singapore gained full independence on August 9, 1965, after a troubled two years as part of Malaysia. Following months of negotiations, riots, and political instability, Singapore was expelled from Malaysia and become a republic in its own right. However, the newly independent island existed in a dangerous neighbourhood. The shores of Singapore had been bombarded by Indonesian forces during the *Konfrontasi* (English: Confrontation) campaign launched by the Sukarno regime against Malaysia in 1963 in opposition to the formation of the new federation as well as the inclusion of Sabah and Sarawak.[6] Facing territorial threats from Indonesia and a persistent fear the it would be subsumed by its much larger neighbourhood, Malaysia.

With the withdrawal of all but a few British troops from the Far East, ie, East of Suez (with a small garrison stationed in Brunei), Singapore was left in a precarious situation.[7] With its territorial sovereignty being threatened, and the legacy of Japanese occupation during the Second World War still fresh on Singaporeans' minds, the new government very quickly realised that Singapore would have to defend itself, and that nobody could be relied upon to defend Singaporean sovereignty (citing the British failure to do so and eventual capitulation in February 1942).[8] It was decided then, that as of 1967, all Singaporean males would be conscripted into military service at age 18 for two years, recognising that for such a small population, a powerful regular military force would be near impossible to stand up and maintain. Singapore's first prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, was quoted as saying "Every boy and girl will learn what it means to be a Singaporean."

The new program, named National Service after the British system of conscription and reserve training during and the years after World War II, was signed into effect by the National Service Act of 1967 and Enlistment Act of 1970. These acts provided that all Singaporean males at age 18 would have to enlist into military service for a period of two years, after which they would be retained as reservists until various ages depending on rank at the time of discharge. To many, this system sounds familiar because it was modelled on the Israeli system, and stood up by Israeli military advisors.[9] In

[3] Ibid, 280
[4] Ibid, 281
[5] Ibid, 281
[6] See Seng Tan, ″Mailed Fists and Velvet Gloves: The Relevance of Smart Power to Singapore′s Evolving Defence and Foreign Policy," Journal of Strategic Studies 38, no. 3 (November 2015): pp. 335
[7] Ibid, 335
[8] Ibid, 334
[9] Balaji Sadasivan, ″Singapore′s Foreign Policy," Estudios Internacionales 40, no. 157 (2007): p. 161

its early days, Singapore had reached out to a number of post-colonial nations for military assistance, and Israel was the only one to answer this call – particularly salient given the situations that both nations found themselves in, neighbourhoods dominated by significantly larger and more powerful Muslim-majority states that sought to wipe the smaller states off the map and consume them. The Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) were stood up at independence, commanded by a small number of British officers, with two infantry regiments, a handful of aircraft, and a tiny fleet of small boats for the navy.[10]

With the advice and assistance of Israeli military advisors, dubbed "Mexicans" in order to not anger the governments of Malaysia and Indonesia, the Singaporean military was rapidly developed into a capable military force, equipped with state of the art technology. Critically, the Israeli advisors had recognised (and instilled) that the SAF would always be outnumbered, and that it would have to leverage technology as a force multiplier in order to maintain capability parity. This notion continues to pervade Singaporean defence planning, leaving the SAF today as one of the most technologically advanced and highly networked forces in the world, with recent acquisitions including the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Singapore today is also one of the largest military spenders and arms manufacturers in the world, spending on average 3.2% of its GDP on defence spending, roughly on par with the United States.[11]

Singapore's defence posture has seen three evolutions across the years, each taking on distinct names to signify the variety in the offensive/defensive balance – but each one essentially making Singapore a "poison pill" if invaded. The first era, named the poison shrimp reflected a strategic ideal by which defence planners accepted that Singapore would be overrun if invaded – but that the SAF would then retreat into the city and fight the invading forces in the streets, thereby leveraging the home court advantage and making an form of occupation very costly. In the 1980s, this evolved into the porcupine doctrine – more proactive in deterring aggression by potential invaders, but not clearly delineated from the poison shrimp doctrine. The third evolution, and current doctrine, is the dolphin. This posture, based largely on the offensive moves made by dolphins when approaching sharks, is reflective of the old maxim that the best defence is a good offence. The idea, across these three iterations then, is that the SAF must always be treated as a force to be reckoned with.[12]

With respect to the question of strategic autonomy, Singapore stubbornly avoids firm alliance commitments. Though many of its defence arrangements tend to be with major Western powers (and recently, with rising Asian powers like India and China), Singapore is not officially a part of any defence alliance, pledging only to defence cooperation, interoperability, and combined training in vague terms. Observers do note that all of Singapore's overseas training missions are in the US or US-allied countries (France, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Taiwan, Thailand, Brunei), that Singaporean personnel are often sent to the US and UK for officer training, that Singapore is a major relay hub for the Five Eyes intelligence sharing pact and the US is one of a highly select club of countries that maintains the rights to maintain a military presence in Singapore.[13] Singapore has also expressed its support for the US military presence and its alliance system (hub and spoke model) in

[10] Tan, *Mailed Fists*, 335

[11] Ibid, 342

[12] " Poison Shrimp, Porcupines, and Dolphins: Singapore Is Packing Some Serious Heat," VICE, March 30, 2015, https://www.vice.com/en/article/d3jagq/poison-shrimp-porcupines-and-dolphins-singapore-is-packing-some-serious-heat.

[13] Andrew T.H. Tan, "Punching above Its Weight: Singapore's Armed Forces and Its Contribution to Foreign Policy," *Defence Studies* 11, no. 4 (2011): p. 684

Asia, but is not an official part of the latter.[14] Despite this, and extremely close defence acquisitions relationships with the US, Israel, Germany, and France, Singapore in 2003 reportedly declined an offer by the US to be considered as a major non-NATO ally (MNNA), a privilege that the US affords only to a handful of countries that comes with increased access to US military hardware and logistics mechanisms. In recognition of the challenges of the 21st century, the SAF also maintains a high level of readiness to deploy on humanitarian assistance missions all around the world, as a demonstration of both its goodwill to all and its almost stubborn neutrality.[15]

Between its reflexive proto-realist view of the world and stubborn commitment to not maintain alliance commitments, Singapore wields a high degree of strategic autonomy in its defence, drilling with countries who consider each other adversaries but are still partnered with Singapore. Should the global stage devolve into conflict once again, it is highly unlikely that Singapore will be spared a place in that war, but like Switzerland, its policy of armed neutrality and "dolphin" defence doctrine allow it to navigate the waters and do exactly as it pleases. Perhaps the greatest reflection of this autonomy is in Singapore's military arrangement with Taiwan despite its official recognition of a One China Policy. The Chinese, according to Sadasivan, "understand" that Singapore and Taiwan have a long-standing commitment, and to this day do not challenge it outright – perhaps the only country in the world that is able to command this degree of flexibility from Beijing.[16]

Section III - Regionalism and Multilateralism: Singapore, Institutionalism and the rules-based order

It is often said in foreign policy circles that for a country to have a seat at the table and have a role in shaping the international order, it had to, in turn, participate actively in upholding said order. Singapore is a subscriber to this principle of international affairs, having maintained often that as a beneficiary of the rules based order, it had a responsibility to be an active player in upholding the same. Moreover, the Singaporean foreign policy establishment, as previously noted, conducts a careful balancing act between its realist and liberal institutionalist views. The latter perspective in particular, manifests in the form of a strong belief in multilateral institutionalism, and active participation in those institutions.[17] This exemplified through three major engagements: the foundational moment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Singaporean participation in United Nations Peacekeeping operations, and the proliferation of counterpiracy operations in the late 2000s and early 2010s with Singaporean participation.

ASEAN was founded in 1967 by the signing of the Bangkok Declaration. Its founding members, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand as a whole represented the more prosperous economies in the region, as well as the only ones with relatively stable governments, not to mention of course, a staunch aversion to the spread of Communism in Asia.[18] ASEAN today is comprised of all the Southeast Asian states and is the world's fifth largest economy as a whole. ASEAN is also the core unit for the conduct of diplomacy and multilateral institutions in the Indo-Pacific.[19] Singapore in particular is a strong proponent of the notion of ASEAN centrality, not only as a means of asserting its own voice, but in the understanding that Southeast Asia at large is required to play a role as the

[14] Tan, *Mailed Fists*, 338

[15] Tan, *Mailed Fists*, 345 & Tan, *Punching above Its Weight*, 679-680

[16] Sadasivan, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, p. 159

[17] Tan, *Mailed Fists*, 337

[18] Anna Grzywacz, "Singapore's Foreign Policy toward Regional and Inter-Regional Institutions," Asian Perspective 43, no. 4 (2019): p. 655

[19]" ASEAN Development Trajectories Reach New Milestone," ASEAN, August 23, 2021, https://asean.org/asean-development-trajectories-reach-new-milestone/

interlocutor in the inevitable butting of heads between India and China as the rising Asian powers. In lending its support for ASEAN centrality, Singapore has in turn cemented its position in the global diplomatic landscape as a serious negotiator in Asia.[20]

Secondly, the city has distinguished itself from other small nations, as an active participant in UN peacekeeping. Since 1989, Singaporean peacekeepers from the SAF and the Singapore Police Force, as well as civilian advisors, deployed on seventeen missions around the world. Singapore was also asked, in July 2002, to nominate the Force Commander to the United Nations Mission of Support in Timor Leste (UNMISET).[21] Since 2003, Singaporean troops have also been deployed in a peacekeeping capacity in Iraq. Singapore also signed, in 1997, the Memorandum of Understanding on UN Standby Arrangements – a clear demonstration of intent to the global community that the city state is serious about its commitment to international security through multilateral cooperation.[22]

In 2009, a broad coalition of countries from around the world stood up Combined Task Force 151 (CTF 151), part of the Combined Maritime Forces initiative, to combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia. Singapore was an early contributor to the task force, being reliant on open and safe lanes of sea passage for its survival, and having had experience with counter-piracy operations in Southeast Asian waters. As of 2018, Singaporean officers had taken command of the task force five times.[23] As with its contributions to peacekeeping, Singapore's contribution to CTF 151, in conjunction with its efforts to negotiate and uphold the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is demonstrative of Singapore's intent to uphold maritime principles like freedom of navigation, and safe passage at sea.[24] Being a nation reliant on the sea, Singapore also has vested interests in maintaining these principles, and these contributions are indicative of a proactive move to secure those interests.[25]

Singapore's diplomatic efforts have also been described by both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and foreign observers alike as being transparent, dealing in good faith, and principled. As Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan noted in a 2017 address to a group of Singaporean civil servants, this particular mode of conducting diplomatic business has meant that Singapore has been viewed by the international community both within and outside of major institutions as a "reliable partner" – in turn affording greater trust in its perspectives backing of its interests and actions on the global stage.[26] This, backed by moves such as the hosting of the 2018 Trump-Kim Summit have furthered the

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[20] Grzywacz, *Singapore's Foreign Policy*, 655-656

[21]" Factsheet SAF Participation in Peacekeeping Operations in Timor-Leste - NAS," Ministry of Defence Singapore, July 11, 2003, https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/data/pdfdoc/MINDEF_20030711001/MINDEF_20030711003_2.pdf

[22]" International Peacekeeping," Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore, n.d., https://www.mfa.gov.sg/SINGAPORES-FOREIGN-POLICY/International-Issues/International-Peacekeeping

[23]" CTF 151: Counter-Piracy," Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), April 14, 2022, https://combinedmaritimeforces.com/ctf-151-counter-piracy/.

[24]" Chronological Lists of Ratifications of Accessions and Successions to the Convention and the Related Agreements," United Nations (United Nations, n.d.), https://www.un.org/Depts/los/reference_files/chronological_lists_of_ratifications.htm

[25] Tan, *Punching above Its Weight,* 681

[26]" Full Speech: Five Core Principles of Singapore's Foreign Policy," The Straits Times, July 17, 2017, https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/five-core-principles-of-singapores-foreign-policy

Singaporean position as a reliable interlocutor on the international stage, who is willing to parlay with all actors – as Dr. Balakrishnan notes, Singapore "aim[s] to be a friend to all, but enemy to none."[27] Despite this diplomatic position, it was nevertheless a surprise when Singapore took the lead amongst the Southeast Asian nations to unequivocally condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine, vote in favour of a resolution to do the same, and moreover, unilaterally impose sanctions on Russia – the first time since the 1979 invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam that Singapore has spoken out against a major global invasion.[28] The most recent set of actions with respect to Ukraine indicate that Singapore is perhaps becoming more comfortable with its place in the world, and is ready to take more proactive stances to back its rhetoric on its backing of the rule of law on the international stage.

Section IV - Interconnectivity and Interdependence: The Small but mighty neoliberal

In the 1800s, when they were surveying Southeast Asia for their next colonial outpost, the British noted that Singapore was in a position of great strategic interest. Located at the nexus of the Malacca, Johor and Singapore Straits, Singapore, in the eyes of the British, had the capacity to be a major transportation hub, welcoming and controlling traffic from Asia to Africa and Europe, and vice versa. What was once a sleepy fishing outpost was then transformed into a major shipping hub – which naturally caught the attention of the Japanese during the Second World War. Singapore has continued to maintain this position as a crucial shipping hub, facilitating the transit of goods all across the Indo-Pacific and beyond. As of 2021, Singapore was the world's busiest container transshipment port, handling a record 599 million tonnes of cargo across a total vessel tonnage of 2.81 billion.[29] Singapore's navy also plays a large part in ensuring the safe passage of commercial vessels through the Malacca, Johor and Singapore straits, some of the busiest shipping lanes in the world by protecting them from potential piracy and asymmetrical threats.

In recognition of Singapore's position as a crucial travel hub, the early government also sought to build up the city as a major port of call for aviation. For example, Singapore first served as a major hub for what would eventually come to be known as the Kangaroo Route, connecting Australia and the United Kingdom, as early as the 1930s, in the infancy of mass air transit – and continued to do so through the dawn of the jet age. Today, the Kangaroo Route is from Sydney to London, plied by Qantas, and utilises Singapore as one of its major layover points, connecting Singapore immediately to Europe and Oceania, while also making it critical to communication between those continents. [30]

[27] Ibid

[28] Singapore, controversially, supported the American-led coalition efforts in Iraq, and deployed troops as early as 2003, in non-combat roles such as engineers and medical support teams. As of 2019, Singaporean troops remain deployed in Iraq in support of the global coalition operation against the Islamic State, in roles such as Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) and medical support.

[29] Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, "Singapore Closes 2021 with Record Container Throughput of 37.5 Million TEUs," Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, January 13, 2022, https://www.mpa.gov.sg/web/portal/home/media-centre/news-releases/detail/bee90c95-edb6-4746-aa66-bc9220cabc05

[30] Andrew Curran, "Why Does the Qantas Kangaroo London-Sydney Route Stop in Singapore?," Simple Flying, January 12, 2022, https://simpleflying.com/qantas-london-singapore-sydney-kangaroo-route/

Singapore Changi Airport remains one of the busiest airports in the world today. In 2019, it served 68 million passengers, taking 17th place in the world's busiest airports.[31]

Given its status as a major port of call in travel and trade, it should come as no surprise that Singapore is also a second home to a plurality of global financial institutions. Major banks such as HSBC, Citibank, and Bank of America have all made their Asian homes in Singapore, and more are flocking to the city with the growing restriction of Hong Kong by the Chinese government. Given Singapore's business-friendly economic policies, relatively low taxes, dependable government, and relatively stable economy, financial institutions have moved to place great faith in Singapore as one of the centres of the global financial market. Singapore's weathering of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and 2008 Great Recession, and relative insulation from Chinese political influence on its financial markets, have also increased the confidence of investors and financial institutions that their business would survive future exogenous shocks, and would also be protected fiercely from the influence of foreign actors.[32]

Between its positions in shipping lanes, aviation routes, and banking, Singapore clearly occupies an important place in global supply chains – and this is no accident. Singaporean planners realised in its early days that its strategic autonomy and sovereignty would have to be safeguarded not only through a careful combination of military might and principled diplomacy, but also an aggressive economic strategy that would tie it into a system of global economic interdependence. As such, any disruption to Singaporean stability from outside forces would have an outsize impact on global supply chains and financial systems, thereby creating problems for all actors involved. This in turn enables the tiny state to also wield outsize power in the conduct of international economics. Having previously been noted as having neoliberal alignments in its economics, Singapore is highly in favour of free trade (and is criticised by many of its neighbours for its FTAs with a number of global powers, thereby undercutting the economic power of its neighbours).[33]

Despite its outsize economic power, Singapore remains however, a nation that is devoid of any sense of natural resources, and is thereby reliant on imports to feed, clothe, shelter its population and maintain its production capacity. It is thereby reliant on the open sea lines of communication, and freedom of navigation to ensure its economic security, both for its necessary imports and its export of finished goods to the world. Given however, its founding ministers' foresight, the country's imports and exports both are highly diversified, preventing a building up of a reliance on a single economic power (or group of powers) and pegging its economic well-being to them.[34] This diversification has been vital to riding out a number of economic shocks in the last thirty years: the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, the Great Recession of 2008, and the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. This is not to say that Singapore has been immune to the consequences of these shocks – in fact, inflation in Singapore (as in much of the world) is at an all-time high as of 2022 as a result of pandemic-related supply chain disruptions, and GDP growth slowed in 2020 due to the near-total collapse of the tourism industry upon which the city state is heavily reliant. The diversification of its economic ties has simply allowed Singapore to weather these storms more easily than would be expected.

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[31] ″ ACI Reveals Top 20 Airports for Passenger Traffic, Cargo, and Aircraft Movements," ACI World, August 5, 2021, https://aci.aero/2020/05/19/aci-reveals-top-20-airports-for-passenger-traffic-cargo-and-aircraft-movements/

[32] Christopher M. Dent, ″Singapore's Foreign Economic Policy: The Pursuit of Economic Security," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 23, no. 1 (2001): pp. 13-14

[33] Tan, *Mailed Fists*, 337

[34] Dent, *Singapore's Foreign Economic Policy*, 7-8

Section V - Assessment and conclusion: A loud roar

There is no doubt that Singapore's foreign policy stance is effective. Between its strategic hedging between great powers, active involvement in upholding the international order, and making itself indispensable in international trade and economics, there is little question that the Lion City roars loud. As much as it avoids aggressive stances on the international stage, the world sits up and takes notice when it does because of what it does on other fronts – as Foreign Minister Balakrishnan noted, "Small states are inconsequential unless we are able to offer a value proposition and make ourselves relevant."[35] Though to the causal observer, it may seem like Singapore is a perfect model for diplomacy on the global stage, one must be cognisant of the years of calculated planning within various government agencies to ensure the conduct of foreign affairs in this fashion. Moreover, observers would also be wise to note that this particular stance and choice of policies were driven by the necessities created by particular geopolitical circumstances both at the moment of independence and in the present day. However, by playing ball with all parties involved, a country like Singapore may easily be mistaken for not having convictions, thus making actions like the sanctions on Russia in 2022 seem far more consequential, especially for a country that has no proclaimed foes in the world.

Returning now to the original question: Is Singapore's model in the conduct of foreign affairs tenable for other small states? Singapore's Foreign Minister, Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan seems to think so.[36] To accept that blindly, however, would also be to ignore certain realities. Singapore wields the particular kind of influence that it does as a function of its physical place in the world, the time of its independence, and its long history prior to independence as a global port city – all working in tandem to further Rajaratnam and Lee's vision of a "global city," a vision which in turn has worked to promote Singapore's place in the world. These institutional realities, along with a very particular history of affiliations with major power players in its neighbourhood mean that the Singaporean model cannot be simply transplanted to other small states as an exact carbon copy with an expectation of the same results. Instead, its particular choices vis-a-vis strategic hedging, not joining alliances, and developing both hard and soft power may provide a template based on which other small states may build policy to cement their place in the world and not be overlooked in the geopolitical arena.

[35] Straits Times, *Five Core Principles*
[36] Ibid

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