

## SOME HIGHLIGHTS ON SINGAPORE - US RELATIONS IN DEFENSE AND SECURITY AFFAIRS (1990-2012)

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### **Abstract:-**

*In the period of 1990 – 2012, Singapore and the United States had established close ties in most aspects of national defence and security: use of military bases and military deployments (upgrading from navy, air force, to COMLOG WESTPAC headquarters, aircraft carriers, coastal warships), annual joint drills, R&D in defense technology, weapon and equipment supply, armed forces co-training, deployment of maritime security initiatives, strategic dialogue on international/regional security forecasting. The MoU 1990 and followed by the Strategic Framework Agreement 2005 had enhanced this strategic security relationship and the two sides had perceived each other as a major security partner but not an ally. This special relationship reflects the flexibility and independence of Singapore, the high reliability and mutual strategic interests of the two countries. This paper presents the factors affecting this relations, including: international and regional context, the need for cooperation from the two countries, some highlights on Singapore – US relations in defense and security affairs (1990-2012) and analyses some features and effect of this relations.*

**Keywords:-** Relations, defense, security, Singapore, the United States (U.S.)

**Singapore** – United States Relations on Security and Defense (1990-2021): Its basis and factors of influence the global stage after the Cold War entails both opportunities and challenges towards the development of Singapore-US relations. The United States became the single world superpower unrivaled in martial prowess. It broadened its influence on ally states and strategic partners of key geographical regions, amongst which Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific were prioritized as part of the US's 'pivot' to Asia policy. In addition, the regional political landscape is impacted by up-rising powers which threatened the US's position in the area, most prominent among them was China, which created a different setting for the Singapore-US relations. In the meantime, the world post-Cold War entered a quiet phase of arms race, even though in-state instability and dormant racial conflict challenged universal security. The attack on 9/11 raised concerns about international terrorism and Islamic extremism, leading Singapore into the global war against terrorism that the US started.

The economic, political and social status of Singapore and the United States were more complementary than conflicting, creating a need for win-win collaboration from either party. If Singapore was a small state, vulnerable against regional instability, and needed a "nuclear umbrella," then the US presented a combination of economic strength and an overwhelming militia which carried impactful political authority on a global scale. The United States set its eyes on Singapore as member of its ally force because the latter held geopolitical importance on the East-West sea route, as well as a major role in the Southeast Asia region.

The bilateral tie from the time of a nascent Singapore preset the tone for later developments in the relations between Singapore and the United States, most notably was Singapore's consistent stance in favor of US involvement in the Vietnam War, and its support for US presence in Southeast Asia as a peacekeeper. This approach stemmed from Singapore's national interests, which also coincided with America's policy. Singapore proactively demonstrated its importance at the right moment, and was able to increasingly foster the reliability of the two nations' partnership. This was the important premise from which the Singapore – USA MoU was signed in 1990, and which would later open up an era of comprehensive and far-reaching bilateral relationship between the two states in the 1990-2012 period.

1. Major aspects of the Singapore-US relations on security and defense (1990-2012) Singapore-US relations on security and defense broadened on all areas: employment of military bases (thorough upgrade of the navy, air force, COMLOG WESTPAC headquarters, aircraft carriers and coastal defence ships), bilateral and multilateral joint exercises, military training, and implementation of marine security initiatives.

On the use of military bases: during the first years after the Cold War, the United States withdrew troops from Subic Bay, and Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. Lee Kuan Yew foresaw the utmost gravitas of US presence in the peacekeeping and political balancing of Asia (Ong, 2017). Under such a recognition, Singapore actively opened Paya Lebar Airbase and Sembawang Naval Base for American ships and planes on the basis of the MoU as signed in November 1990 prior to the closure of the US's final base in the Philippines in November 1992 and the Philippines' subsequent refusal for any further US engagement with its military bases (Thayer, 2010).

Singapore retained the full right to manage these bases and only allowed the US military the use of their infrastructure for transit maintenance and training, or to conduct periodic drills. The MoU was set to be valid for 15 years from the year of 1990 (and was subsequently extended till 2035). In 1991, the MoU allowed The United States to send 95 service men and women to Singapore to start deploying six F-16 Fighting Falcon Aircrafts from South Korea every two weeks to Singapore. Joint exercises between the two countries' air forces saw an increase in frequency, and US ships also visited Singapore more often and stayed for increasingly longer duration (Conboy, 1992).

In 1991, this document was adjusted to allow America the relocation of its Commander, Logistics Group Western Pacific from Subic to Singapore. The COMLOG WESTPAC is the core command force responsible for coordinating the deployment of military ships throughout the Pacific (Conboy, 1992). This expansion soon proved to be of utmost value to the US: from Singapore, the United States could quickly resolve any problem that arose in the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, the Korean Peninsula, and Somalia. Singapore also grew to become a vital transit point in the Gulf War from 1990-1991 (Latif, 2009).

To further support US presence in Southeast Asia, Singapore used its own money and resources to build the Changi Naval Base, of which it invited the US Army to make use (Khong, 2015). In November 1998, Singapore and the United States signed the Addendum to the MoU of 1990 which allowed American ships, aircraft carriers, and submarines the usage of Changi Naval Base which would open in 2000 (MINDEF, 2005). The Changi Naval Base is essentially a deep-water port for the docking of large American military ships, including big aircraft carriers. The Changi Naval Base is an effective alternative to the discontinuation of service by the Subic Naval Base in the Philippines from 1994. At the same time, the frequency of the Singaporean Army's joint or multilateral military exercise with America and other nations increased.

The two states carried out annual exercises, such as Tiger Balm – the longest running bilateral exercise between Singapore and the United States – which started from 1980, or the Commando Sling air force exercise the two nations began in 1990.

In addition to these, the Singaporean Army also took part in multilateral exercise of the United States and other countries in the region, including the Cope Tiger and Cobra Gold, which was previously a US-Thailand exercise, or the Malabar exercise (US – India – Singapore) which is an annual Naval exercise near the East Coast of the Malacca Strait (Thayer, 2010).

From 1995, Singapore was the focal location for military exercise of the Commander, US 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet and 7 of the Southeast Asian nations (Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei and Cambodia), known as the CARAT (Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training), which was planned and overseen by COMLOG WESTPAC. The objectives of CARAT include the enhancement of regional cooperation, the foster of friendships, and improvements of professional skills, maintaining the readiness for combat of participating countries' navies, under the direction of America (Thayer, 2010).

Singapore also participated in the Southeast Asia Cooperation against Terrorism program initiated and led by the US, which consisted of annual military exercises between The US, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore (Thayer, 2010).

On military training, the research and sales of weapons, the long term preparation that the United States facilitated for Singapore was important for the development of Singapore's armed forces. In the early 1990s, the US accepted Singapore's proposal for longer training of F-16 Aircrafts (Center for Security Studies ETH Zurich, 2013). Singaporean pilots took part in regular trainings at air force bases in New Mexico, and Arizona. Singaporean pilots were also present in Red Flag Exercise in Nevada alongside American, British, and French pilots (Chang, 2003). Singaporean soldiers were allowed entry and usage of expensive US military training facilities, which were salient in the development and operation of new military capabilities, the most typical as described in the following table:

**Table 2. A summary of Singapore's main military training and drills centers in the United States**

Platform	Detachments/ Exercises
F-15SG	Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho (Peace Carvin V)
F-16c/D	Luke Air Force Base, Arizona (Peace Carvin II)
AH-64d Apache	Marana, Arizona (Peace Vanguard) <sup>SEP</sup> Exercise Daring Warrior (Fort Sill, Oklahoma)
CH-47 Chinook	Grand Prairie, Texas (Peace Prairie)
S-70B Sikorsky Seahawk	USN Maritime Strike Weapons School, California (Peace Triton)
HIMARS	Exercise Daring Warrior (Fort Sill, Oklahoma)

Source: Hedging for Maximum Flexibility: Singapore's Pragmatic Approach to Security Relations with the US and China, Journal of the Singapore Armed Forces (Department of State Publication, 2015).

In 2001, Singapore was one of the two Asian nations, and the only Southeast Asian state, to participate in the development of coordinated bombers (Joint Strike Fighter – JSF) – the most extensive research and production program for strike fighter aircrafts since after the Cold War for America and its allies (The United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, Canada, Turkey, Australia, Norway, Denmark, South Korea, Belgium, Israel, and Singapore – even though Singapore wasn't an official US ally), with an output of thousands of aircrafts, including the super stealth multirole combat fighter F-35 – the most expensive weapon project. The contract for the development and systemic demonstration of the aircrafts was signed in 2001 and was added into the participating countries' financial plans up till 2035 (Dexian, 2013).

Singapore imported a range of heavy weapons from the US – F-16 fleets, KC-135 military aerial refueling aircrafts, Chinook helicopters, AH-64D Apache attack helicopters, Harpoon missiles for naval patrol aircrafts, aerial rockets, laser guided missile launchers, Hydra-70 missiles, torpedoes, and GPS equipment, among others. From 1994 to 2001, the United States sold military goods and services worth 5 billion USD for Singapore. On December 2005, Singapore selected 12 F-15SG from Boeing over France's Dassault Rafale, enhancing its security tie with America. Apart from this 1-billion-USD deal, the Singaporean Air Force also purchased a number of rockets, spare parts, and other supplies, adding to a sum of 800 million USD (Eul, 2007) (Wei, 2017). It must be admitted that, with its strategic parallel in the upgrading of weapons and a notable budget for defense, Singapore's Armed Force is the sole military in Southeast Asia capable of effective collaboration with the United States in terms of defense technology, and which, all in all, increased this nation's power of self-defense.

G.Bush government made amendments to the key US national security policy after the attack of September 11. The fear of Islamic extremists affected Singapore as also due to its geographical position: The island country is buffered by Islamist-majority countries of Malaysia and Indonesia. Singapore was cautious of the possible extreme threat. The country supported the US in the surge against international terrorism by the exchanges of intelligence data, the tight control over trans-border transportation, as well as the surveillance over sponsorship provided to the terrorist groups and the

cooperation in implementing defense over attack possibilities. Singapore security force succeeded in capturing 13 Singaporeans associated with Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), who was allegedly having connections to Al Qaeda in plans to bomb Singapore national defense units, US embassy and other European embassies in Singapore. In a plan, JI attempted to create seven bombing trucks consuming 17 tonnes of ammonium nitrate. Once succeeded the trucks would be the most devastating terrorist attack in the world after the September 11 attack in the US (Wei, 2017). JI had another plan to perform a hijacking attack into Changi Airport and an explosion targeting the water pipe connecting Singapore and Malaysia (Latif, 2009). JI at the same time worked with other organizations in an attempt to achieve a widely-impacted subversion in Southeast Asia in order to have a newly-formed Islamic country, expectedly named Daulah Islamiyah. The country would cover Malaysia, South Thailand, South Philippines, Brunei and Singapore and have Indonesia as its capital (Latif, 2009).

Singapore provided military logistics in a supporting move to the US-led military campaign to destroy Al Qaeda bases in Afghanistan and exterminate Taliban. During the post-Taliban time, Singapore resumed its supports to US air force and navy in carrying out the attempts to reconstruct Afghanistan (Mushahid, 2002).

Singapore was the first one in Asia to support and partner with the US in the practice of Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI), Automatic Identification System (AIS) applied on vessels, Container Security Initiative (CSI), or Proliferation Security Initiative (Thayer, 2010). Those were initiated by the US in an attempt to combat terrorist all over the world.

CSI's purpose was to increase security for container cargo and reduce the terrorist attacks making use of the containers. Within the CSI framework, Singapore deployed tighter check on the container cargo transit at Singapore seaports before they were transported into the US. Singapore partnership was the key to CSI as most container cargo shipped to the US was transit through Singapore seaports (Wei, 2017).

While PSI faced opposition from China, Indonesia and Malaysia, Singapore pioneered to be the key supporter to the initiative. The country agreed to detain ships and vessels carrying missile and chemical weapon materials. By August 2005 and October 2009, Singapore joined the joint naval drill named DEEP SABRE. The drill was the biggest one had ever held in Asia, with participation of more than 20 countries (Thayer, 2010).

The US and Singapore had a lot of concerns over the marine security in the Strait of Malacca, as there was no effective security solution for traffic on the strait. Annual circulation on the strait was 50,000 ships and vessels. Singapore and Malacca route loaded two thirds of the total oil transportation in the world. There were 78 pirate attacks in the area in the first nine months in 2005, of which 61 in Indonesia Sea, 10 in Malacca and the rest in Singapore. Pirate attacks caused the damage of US\$25 billion each year (Eul, 2007). The Far East (including Malacca and East Vietnam Sea) saw the most frequency of pirate attacks, of 56 per cent over the total cases in the world (Guo, 2005). The context was the key drive to the initiative of regional marine security by the US. The practice of RMSI allowed US supervising the departure and the arrival of almost all ships and vessels in oceans around the world. This was crucial to the combat over global terrorism but at the same time it raised concerns over the over surveillance by US Navy towards the world marine transportation. Many countries at the time were reluctant to the participation into RMSI, including Indonesia and Malaysia (Sam Bateman, Catherine Zara Raymond and Joshua Ho, 2006). The situation made Singapore the only one in the Far East took part in the invention and supported the presence of US Navy in the region.

In 2003, Singapore rejected the US from being the key ally outside NATO. However, Singapore agreed to negotiate for a strategic framework agreement (SFA) that allowed the two countries developing long-term, closer partnership in security and defense (Wei, 2017). Singapore's rejection became a unique angle in the US-Singapore bilateral relation (more clarifications will be added in Section 3). The key ally situation, in general, would earn Singapore more security and military (and perhaps economic) supports from the US; but at the same time more influences would come. Singapore prioritized the strategy of being multi-lateral, diversifying and flexible and not being fit into any types of mold.

In October 2003, Singapore and the US negotiated for the first and the key SFA, which was expected to influence the regional relation. In July 12 2005, the two countries sign The Strategic Framework Agreement for a Closer Cooperation Partnership in Defense and Security.

The SFA included statements of having strategic dialogues over security and defense; and promoting military cooperation and technology, research and development exchanges. The SFA helped create an official legal frame for the bilateral security and defense cooperation at present and in the future, including the principles and detailed sectors for cooperation. The SFA marked a new chapter in the relation between the two countries, especially in security and defense. It also helped to enhance the partnership in international combat over terrorism, prevention over the dissemination of mass weapon, organization of joint military drills, provision of military trainings, and the dialogues over the policy for defense technology sharing (SFA). "The SFA would make military partnership [between the US and Singapore] broader," said then-Minister for Defense Teo Chee Hean. The bilateral considered each as less than an ally and more than a friend (Latif, 2009). The practice of the SFA made Singapore a "Key Security Partner" towards the US.

Within the SFA, Singapore then-Minister for Defense Teo Chee Hean and then-US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld signed two crucial agreements:

The Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) brought together defence cooperation activities and provided for new areas of mutually beneficial cooperation. The DCA elevated defence relations and deepened military cooperation in five areas: military, policy, strategic, technology, and non-conventional security challenges. Within the agreement, the countries' high-ranking defense officials would meet annually in the Strategic Security Policy Dialogue, which were held for the exchanges of viewpoints over security, defense and bilateral cooperation. - Protocol of Amendment to the 1990 MOU (AMOU) extended the existing agreements allowing US vessels making use of Singapore marine base (MINDEF, 2005). The MOU was significant as it legalized the current proportion of the two countries in the area. 1990 MOU existed in 15 years and it would be reconsidered in 2005. For the SFA, all defense cooperation activities were legal under new framework and recognized by the two countries.

The SFA so far stood for the common security issue and at the same time reinforced the agreement between the two countries over the deep cooperation to deal with the emerging security matters, including terrorism, the prevention over pandemic, and humanitarian relief. The enhancement of technology exchange was suitable to the Singapore's new development strategy, including new technology, defense technique research and armed tool manufacture.

The bilateral defense cooperation had seen the remarkable progress since the signing of the SFA. Singapore deployed forces including UAVs and healthcare troops to Afghanistan, hand in hand with US Army to reconstruct the battled areas (Wei, 2017). Singapore at the same time sent naval ships to Aden Gulf to assist CTF-151, a programme against pirate attacks (Wei, 2017). Singapore deployed high-ranking navy officials to the gulf twice since 2010.

In June 2012, the US declared the deployment of four littoral combat ships (LCS) to Singapore. Joint statement by Singapore then-Minister for Defense Ng Eng Hen and then-US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta in June 2 2012 said the deployment was first to the strategy of rotation patrol of LCS to Singapore commencing in the second quarter of 2013 (Nguyen, 2014) in order to reinforce navy force to deal with new situations.

Speaking to the local media, Panetta said till 2020, US Navy would reorganize navy forces in Pacific Ocean and Atlantic Ocean, transferring the post-Cold War ratio of 50-50 to 60-40, including the deployment of six aircraft carriers (Nguyen, 2014).

### **1. Remarks:**

In terms of security and defense, it can be argued the military tie with the United States is the most tight-knit and comprehensive cooperation of Singapore. From the initial common goal of prolonging US presence in Southeast Asia and ensuring regional security, the two states developed their relations through MoUs which allowed the American army the use of Singaporean army bases, eventually upgrading the status of the collateral tie to primary security partners, more than friends, but not yet allies, shown in the SFA. Via which, the two nations implemented cooperative missions on a variety of forms: joint military exercises, army training, marine security initiatives, and the research of military science and technology.

### **Highly cordial relations in mutual trust:**

Firstly, Singapore deployed one coherent policy towards the United States whereby Singapore constantly asserted that the United States "played a vital role in the stability and prosperity of Asia" in the past, present, and into the future. Singapore and the US shared the same view towards promoting stability, security and prosperity in Asia. Singapore held a consistent support towards US presence in the region to maintain peace, to check China's dramatic rise, and curb traditional and non-traditional security challenges existing in the region – concerns towards the growth, and even the survival, of Singapore.

Secondly, the United States increased the number and "heaviness" of military deployment (air force and navy personnel, to aircraft carriers) on military bases within the territory of Singapore – a move which could be considered 'sensitive' if there were not high credibility between the nations; in addition, the deployment of US troops and aircraft carriers in a different sense could be interpreted to reveal that the United States valued this relationship – once the US had stationed its military in a friendly state, the act became a symbolic statement of the United States' involvement in the protection of this nation, to deter and pre-emptively staunch attempts at attacks, specifically:

+ The presence of US military power in another country is particularly effective in preventing a belligerent state from invading that country for two reasons. The army is an important counter force against the major military force used in an invasion. And since it is relatively difficult to withdraw the army after deployment, the presence of the US army in a state is a strong signal to the protected state, and any state with mal-intention that the United States is primed to protect its partner nation (Police Science Institute, 1998).

+ Aircraft carriers are a central part of the US navy's overseas deployment, in part because these carriers are symbolic of US military might. At the same time, carriers also promote an inhibitive air stemming from the destructive power they carry, and their ability to prevent and quickly respond to crises and conflicts (Police Science Institute, 1998). LCS is a generation of warships equipped with advanced technology, designed for nearshore military operations, capable of destroying targets such as torpedoes, dealing with small warships, and detecting diesel submarines.

For Singapore, the United States was a global bastion of military power, with links to various vital locations in the world. Singapore had no qualms about the US's military muscles, however, as it believed the US, in general, was using its power

in a suitable and dependable manner (Khong, 2015). The fact that Singapore chose to depend on the US's military had its historical and contemporary bases. A look at history showed that the US was ready to fight in local wars, to keep its promise as a peacekeeping body of assistance to its allies. For Singapore, amid contemporary history, the United States' superior military prowess played a major factor in keeping the peace of Asia in the past few decades (Khong, 2015).

Thirdly, the confidence between Singapore and the United States also manifested itself in various other factors:

- + The US decided on Singapore as the first place for the employment of new initiatives;
- + SFA: Despite Singapore's refusal to become an official US ally outside of NATO in 2003, a short while after the two states negotiated SFA, and Singapore was allowed benefits similar to other US allies;
- + The personal relationships between Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and US government officials through the eras: Lee Kuan Yew's candid advice or warnings about regional politics carried gravitas, and were often respected and listened by politicians even when they weren't easy on the ears of big powerful states. Because his remarkable talent for persuasion, foresight and outstanding strategic leadership were deeply respected, Lee Kuan Yew could establish mechanisms to pursue the mutual strategic interests of both countries in a pragmatic partnership (Ong, 2015).

- Despite comprehensive cooperation in various fields, the two states have not yet reached an official alliance status. Singapore proactively developed its relations with the United States, and moved to enhance their strategic partnerships. Yet, Singapore's increasingly closer tie with the US didn't prescribe full assent on Singapore's part towards all of the US's decisions. Within China's drastic economic growth as a stepping stone for the magnification of both its hard and soft powers, alongside the rapid development of Japan and India, the changes in international relations were difficult to predict. In this context, if Singapore had agreed to become an official ally of the US outside of NATO, it would have meant that Singapore chose to side with a America in opposition to China and other socialist communist states, Singapore's economic gains from its links with China would suffer direly would there have been a strain or a conflict in the delicate relations between the two nations.

Moreover, in a formal alliance, the provisions for the governing of defense cooperation between member countries would be compiled into a legally binding international agreement. If a member state failed to uphold the commitments as delineated in the coalition treaty would not only violate international laws but also caused serious damage in terms of reputation for the state (Ngo, 2019) whereas Singapore's foreign relations strategies tended to be flexible and pragmatic, this island state did not want to confine itself to binding agreements.

This explained why Singapore turned down the US's offer to become a major non-NATO ally, the same one which was accepted by the Philippines and Thailand, two countries which became US ally from prior agreements (See, 2014). It can be observed that Singapore pursued a fluid scheme of foreign policies. Even though Singapore was not a major non-NATO ally of America in name, it still received almost the same benefits as a strategic partner of America in Southeast Asia, while at the same time could still exploit great benefits from its bilateral security and defense relationship with the United States. This was similar to not holding regular official state visits, and demonstrated Singapore's emphasis on the content and effectiveness of its international cooperation rather than the formalities of the cooperation.

At the same time, the US's move to offer status towards such a small state as Singapore further reinforced the fact that the Bush administration saw Singapore as an important security partner, and that America was clearly interested in promoting strong relations with this island nation.

The question posed was: why did America accept Singapore's choice in not becoming an official ally, and did not push for a different answer from Singapore? According to Daniel Chua, Singapore developed on its own, at a rapid rate and to great success, while also cooperating in regional economic and security arrangements. The country asked for little attention from the United States and required no aids, but made important contributions to US interests and goals in the region. And Washington would "not seek closer political and defense ties with Singapore while still maintaining proper and friendly relationships" (Chua, 2014).

As Singapore and the United States shared a more important strategic interest, these restrictions did not have critical influence on the overall direction of the Singapore-US relationship.

The Singapore-US relations illustrated versatility and proactivity of Singapore foreign relations

For superpowers, whether a small state existed or not had never been a salient point of discussion, except for when that small state possessed important natural resources such as crude oil or natural gas, vital fuels for the world. If all that Kuwait had were sand, the US would never have come to the rescue when Saddam Hussein invaded and occupied Kuwait. Therefore, small states often had to take the initiative to promote their position and values in relations with more powerful nations. Singapore performed exceptionally in its quest to build a strong tie with the United States.

- Took it to open Singaporean military bases for American use, in spite of oppositions from neighboring countries and the fact that Singapore was a modest country in terms of territory:

Lee Kuan Yew recognized very early on that the presence of the United States played an important role in maintaining peace and balance in Asia for the development of the regional economies. This insight of his was the earliest reached amongst regional state leaders, and Singapore was often in the minority for expressing this view, at times Singapore was the sole supporter of the US among third-world countries or within the backdrop of the Non-Aligned Movement (Ong, 2015).

By the end of the 1980s, at the start of the 1990s, when the United States had to withdraw its troops from the Philippines' Subic Naval Base, Singapore went ahead and invited the US to make use of its military bases, even though these still remained under the management and supervision of the former. When one considers this move, Singapore the country as a whole was smaller than America's base at Subic, however seeing the right opportunity, Singapore took it to grow its association with America. And because Singapore's territory was too small to establish new military bases for the US, it offered the latter use of its existing bases under the superintendence of the Singaporean government. These bases would not become American bases (Lee, 2010). In agreements signed with the US, Singapore did not use the phrase "basing right agreement" as in previous agreements signed between the United States and Japan, South Korea, or the Philippines (Conboy, 1992) but "access right," meaning that the US Army could only make use of the Singaporean bases on a rolling or periodic basis, not for permanent station. This was a deft and ingenious move by the Singaporean authority.

In further analysis of the situation, Malaysian Minister Rithauddeen objected, saying that Singapore must not jeopardize the situation by allowing an increase in foreign military forces in the region. Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas hoped that Singapore would continue to support the idea of a non-nuclear zone in Southeast Asia, and that Indonesia opposed such an offer by Singapore if it meant adding a new military base in the area. Despite the protest, in August 1989, Lee Kuan Yew asked his Foreign Minister, George Yeo, to deliver a public announcement saying that Singapore was ready to allow US military forces to increase the use of the country's military bases (Lee, 2010).

In further line to the 1990 MoU, after Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait in 1990, in order to build up its military force in the Persian Gulf, the United States had to mobilize half a million troops to the Gulf region quickly. Although the MoU between Singapore and the United States had not been signed at the time, Singapore allowed US aircrafts and naval warships to carry troops and supplies across the Pacific Ocean and transit in Singapore. The island state also sent a group of medical personnel to Saudi Arabia to express their support for US activities in the area (Lee, 2010).

Singapore's proactivity is shown through its thorough assessment of the situation and how it was able to seize any opportunity that presented itself in a timely manner. When the United States left its bases in the Philippines in September 1991, Singapore's military bases provided America with a foothold in Southeast Asia.

Singapore used its own finance and resources to build Changi Naval Base, of which it offered the US Army usage (Khong, 2015).

Seeing that the United States' military deployment was beneficial to Singapore, after 10 years of hosting US troops from 1990, in 2000, Singapore proceeded to build the Changi Navy Base on a larger scale, capable of anchoring the US's large aircraft carriers and coastal warships. Notably, Singapore invested in Changi Naval Base with its own resources (with the main purpose is US deployment because Singapore did not own any aircraft carrier (Kuok, 2016) and in their public statements, Singapore leaders always expressed goodwill in welcoming the US Navy LCS's (US Navy littoral combat ships) to the base. The presence of these large ships in the region would allow the two countries to pursue their shared core interests, which was maritime security, and the stability and free circulation of trade routes in the waters around the Strait of Malacca.

If Singapore did not take the initiative in its relations with the United States, America would have focused on strategic relationships with Japan, and its allies such as the Philippines and Thailand in its pivot to Asia, or any other country with a larger territory... and could have easily ignored the small island nation of Singapore. Thus, Singapore's proactivity is the essence of acuity in identifying opportunities, and being practical for the benefits of the state by the Singaporean government.

Singapore-US relations from 1990 to 2012 in the field of security and defense developed to a great height. The two states cooperated in security and defense in all aspects: annual joint exercises, Singapore allowed the US military to use its bases, it purchased military equipment and collaborated with America in the research of state-of-the-art equipment, co-trainings, shared professional experiences and forecasted regional and world security developments. The Singapore-US defense and security cooperation was a legacy of their ties from before 1990, where Singapore was consistent in its policy of full support for US military presence in Southeast Asia. Singapore was a strategic security partner of America but not an ally, this was a unique relationship and demonstrated Singapore's flexibility and creativity in the planning and implementation of its independent foreign policy.

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