

SINGAPORE'S STRATEGIC DILEMMA:
US OR CHINA?

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by

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ABSTRACT

SINGAPORE'S STRATEGIC DILEMMA: US OR CHINA? by Major Luke Goh, 158 pages.

Singapore faces a strategic dilemma as the rise of China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific result in a competition for influence. This thesis analyzes historical case studies of the Thucydides Trap to identify aggravating and mitigating factors that resulted in outcomes of either war or no war between ruling and rising powers. It then uses these factors to develop an understanding of the possible causes of conflict between the US and China. It concludes that while a conflict is possible, it is not inevitable because a conflict is not in the interest of either country. As both countries seek to avoid a direct confrontation, the security environment in the next 10 to 20 years will instead be marked by more intense competition as China seeks regional dominance.

Given this security environment, this thesis recommends a hedging strategy to safeguard and advance Singapore's core national interests of survival and prosperity. A hedging strategy is optimal because it allows Singapore to benefit economically and politically from a rising China through return-maximizing policies, while mitigating the possibility that China's rise might not be peaceful through risk-contingency policies. To implement a hedging strategy successfully, Singapore will need to leverage its ability to influence its security environment by facilitating continued US regional presence and by drawing major powers to have a stake in the region.

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ACRONYMS

A2AD	Anti-Access Aerial Denial
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CCP	Chinese Community Party
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PLA	People's Liberation Army
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
SAF	Singapore Armed Forces
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea
US	United States

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

World leaders recognize the United States (US)-China relationship as the most important bilateral relationship in the world this century. President Obama described the US-China relationship as one that will shape the 21st century, while President Xi acknowledged that US and China cooperation could “become a bedrock of global stability and a booster of world peace.”¹ The rebalancing of the US towards the Asia-Pacific coupled with the rise of China raises questions that will have a significant impact on the regional security environment. Historically, the rise of a regional power has often led to an unstable security environment as it competes with the dominant power for influence. The outcomes of these contests are shaped by how the dominant power responds to the emerging power. The US has two possible approaches in this regard — develop a new type of major-power relationship with China leading to a new equilibrium in the regional hierarchy of power, or attempt to contain China’s rise and risk a potential conflict. In reality, the options are not binary and the most probable outcome is likely to be somewhere in between.

The competition between the US and China is most predominant in the Asia-Pacific region, which has become increasingly contested with both powers seeking to

¹ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, “Remarks by the President at the US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue,” The White House, July 27, 2009, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-uschina-strategic-and-economic-dialogue>; Xinhuanet, “Full Text of Xi Jinping’s speech on China-US relations in Seattle,” *Xinhuanet*, September 22, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-09/24/c_134653326.htm.

exert their influence. China's economy has been growing at a rapid pace and it has become an engine of economic growth for the region. This growth has provided the resources to support the modernization of its military. However, China's actions in the East China and South China Seas have had a destabilizing effect on peace and stability in the region. On the other hand, the US continues to have a forward presence with regional security maintained through US-led security arrangements and its rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific. China's economic appeal versus the US-led security architecture has resulted in a separation of economic and security centers of power, which creates foreign policy dilemmas for states in the region. The security environment shaped by the interactions of the US and China will have significant implications for the security strategy of states in the Asia-Pacific, including Singapore.

Singapore's security strategy is derived from its foreign policy, which has been described as a policy of pragmatism serving the core national interests of survival and prosperity.² A belief of Singapore's leaders is that success and survival are two sides of the same coin.³ This belief stems from the country's sense of vulnerability as a small state and its belief that nobody owes Singapore a living. There are four fundamental principles that shape Singapore's foreign policy. First, Singapore is a small state and its foreign policy actions are limited by the realities and challenges of a small state. Second, Singapore is committed to supporting the role of the Association of Southeast Asian

² Michael Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy: Coping with Vulnerability* (London: Routledge, 2000), 34-36.

³ Siong Guan Lim and Joanne Lim, *The Leader, the Teacher and You: Leadership Through the Third Generation* (London: Imperial College Press, 2013), 11-13.

Nations (ASEAN) in facilitating economic growth and social progress as well as promoting regional peace and stability.⁴ Third, Singapore recognizes that its economic prosperity is enabled by open trading systems and therefore supports endeavors to promote and maintain free trade and free markets. Fourth, Singapore believes in the importance of safeguarding the international rule of law, as it is a major beneficiary of a stable international system.⁵

Singapore currently enjoys positive relations with both the US and China, which allows it to safeguard and advance its national interests. Are these positive relations the outcome of a relatively benign security environment or the result of adept foreign policy actions by the Singapore government? With increasing contestation between the US and China in the Asia-Pacific, can Singapore continue to enjoy good relations with both the US and China? Will foreign policy space shrink and will Singapore face a dilemma of having to choose between the US and China? This thesis explores the possible strategy that Singapore can adopt to navigate an increasingly complex and contested security environment in order to protect its core national interests of survival and prosperity.

Definitions and Assumptions

At this point, it is useful to define a few terms of importance and clarify assumptions used in this thesis. The definition of the Asia-Pacific region is based on

⁴ ASEAN, “Overview,” accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.asean.org/asean/about-asean/overview>.

⁵ Embassy of the Republic of Singapore, “Foreign Policy,” Government of Singapore, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/overseasmission/bangkok/about_singapore/foreign_policy.html.

former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s description which states that the region “[stretches] from the Indian subcontinent to the western shores of the Americas, the region spans two oceans—the Pacific and the Indian.”⁶ It includes East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Oceania (e.g. Australia and New Zealand). In addition, there are two key assumptions made in this thesis—China will continue to rise in the 21st century; and the US will sustain its rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific region for the long term.

The rise of China refers to the growth in its comprehensive national power that includes diplomatic, informational, military and economic powers. Robert Dahl, a Sterling Professor of Political Science at Yale University, provides a definition of national power that is used in this thesis. Dahl defines national power as an actor’s ability to cause another actor to do something that it otherwise would not do.⁷ Ray Cline, an executive director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University, dissects power into the elements of capabilities and commitment in the Cline Power Equation, which provides a useful framework to understand the growth in China’s national power.⁸ China’s capabilities derive from significant economic growth that has occurred since the implementation of open market economic reforms under Deng

⁶ Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/>.

⁷ Robert A. Dahl, “The Concept of Power,” *Behavioral Science* 2, no. 3 (July 1957): 201-202.

⁸ Cline Power Equation: $P_p = (C + E + M) * (S + W)$, where P_p : perceived power, C: critical mass, E: economic capability, M: military capability, S: strategic purpose, W: will to pursue national strategy. C, E and M are elements of capabilities, while S and W are elements of commitment; Ashley J. Tellis et al., *Measuring National Power in the Postindustrial Age* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2000), 30.

Xiaoping in 1978. The political leadership demonstrates its commitment through national narratives and actions to achieve these narratives from the “invigoration of China” under Deng Xiaoping, to the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” under Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, to the “Chinese Dream” under Xi Jinping. President Xi describes his vision of a “Chinese Dream” as a national rejuvenation to improve the lives of its people.⁹

President Xi’s commitment to national rejuvenation is also seen in China’s more assertive stance over sovereignty claims and territorial disputes in the East China and South China Seas. It should be noted that the concept of power status is relative and therefore the rise of China is a rise vis-à-vis other players. It does not suggest that other players remain stagnant.

The first key assumption made in this thesis is that China will continue to rise in the 21st century. There are many indicators to suggest that this will be true. First, China’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth over the last three decades has averaged 10 percent a year, which resulted in China overtaking Japan as the world’s second largest economy in 2010.¹⁰ While China recently reduced its growth target for 2015 to 7 percent, which would be the slowest expansion in more than two decades, this is still much higher than the US average GDP growth rate of 2.2 percent over the last 5 years.¹¹ Based on

⁹ Wall Street Journal, “Full Transcript: Interview with Chinese President Xi Jinping,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 22, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/full-transcript-interview-with-chinese-president-xi-jinping-1442894700>.

¹⁰ World Bank Group, “China-Overview,” The World Bank, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview>.

¹¹ World Bank Group, “GDP growth (annual %),” The World Bank, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>.

these GDP growth trajectories, the Economist Intelligence Unit, which is the research and analysis division of Britain's The Economist Group, predicts that the Chinese economy will overtake the US economy by 2026.¹² This represents a growth in China's "economic capability" in the Cline equation. A counterargument is that China's continued economic development is not guaranteed and it requires significant structural economic reforms to sustain its growth rate. However, Chinese leaders acknowledge this and there are existing efforts undertaken to shift from an export-oriented to a consumption-based economy.¹³

Second, China's military modernization has the potential to erode US military technological advantages. While China's current official defense spending of \$136 billion is significantly less than US defense spending of \$581 billion, it grew at an average of 9.5 percent per year from 2005 through 2014. The Department of Defense's Annual Report to Congress in 2015 notes that "China has the fiscal strength and political will to support continued defense spending increases."¹⁴ As the Chinese economy grows, China's military budget is projected to increase correspondingly and it is estimated that Chinese

¹² The Economist Intelligence Unit, "Long-Term Macroeconomic Forecasts: Key Trends to 2050," *The Economist*, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, http://pages.eiu.com/rs/783-XMC-194/images/Long-termMacroeconomicForecasts_KeyTrends.pdf.

¹³ Mark Magnier and Jeremy Page, "Xi Jinping: China's Economic Risks 'Not That Scary'," *Wall Street Journal*, November 9, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/xi-jinping-chinas-economic-risks-not-that-scary-1415516936>.

¹⁴ US Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2015* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2015), 49.

defense spending could surpass the US after 2035.¹⁵ Furthermore, the Department of Defense notes that it is difficult to estimate China's actual spending because of "poor transparency and incomplete transition from a command economy."¹⁶ The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, an independent international think tank in Sweden, estimates that Chinese defense spending tend to be over 50 percent higher than the official defense budget because of extra-budgetary items such as research and development that are not included in the official budget.¹⁷ In addition, President Xi announced, at a military parade to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, that the government will decrease overall troop levels by 300,000.¹⁸ Ground forces are likely to face the brunt of the reduction and this suggests a shift from the traditional land forces to the more advanced and manpower-efficient sea and air forces. China also recently introduced military reforms that equalized the standing of the different services of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which should strengthen its

¹⁵ The Economist, "China's Military Rise-The Dragon's New Teeth," *The Economist*, April 7, 2012, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/node/21552193>.

¹⁶ US Department of Defense, "Annual Report to Congress," 49.

¹⁷ Sam Perlo-Freeman, "China Increases Defense Budget for 2012 by 11.2% to 670.3 billion Yuan," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, March 5, 2012, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.sipri.org/media/expert-comments/exp1>.

¹⁸ Xinhuanet, "Full Text of Chinese President's Speech at Commemoration of 70th Anniversary of War Victory," *Xinhuanet*, September 3, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-09/03/c_134583870.htm.

ability to conduct joint operations.¹⁹ This military modernization represents a growth in China's "military capability" represented in the Cline equation.

Third, demographics will have an impact on the rise of China. China is the world's most populous country with 1.37 billion people. It accounts for 18 percent of the world's population and is more than four times the US population of 321 million people.²⁰ China's population represents a significant "critical mass" as defined by the Cline equation. China's sheer numbers can provide it an advantage in the labor market if it is able to maximize the potential of its human resources. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China, China graduated an average of 6 million undergraduates a year in the last five years and had 118 million people with college and higher-level education in 2014.²¹ Even though the quality of education might not be comparable to the US, the total number of college graduates in terms of sheer numbers is staggering. Based on this rate of increase, the number of people with college and higher-level education in

¹⁹ Stratfor Global Intelligence, "China takes Bold Steps Towards Military Reform," January 11, 2016, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/china-takes-bold-steps-toward-military-reform>.

²⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, "Guide to Country Comparisons-People and Society-Population," accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2119rank.html>.

²¹ National Bureau of Statistics of China, "Education-21-9 Number of Graduates of Formal Education by Type and Level," China Statistical Yearbook 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2014/indexeh.htm>; National Bureau of Statistics of China, "Population-2-13 Population by Sex, Educational Attainment and Religion," China Statistical Yearbook 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2014/indexeh.htm>.

China will surpass the entire US labor force within the next 10 years.²² Although the level of educational attainment is increasing, the Chinese labor market has not been able to absorb the large number of graduates.²³ China will need to restructure its economy to provide jobs that match the labor supply to reduce unemployment and underemployment in its workforce. In addition, China will need to implement structural reforms to the economy and labor market to offset the impact of an aging population that will result because of its three-decade one-child policy.²⁴

Fourth, since its founding in 1949, China has had three descents in power status and each of the three descents was temporary and can be traced back to a political crisis rather than wars or economic difficulties. China's leaders are cognizant of this and are determined to avoid a political crisis. Therefore, based on this historical trend, China will likely avoid a fall in its power status if there is no political crisis in the future.²⁵ China's national power fell from 1959-1963 because of Mao's anti-rightwing movement to purge alleged "rightists" within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This movement led to the failed economic policies of mandatory agricultural collectivization during the Great Leap

²² Central Intelligence Agency, "Guide to Country Comparisons-Economy-Labour Force," accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2095rank.html>.

²³ Yojana Sharma, "What do you do with millions of extra graduates?" *BBC*, July 1, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-28062071>.

²⁴ Feng Wang, "Racing Towards the Precipice," Brookings Institution, June 2012, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2012/06/china-demographics-wang>.

²⁵ Xuetong Yan, "The Rise of China and its Power Status," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 1 (2006): 26.

Forward, which was a campaign that aimed to transform the country to a socialist society. This economic decline had an adverse effect on China's national power. The next descent occurred from 1966-1976 during the Cultural Revolution, which purged capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society. It led to the "most severe setback and the heaviest losses suffered by the Party, the state and the people."²⁶ The next descent occurred after China's crackdown on the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, which was globally condemned. This crackdown resulted in international isolation and slow economic growth.²⁷ Despite the severity of these setbacks, China recovered from each of these descents and continued its long-term upward trajectory.

The rebalancing of the US towards the Asia-Pacific refers to the expanding and intensifying role of the US in the region. President Obama stated in a 2011 address to the Australian parliament that "the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future."²⁸ The rebalance has led to an increased emphasis on military, foreign and economic policy in the region. The prioritization of military forces to the region is evident in the Quadrennial Defense Review 2014, which highlights that 60 percent of US Navy assets will be stationed in the Pacific by 2020. In addition, it also outlined new troop deployments to Australia to establish a 2,500 strong Marine Air

²⁶ Communist Party of China, *Resolution on CPC History (1949-81)* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981), 32.

²⁷ Yan, "The Rise of China and its Power Status," 25-26.

²⁸ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by President Obama to the Australian Parliament," The White House, November 17, 2011, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>.

Ground Task Force, which will mitigate reductions in Okinawa, and new naval deployments of littoral combat ships rotating through Singapore.²⁹ The deployment of additional military resources in a period of global force reduction represents a significant shift in policy.³⁰ The US has also elevated its diplomatic visibility and presence in the Asia-Pacific. For example, the US joined the East Asia Summit in 2011 and expanded its representation at multilateral forums such as the ASEAN Regional Forum. During Secretary of State Clinton's visit to the ASEAN Secretariat in 2009, the ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan remarked that the "visit shows the seriousness of the United States to end its diplomatic absenteeism in the region."³¹ The US has also been working on promoting open market economies most evident in the recently concluded Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement, which is expected to enhance free trade and investment among partner countries.

The second key assumption made in this thesis is that the US will sustain its rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific region for the long term. This assumption is supported by the following factors. First, the Asia-Pacific region will continue to be strategically important to the US. The Asia-Pacific region contains 50 percent of the world's

²⁹ US Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2014), 34.

³⁰ Mark E. Manyin et al., *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" Toward Asia*, CRS Report R42448 (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, March 2012), 2-3.

³¹ ASEAN, "Press Statement by Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, Secretary-General of ASEAN on the Occasion of the Visit of the US Secretary of State, the Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton, to the ASEAN Secretariat," February 18, 2009, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/archive/SG-Speech-17-Feb-2009.pdf>.

population and has three of the five largest armed forces in the world—China, India and North Korea.³² It also accounts for approximately 25 percent of the world’s annual GDP with its share of global economic distribution projected to increase in the future.³³ The ability to leverage Asia’s growth as a market for US exports and investment opportunities will be critical to US economic interests because the Asia-Pacific region accounts for a large percentage of US exports.³⁴ In addition, the Asia-Pacific is also a vital maritime gateway for trade: almost 30 percent of the world’s maritime trade transits the South China Sea, and two-thirds of the world’s oil shipments flow through the Indian Ocean to the Pacific.³⁵ It is therefore in US interest to maintain peace and stability in the region to ensure freedom of navigation and to ensure the free flow of trade. These statistics illustrating the strategic importance of the Asia-Pacific region are unlikely to change in the near future and this implies that US long-term economic and security interests are inextricably linked to this region.

Second, the rise of China will oblige the US to continue to remain engaged in the Asia-Pacific. It is in the interest of the US to maintain its regional influence, protect its position as a global superpower, and not readily cede power to China by withdrawing

³² The International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2015* (London: Routledge, 2015), 484-490.

³³ David Lai, *Asia-Pacific: A Strategic Assessment* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College Press, May 2013), 2-3.

³⁴ Office of the United States Trade Representative, “US-APEC Trade Facts,” accessed April 26, 2016, <https://ustr.gov/trade-agreements/other-initiatives/asia-pacific-economic-cooperation-apec/us-apec-trade-facts>.

³⁵ US Department of Defense, *Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2015), 1.

from the region. China's growing military capabilities and increased assertiveness has also led to calls by US allies, like the Philippines, for stronger US presence in the Pacific. In addition, the rise of China will inevitably lead to attempts by China to gain regional influence and to challenge the US-led international order that China had no part in establishing. By remaining engaged in the Asia-Pacific, the US will be better positioned to support allies and to facilitate China's integration into the existing world order.

Third, many aspects of this rebalancing are an expansion of decades-long involvement in the Asia-Pacific rather than a transformation of existing policy. Former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta described the "more than six decades of US military presence and partnership in the region" as a contributor to peace and prosperity in the region.³⁶ The US has many long-standing structural commitments in this region. For example, five of the seven US collective defense agreements signed in the 1950s were with Asia-Pacific states, including Australia and New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, Japan, as well as South Korea.³⁷ Furthermore, many initiatives put in place by the Obama Administration in the last few years cannot be easily unwound without hurting US credibility. In addition, if the US Congress ratifies the TPP, subsequent administrations will be required to see through the implementation. Based on these trends, it is likely that

³⁶ The International Institute of Strategic Studies Shangri-La Dialogue, "The US Rebalance Towards the Asia-Pacific: Leon Panetta," June 2, 2012, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.iiss.org/en/events/shangri%20la%20dialogue/archive/sld12-43d9/first-plenary-session-2749/leon-panetta-d67b>.

³⁷ US Department of State, Treaty Affairs, "US Collective Defense Arrangement," accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/s/l/treaty/collectivedefense/>.

the US will continue to remain engaged in the Asia-Pacific to protect its national interests. The next section discusses the research questions in this thesis.

Research Questions

The primary research question is: “What strategy can Singapore adopt to navigate a security environment shaped by a rising China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific?” This can be further dissected into three secondary research questions: (1) What is the security environment and associated security challenges defined by the rise of China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific in the next 10 to 20 years? (2) Can Singapore influence its security environment? (3) What is the strategy that Singapore can adopt to safeguard and advance its national interests?

The first secondary research question focuses on determining the possible scenarios and the corresponding impact on the security environment as the two countries compete for influence in the Asia-Pacific. It addresses tensions that arise from potential changes in the existing balance of power relationship based on current trajectories of change. The second secondary research question deals with the limitations and challenges of small states. It examines Singapore’s sources of power and to what extent Singapore can punch above its weight to influence its security environment. Based on the context provided by answers to these questions, the third secondary research question analyzes the strategic options available to small states and determines how these options can be applied to safeguard and advance Singapore’s national interests.

Significance of the Issue

The issue of US-China relations is significant at multiple levels—the global level, the regional level and the local level. At the global level, world leaders have described the US-China relationship as the most important bilateral relationship in the world this century. It is significant because the US has been the world’s preeminent power since the end of the Cold War and the rise of China challenges the status quo of US global dominance. Historically, this type of challenge often leads to tensions because the incumbent dominant power is not likely to cede its position to the emerging power. The nature of this relationship and how tensions are managed will have important implications for the global security environment. While it is impossible to predict the outcome of US-China relations at equilibrium, it is certain that a more powerful China will desire changes to existing spheres of influence and the current international order.

At the regional level, the Asia-Pacific is at risk of becoming an arena for a proxy contest between the US and China as they compete for influence in the region. This will likely have an adverse impact on ASEAN cohesion, which has been the cornerstone of ASEAN policy since its establishment. The ASEAN Declaration, which was the founding document for ASEAN, states that ASEAN countries are “convinced of the need to strengthen further the existing bonds of regional solidarity and cooperation.”³⁸ In recent years, fault lines within ASEAN have emerged as China seeks to establish its influence in Southeast Asia. For example in 2012, ASEAN failed to issue a joint communique for the

³⁸ ASEAN, “The ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration),” August 8, 1967, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.asean.org/the-asean-declaration-bangkok-declaration-bangkok-8-august-1967/>.

first time in its 45-year history after the annual ASEAN Ministerial Meetings held in Phnom Penh. This failure to issue a joint communique occurred because of disagreements between the claimant states and Cambodia, which was the sitting ASEAN Chairman. The claimant states, in particular the Philippines, wanted a statement on ASEAN's position on the territorial claims in the South China Sea. However, Cambodia, under the influence of China, suggested that the South China Sea issue should not be included in the joint statement because it is a bilateral issue.³⁹ With increasing contestation, such disagreements are likely to become more prevalent in the future.

At the local level, Singapore as a small state will be affected by vagaries in the US-China relationship. An old African proverb aptly describes this immutable reality of small states: "when elephants fight, the grass gets hurt; when elephants make love, the grass suffers just as much." This proverb represents Singapore's position as a "price-taker" where it must accept geopolitical realities with a limited ability to influence its environment. Singapore has thus far been successful at maintaining positive relations with both the US and China. It benefits from regional peace and stability facilitated by US presence in the Asia-Pacific as well as economic advantages from a growing Chinese economy. However, Singapore's future success in managing its relationship with the US and China is not guaranteed and will depend on how well it navigates this more contested security environment.

³⁹ Ernest Z. Bower, "China reveals its hand on ASEAN in Phnom Penh," East Asia Forum, July 28, 2012, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/07/28/china-reveals-its-hand-on-asean-in-phnom-penh/>.

Limitations and Delimitations

While the rise of China has a global impact as evidenced by China's diplomatic and economic activities in Africa and Latin America, this thesis focuses on the impact of US-China relations in the Asia-Pacific and does not discuss China's growing influence outside of the Asia-Pacific region. This is because the Asia-Pacific region will likely be the hotspot for US-China contestation as China seeks to establish its regional influence. There are existing indicators that suggest this, such as the competing territorial claims in the East China and South China Seas between China and other claimant states, including US allies Japan and the Philippines.

A study of the regional hierarchy of power will not be complete without considering the interaction of other regional powers and organizations, such as Japan, India and ASEAN. However, the treatment of this issue is limited to its impact on US-China relations and Singapore's security strategy.

This thesis also examines Singapore's sources of power and determines how these can be effectively employed to influence its security environment. It studies Singapore's possible security strategies, including all instruments of national power and encompassing both unilateral and collective actions as part of regional organizations, such as ASEAN, that will allow Singapore to safeguard and advance its national interests.

Conclusion

The US-China relationship will define the security environment of the Asia-Pacific in the 21st century. The macro trends suggest that China is rising, and barring any political crisis that might temporarily halt its rise, it will continue to be the world's greatest emerging power with capabilities to challenge US global dominance, especially

in the Asia-Pacific region. Concurrently, the US is committed to the Asia-Pacific because of the region's strategic importance and because US long-term interests are inextricably tied to the region. These trends indicate an inevitable contest for influence in the Asia-Pacific, a contest that has repeatedly played out in history between an emerging power and a dominant power competing for influence.

This contest is significant for the world because it is the first time since the end of the Cold War that US dominance has been challenged and the outcome of this contest will likely affect the global order. It is also important for the region because it risks tearing the region into separate spheres of influence, compromising regional integration and threatening ASEAN cohesion. This contest is also critical for Singapore, as Singapore is a small country that is affected by vagaries in the US-China relationship.

This thesis analyzes the security environment defined by the rise of China and the rebalance of the US towards the Asia-Pacific. It then examines the range of policy options available to small states and suggests a possible strategy that Singapore can adopt to navigate this security environment.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is organized in three sections. Section I examines existing foreign policy relations. It describes current US-China relations, which are complex and multi-faceted with elements of both cooperation and competition. It also describes Singapore's bilateral relations with the US and China, which has been excellent despite competition between the two countries. In addition, it outlines the interactions with regional powers and the impact of these interactions on US, China and Singapore. These foreign policy relations provide the context to address the primary research question, which seeks to identify a strategy that Singapore can adopt to navigate a security environment shaped by a rising China and a US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific.

Section II is a historical review of contests between ruling powers and rising powers. The objective is to identify aggravating factors that resulted in outcomes of war and mitigating factors that resulted in outcomes of no war between ruling and rising powers in major historical cases. There were five aggravating factors identified that resulted in an outcome of war: dissatisfaction with the existing balance of power; a sense of insecurity caused by powerful neighbors; religious and ideological differences; strategic economic competition; and nationalistic sentiments. On the other hand, there were five mitigating factors identified that resulted in an outcome of no war: competing priorities in other parts of the world; constraints by external powers; possibility of nuclear war; mutual independence; and structural restraints. The analysis of these factors provides a basis to approach the first secondary research question, which aims to

determine the security environment and the associated security challenges with the rise of China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific in the next 10 to 20 years.

Section III is a study of small state security strategies. It reviews the existing literature on the characteristics of small states, which have broader security concerns than larger states. It also examines security strategies and the ability of small states to exercise influence over larger powers. It then explores international relations theories, including the concepts of balancing, bandwagoning and hedging. The literature review in Section III facilitates answering the second and third secondary research questions, which are whether Singapore can influence its security environment and what strategy Singapore can adopt to safeguard and advance its national interests.

Section I: US, China and Singapore Relations

This section is a review of existing foreign policy relations. It includes three sub-sections describing US-China relations, Singapore's relations with both the US and China, and relations between Japan, India and ASEAN with both the US and China.

US-China Relations

US-China relations started with “ping-pong diplomacy” in 1971. A famous comparison by the late Michel Oksenberg, an American political scientist and China watcher, noted that before the US ping-pong team visit, more Americans had been to the moon than had visited the People's Republic of China with government permission, thus the term.⁴⁰ Rapprochement began with President Nixon's visit to China in 1972. The US

⁴⁰ Michel Oksenberg, “The Strategies of Peking,” *Foreign Affairs* 50, no. 1 (October 1971): 18.

wanted to normalize relations with China to undermine alliances between communist countries, while China was interested in rapprochement to counter an expansionist Soviet Union. Before 1972, US-China relations were estranged with no diplomatic ties between the two countries and the US did not formally acknowledge the existence of the People's Republic of China because it recognized the Republic of China in Taiwan as the legitimate government of China. There was virtually no trade or investment taking place between the two countries. The two countries eventually established formal diplomatic relations in 1979.⁴¹

The remarks by current leaders of both countries provide insights into US-China relations. President Xi has consistently highlighted the need to “build a new model of major-country relationship between the two countries.”⁴² President Xi first proposed this concept when he visited Washington in 2012 as Vice President and after becoming President, reiterated it during the informal Sunnylands Summit with President Obama in June 2013. Robert Daly, Director of the Kissinger Institute on China and the United States at the Wilson Center, noted that since then, China has “included the phrase in nearly every speech on bilateral relations.”⁴³ In his recent visit to the US in September 2015, President Xi highlighted efforts necessary to advance this new model of major-

⁴¹ US Department of State, Office of the Historian, “Rapprochement with China, 1972,” October 21, 2013, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/rapprochement-china>.

⁴² Xinhuanet, “Full Text of Xi Jinping’s speech on China-US relations in Seattle.”

⁴³ David Wertime, “Unpacking Xi Jinping’s Pet Phrase for US-China Ties,” *Foreign Policy*, September 23, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/09/23/unpacking-xi-jinpings-pet-phrase-new-model-of-great-power-relations-us-china-explainer/>.

country relationship: deepening mutual understanding on each other's strategic intentions; advancing win-win cooperation by accommodating each other's interests; managing differences properly and effectively; and fostering friendly people-to-people relations.⁴⁴

There are two reasons why China desires a new model of major-country relationship. First, it provides an external environment that is conducive for China's rise. By deepening mutual understanding, China hopes to avoid historical patterns of inevitable conflict between great powers. The assumption is that this new model avoids a zero-sum game and provides win-win outcomes for both countries.⁴⁵ Dr. David Lai, a Professor at the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, notes that this new model is "old wine in a new bottle" and is an extension of China's pledge in 2003 of peaceful development to ease US concerns over the rise of China.⁴⁶

Second, the new model of major-country relationship is also termed a "New Type of Great Power Relations", which China views as an elevation of its status to equal that of the US. In addition, China sees acknowledgement by the US as an implicit recognition

⁴⁴ Xinhuanet, "Full Text of Xi Jinping's speech on China-US relations in Seattle."

⁴⁵ Ren Xiao, "Modeling a 'New Type of Great Power Relations': A Chinese Viewpoint," The ASAN Institute for Policy Studies, October 4, 2013, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.theasanforum.org/modeling-a-new-type-of-great-power-relations-a-chinese-viewpoint/>.

⁴⁶ David Lai, "Op-Ed: Doubts on China's 'New Model for Great Power Relationship,'" Strategic Studies Institute, October 3, 2013, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/index.cfm/articles/Doubts-On-Chinas-New-Model/2013/10/3>.

of its power status. This strengthens nationalistic pride and supports the domestic goals of the CCP.⁴⁷

President Obama has repeatedly emphasized that the US welcomes the rise of China and supports China's expanding role on the international stage. In remarks after the Sunnylands Summit, President Obama noted, "it is very much in the interest of the United States for China to continue its peaceful rise, because . . . it puts China in the position to work with us as equal partners in dealing with many of the global challenges that no single nation can address by itself."⁴⁸ At a Joint Press Conference during President Xi's recent visit to the US, President Obama said that the US "welcomes the rise of a China that is peaceful, stable, prosperous, and a responsible player in global affairs."⁴⁹

President Obama mentioned the "new model of relations" in remarks after the Sunnylands Summit and "committed to continuing to strengthen and build a new model

⁴⁷ Cheng Li and Lucy Xu, "Chinese Enthusiasm and American Cynicism Over the 'New Type of Great Power Relations'," Brookings Institution, December 4, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2014/12/05-chinese-pessimism-american-cynicism-great-power-li-xu>.

⁴⁸ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by President Obama and President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China after Bilateral Meeting," The White House, June 8, 2013, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/06/08/remarks-president-obama-and-president-xi-jinping-peoples-republic-china->.

⁴⁹ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by President Obama and President Xi of the People's Republic of China in Joint Press Conference," The White House, September 25, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/25/remarks-president-obama-and-president-xi-peoples-republic-china-joint>.

of relations” as late as March 2014.⁵⁰ However, the Obama Administration has since avoided the use of the phrase to describe US-China relations because of differing interpretations. While the US sees the new model as a partnership to develop solutions to global problems, China views it as a means to increase its status and influence.⁵¹ In addition, Kenneth Lieberthal, who served as director of China policy at the National Security Council under President William J. Clinton, notes that China’s perspective of great power relationship requires respect of mutual core interests. However, the US is unsure what this entails and whether it includes China’s sovereignty claims over Taiwan and the East China and South China Seas.⁵² The US is not willing to concede these strategic interests to China.

Former Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, in a report for the Belfer Center at Harvard provides another perspective on how the US and China view each other. He notes that “China sees America as deeply opposed to China’s rise, and driven to do

⁵⁰ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, “Remarks by President Obama and President Xi Jinping of the People’s Republic of China After Bilateral Meeting”; The White House Office of the Press Secretary, “Remarks by President Obama and President Xi Jinping of China Before Bilateral Meeting,” The White House, March 24, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/24/remarks-president-obama-and-president-xi-jinping-china-bilateral-meeting>.

⁵¹ Dingding Chen, “Defining a ‘New Type of Major Power Relations’,” *The Diplomat*, November 8, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/11/defining-a-new-type-of-major-power-relations/>.

⁵² Jane Perlez, “China’s ‘New Type’ of Ties Fails to Sway Obama,” *The New York Times*, November 9, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/10/world/asia/chinas-new-type-of-ties-fails-to-sway-obama.html?_r=0.

whatever it takes to prevent China usurping American regional and global power.”⁵³

Rudd explains that China’s perspectives are shaped by its historical experiences of Western colonial powers seizing its territory and its realist view that the US will prevent it from regaining its proper place in the global order because it will challenge US dominance. China cites the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific, including US support for Japan and the Philippines in territorial disputes with China, as evidence of containment. In addition, China cites the exclusion of China from the TPP and the failed attempt by the US to prevent allies from joining the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) as other examples to support this claim. Rudd notes that China sees the US denying it international space “in policy domains ranging from hard security, to economics and trade diplomacy.”⁵⁴

However, Rudd notes “the US rejects it is undermining or containing China [and instead] sees China as seeking to push the US out of Asia.”⁵⁵ Rudd cites a Chinese interlocutor who describes this conflicting view as “mutually assured misperception.”⁵⁶ Rudd explains that President Xi is more nationalistic than previous Chinese leaders and has been more assertive in his approach towards foreign policy. This includes his uncompromising responses to challenges to “core interests” in the East China and South

⁵³ Kevin Rudd, *US-China 21: The Future of US-China Relations under Xi Jinping* (Boston, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, April 2015), 12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 12-15.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

China Seas, as well as his views on how China should actively shape the new rules of the international order based on classical Chinese concepts of “righteousness”, “fairness”, and “justice.” Rudd notes the emergence of a US view that China is a long-term threat to US strategic interests. He adds, “the US sees China as actively competing for political, diplomatic and security policy space in Asia at America’s expense . . . with a view to establishing its own sphere of strategic influence across the region over time.”⁵⁷

A monograph for the John L. Thornton China Center at Brookings co-written by Lieberthal and Wang Jisi, Dean of the School of International Studies at Peking University, provides a joint US and China academic perspective on the mutual distrust of long-term intentions that exists between the US and China.⁵⁸ It identifies three fundamental factors leading to distrust between the two countries. The first factor is the different political systems and cultures. The US views China’s one-party governing system as opaque and is unable to assess China’s sincerity and intentions. China’s undemocratic system and human rights violations are also barriers towards building mutual trust and understanding. Conversely, China views the US actions in promoting democracy as undermining authority and legitimacy of the CCP. China therefore finds it difficult to believe that the US sincerely wants China to be strong and prosperous.⁵⁹

The second factor is the lack of understanding of how each other’s government and other entities work. The authors describe the “functions and operations of the

⁵⁷ Ibid., 16-18.

⁵⁸ Kenneth Lieberthal and Jisi Wang, “Addressing US-China Strategic Distrust,” *John L. Thornton China Center Monograph Series*, no. 4 (March 2012), 5.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 35.

Communist Party of China [as remaining] largely a black box to US politicians.” The authors also note that each country also tends to interpret adverse effects of non-governmental actions as deliberate actions orchestrated by the other government. For example, the US views the economic activities of China’s state-owned enterprises with suspicion, when in fact many decisions are motivated by commercial interests and are not linked to the Chinese central government.⁶⁰ Similarly, the Chinese view actions by American NGOs, private foundations and the media as politically motivated and sponsored by the US government.⁶¹ Lai adds that China’s strategy of “hiding intentions and biding time,” initially proposed by Deng Xiaoping, contributes to distrust because the US is not able to discern if China’s calls for peace are rhetorical or genuine.⁶²

The third factor is the closing gap between the US and China’s power status. China views US policies and actions as efforts towards maintaining its global hegemony and containing China’s rise, while the US is suspicious of China’s ambitions as China rises.⁶³ Graham Allison, an American political scientist at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, warns that this strategic distrust could lead the US and China into a Thucydides trap and potential conflict. Thucydides identified the driving forces

⁶⁰ Ibid., 36.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Lai, “Doubts on China’s ‘New Model for Great Power Relationship’.”

⁶³ Lieberthal and Wang, “Addressing US-China Strategic Distrust,” 36-37.

that can cause this: a rising power's growing influence and sense of importance that can cause an established power to become insecure and determined to defend the status quo.⁶⁴

Other scholars have also attempted to characterize US-China relations. Harry Harding, an American political scientist specializing in Chinese politics and foreign affairs, describes the two countries as being “neither friend nor foe.”⁶⁵ This is understandable as the two countries are not allies and have competing ideological beliefs and security interests. However, the two countries are also not direct adversaries and both are determined to avoid conflict. More recently, Harding notes the transformation of US-China relations from a “fragile relationship” to one that has increased breadth to include multiple issues. Previously, a small number of issues dominated the US-China agenda—Taiwan, human rights and political reform. This has grown in breadth to include multiple issues, such as climate change, energy security, terrorism, Chinese investments in the US and issues involving other countries, like North Korea. Harding argues that the relationship is less fragile and more robust because of increased mutual interdependence on many bilateral issues that require cooperation between the US and China.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Graham Allison, “The Thucydides Trap: Are the US and China Headed for War?” *The Atlantic*, September 24, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/>.

⁶⁵ Harry Harding, “Neither Friend Nor Foe: A China Policy for the Nineties,” *Brookings Review* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 7.

⁶⁶ Harry Harding, “Do China and America still have a ‘Fragile Relationship?’ Are they still ‘Neither Friend nor Foe?’” in *Macao and US-China Relations*, ed. Yufan Hao and Jianwei Wang (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 31-32.

Harding also describes the relationship as “containing, simultaneously, both cooperative and competitive aspects.”⁶⁷ President Xi noted in a Joint Press Conference during his recent visit to the US that the US and China have agreed to “expand the practical cooperation in various areas at the bilateral, regional, and global level, and manage differences and sensitive issues in a constructive manner.”⁶⁸ Both countries have shown an ability to cooperate on mutual security and economic interests, such as the Six-Party Talks to dismantle North Korea’s nuclear program, the issue of climate change and the stability of the global economic system. In addition, the US and China have interdependent economies with China’s rapid economic growth providing investment opportunities for the US and the US providing markets for China’s exports.

However, the two countries also compete militarily and economically. China’s Anti-Access Aerial Denial (A2AD) strategy is aimed at negating the US military’s technological advantage and preventing US intervention in a regional conflict. In response, the US has developed a concept, initially called Air-Sea Battle, but now called Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons, as a countermeasure to address China’s A2AD strategy.⁶⁹ In addition, the US has also directly challenged China’s territorial claims in the East China and South China Seas with military actions. In 2013, the US flew two B-52 bombers over the disputed Senkaku or Diaoyu islands

⁶⁷ Ibid., 28.

⁶⁸ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, “Remarks by President Obama and President Xi of the People’s Republic of China in Joint Press Conference.”

⁶⁹ Ronald O’Rourke, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for US Navy Capabilities-Background and Issues for Congress*, CRS Report RL 33153 (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, September 2015), 8, 54-55.

without providing China prior notification shortly after China established its Air Defense Identification Zone in the East China Sea.⁷⁰ More recently, the US sailed the USS Lassen, a guided missile destroyer, within 12 nautical miles of Subi Reef in the contested Spratly Islands as an indication that it did not recognize China's territorial claims in the South China Sea.⁷¹

Besides competing militarily, the US and China also compete economically. For example, the US-led TPP trade pact excludes China, while the China-backed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) excludes the US. The recently concluded TPP negotiations have resulted in added impetus to fast-track negotiations for the RCEP.⁷² In addition, the US has been suspicious of the Chinese proposal to establish the AIIB, which is seen as a rival to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund both dominated by the US. The US has responded by attempting to persuade allies not to support the AIIB, but this has not been very successful with key allies, like the United Kingdom and Australia participating as founding members of the AIIB.⁷³

⁷⁰ Zachary Keck, "US Bombers Challenge China's Air Defense Identification Zone," *The Diplomat*, November 27, 2013, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/11/us-bombers-challenge-chinas-air-defense-identification-zone/>.

⁷¹ Shannon Tiezzi, "US Freedom of Navigation Patrols in the South China Sea: China Reacts," *The Diplomat*, October 27, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/us-freedom-of-navigation-patrols-in-the-south-china-sea-china-reacts/>.

⁷² Jack Kim, "China-backed Trade Pact Playing Catch-Up after US-led TPP Deal," *Reuters*, October 10, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/11/us-trade-tpp-rcep-idUSKCN0S500220151011>.

⁷³ Jane Perlez, "US Opposing China's Answer to World Bank," *The New York Times*, October 9, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/10/world/asia/chinas-plan-for-regional-development-bank-runs-into-us-opposition.html>.

In summary, US-China relations are complex and multi-faceted with both countries having differing views on their relationship. This has been described as “mutually assured misperception,” which results in mutual distrust of long-term intentions. The two countries are also simultaneously cooperating and competing, but both sides have a pragmatic approach to their disagreements and both acknowledge that specific disagreements should not prevent cooperation on issues where there can be mutual benefits.⁷⁴

Singapore’s Relations with US and China

Singapore and the US have a comprehensive relationship that began with Singapore’s independence in 1965. Both countries formally established diplomatic relations a year later in 1966. Bilateral relations between Singapore and the US are positive with close cooperation on security, economic and political issues based on convergent strategic interests.⁷⁵ During a visit to the US in 2013, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong described both countries as having “excellent security cooperation” and “economic relations [that] are robust.”⁷⁶ Likewise, President Obama described Singapore as “an outstanding economic partner” and “an outstanding partner

⁷⁴ Lieberthal and Wang, “Addressing US-China Strategic Distrust,” 1.

⁷⁵ US Department of State, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, “US Relations with Singapore,” January 23, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2798.htm>.

⁷⁶ Prime Minister’s Office Singapore, “Speech by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at Gala Dinner hosted by US Chamber of Commerce and US-ASEAN Business Council,” Government of Singapore, April 2, 2013, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.pmo.gov.sg/mediacentre/speech-prime-minister-lee-hsien-loong-gala-dinner-hosted-us-chamber-commerce-and-us>.

for us [the US] on the international stage.”⁷⁷ He also noted that the two countries have “an extraordinary relationship” and “extremely close military cooperation.”⁷⁸ Former US Ambassador to Singapore, David Adelman, stated that there are three pillars to the Singapore-US relationship: the Strategic Framework Agreement in security, the US-Singapore Free Trade Agreement in trade, and the US-Singapore Strategic Partnership Dialogue in political and economic dialogue.⁷⁹

The Strategic Framework Agreement, signed in July 2005, is built on the 1990 Memorandum of Understanding Regarding United States Use of Facilities in Singapore to support continued US security presence and is the basis of Singapore’s security relationship with the US. It articulates the principles of the US-Singapore defense partnership and highlights key areas of defense cooperation.⁸⁰ Singapore and the US have many areas of security cooperation. First, the US provides Singapore access to state-of-the-art military technology and equipment. This was evident in Singapore’s purchase of the F-15 and the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System as well as Singapore’s participation in the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program. Second, both countries benefit

⁷⁷ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, “Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Lee of Singapore Before Bilateral Meeting,” The White House, April 2, 2013, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/02/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-lee-singapore-bilateral-meeti>.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ David Adelman, “The US-Singapore Strategic Partnership: Bilateral Relations Move Up a Weight Class,” *The Ambassadors Review* (Spring 2012): 11-12.

⁸⁰ Ministry of Defence, “Factsheet-The Strategic Framework Agreement,” Government of Singapore, July 12, 2005, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press_room/official_releases/nr/2005/jul/12jul05_nr/12jul05_fs.html#.Vk5bp6Q3PIU.

from access to each other's military facilities and training areas. Singapore provides military facilities that are operationally valuable to the US. Such facilities fill a strategic logistical gap for US naval deployments and support the forward presence of its forces in the region.⁸¹ This forward presence includes the deployment of up to four littoral combat ships to Singapore on a rotational basis. The US also provides training areas for the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) to hone its military capabilities.⁸² Third, Singapore supports the US-led global war on terror, where Singapore's contributions, such as the provincial reconstruction teams and medical teams deployed in Afghanistan, make it a valuable partner in the "coalition of the willing". More recently, Singapore has offered military assets in the global fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. This cooperation includes liaison and planning officers, a KC-135R air-to-air refuelling aircraft and an image analysis team.⁸³ Singapore also participates in and cooperates on maritime security initiatives, such as Combined Task Force 151 to combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Andrew T. H. Tan, "Punching Above Its Weight: Singapore's Armed Forces and Its Contribution to Foreign Policy," *Defence Studies* 11, no. 4 (2011): 684-685.

⁸² Ministry of Defence, "Joint Statement by US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and Singapore Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen," Government of Singapore, December 13, 2013, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press_room/official_releases/sp/2013/13dec13_speech2.html#.VID7ZqQ3PIU.

⁸³ Ministry of Defence, "Reply by Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen to Parliamentary Question on Joining the Coalition to Combat ISIS," Government of Singapore, November 3, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press_room/official_releases/ps/2014/03nov14_ps.html#.VIEDoKQ3PIV.

⁸⁴ Ministry of Defence, "Overseas Operations," Government of Singapore, March 16, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/key_topics/overseas_operations.html.

The US-Singapore Free Trade Agreement went into effect in 2004. This was the first US bilateral free trade agreement with an Asian country. Since then, bilateral trade has increased significantly with \$50 billion in total two-way goods traded in 2012, which made Singapore the 17th largest US trading partner and largest US trading partner in ASEAN. Conversely, the US is Singapore's third largest trading partner globally.⁸⁵ Singapore and the US are also member countries of the TPP. In addition, the US is Singapore's largest foreign investor with total investments of \$154 billion at the end of 2013. There are also approximately 3,600 American companies based in Singapore and many use Singapore as a regional hub for operations in Asia.⁸⁶ This close economic relationship translates into mutual benefits in terms of profits, jobs and investment opportunities for both countries.

The Strategic Partnership Dialogue was launched in 2012 to enhance bilateral cooperation and strategic partnership. It elevated political and economic dialogue between the two countries by establishing an institutionalized process for regular interaction to discuss cooperation and address challenges. The first dialogue led to the signing of the Third Country Training Program, which jointly extends technical assistance to developing countries, particularly ASEAN countries in the lower Mekong region in the areas of environment, health, urban planning and disaster management.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Emma Chanlett-Avery, *Singapore: Background and US Relations*, CRS Report RS20490 (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, July 2013), 3.

⁸⁶ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, "US Relations with Singapore."

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

While Singapore maintains an excellent and comprehensive bilateral relationship with the US, it also has positive relations with China. Although bilateral trade and exchanges were ongoing since founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's visit to China in 1976 and Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's visit to Singapore in 1978, Singapore only established diplomatic relations with China in 1990. This was a deliberate decision to formalize relations only after all other ASEAN founding members had done so, in order to avoid misperceptions that Singapore was a third China.⁸⁸ In a congratulatory message to mark the 25th anniversary of Singapore-China diplomatic relations, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said that the "two countries have always shared a long-standing and special friendship" and that "economic ties are robust, anchored by deep mutual understanding, common interests and strong people-to-people ties."⁸⁹ In a penned essay prior to his visit to Singapore, President Xi noted, "leaders of our two countries have approached our relationship as one of strategic and long-term importance" and pledged that "China is ready to partner with Singapore to carry forward the China-Singapore relationship."⁹⁰ More recently, the two countries elevated bilateral relations on the 25th

⁸⁸ Kian Beng Kor, "Low-Key Start to Flourishing Friendship," *The Straits Times*, November 6, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/low-key-start-to-flourishing-friendship?login=true>.

⁸⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "MFA Press Statement: Exchange of congratulatory messages to commemorate the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Singapore and China," Government of Singapore, October 2, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/media_centre/press_room/pr/2015/201510/press_20151002.html.

⁹⁰ Jinping Xi, "Xi Jinping: Build on past achievements for brighter China-Singapore ties," *The Straits Times*, November 6, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/xi-jinping-build-on-past-achievements-for-brighter-china-singapore-ties>.

anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations by agreeing to establish an “All-Round Cooperative Partnership Progressing with the Times.”⁹¹

Singapore and China relations are anchored on strong economic ties. China is Singapore’s largest trading partner with bilateral trade reaching almost \$80 billion last year, which is a 28-fold increase over the last two decades. Singapore has also invested in industrial parks and the services sectors in China and has been China’s largest foreign investor since 2013.⁹² In addition, Singapore and China have a bilateral free trade agreement that came into effect in 2009 that has boosted bilateral trade and investments significantly. This was the first comprehensive bilateral free trade agreement that China had with another Asian country. More recently, both countries agreed to work towards a substantive upgrade of the China-Singapore free trade agreement to “prepare for the next stage of [their] economic cooperation.”⁹³ Singapore and China are also member countries of the RCEP, a free trade agreement between ASEAN members and ASEAN’s free trade agreement partners—Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea and New Zealand. The

⁹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Joint Statement between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Singapore on the Establishment of an All-Round Cooperative Partnership Progressing with the Times,” Government of Singapore, November 7, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/media_centre/press_room/pr/2015/201511/press_20151107.html.

⁹² Xi, “Build on past achievements for brighter China-Singapore ties.”

⁹³ Kian Beng Kor, “Singapore-China ties a unique relationship that evolves with the times: President Tony Tan,” *The Straits Times*, November 6, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/singapore-china-ties-a-unique-relationship-that-evolves-with-the-times-president-tony-tan>.

agreement includes 16 countries that accounts for 45 percent of the world's population and a third of the world's GDP.⁹⁴

Singapore and China also cooperate in other areas with mutual economic benefits. These include two existing government-to-government projects in China, the Suzhou Industrial Park set-up in 1994 and the Tianjin Eco-City developed in 2008, to facilitate transfer of knowledge from Singapore's experience in economic development. More recently, both governments announced a third project in the western region of Chongqing, which aims to enhance connectivity and support the development in that region.⁹⁵ In addition, both countries have significant financial cooperation with Singapore being the largest offshore Renminbi center outside China, facilitating the internationalization of the Chinese currency by providing a market to settle trade and financial transactions in the Renminbi.⁹⁶ This provides mutual benefits as it supports the growth of Singapore's financial sector as well as China's efforts to internationalize its currency. Singapore has also supported the Chinese-led AIIB initiative as a founding member and China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative, which is a development strategy

⁹⁴ Ministry of Trade and Industry, "Factsheet: What you need to know about Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)," Government of Singapore, June 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, [https://www.mti.gov.sg/MTIInsights/SiteAssets/Pages/FACTSHEET-WHAT-YOU-NEED-TO-KNOW-ABOUT/Factsheet%20on%20RCEP%20\(June%202014\).pdf](https://www.mti.gov.sg/MTIInsights/SiteAssets/Pages/FACTSHEET-WHAT-YOU-NEED-TO-KNOW-ABOUT/Factsheet%20on%20RCEP%20(June%202014).pdf).

⁹⁵ Kian Beng Kor, "Third Singapore-China joint project to be based in Chongqing," *The Straits Times*, November 6, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/third-singapore-china-joint-project-to-be-based-in-chongqing-president-xi-jinping?login=true>.

⁹⁶ Kor, "Low-Key Start to Flourishing Friendship."

that focuses on connectivity and cooperation among countries in Eurasia, as Singapore sees opportunities to leverage its strengths in transport, finance and trade.⁹⁷

Singapore and China also have close people-to-people ties. Singapore's President Dr. Tony Tan said that growth in friendship and cooperation "can be attributed to the historical and cultural linkages between our two peoples, including our pioneer generation of leaders."⁹⁸ Both countries have regular high-level interactions with Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister and China's Executive Vice Premier meeting annually at the Joint Council for Bilateral Cooperation to plan, guide and coordinate bilateral issues.⁹⁹ In addition, after Deng Xiaoping's remarks in 1992 that Singapore should be a model for China's development, close to 50,000 officials have visited Singapore to learn from its experiences in economic development and governance.¹⁰⁰

While Singapore and China have had an extended period of economic relations, defense relations between the two countries are relatively nascent. The two countries signed their first defense agreement, the Agreement on Defence Exchanges and Security

⁹⁷ Patrick John Lim, "China's One Belt, One Road Initiative could usher in new growth: Josephine Teo," *ChannelNewsAsia*, August 22, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/singapore/china-s-one-belt-one-road/2010212.html>.

⁹⁸ The Istana, "Speech by President Tony Tan Keng Yam at the State Banquet Hosted in Honour of the President of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency Xi Jinping on 6 November 2015," President's Office, November 6, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.istana.gov.sg/news/speeches/2015/speech-president-tony-tan-state-banquet-honour-president-the-peoples-republic>.

⁹⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Establishment of an All-Round Cooperative Partnership Progressing with the Times."

¹⁰⁰ Kor, "Low-Key Start to Flourishing Friendship."

Cooperation, in 2008.¹⁰¹ The two countries then agreed on a Four-Point Consensus in 2014 to strengthen bilateral defense cooperation and enhance mutual understanding and trust through regular high-level meetings, practical cooperation and people-to-people engagements. As part of the agreement, joint training exercises between the PLA and the Singapore Army will expand in subject, scope and frequency. In addition, the PLA Navy and the Republic of Singapore Navy will expand exchanges to involve specialized fields and joint training.¹⁰² This led to an inaugural naval exercise in May 2015 where the two navies conducted gunnery and maneuvering drills.¹⁰³

In summary, Singapore has excellent bilateral relations with both the US and China, despite the US and China competing economically and militarily in the Asia-Pacific. This is evident in both economic and security areas. In the economic area, Singapore is simultaneously negotiating regional free trade agreements with the US through the TPP and China via the RCEP. In addition, Singapore has joined the Chinese-led AIIB despite US efforts to discourage its allies from doing so. In the security area,

¹⁰¹ Ministry of Defence, “Factsheet: Agreement on Defence Exchanges and Security Cooperation between China and Singapore,” Government of Singapore, January 7, 2008, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press_room/official_releases/nr/2008/jan/07jan08_nr/07jan08_fs.html#.VIKKNaQ3PIU.

¹⁰² Ministry of Defence, “Joint Press Release by General Chang Wanquan, State Councillor and Minister of National Defence, People's Republic of China and Dr Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Defence, Republic of Singapore,” Government of Singapore, November 14, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press_room/official_releases/nr/2014/nov/14nov14_nr/14nov14_nr.html#.VIKXAqQ3PIU.

¹⁰³ Ministry of Defence, “Singapore and Chinese Navies Conclude Inaugural Bilateral Naval Exercise,” Government of Singapore, May 25, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press_room/official_releases/nr/2015/may/25may15_nr.html#.VIKhVqQ3PIU.

Singapore is neutral in its position on the South China Sea dispute. It is not a claimant state and has maintained that the specific territorial disputes can only be settled by the parties directly concerned.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, while giving his perspective on China's territorial disputes, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong acknowledged the Chinese argument that its claims existed long before international law came into existence, and that these have to be given due weight because international law does not go back to things which precede it.¹⁰⁵

Relations of Regional Powers and ASEAN with US and China

A review of the major foreign policy relations in the Asia-Pacific would not be complete without considering regional countries and organizations, such as Japan, India and ASEAN. Japan and India were selected because of their proximity to China as well as their relative power status in the region, while ASEAN was chosen because it is a multinational organization that Singapore is part of.

Japan and the US have a close bilateral relationship. Japan's alliance with the US is viewed as the cornerstone of US security interests in Asia, which has contributed to regional stability. The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the two countries allows US forces and military assets to be based in Japan and commits the US

¹⁰⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Singapore Minister's Comments in Parliament on ASEAN and South China Sea," Government of Singapore, August 13, 2012, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/overseasmission/phnom_penh/press_statements_speeches/embassy_news_press_releases/2012/201208/Press_13082012.html.

¹⁰⁵ Council on Foreign Relations, "Singapore Prime Minister Lee Backs Trans-Pacific Partnership and Stronger US Ties," June 24, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/singapore/singapore-prime-minister-lee-backs-trans-pacific-partnership-stronger-us-ties/p35663>.

to defend Japan against an attack. In addition, Japan is the third largest economy in the world and it has close economic ties with the US. The two countries are also member nations of the TPP free trade agreement.¹⁰⁶

Japan's close ties with the US can be viewed as a balance against its frosty relations with China, which have been encumbered by Japan's wartime past and territorial disputes in the East China Sea. The Chinese currently view the Japanese administration as revisionist and are strongly opposed to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine, which enshrines Japan's war dead, including leaders convicted of war crimes.¹⁰⁷ The Chinese also oppose Prime Minister Abe's push to change Japan's pacifist constitution to expand the role of Japan's self-defense force to support allies, mainly the US, in collective self-defense. However, economic necessity has led to a quiet economic rapprochement between China and Japan, with an increase in Chinese real estate investments in Japan and an increase in Chinese tourists visiting Japan. The term "hot economics, cold politics" has therefore often been used to characterize the Sino-Japanese relationship.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ US Department of State, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, "US Relations with Japan," February 4, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/4142.htm>.

¹⁰⁷ Barney Henderson, "Why do Japan and China have such a frosty relationship?" *The Telegraph*, November 10, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/11221248/Why-do-Japan-and-China-have-such-a-frosty-relationship.html>.

¹⁰⁸ William Sposato, "Why is China Playing Nice with Japan?" *Foreign Policy*, August 4, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/08/04/why-is-china-playing-nice-with-japan-abenomics/>.

After India's independence in the period between the 1950s-1980s, bilateral relations between India and the US were hindered by several disagreements: the nonaligned India's Soviet tilt; close ties the US has with Pakistan; and the abstention of India from the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty. As the Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, diplomatic relations between India and the US began to improve. The US sees significant potential in a partnership with India because India is the world's largest democracy and it shares common values with the US.¹⁰⁹ In addition, India is a rising power with a fast-growing and powerful economy, which will create new markets and new opportunities for US trade. It is also a nuclear-armed state with a strong military, which makes it a regional military power. A positive relationship with India also supports US interests in establishing a balance of power in Asia. In a recent speech in Singapore that alluded to the South China Sea dispute, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "the most critical need in this region is to uphold and strengthen the rules and norms that must define our collective behavior."¹¹⁰ He added, "India will lend its strength to keep the seas safe, secure and free for the benefit of all."¹¹¹

India and China have a relationship that has both positive and negative aspects. A positive aspect is the close economic relations between the two countries with China

¹⁰⁹ K. Alan Kronstadt and Sonia Pinto, *US-India Security Relations: Strategic Issues*, CRS Report R42948 (Washington, Dc: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, January 2013), 1.

¹¹⁰ Narendra Modi, "India is now the bright hope for sustaining Asian dynamism and prosperity: PM Modi in Singapore," November 23, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.narendramodi.in/text-of-37th-singapore-lecture-india-s-singapore-story-by-prime-minister-during-his-visit-to-singapore--377134>.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

being one of India's largest trading partners. Another positive aspect is the emphasis that Chinese leaders have placed on improving ties between the two countries. In contrast, a negative aspect of the relationship is the long-standing boundary dispute that flares up every now and then, with the latest incident occurring in 2014. Another negative aspect is China's close relationship with Pakistan and its developmental assistance to Pakistan for projects and infrastructure in disputed areas between India and Pakistan. China's military activities in the Indian Ocean, which India views as its backyard, also contribute to bilateral friction. India's move towards a closer relationship with the US acts as a balance against China. India also maintains a diversified portfolio of partnerships with other countries through its "Look East" policy by deepening engagement with countries in East and Southeast Asia, including Japan. ¹¹²

ASEAN has positive relations with the US and the relationship has expanded significantly since formal relations began in 1977. At the recent 3rd ASEAN-US Summit, this relationship was elevated to an ASEAN-US Strategic Partnership to realize the common vision of a peaceful, prosperous and stable Asia-Pacific region with five priority areas of cooperation: economic integration, maritime cooperation, transnational challenges, emerging leaders and women's opportunities. The ASEAN-US relationship is anchored on shared principles such as the Charter of the United Nations (UN) and the ASEAN Charter with both ASEAN and the US committed to a rules-based approach in Asia, respect for international law and the peaceful resolution of disputes. There are

¹¹² Tanvi Madan, "India's Relations with China: The Good, the Bad and the (Potentially) Ugly," Brookings Institution, October 2013, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2013/10/08-india-china-relations-madan>.

multiple ASEAN-led mechanisms for regular interaction and dialogue between ASEAN and the US, including the East Asia Summit, ASEAN Regional Forum and ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus.¹¹³ US-ASEAN economic engagement is also significant, with ASEAN being the fourth-largest goods trading partner of the US in 2014. Furthermore, the US had the largest stock of foreign direct investment in ASEAN in 2014, which is larger than the foreign direct investment in ASEAN from Japan, Korea and China combined for the same period.¹¹⁴

ASEAN and China have a mixed relationship with respect to aspects of both cooperation and tension. In terms of economic relations, ASEAN and China have a free trade agreement, which entered into force in 2010. With the world's second largest economy, China consistently appears as a top five trading partner of ASEAN members. However, the degree of dependence on Chinese trade varies between wealthier and poorer ASEAN countries. While wealthier ASEAN countries have a diverse set of trading partners, poorer ASEAN countries rely more heavily on China. As ASEAN members develop, there could be a shift from economic complementation to economic competition between ASEAN and China. This results from ASEAN economies expanding exports to the West and attracting low-cost manufacturing investments that

¹¹³ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Joint Statement on the ASEAN-US Strategic Partnership," The White House, November 21, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/21/joint-statement-asean-us-strategic-partnership>.

¹¹⁴ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Fact Sheet: US-ASEAN Economic Engagement," The White House, November 21, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/21/fact-sheet-us-asean-economic-engagement>.

previously went to China.¹¹⁵ In terms of security relations, four ASEAN members (Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam) have territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea. While ASEAN and China signed a Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea in 2002, there has been a lack of progress towards a legally binding code of conduct. This lack of progress is attributed to China's position that ASEAN is not the platform to discuss South China Sea issues. Instead, China prefers to negotiate South China Sea issues bilaterally with claimant states, but this position ignores the fact that non-claimant ASEAN members also have an interest in the discussions and management of the territorial disputes. The territorial disputes have also undermined ASEAN cohesion, which was evident in 2012 when ASEAN failed to issue a joint communique for the first time in its history.¹¹⁶

In summary, the foreign policy relations of regional powers and organizations, such as Japan, India and ASEAN, with the US and China are important to understanding the dynamics of US-China interactions in the Asia-Pacific. The status of these relationships will also have a bearing on the security environment in the Asia-Pacific in the next 10 to 20 years.

¹¹⁵ Nargiza Salidjanova, Jacob Koch-Weser and Jason Klanderman, *China's Economic Ties with ASEAN: A Country-by-Country Analysis* (Washington, DC: US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, March 17, 2015), 3-8.

¹¹⁶ Siew Mun Tang, "ASEAN Must Speak Up More on South China Sea Matters," *The Straits Times*, August 13, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/asean-must-speak-up-more-on-south-china-sea-matters>.

Section II: Historical Review of Contests between Ruling and Rising Powers

This section provides a historical review of contests between ruling powers and rising powers. It is based on an analysis of the Thucydides Trap Case File developed by researchers at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. The Thucydides Trap is a metaphor that describes "the inevitable structural stress that occurs when a rising power threatens to displace a ruling power." The historical cases span the period from the early 16th century to the present and include cases where a major rising power threatened to displace a major ruling power. This rivalry resulted in war for 12 of the 16 cases, while war was avoided for the remaining four cases (see table 1).¹¹⁷ The objective of this section is to identify aggravating and mitigating factors across the Thucydides Trap Case File that resulted in outcomes of either war or no war between ruling powers and rising powers in these major historical cases. Identifying these factors facilitates a better understanding of the current power dynamics with the US as the ruling power and China as the rising power. It would also provide a basis to answer the first secondary research question, which aims to determine the security environment and the associated security challenges with the rise of China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific in the next 10 to 20 years.

¹¹⁷ Graham Allison, "Thucydides Trap Case File," September 23, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/24928/thucydides_trap_case_file.html?breadcrumb=%2Fexperts%2F199%2Fgraham_allison.

	Period	Ruling Power	Rising Power	Result
1	First half of 16th century	France	Hapsburgs	War
2	16th to 17th centuries	Hapsburgs	Ottoman Empire	War
3	17th century	Hapsburgs	Sweden	War
4	17th century	Dutch Republic	England	War
5	Late 17th to early 18th centuries	France	Great Britain	War
6	Late 18th to early 19th centuries	United Kingdom (UK)	France	War
7	Mid-19th century	UK, France	Russia	War
8	19th century	France	Germany	War
9	Late 19th to early 20th centuries	Russia, China	Japan	War
10	Early 20th century	UK	United States	No war
11	Early 20th century	Russia, UK, France	Germany	War
12	Mid-20th century	Soviet Union, UK, France	Germany	War
13	Mid-20th century	United States	Japan	War
14	1970s to 1980s	Soviet Union	Japan	No war
15	1940s to 1980s	United States	Soviet Union	No war
16	1990s to present	UK, France	Germany	No war

Source: Graham Allison, “Thucydides Trap Case File,” September 23, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/24928/thucydides_trap_case_file.html?breadcrumb=%2Fexperts%2F199%2Fgraham_allison.

Review of Cases where a Ruling and Rising Power Fought a War

An analysis of the 12 historical cases where a ruling and rising power fought a war reveals five aggravating factors that resulted in an outcome of war. The five aggravating factors identified are dissatisfaction with the existing balance of power, a sense of insecurity caused by powerful neighbors, religious and ideological differences, strategic economic competition and nationalistic sentiments.

First, a dissatisfaction with the existing balance of power is a direct outcome of the inevitable structural stress that results when a rising power threatens to displace a ruling power as described by the Thucydides Trap. In Case #6, Napoleon’s attempt to conquer Europe threatened the United Kingdom’s core belief that its security depended

on the prevention of a hegemonic power on the European continent.¹¹⁸ The United Kingdom therefore responded with two objectives—restoring the balance of power in Europe by forcing France to surrender conquests in the Low Countries and maintaining a balance of power where the United Kingdom has control of the seas and a monopoly on global trade.¹¹⁹ In Case #11, Paul Kennedy, a British historian at Yale University, views the 1914-1918 conflict in World War I between the United Kingdom and Germany as a continuation of the competition for power that had been ongoing for at least fifteen or twenty years before 1914. This competition was mainly in the form of an intense naval arms race, but also included elements of trade rivalry, competition for colonies and nationalist public opinion. Kennedy argues that war occurred essentially because the United Kingdom wished to preserve its status quo as the ruling power, while Germany as a rising power was taking steps to alter it.¹²⁰ A dissatisfaction with the existing balance of power also contributes to a sense of insecurity, which is the next factor to be examined.

Second, a sense of insecurity caused by powerful neighbors in close proximity contributed to war in several cases. In Case #1, King Francis I of France was concerned by Charles of Spain's increasing power as he consolidated his rule over Hapsburg-controlled territories. This expansion raised the prospect of Hapsburg encirclement and created pressure on all of France's land frontiers, which prompted France to attack

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Michael Leggiere, *The Fall of Napoleon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2.

¹²⁰ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980), 464-470.

whenever the opportunity arose.¹²¹ In Case #3, Sweden challenged Hapsburg hegemony because Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus viewed Hapsburg occupation of northern Germany as posing a direct danger to Sweden and this led to Swedish involvement in the Thirty Years' War.¹²² In addition, King Gustavus wanted "to control territories and ports in northern Germany as a forward defense for Sweden" to counter Hapsburg naval ambitions.¹²³ In Case #9, Japan rose to challenge the status quo of Chinese and Russian dominance in East Asia, which resulted in the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War. In the Sino-Japanese War, Japan's objective was the removal of Chinese influence from the Korean peninsula, which was important because of the Korean peninsula's proximity to Japan and its ability to act as a buffer against foreign encroachment.¹²⁴ Regarding the Russo-Japanese War, Japan felt insecure because there were too many Russian troops in Manchuria and negotiations for their withdrawal were unsuccessful.¹²⁵ A sense of insecurity in all three cases was caused by the physical presence of powerful neighbors in close proximity to the countries' geographical borders.

¹²¹ John Lynch, *Spain under the Hapsburgs: Empire and Absolutism, 1516-1598* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 88-89.

¹²² Michael Roberts, "Sweden and the Baltic 1611-54," in *The New Cambridge Modern History: The Decline of Spain and the Thirty Years War, 1609-48/49*, ed. J. P. Cooper (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 392.

¹²³ Jan Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 187.

¹²⁴ Akira Iriye, "Japan's Drive to Great-Power Status," in *The Emergence of Meiji Japan*, ed. Marius B. Jansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 307-311.

¹²⁵ Ian Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (New York: Longman, 1985), 2.

Third, religious and ideological differences contributed to war between ruling powers and rising powers. In Case #3, Sweden declared its support for the Protestant cause and entered into the Thirty Years' War by engaging Hapsburg forces in Germany.¹²⁶ In Case #7, the United Kingdom and France fought against Russia in the Crimean War to counter Russian expansion. The British and French viewed the Crimean War as a “defense of liberty and European civilization against the barbaric and despotic menace of Russia.”¹²⁷ It was also fueled by religious passions that had been building for centuries with French support for Catholics in conflict with Russian support for Orthodox Christians.¹²⁸ In Case #12, the Third Reich under Hitler was “consumed by visceral hatreds and ambitions” and viewed the war as a means to enable “German racial reordering of Central and Eastern Europe and the re-emergence of Germany as the dominant power of the European Continent.”¹²⁹ While religious and ideological differences were often not the root cause of war in these cases, they were contributory factors that led to conflict.

Fourth, strategic economic competition between ruling powers and rising powers can also result in an outcome of war. In Case #4, England was the rising power in the 17th century and it sought to expand its share of international trade at the expense of the

¹²⁶ Roberts, “Sweden and the Baltic,” 392.

¹²⁷ Orlando Figes, introduction to *The Crimean War: A History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010), xxii.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹²⁹ Richard J. Evans, preface to *The Third Reich in Power, 1933-1939* (New York: Penguin, 2005), xv-xvi.

Dutch. This economic competition shifted to a full strategic rivalry because of an increased assertiveness in English foreign policy that included aggressive mercantilism and a significant naval build-up. In addition, there was a close relation between economic and strategic issues because both sides viewed the control of the seas as fundamentally important to national existence.¹³⁰ This strategic rivalry eventually led to the Anglo-Dutch Wars, which the Dutch viewed as entirely defensive in terms of protecting trade on which Holland completely depended.¹³¹ In Case #13, economic sanctions by the US denied Japan access to overseas imports of critical resources and raw materials that it completely relied on. The Japanese leadership viewed this economic containment as a severe threat and it resulted in Japan attacking the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor in a preemptive move for Japan's subsequent territorial expansion to secure its required resources.¹³² In these cases, strategic economic competition resulted in wars because it fundamentally affected the survival of these nations.

Fifth, nationalistic sentiments created internal pressures that led to wars between ruling powers and rising powers. In Case #8, Prussia's Otto von Bismarck viewed war with France as an effective means of stoking nationalistic sentiments to mobilize popular support for the unification of the Prussian-dominated North German Confederation with

¹³⁰ Jack Levy, "The Rise and Decline of the Anglo-Dutch Rivalry, 1609-1689," in *Great Power Rivalries*, ed. William R. Thompson (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 188-189.

¹³¹ J. R. Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 11.

¹³² Herbert Feis, *The Road to Pearl Harbor: The Coming of the War between the United States and Japan* (New York: Atheneum, 1965), 248-249.

southern German states.¹³³ Bismarck recognized “that a Franco-German war must take place before the construction of a United Germany could be realized.”¹³⁴ In Case #12, the Treaty of Versailles resulted in an economically and militarily weak Germany after World War I because of the massive reparations required and military constraints placed. This resulted in resentment amongst Germans and provided the conditions for Hitler’s Nazi Party to rise to power by capitalizing on these nationalistic sentiments and promising the restoration of national pride.¹³⁵ In Case #13, the late Richard Storry, who was Emeritus Professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Oxford, described the Japanese as lacking an appreciation of equality as a political and social ideal. Instead, the Japanese ranked nations in a hierarchy and the rhetoric of Japanese nationalism in the 1930s was that Japan needed to find its proper place in the world, a place at the apex of the pyramid.¹³⁶ Nationalistic sentiments were a contributing factor to war because of the political support and pressure from the domestic population.

¹³³ Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 24.

¹³⁴ Otto von Bismarck, *Bismarck, the Man and the Statesman, Being the Reflections and Reminiscences of Otto, Prince von Bismarck*, trans. A. J. Butler (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1898), 57.

¹³⁵ Allison, “Thucydides Trap Case File.”

¹³⁶ Richard Storry, *Japan and the Decline of the West in Asia, 1894-1943* (London: Macmillan Press, 1979), 158.

Review of Cases where a Ruling and Rising Power Did Not Fight a War

An analysis of the four historical cases where a ruling and rising power did not fight a war reveals five very different mitigating factors that resulted in an outcome of no war. The five mitigating factors identified are competing priorities in other parts of the world, constraints by external powers, possibility of nuclear war, mutual independence and structural restraints.

First, the United Kingdom's competing priorities in other parts of the world compelled it to enter into a "Great Rapprochement" with the US and this prevented war between the two countries. In Case #10, the United Kingdom was facing a closer and more ominous threat from a rising Germany and was stretched to defend its imperial colonies in Asia. However, the United Kingdom had insufficient military resources to support its defense requirements. To address these challenges, the United Kingdom sought alliances to strengthen both its defenses and its voice in European politics. Therefore, instead of challenging the rise of the US through war, the United Kingdom had no choice but to manage a peaceful power transition by abandoning the Western Hemisphere to the US.¹³⁷ The United Kingdom also deferred to what many British viewed as unreasonable US demands over territorial disputes in Canada and Latin America as well as lucrative fishing rights.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Bradford Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement; England and the United States, 1895-1914* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 156-157.

¹³⁸ Allison, "Thucydides Trap Case File."

Second, constraints by external powers have prevented war from occurring between ruling and rising powers. In Case #14, Japan and the Soviet Union technically remain at war, as both countries did not sign a peace treaty after World War II. In addition, there is an unresolved territorial dispute over four small islands known by Russia as the Kurils and by Japan as the Northern Territories that the Soviet Union seized towards the end of World War II. Japan's significant economic modernization, which allowed it to surpass the Soviet Union in total GDP in 1987, would typically result in a more assertive effort to reclaim these lost territories. However, the Thucydides Trap Case File noted, "the continuous role of the US as the guarantor of Japan's security . . . has constrained these impulses."¹³⁹ In Case #16, Germany has peacefully reemerged since the 1990s as the predominant power in Europe with its role as the economic driver of the region and its position as a strong political voice. The Thucydides Trap Case File noted, "as long as the US continues as Europe's security overlord through its leadership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and provides its nuclear umbrella, structural stresses that would otherwise create risks of military conflict between Germany and its EU allies will likely remain muted."¹⁴⁰

Third, the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union (Case #15) is an example of how the possibility of nuclear war prevented a direct conflict between ruling and rising powers. When the Soviet Union broke the US nuclear monopoly by successfully testing its own nuclear weapon in 1949, there was a real possibility of

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

mutually assured destruction through nuclear war. John Gaddis, a Cold War historian at Yale University, described this new phenomenon where “for the first time in history no one could be sure of winning, or even surviving, a great war.”¹⁴¹ Gaddis noted the Cold War inverted the logic of the “father of the atomic bomb”, J. Robert Oppenheimer, who said, “if there is another war, atomic weapons will be used.” Instead, because nuclear weapons could be used in a war between great powers, no such war took place.¹⁴²

Fourth, Gaddis posits that mutual independence could have been a stabilizing factor in relations between the US and the Soviet Union (Case #15). Gaddis notes the flawed classical liberal assumption that extensive contact between nations, such as economic interdependence and cultural exchange, increases the chances of peace and highlights that this assumption is not supported by historical evidence.¹⁴³ Instead, Gaddis argues that the absence of economic leverage available to each side and the minimal interaction between two dissimilar people “constituted a structural support for stability in relations between the two countries.”¹⁴⁴ In addition, Gaddis notes that the two countries occupied different sides of the earth and this geographical remoteness has reduced the possibility of irredentist grievances.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ John Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 262.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ John Gaddis, “The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System,” *International Security* 10, no. 4 (Spring 1986): 111-112.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

Fifth, structural restraints contributed to Germany's peaceful rise in Europe (Case #16). After the collapse of communism, the United Kingdom and France were concerned that German reunification would again result in a powerful and dangerous force in Europe. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher feared German ambitions and did her best to prevent reunification. Thatcher privately expressed her fears to President Bush that "the Germans will get in peace what Hitler couldn't get in the war."¹⁴⁶ To counter this threat, "Europeans, particularly the French, believed that any revival of German power had to go hand in hand with European structures that would keep the German state from endangering France."¹⁴⁷ The European Union and NATO are examples of such economic and security structures. The first NATO Secretary General, Lord Ismay, famously stated that NATO's goal was "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."¹⁴⁸

In summary, the analysis of the Thucydides Trap Case File revealed aggravating and mitigating factors that resulted in outcomes of either war or no war between ruling powers and rising powers. This examination facilitates a subsequent analysis of the power dynamics between the US as the ruling power and China as the rising power.

¹⁴⁶ Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 206-207.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁴⁸ Geoffrey Wheatcroft, "Who Needs NATO?" *The New York Times*, June 15, 2011, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/16/opinion/16iht-edwheatcroft16.html?_r=0.

Section III: Security Strategies of Small States

This section is a study of small state security strategies. It reviews the existing literature on the characteristics and security strategies of small states. It then explores international relations theories, including the concepts of balancing, bandwagoning and hedging. This review facilitates answering the second and third secondary research questions, which are whether Singapore can influence its security environment and what strategy Singapore can adopt to safeguard and advance its national interests.

Literature Review of Small States

Small states are a highly heterogeneous group with all but one or two dozen member states of the UN falling into the category of small states.¹⁴⁹ It is therefore not surprising that there is no consensus in the literature on the definition of a small state. Smallness is a relative concept and any classification based on an absolute number, like the size of a population, state territory or GDP, is likely to be arbitrary.¹⁵⁰ This thesis presents three definitions, which illustrate the characteristics of small states. The definitions are based on capabilities, leader perceptions and the residual category concept. First, Hans Morgenthau, a leading figure in the study of international politics, defines smallness as a relative lack of capabilities, where a “Great Power is a state which is able to have its will against a small state . . . which in turn is not able to have its will

¹⁴⁹ Iver B. Neumann and Sieglinde Gstöhl, “Introduction: Lilliputians in Gulliver’s World?” in *Small States in International Relations*, ed. Christine Ingebritsen et al. (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2006), 3.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

against a Great Power.”¹⁵¹ Second, Robert Keohane, a leading American political scientist suggests the definition should instead focus on the role that leaders see their countries playing, where “a small power is a state whose leaders consider that it can never, acting alone or in a small group, make a significant impact on the system.”¹⁵² Third, political scientists Iver Neumann and Sieglinde Gstöhl suggest that small states are a residual category of states that are neither great powers nor middle powers and “are defined by what they are not.”¹⁵³ It should also be noted that small states are not necessarily weak states. The distinction between small and great is one of quantity, while the distinction between strong and weak is one of quality.¹⁵⁴

Erling Bjøl, a Danish historian and political scientist, identifies another important characteristic that differentiates great powers and small states. Bjøl suggests that the security concerns of small states are broader than that for great powers. While great powers are primarily concerned with protecting their territory and their client states against adversaries, small states have broader security interests that range between two poles. At one pole, small states are concerned about existential threats and the survival of their nation, while at the other pole they are concerned about resisting and preventing

¹⁵¹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?* (New York: New American Library, 1972), 129-130.

¹⁵² Robert O. Keohane, “Lilliputians’ Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics,” *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (1969): 296.

¹⁵³ Neumann and Gstöhl, “Introduction: Lilliputians in Gulliver’s World?” 5-6.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

political encroachment to maintain political independence.¹⁵⁵ An understanding of the broad security interests of small states provides a context for the study of their security strategies.

The literature is replete with theories of how small states develop strategies to address their security interests. This thesis examines three theories discussed in the literature. First, Morgenthau suggests a realist view where “small nations have always owed their independence either to the balance of power (Belgium and the Balkan countries until the Second World War), or to the preponderance of one protecting power (the small nations of Central and South America, and Portugal), or to their lack of attractiveness for imperialistic aspirations (Switzerland and Spain).”¹⁵⁶ Annette Baker Fox, an American international relations scholar, studied the diplomatic efforts of Turkey, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Spain during World War II and arrived at a conclusion that is consistent with Morgenthau’s concept of “lack of attractiveness.” Baker Fox argues that success in avoiding conflict was premised on geographical advantages, such as the absence of hostile neighbors, and adept diplomacy in convincing larger powers that the smaller state’s neutrality was advantageous to the great power based on a cost-benefit calculus.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Erling Bjøl, “The Small State in International Politics,” in *Small States in International Relations*, ed. August Schou and Arne Olav Brundtland (Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1971), 30-31.

¹⁵⁶ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Knopf, 1948), 196.

¹⁵⁷ Annette Baker Fox, *The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1959), 4-9.

Second, Neumann and Gstöhl describe a “causal chain” where a small state’s physical smallness results in scarcity, which then leads to external economic dependence, which may cause external sensitivity, which then gives rise to the danger of foreign determination.¹⁵⁸ Neumann and Gstöhl outline strategies that small states could adopt to mitigate the consequences of smallness and resource scarcity. These strategies include avoiding increasing interdependence in the first place (e.g. isolationism), avoiding high external dependence by increasing one’s prestige (e.g. membership in international organizations) or by diversifying one’s trading partners and avoiding foreign determination (e.g. neutrality).¹⁵⁹

Third, Dan Reiter, an American political scientist, uses learning theory as an alternative concept to traditional realism to explain how states are influenced more by historical experiences than external threats. While realism suggests that small states participate in alliances because of a more threatening external environment, learning theory posits that states’ actions are instead based on lessons drawn from formative historical experiences. A positive historical experience results in the continuation of neutrality or alliance membership, while a negative experience leads to a new choice. Reiter uses quantitative methods to demonstrate that learning theory is the dominant explanation of states’ alliance choices and that changes in the threat environment have only marginal effects on the decision of states to enter alliances.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Neumann and Gstöhl, “Introduction: Lilliputians in Gulliver’s World?” 11.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶⁰ Dan Reiter, “Learning, Realism, and Alliances: The Weight of the Shadow of the Past,” *World Politics* 46, no. 4 (July 1994): 490.

The literature also discusses how small states can exercise influence over larger powers. This thesis examines three. First, Ulf Lindell and Stefan Persson, political scientists from the University of Lund in Sweden, identified the quality of actors as a systemic “power base” factor that enables small states to achieve this influence. These qualities of actors include geography, resources and reputation.¹⁶¹ In terms of geography, a small state’s influence is strengthened if it is “located at the center of an important network of international transactions.”¹⁶² In terms of resources, a small state will have greater influence if it is endowed with natural and human resources, including the ability to mobilize the will of its people. In terms of reputation, a state known to be reliable and to possess good judgment will have greater influence. Another aspect of reputation is the organizational capabilities of the state, which comprises well-functioning political, public and military institutions that contribute to the state’s ability to exercise influence.¹⁶³

Second, small states can influence larger powers through international organizations, where all sovereign states whether big or small are equal. Robert Rothstein, a professor of international relations at Colgate University, suggests that small countries support international organizations because of the formal equality of membership, the potential security offered to members and the possible capabilities of

¹⁶¹ Ulf Lindell and Stefan Persson, “The Paradox of Weak State Power: A Research and Literature Overview,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 21, no. 2 (June 1986): 83-84.

¹⁶² Gunnar Sjöstedt, “The Exercise of International Civil Power,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 12, no. 1 (March 1977): 33.

¹⁶³ Lindell and Persson, “The Paradox of Weak State Power,” 84.

such organizations to check larger powers.¹⁶⁴ In addition, small states “favor discourses that institutionalize rules and norms, such as international law, international regimes, and international institutions” because they provide an opportunity for small states to shape the rules and norms of interstate relations.¹⁶⁵

Third, Neumann and Gstöhl suggest a constructivist view where states that are able to contribute ideas to global discourse have more foreign policy space to maneuver and influence larger powers. Small states “may not only engage in bargaining with the other (greater) powers, but also argue with them, pursue framing and discursive politics, and socially construct new, more favorable identities in their relationships.”¹⁶⁶ Christine Ingebritsen, a political scientist at the University of Washington, supports this view and highlights examples of Scandinavian countries that act as “norm entrepreneurs” to influence the international system through leadership in niche areas like global eco-politics, conflict resolution and the provision of aid.¹⁶⁷

In summary, the literature review of small states provided insights into the characteristics and security strategies of small states. Small states have broad security concerns that span both existential threats that can affect survival and foreign influence threats that can undermine political independence. The security strategies examined in

¹⁶⁴ Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 39-40.

¹⁶⁵ Neumann and Gstöhl, “Introduction: Lilliputians in Gulliver’s World?” 20-21.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

¹⁶⁷ Christine Ingebritsen, “Norm Entrepreneurs: Scandinavia’s Role in World Politics,” abstract, *Cooperation and Conflict* 37, no. 1 (March 2002): 11.

this review include Morgenthau's theory that small nations survive because of a balance of power or protection by a larger power or a lack of attractiveness; Neumann and Gstöhl's discussion of strategies to mitigate the consequences of smallness and resource scarcity; and Reiter's learning theory that suggests small states are influenced by historical experiences. This review also examined how small states can exercise influence over larger powers, namely through "power bases" such as the actor's quality, through international organizations where sovereign equality gives small states a more level playing field and through the contribution of ideas to global discourse.

International Relations Concepts: Balancing, Bandwagoning and Hedging

Traditional international relations theory predicts that states respond to a rising power by either balancing or bandwagoning. Balancing behavior is based on the balance-of-power theory, which is the idea that national security is enhanced when power is distributed such that no single state is dominant.¹⁶⁸ States therefore balance against a dominant power to preserve their own security. This is achieved either through external balancing by joining alliances or through internal balancing by building up internal capabilities.¹⁶⁹ In contrast, bandwagoning behavior involves choosing "to crouch under—rather than contain against—a fast emerging power."¹⁷⁰ This could be defensive, where

¹⁶⁸ Charles Kegley and Shannon Blanton, *World Politics: Trend and Transformation, 2014-2015 Edition* (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2015), 259.

¹⁶⁹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1979), 168.

¹⁷⁰ Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "The Essence of Hedging: Malaysia and Singapore's Response to a Rising China," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30, no. 2 (2008): 160.

states bandwagon to avoid conflict and achieve greater security, or it could be offensive, where states profit from being on the side of the rising power.¹⁷¹

Stephen Walt, a professor of international relations at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, refines the balance-of-power theory and offers a balance-of-threat theory. Walt argues that power is only part of the equation in the decision of states to balance or bandwagon and this decision should be more accurately viewed as a response to threat. For example, states may balance by allying with other strong states if a weaker state poses a greater threat. Walt defines balancing as allying with others against the prevailing threat and bandwagoning as aligning with the source of danger.¹⁷² Walt suggests that it is therefore important to consider other factors that affect the level of threat. *Ceteris paribus*, factors that increase the potential threat posed by a state are: a higher aggregate power, including total resources such as population, industrial and military capabilities, and technological prowess; close geographic proximity because the ability to project power declines over distances; large offensive capabilities; and perception of aggressive intentions.¹⁷³

Walt suggests two reasons why states choose to balance. First, states do so to contain a threat before it becomes too strong. States “join with those who cannot readily

¹⁷¹ Randall L. Schweller, “Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In,” *International Security* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1994): 74.

¹⁷² Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 17.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 22-26.

dominate their allies, in order to avoid being dominated by those who can.”¹⁷⁴ This was Britain’s traditional alliance policy as explained by Winston Churchill who said that “For four hundred years the foreign policy of England has been to oppose the strongest, most aggressive, most dominating Power on the Continent . . . we always took the harder course, joined with the less strong Powers, . . . and thus defeated the Continental military tyrant, whoever he was.”¹⁷⁵ Second, balancing increases the state’s influence within its alliance because the weaker alliance has more need for the state’s membership. In contrast, joining the stronger alliance gives the state less influence because partners would value its contributions less.¹⁷⁶

Walt identifies two distinct motives of bandwagoning behavior. First, states bandwagon as a form of appeasement. This defensive motive preserves the state’s independence when faced with a potential threat. The hope is that the state will avoid an attack and the attack will be diverted elsewhere.¹⁷⁷ Second, states bandwagon to share the spoils of victory. This offensive motive results in profit as states join the side they believe will triumph.¹⁷⁸ Stalin’s decision to align with Hitler through the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty in 1939 illustrates both motives well. The treaty deflected Hitler’s aggression westward temporarily and resulted in Stalin profiting from the

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 18.

¹⁷⁵ Winston S. Churchill, *The Gathering Storm: The Second World War, Volume 1* (New York: RosettaBooks, 2002), 186-187.

¹⁷⁶ Walt, *The Origins of Alliance*, 18-19.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 21.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

dismemberment of Poland. Stalin was therefore able to gain both time and territory by bandwagoning with Germany.¹⁷⁹

The theories of balancing and bandwagoning have contrasting implications for international politics. If balancing were the dominant tendency, states that seek to dominate others would attract widespread opposition and cause other states to align against them. Aggression would be discouraged because it results in resistance. The rational policy in this world would be to minimize the threat that one poses to others. In contrast, if bandwagoning were the dominant tendency, powers that exhibit strong and potentially aggressive behavior would be rewarded with new allies because states ally with those who appear most threatening. The rational policy in this world would be to use force to attract more allies through belligerence or brinksmanship. In addition, the effect of misperceiving the dominant tendency is dangerous because policies appropriate in a particular situation are destabilizing in another. For example, a great power's moderate response in a bandwagoning world would result in allies defecting, while an aggressive posture in a balancing world would result in greater opposition.¹⁸⁰

Walt identifies three factors that affect a state's propensity to balance or bandwagon. First, a weaker state is more likely to bandwagon if it is less able to affect the outcome of a conflict and must choose the winning side. A stronger state, however, might be able to tilt the balance in favor of the weaker alliance and is hence more likely to balance. In addition, weaker states are sensitive to powers in their immediate vicinity

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 27-28.

because they would be the first victims of expansion. Second, states are more likely to balance when there is a greater probability of support from allies. An effective system of diplomatic communication is therefore required to assure allies and provide confidence to encourage balancing. In contrast, bandwagoning occurs when allies are unavailable or potential support from allies is not well communicated. Third, states are more likely to balance during peacetime or in the early stages of war. This behavior occurs because states seek to deter or defeat aggression during this period. However, during the later stages of war, when the outcome appears certain, bandwagoning behavior in the form of defection from the losing side would appear more prevalent.

Instead of balancing or bandwagoning, states can adopt a hedging strategy. Hedging is defined as behavior where a state “seeks to offset risks by pursuing multiple policy options that are intended to produce mutually counteracting effects, under the situation of high-uncertainties and high-stakes.”¹⁸¹ Kuik Cheng Chwee, an associate professor at the National University of Malaysia, identifies three conditions for hedging: the absence of an immediate threat that would force a state to balance or bandwagon for protection; the absence of ideological fault-lines that might rigidly divide states; and the absence of an all-out great power rivalry that would force smaller states to choose sides.¹⁸²

Kuik views hedging as a multi-component strategy that exists between the two ends of the balancing-bandwagoning spectrum (see figure 1). On one end of the spectrum

¹⁸¹ Kuik, “The Essence of Hedging,” 165.

¹⁸² Ibid.

is pure-balancing, which represents a higher degree of power rejection, while on the other end is pure-bandwagoning, which represents the extreme form of power acceptance.¹⁸³ Hedging behavior comprises two mutually counteracting approaches termed “return-maximizing” and “risk-contingency” options. The “return-maximizing” approach allows the hedger to reap as much profit as possible from the great power when relations are positive. This approach is counteracted by the “risk-contingency” approach, which aims to reduce the hedger’s loss when relations turn negative. The hedging strategy therefore plans for the best, but prepares for the worst. It comprises five components, which include indirect-balancing and dominance-denial under the “risk-contingency” approach and economic-pragmatism, binding-engagement and limited-bandwagoning under the “return-maximizing” approach.¹⁸⁴

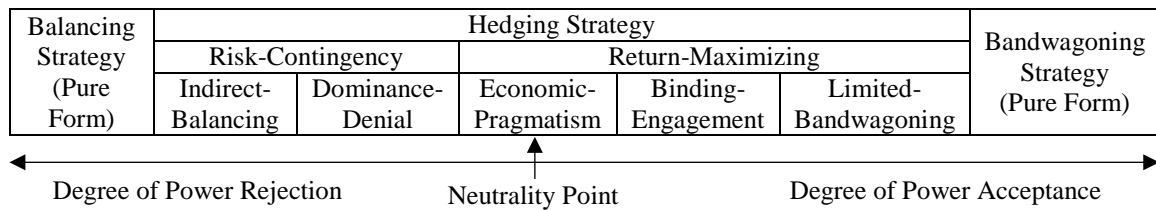


Figure 1. Components of Hedging Strategy

Source: Kuik Cheng-Chwee, “The Essence of Hedging: Malaysia and Singapore’s Response to a Rising China,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30, no. 2 (2008): 166.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 171.

First, indirect-balancing is a policy where a state undertakes military efforts to prepare for uncertain strategic contingencies by establishing or maintaining defense relations with other powers and upgrading internal military capabilities. This policy is different from pure-balancing because the state does not direct efforts at a particular power, but instead aims to improve overall defense capabilities in general.¹⁸⁵

Second, dominance-denial is a policy that is political in nature, which aims to prevent the emergence of a predominant power that may interfere with the political independence of the smaller state. The smaller state achieves this by strengthening its diplomatic influence and involving other powers in regional affairs. Dominance-denial is different from pure balancing as it is about a balance-of-political-power, instead of a balance-of-military-power. Dominance-denial also does not target a particular power.¹⁸⁶

Third, economic-pragmatism is a policy that seeks to maximize economic gains from trade and investment relations with a great power, even though political problems might exist between them. This pragmatic policy compartmentalizes the relationship with a great power by focusing on economic opportunities and setting aside political problems. This policy represents a neutrality point on the spectrum, as it assumes neither power acceptance nor power rejection by the smaller state.¹⁸⁷

Fourth, binding-engagement is a policy that aims to bind the great power through institutionalized relations that enmeshes it in regular diplomatic activities and to engage

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 170-171.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 169-170.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 167.

the great power through open channels of communication. The intent is to influence the power's policy choices and to mitigate revisionist tendencies by integrating it into the established order.¹⁸⁸ There is a subtle difference between binding-engagement and dominance-denial. Binding-engagement works by persuading the great power that it also has a stake in preserving the status quo, while dominance-denial presents a more confrontational message that hegemonic actions will compel a state to move closer to other powers.¹⁸⁹

Fifth, limited-bandwagoning is a policy where a smaller state aligns with a great power in limited ways to obtain present or future rewards. There are three differences between pure-bandwagoning and limited-bandwagoning. Pure-bandwagoning includes both political alignment and military alliance, while limited-bandwagoning only involves the former, which is manifested in policy coordination on selective issues and voluntary deference to the larger power. Pure-bandwagoning assumes a zero-sum situation as a state that bandwagons with one power simultaneously distances itself from another. In limited-bandwagoning, the state would still maintain relations with other great powers. Pure-balancing is hierarchy-acceptance as the smaller state accepts a superior-subordinate hierarchy, while limited-balancing is hierarchy-avoidance as the smaller state avoids losing its autonomy or becoming overly dependent on the larger power.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 170.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 168-169.

In summary, the literature review of international relations theories provided an overview of the balancing, bandwagoning and hedging concepts, which are possible strategies that small states can adopt in response to a rising power. The selection of an optimal strategy would depend on the small state's goals and the context of its operational environment.

Conclusion

The literature review was divided into three sections. Section I provided an examination of existing foreign policy relations. US-China relations are complex and multi-faceted with both countries simultaneously cooperating and competing. The relationship has also been described as “mutually assured misperception,” which results in mutual distrust of long-term intentions. Despite US-China competition in the Asia-Pacific, Singapore has thus far managed to pursue its national interests without compromising its excellent bilateral relations with either country. The foreign policy relations of Japan, India and ASEAN with US and China were also examined to provide an understanding of the dynamics of US-China interactions with regional powers.

Section II provided a historical review of contests between ruling powers and rising powers based on an analysis of the Thucydides Trap Case File. The five aggravating factors identified that resulted in an outcome of war were dissatisfaction with the existing balance of power, a sense of insecurity caused by powerful neighbors, religious and ideological differences, strategic economic competition and nationalistic sentiments. On the other hand, the five mitigating factors identified that resulted in an outcome of no war were competing priorities in other parts of the world, constraints by external powers, possibility of nuclear war, mutual independence and structural restraints.

Section III provided a review of small state security strategies. It examined the existing literature on the characteristics of small states. Small states have broader security concerns that span both existential threats that can affect survival and foreign influence threats that can undermine political independence. The review also examined small state security strategies as well as how small states can exercise influence over larger powers. It then explored international relations theories, including the concepts of balancing, bandwagoning and hedging. The selection of an optimal strategy would depend on the small state's goals and the context of its operational environment.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used to answer the primary research question that is: “What strategy can Singapore adopt to navigate a security environment shaped by a rising China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific?” The primary research question can be dissected into three secondary research questions, which are recapped as follows: (1) What is the security environment and associated security challenges defined by the rise of China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific in the next 10 to 20 years? (2) Can Singapore influence its security environment? (3) What is the strategy that Singapore can adopt to safeguard and advance its national interests? The literature review provides the context and the theoretical framework to answer these questions.

This thesis answers the first secondary research question by analyzing the current US-China relationship. It determines the extent to which the five aggravating factors, which resulted in outcomes of war, and the five mitigating factors, which resulted in outcomes of no war, exist in the US-China relationship. The analysis of the Thucydides Trap Case File factors provide a basis for an assessment and projection of the future security environment and the associated security challenges that will result with China as the rising power and the US as the ruling power in the next 10 to 20 years.

With an assessment of the security environment providing the context, this thesis answers the second secondary research question by analyzing the ability of Singapore to influence its security environment. The analysis is based on the three factors discussed in the literature review of how small states exercise influence over larger powers. These

three factors are actor's quality, participation in international organizations and the ability to provide ideas that contribute to global discourse. The analysis determines how Singapore influences its security environment and the extent to which Singapore has been successful on each of these three factors. The analysis then determines whether it can continue to do so given projected changes in the external environment.

Finally, this thesis answers the third secondary research question by determining the ends, ways and means of Singapore's security strategy. First, this thesis defines the ends based on national objectives articulated by Singapore's political leaders. Second, it determines the ways using Kuik's spectrum of balancing, hedging and bandwagoning as a framework. It analyzes where along the spectrum Singapore's policies should lie given the future security environment with the rise of China and the rebalance of the US towards the Asia-Pacific. Third, this thesis discusses the means, including diplomatic, military and economic efforts to achieve the ways defined earlier.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

This chapter addresses the research questions in three sections. Section I addresses the first secondary research question by analyzing the impact of US-China relations on the Asia-Pacific security environment in the next 10 to 20 years. It examines the extent to which the aggravating and mitigating factors in the Thucydides Trap Case File exist in the US-China relationship. It concludes that while war is possible because of great power rivalry associated with the rise of China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific, it is not inevitable in the next 10 to 20 years and it would depend on how both countries manage this important relationship.

Section II addresses the second secondary research question by analyzing the ability of Singapore to influence its security environment. It studies how Singapore has employed the three factors of actor's quality, participation in international organizations and the contribution of ideas to global discourse to influence its security environment and the extent to which it has been successful. It concludes that Singapore will be able to continue influencing its security environment through adept foreign policy actions and continued efforts to remain relevant globally.

Section III addresses the third secondary research question by determining the ends, ways and means of Singapore's security strategy. The ends are survival and prosperity, which are core national objectives articulated by Singapore's political leaders. This thesis then proposes a hedging approach as the way to achieve these ends. It then describes the means including a combination of diplomatic, military and economic efforts to support the hedging approach, which comprises return-maximizing and risk-

contingency options. Singapore will need to leverage return-maximizing efforts to reap economic and diplomatic benefits from a rising China. Simultaneously, it will need to maintain risk-contingency efforts to counteract Chinese dominance.

Section I: Analysis of US-China Relations

This section addresses the first secondary research question, which aims to determine the security environment and associated security challenges defined by the rise of China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific in the next 10 to 20 years. The analysis is based on the extent to which the aggravating and mitigating factors identified from the Thucydides Trap Case File exist in the US-China relationship. The five aggravating factors identified were dissatisfaction with the existing balance of power, a sense of insecurity caused by powerful neighbors, religious and ideological differences, strategic economic competition and nationalistic sentiments. On the other hand, the five mitigating factors identified were competing priorities in other parts of the world, constraints by external powers, possibility of nuclear war, mutual independence and structural restraints. The intent of analyzing these factors is not to use historical case studies to predict future US-China relations, but instead to develop an understanding of the aggravating and mitigating factors that could result in a conflict between the US and China, which then provides a basis to determine the security environment and associated security challenges in the Asia-Pacific.

Analyzing US-China Relations for Aggravating Factors of Conflict

First, China is dissatisfied with the existing balance of power because it desires regional dominance. Singapore's former Foreign Minister, K. Shanmugam, noted that

China's long-term objective is to be the dominant power in East Asia based on China's new mantra of "Asia for Asians."¹⁹¹ This assessment is supported by President Xi's remarks at a conference in Shanghai in May 2014 that, "it is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia and uphold the security of Asia."¹⁹² While China seeks regional dominance, recent remarks by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi suggest that China does not seek global dominance. Foreign Minister Wang said, "There is another reason why China will not replace the US. It is that China is not the US. China is always China, and will not become another US. Expansionism is not in the DNA of the Chinese people. There is no urge for China to be the savior of the world. Over 2,000 years ago, we built the Great Wall for self-defense. That is a good manifestation of the Chinese culture. And this tradition will remain in our DNA."¹⁹³ While these remarks might appear to be Chinese rhetoric, China will probably not challenge US global dominance in the next 10 to 20 years. China's economic growth took place under the US-led world order and it is still largely a free rider in the global system. Therefore, although China wants its status recognized through a new model of major-country relationship, it will likely not challenge the international order from which it continues to benefit

¹⁹¹ Sui Noi Goh, "Adroit Diplomacy Needed to Tackle Pressure from Big Powers," *The Straits Times*, August 28, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/adroit-diplomacy-needed-to-tackle-pressure-from-big-powers>.

¹⁹² China.org.cn, "Remarks at the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia," China.org.cn, May 21, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.china.org.cn/world/2014-05/28/content_32511846.htm.

¹⁹³ Embassy of the People's Republic of China, "A Changing China and Its Diplomacy-Speech by Foreign Minister Wang Yi at Center for Strategic and International Studies," People's Republic of China, February 26, 2016, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/eng/zgyw/t1345211.htm>.

significantly.¹⁹⁴ Based on the analysis that China only desires regional and not global dominance, it is assessed that the “dissatisfaction with the existing balance of power” factor exists at a moderate level in the US-China relationship. This factor will contribute to a more contested Asia-Pacific security environment with increased probability of conflict between the US and China as China seeks to be the regional hegemon.

Second, China’s perceptions that the US is attempting to contain China through its rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific results in a sense of insecurity. China sees the US military alliance and support for Japan and the Philippines in territorial disputes with China as well as US military presence in the areas surrounding China as a threat to Chinese security.¹⁹⁵ For example, President Obama has remarked that, “[US] treaty commitment to Japan’s security is absolute, and Article 5 covers all territories under Japan’s administration, including the Senkaku Islands.”¹⁹⁶ However, over the next 10 to 20 years, this sense of insecurity will be mitigated by the growth of China’s military capabilities, specifically its A2AD capabilities aimed at preventing US intervention in a regional conflict. In addition, China’s sense of insecurity is not directly caused by powerful neighbors as in the Thucydides Trap Case File, but is instead caused by the US support for China’s neighbors, which is one level removed and dependent on the

¹⁹⁴ Qingguo Jia, “China’s Dual Identities,” *The Straits Times*, July 11, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/chinas-dual-identities>.

¹⁹⁵ Rex Li, *A Rising China and Security in East Asia: Identity Construction and Security Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 173.

¹⁹⁶ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, “Joint Press Conference with President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of Japan,” The White House, April 24, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/24/joint-press-conference-president-obama-and-prime-minister-abe-japan>.

continued political will of the US in supporting its allies. Based on this analysis, it is assessed that the “sense of insecurity caused by powerful neighbors” factor exists at a moderate level in the US-China relationship. This factor could have a destabilizing impact on the Asia-Pacific security environment if Chinese investments in military capabilities to improve its sense of security triggers a regional arms race that escalates regional tensions.

Third, ideological differences exist between a democratic US and a communist China, which was noted in the literature review as a fundamental factor leading to distrust between the two countries. This is because the opacity of China’s one-party system prevents the US from accurately assessing China’s intentions and US actions in promoting democracy are seen to undermine the authority and legitimacy of the CCP. Singapore’s Ambassador-at-Large, Bilahari Kausikan, noted in a speech that “China’s rise has been psychologically unsettling to many in the West because in China, capitalism flourishes without democracy . . . it punctures the western myth of the universality of its political values and of the inevitability of the development of political forms similar to its own.”¹⁹⁷ Ambassador Kausikan adds that although the US is aware that preservation of CCP rule is the most vital of Chinese interests, it is reluctant to endorse this explicitly, and instead adopts a pragmatic approach in dealing with the CCP. This is because legitimizing CCP rule would require a redefinition of the universality of US democratic

¹⁹⁷ Bilahari Kausikan, “Dealing with an Ambiguous World-Lecture II: US-China Relations: Groping towards a New *Modus Vivendi*,” IPS-Nathan Lectures, February 25, 2016, accessed April 26, 2016, http://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/ips/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/02/IPS-Nathan-Lectures_Lecture-II_US-China-Relations_260216.pdf.

political values.¹⁹⁸ While ideological differences exist, both countries adopt a pragmatic approach in managing the differences and neither country is trying to impose its values on the other. Based on this analysis, it is assessed that the “religious and ideological differences” factor exists at a low level in the US-China relationship.

Fourth, while strategic economic competition exists between the US and China, it is mitigated by their interdependent economies. In addition, unlike in the Thucydides Trap Case File, economic competition between the US and China does not fundamentally affect the survival of the two countries. The literature review noted that the US and China are simultaneously competing and cooperating in the economic domain. Strategic economic competition between the two countries appears to stem from great power rivalry vying for influence rather than pure economic factors. This economic competition is observed in the US-led TPP trade pact versus the China-backed RCEP and in the establishment of the AIIB that is seen to rival the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. However, at the same time, the US and China have interdependent economies and both sides stand to gain from a constructive economic relationship. China is highly reliant on US markets for its exports. It is also dependent on US Treasury bond markets to store its foreign exchange reserves. On the other hand, US consumers benefit from low-cost imports from China while US companies benefit from increased profitability by including China as part of its global supply chain.¹⁹⁹ The US is also

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Eswar Prasad and Grace Gu, “An Awkward Dance: China and the United States,” Brookings Institution, November 11, 2009, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2009/11/11-us-china-prasad>.

reliant on China to finance its budget with China being the largest foreign holder of treasury securities.²⁰⁰ Based on this analysis, it is assessed that the “strategic economic competition” factor exists at a low level in the US-China relationship because it is mitigated by the interdependent economies of the two countries.

Fifth, nationalistic sentiments in China are shaped by two periods in its history. The first period is a golden era of 5,000 years that is a source of pride and inspiration for Chinese nationalists.²⁰¹ President Xi’s vision of a “Chinese Dream” to achieve a great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation reminds the Chinese of this proud history. The second period is a traumatic century of humiliation from the First Opium War and the British acquisition of Hong Kong in 1842 until the end of World War II in 1945, where unilateral concessions such as indemnities, extraterritoriality, and foreign settlements in treaty ports were forced on China through unequal treaties.²⁰² These were perceived as humiliating losses of sovereignty and continue to weigh on the Chinese psyche especially with regard to its territorial disputes. A study of Chinese public opinion on the East China and South China Sea disputes published in 2014 by the University of Western Australia’s Perth USAsia Centre provides further insights on Chinese nationalistic sentiments. The survey found broad identification with China’s territorial claims where an overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that the disputed maritime territorial features belong to

²⁰⁰ US Department of the Treasury “Major Foreign Holders of Treasury Securities,” accessed April 26, 2016, <http://ticdata.treasury.gov/Publish/mfh.txt>.

²⁰¹ Peter Gries, “Nationalism, Indignation and China’s Japan Policy,” *The SAIS Review of International Affairs* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 107-108.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 108-109.

China. However, the survey also found significantly more support for compromise, and UN arbitration, than military force. In addition, although there was high confidence in China's ability to retake the islands if occupied by rival countries, the majority of respondents agreed that using military force would not be in China's national interest even if the other side took a provocative stance. There is hence no evidence to currently suggest that nationalistic sentiments are pushing the CCP into an unwanted war.²⁰³ However, nationalistic sentiments could change over time. China's two periods of history will continue to influence Chinese desire to regain its place as a great power. Based on this analysis, it is assessed that the "nationalistic sentiments" factor currently exists at a moderate level in the US-China relationship. This factor affects the Asia-Pacific security environment because it suggests that China will continue to maintain its assertive stance on territorial disputes in the East China and South China Seas.

Analyzing US-China Relations for Mitigating Factors of Conflict

First, the US has competing priorities in other parts of the world, including the Middle East and Europe, that might distract it from the strategic challenge of the rise of China in the Asia-Pacific. For example, the Syrian civil war is a source of instability in the Middle East that poses an immediate challenge requiring US diplomatic and military attention. In addition, recent terror attacks in Paris and San Bernadino are a reminder of the continued threat presented by radical Islamic terrorist groups, such as the Islamic

²⁰³ Andrew Chubb, "Exploring China's 'Maritime Consciousness': Public Opinion on the South and East China Sea Disputes," Perth USAsia Centre, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, http://perthusasia.edu.au/usac/assets/media/docs/publications/2014_Exploring_Chinas_Maritime_Consciousness_Final.pdf.

State in Iraq and Syria, and the need for the US to continue engaging in a war against terror.²⁰⁴ In Europe, a more aggressive Russia that conducts destabilizing actions in Ukraine, including the annexation of Crimea in 2014, has required the Obama Administration to take steps to reassure European allies of US commitment to European security.²⁰⁵ The US could therefore be pressured to redirect attention towards these other competing priorities especially given criticism that the US is neglecting much more dangerous problems in the Middle East and Europe because of its rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific.²⁰⁶ This pressure is compounded by sequestration and budget cuts facing the US military, which former Chief of Staff of the US Army, General Ray Odierno, said would limit its strategic flexibility. General Odierno noted that sequestration “will challenge us to meet even our current level of commitments to our allies and partners around the world [and] will eliminate our capability, on any scale, to conduct simultaneous operations, specifically deterring in one region while defeating in another.”²⁰⁷ Based on this analysis, although the Asia-Pacific is strategically important to

²⁰⁴ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, “Address to the Nation by the President,” The White House, December 6, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/06/address-nation-president>.

²⁰⁵ Derek E. Mix, *The United States and Europe: Current Issues*, CRS Report RS22163 (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, February 2015), 6-7.

²⁰⁶ Gideon Rachman, “Obama’s Asia Policy is Distracted and Ambiguous,” *The Financial Times*, April 2, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/bfe9c506-c4c7-11e3-8dd4-00144feabdc0.html#axzz42X3QPyqc>.

²⁰⁷ Amaani Lyle, “Odierno: Sequestration Threatens Army Readiness,” *DoD News*, January 28, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128061>.

the US, competing priorities and resource constraints could distract the US in the next 10 to 20 years and it is assessed that the “competing priorities in other parts of the world” factor exists at a moderate level in the US-China relationship. While this factor mitigates the possibility of direct conflict between the US and China, it could have a potentially negative impact on the Asia-Pacific security environment because US presence provides security for the region and a US that is distracted could embolden China to increase its assertiveness. Consequently, reduced US presence could be potentially destabilizing for the region if regional powers expand their military capabilities to mitigate security vulnerabilities. Indeed, even with the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific there has been continued growth in military spending in Asia and Oceania, which was heavily influenced by China and was higher than the global average growth rate, with military spending rising by 5.4 percent in 2015.²⁰⁸

Second, unlike in the Thucydides Trap Case File, constraints by external powers have only a limited effect on the US and China, which are both great powers. For example, China’s preference is for territorial disputes in the South China Sea to be resolved bilaterally between it and claimant states rather than with ASEAN or with the interference of external parties. This approach of negotiating with individual ASEAN countries is advantageous for China given the vast asymmetries in capabilities that is in

²⁰⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “World Military Spending Resumes Upward Course, Says SIPRI,” April 5, 2016, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.sipri.org/media/pressreleases/2016/milex-apr-2016>.

China's favor.²⁰⁹ However, this approach weakens the effectiveness of ASEAN as a regional organization in managing potential tensions over territorial disputes in the South China Sea. As noted in the literature review, this preference for bilateral negotiations has resulted in a lack of progress towards developing a legally binding code of conduct, which would be a more effective mechanism to restrain the actions of claimant parties. Based on this analysis, it is assessed that the "constraints by external powers" factor exists at a low level in the US-China relationship because it is challenging for regional organizations, such as ASEAN, to influence great powers.

Third, the risk of mutually assured destruction caused by a nuclear war could reduce the chances of a conflict occurring between the US and China. Hugh White, a professor of strategic studies at the Australian National University, notes that the last major Nuclear Posture Review in 2010 by the US assumes the US would rely less and less on nuclear weapons to deter or defeat potential adversaries because it would be able to prevail with high-tech non-nuclear forces.²¹⁰ However, this might not necessarily be true in the Asia-Pacific over the next 10 to 20 years as major enhancements in China's maritime capabilities steadily erode US naval and air superiority in the region. White argues that as the US ability to achieve a swift and decisive victory over China using conventional forces diminishes, the risk that a conflict would cross the nuclear threshold

²⁰⁹ Prashanth Parameswaran, "The Challenge to China's South China Sea Approach," *The Diplomat*, April 1, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/04/the-challenge-to-chinas-south-china-sea-approach/>.

²¹⁰ Hugh White, "The New Nuclear War Threat in US-China Ties," *The Straits Times*, October 27, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/the-new-nuclear-war-threat-in-us-china-ties>.

rises.²¹¹ White adds that, unlike during the Cold War, both parties are not clear on where the nuclear threshold lies, which could result in miscalculations occurring. The risk is that both sides assume the other would back down rather than fight a nuclear war and consequently both sides are more willing to take risks that might lead to a confrontation.²¹² However, White acknowledges that the possibility of nuclear war is remote and this implies that it is a less effective deterrent against a potential conflict. Based on this analysis, it is assessed that the “possibility of nuclear war” factor exists at a moderate level in the US-China relationship because it is remote, but possible. This factor will have a stabilizing effect on the US-China relationship, as both sides would seek to avoid a conflict that could potentially escalate towards a nuclear war.

Fourth, the US and China are not mutually independent. As noted in the literature review, the “mutual independence” factor is counter-intuitive as historical evidence suggests that mutual independence, which includes absence of economic leverage and minimal people-to-people interaction, provides a structural support for stability in relations between two countries. The US and China have extensive economic relations and are economically interdependent. Both countries also have significant people-to-people interaction. For example, the top leaders of both countries meet regularly, businesses from both countries deal with each other frequently and a significant number of Chinese students attend US universities. Based on this analysis, it is assessed that the “mutual independence” factor exists at a low level in the US-China relationship.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

Fifth, unlike in the Thucydides Trap Case File, there are no structural restraints similar to the European Union or NATO that exists between the US and China. However, there are multiple platforms in the Asia-Pacific that draw both the US and China into deep involvement within the region. These platforms provide an avenue for the two countries to engage in regional dialogue in order to facilitate mutual understanding and promote confidence thereby reducing the chances of conflict. The advantage of multilateral forums is that it provides an added avenue for countries to engage in dialogue even when bilateral relations are frosty and no bilateral dialogue occurs. The US and China are both members of regional forums that cover broad areas of discussion. This includes the East Asia Summit that provides a platform for strategic discussions on key issues affecting the region; the ASEAN Regional Forum that is a forum for security dialogue in Asia; and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation that promotes free trade throughout the Asia-Pacific.²¹³ Based on this analysis, it is assessed that the “structural restraints” factor exists at a moderate level in the US-China relationship. This factor will have a positive effect on the Asia-Pacific security environment, as increased dialogue that facilitates mutual understanding will decrease the possibility of conflict between the two countries.

²¹³ ASEAN, “Chairman’s Statement of the First East Asia Summit Kuala Lumpur, 14 December 2005,” accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.asean.org/?static_post=chairman-s-statement-of-the-first-east-asia-summit-kuala-lumpur-14-december-2005-2; ASEAN, “About the ASEAN Regional Forum,” accessed April 26, 2016, <http://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/about.html>; Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, “About APEC,” accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.apec.org/About-Us/About-APEC.aspx>.

Summary

The assessment of the Thucydides Trap Case File factors in the US-China relationship and their impact on the security environment is summarized in table 2. The aggravating factors in the US-China relationship that could contribute to war are a “dissatisfaction with the existing balance of power” with China seeking regional dominance, “a sense of insecurity caused by powerful neighbors” with US actions in support of allies perceived by China as an attempt to contain China’s rise and “nationalistic sentiments” that support an assertive China. In contrast, the mitigating factors in the US-China relationship include “competing priorities in other parts of the world” with the US potentially distracted by more pressing problems in the Middle East and Europe, a “possibility of nuclear war” where both parties seek to avoid mutually assured destruction and “structural restraints” with regional forums that facilitate dialogue and mutual understanding. However, as noted previously, “competing priorities in other parts of the world” could have a destabilizing impact on the security environment because US presence has been a stabilizing force in the region.

	Outcome	Factors Identified from the Thucydides Trap Case File	Extent Factor Exists in US-China Relationship	Impact on Security Environment
1	War	Dissatisfaction with the existing balance of power	Moderate	Negative
2		A sense of insecurity caused by powerful neighbors	Moderate	Negative
3		Religious and ideological differences	Low	-
4		Strategic economic competition	Low	-
5		Nationalistic sentiments	Moderate	Negative
6	No War	Competing priorities in other parts of the world	Moderate	Negative
7		Constraints by external powers	Low	-
8		Possibility of nuclear war	Moderate	Positive
9		Mutual independence	Low	-
10		Structural restraints	Moderate	Positive

Source: Created by author.

Both the US and China benefit from peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific and would stand to lose much more if a conflict occurs between the two countries. While war is possible because of the great power rivalry between the US and China, it is not inevitable in the next 10 to 20 years because it is not in the interest of either party to enter a conflict. In addition, a conflict is also unlikely because both parties seek to avoid a direct confrontation. However, the risk of conflict rises with increased Chinese nationalism that supports Chinese assertiveness on territorial disputes in the East China and South China Seas, which are fast becoming flashpoints for conflict in the region. A minor incident could potentially trigger these flashpoints resulting in the two countries inadvertently entering into a conflict that neither wants. A possible scenario is a tactical miscalculation escalating into a full-scale conflict during US military action, such as a freedom of navigation patrol, to challenge China's territorial claims in the disputed areas. Another possible scenario is the US being drawn into a conflict with China because of its

treaty obligation to allies Japan and the Philippines. The US and China will need to take steps to avoid a possible conflict caused by these potential pitfalls. Such steps can include mutual restraint to avoid a conflict as well as participation in regional forums to facilitate dialogue and mutual understanding, thereby reducing overall levels of distrust between the two countries.

Overall, it is assessed that the security environment defined by the rise of China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific in the next 10 to 20 years will be one marked by more intense competition for influence as China seeks to be the regional hegemon. This will result in reduced foreign policy space for Singapore to maneuver. The region will also likely see increased militarization in response to a more assertive China that is modernizing its military capabilities. The associated security challenge is the development of a stable regional hierarchy of power that promotes peace and stability in the region. The key challenge for the region is to manage competing tensions that arise because of China's desire to be the regional hegemon and the need for US leadership, which remains indispensable in the region because of the stability it provides.

Section II: Can Singapore Influence its Security Environment?

This section addresses the second secondary research question, which aims to determine if Singapore is able to influence its security environment. The analysis is based on the three factors identified in the literature review, which are actor's quality, participation in international organizations and the ability to provide ideas that contribute to global discourse. This section determines how Singapore influences its security environment and the extent to which Singapore has been successful on each of these

factors. It then determines whether Singapore can continue to influence its security environment given projected changes in the external environment.

How Does Singapore Influence its Security Environment?

First, Singapore influences its security environment by leveraging its qualities of geography and economic success to establish global connections that make it relevant to the world. Founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew argued, “we must make ourselves relevant so that other countries have an interest in our continued survival and prosperity as a sovereign and independent nation.”²¹⁴ Singapore has been successful in this regard, as it has used its strategic location along the Straits of Malacca, which is one of the world’s most important waterways in terms of trade, to establish itself as a critical hub in the global economy. It has also tapped on its niche expertise in the financial, maritime and aviation sectors to enhance its global connectedness. Singapore is a major financial center and investment hub with 127 commercial banks (including 122 foreign banks), 38 merchant banks and 338 fund management firms operating in Singapore.²¹⁵ It also overtook Japan as the largest foreign exchange center in Asia and the third largest in the

²¹⁴ Prime Minister’s Office Singapore, “Speech by Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Minister Mentor, at the S. Rajaratnam Lecture,” Government of Singapore, April 9, 2009, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.pmo.gov.sg/mediacentre/speech-mr-lee-kuan-yew-minister-mentor-s-rajaratnam-lecture-09-april-2009-530-pm-shangri>.

²¹⁵ Yee-Kuang Heng and Syed Mohammed Ad’ha Aljunied, “Can Small States Be More than Price Takers in Global Governance?” *Global Governance* 21, no. 3 (2015): 443.

world after London and New York in 2013.²¹⁶ In the maritime sector, Singapore was one of the world's busiest ports in 2014 in terms of vessel arrival tonnage. It is also a transshipment maritime hub connected to 600 ports in 123 countries. Singapore is also a well-connected aviation hub with the world's sixth-busiest airport for international passenger traffic in 2014 and has nearly 100 international airlines connecting 300 cities in 70 destinations worldwide.²¹⁷ Singapore's global connectedness makes it relevant as an important node in the world economy. This relevance enhances Singapore's security because it makes others have an interest in Singapore's continued survival.

Another quality is Singapore's credible and respected military capabilities, which enable it to conduct effective defense diplomacy to influence its security environment. Tim Huxley, the executive director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies—Asia, described Singapore's defense policy and armed forces as “exceptional in Southeast Asia.”²¹⁸ Former Minister for Defence, Teo Chee Hean, highlighted in parliament that a capable SAF “can engage meaningfully with our ASEAN friends and partner countries, and contribute useful capabilities towards regional cooperative activities . . . [Otherwise], Singapore would play a much more diminished role and we would not have the same

²¹⁶ The New Paper, “Singapore is 3rd Largest Forex Hub in the World,” *The New Paper*, September 8, 2013, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://news.asiaone.com/news/singapore/spore-3rd-largest-forex-hub-world>.

²¹⁷ Heng and Aljunied, “Can Small States be More than Price Takers in Global Governance?” 445-447.

²¹⁸ Tim Huxley, introduction to *Defending the Lion City: The Armed Forces of Singapore* (NSW, Australia: Allen and Unwin, 2000), xix.

voice at the table.”²¹⁹ The presence of state-of-the-art military capabilities enables the SAF to contribute to regional security and make Singapore a valuable regional partner for external great powers, such as the US.²²⁰ In addition, a highly sophisticated SAF can participate in complex exercises as a credible training partner, which engenders respect for the SAF and supports the development of defense relationships. The global training footprint of the SAF also supports defense diplomacy as it provides an opportunity for Singapore to forge and strengthen political ties with key countries around the world.²²¹ Singapore’s credible and respected military capabilities contribute to its soft power in the region because external great powers take it seriously thereby “giving it added weight and enhancing its political bargaining power vis-à-vis the rest of the region.”²²²

Second, Singapore influences its security environment by participating in and supporting international organizations, where all states whether big or small are equal. Singapore favors the UN because it represents predictability and respect for international law, which are critical for the continued survival of small states.²²³ Singapore’s political leaders have consistently emphasized the importance of international organizations in

²¹⁹ Ministry of Defence, “Speech by Minister for Defence Teo Chee Hean, at Committee of Supply Debate 2009,” Government of Singapore, February 12, 2009, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press_room/official_releases/sp/2009/12feb09_speech.html#.VvdiY6Q3OP8.

²²⁰ Tan, “Punching Above Its Weight,” 674-675.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 692.

²²² *Ibid.*, 674-675.

²²³ Heng and Aljunied, “Can Small States be More than Price Takers in Global Governance?” 440.

speeches to the UN General Assembly. In 1995, former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said, “Small countries like Singapore need the UN, and must play a constructive role in supporting it.”²²⁴ Former Foreign Minister George Yeo reiterated in 2008 that, “Small countries need the UN and other international institutions to protect our interests and we therefore have every interest in making sure that these institutions are effective.”²²⁵

Former Foreign Minister K. Shanmugam said in 2012 that Singapore needs “a predictable and stable, rule-based international system in order to survive.”²²⁶ In addition to participating in and supporting international organizations, Singapore leaders also believe that “if you do not have a seat at the table, you may well end up on the menu” and therefore Singapore actively promotes its interests by making its views heard to prevent decisions taken or norms developed “which may be inimical to our national interests.”²²⁷

²²⁴ National Archives of Singapore, “Speech by Mr Goh Chok Tong, Prime Minister of Singapore, at the UN 50th Anniversary Special Commemorative Meeting on Tuesday, 24 October 1995 (New York Time), at the General Assembly Hall, United Nations,” Government of Singapore, October 24, 1995, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/data/pdfdoc/gct19951024.pdf>.

²²⁵ National Archives of Singapore, “Statement by his Excellency Mr George Yeo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore, at the United Nations General Assembly 63rd Session General Debate, 29 September 2008, New York: Adjusting to a New Multipolar Reality,” Government of Singapore, September 29, 2008, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/speeches/view-html?filename=20080929981.htm>.

²²⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “General Debate Statement by His Excellency Mr K Shanmugam, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Law of the Republic of Singapore, 29 September 2012,” Government of Singapore, September 29, 2012, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/overseasmission/newyork/nyemb_statements/statement/2012/201209/press_20120929.html.

²²⁷ Albert Chua, “Small States at the United Nations,” in *50 Years of Singapore and the United Nations*, ed. Tommy Koh, Li Lin Chang and Joanna Koh (Singapore: World Scientific, 2015), 46.

An example of Singapore promoting its interests is the establishment of the Forum of Small States at the UN in 1992 as an informal grouping on a non-ideological and non-geographical basis. It provides a platform for small states to discuss issues of mutual concern and to foster common positions, which gives small states a bigger voice in the UN. The Forum of Small States now comprises 107 countries out of the 193 member states in the UN.²²⁸ Former Foreign Minister K. Shanmugam highlighted this concept of strength in numbers in a speech to ministers from the Caribbean Community: “Due to our small size, we are ultimately ‘price-takers’ . . . However, we have found strength in numbers by being united in international fora such as the UN . . . Working together has given us a bigger and louder voice collectively, and helped us amplify our own perspectives on global issues.”²²⁹ The Forum of Small States also allows small states to raise global issues in a “trade unionist” way without affronting larger powers.²³⁰ Singapore also helped to form the Global Governance Group in 2009, which comprises 30 small and medium sized states. This group was formed after the emergence of the G-20 to better engage and feed views into the G-20 process. This engagement and feedback mitigate the potential exclusion of interests of small and medium sized states by the G-

²²⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Small States,” Government of Singapore, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/international_issues/small_states.html.

²²⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “MFA Press Statement: Caribbean Community (CARICOM) High-Level Ministerial Exchange Visit in Singapore 15 to 19 July 2013,” Government of Singapore, July 15, 2013, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/media_centre/press_room/pr/2013/201307/press_20130715.html.

²³⁰ Iftekhhar Ahmed Chowdhury, “Small States in UN System: Constraints, Concerns, and Contributions,” *ISAS Working Paper*, no. 160 (October 2012): 4.

20.²³¹ Singapore's role in the Global Governance Group led to it being invited to five out of six G-20 Summits since the 2010 G-20 Seoul Summit.²³² This is significant because no more than five countries can be invited from outside the G-20 and Singapore's participation provides it an avenue to contribute its views and influence deliberations.²³³ Besides the Forum of Small States and the Global Governance Group, Singapore is also an active member of the Alliance of Small Island States and the Small Island Developing States, which are coalition of small island and low-lying coastal countries that share similar challenges, especially their vulnerabilities to climate change.²³⁴ Singapore's active participation in the international system and its proactive approach of bringing small states together to build like-minded coalitions enable it to influence its security environment and compensate for its smallness by providing a bigger voice to speak out on issues that affect its interests.²³⁵

Third, Singapore's leaders and diplomats provide globally sought after views that contribute to global discourse. President Obama said that "no small number of this and past generations of world leaders have sought his [Lee Kuan Yew's] advice on

²³¹ Heng and Aljunied, "Can Small States be More than Price Takers in Global Governance?" 441.

²³² Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "G20," Government of Singapore, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/international_organisation_initiatives/g20.html.

²³³ Heng and Aljunied, "Can Small States be More than Price Takers in Global Governance?" 443-444.

²³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Small States."

²³⁵ Heng and Aljunied, "Can Small States be More than Price Takers in Global Governance?" 442.

governance and development.”²³⁶ Joseph Nye, an American political scientist, noted that founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew’s “views are sought by respected senior statesmen on all continents.”²³⁷ Another Singaporean leader providing leadership at the international level is Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam, who was selected in 2011 as the first Asian to chair the International Monetary and Financial Committee, which is the key policy advisory body of the International Monetary Fund.²³⁸ In addition, Singapore’s skillful diplomats are also often requested to play the role of “impartial” chairman in multilateral institutions or negotiations, which allows Singapore to shape the decision-making process and potentially the outcome.²³⁹ An example is Professor Tommy Koh, who was chair of the historic Third Conference on the Law of the Sea that drafted the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).²⁴⁰

²³⁶ The White House Office of the Press Secretary, “Statement by the President on the Death of Lee Kuan Yew,” The White House, March 22, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/22/statement-president-death-lee-kuan-yew>.

²³⁷ Graham Allison et al., *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master’s Insights on China, the United States, and the World* (Cambridge, MA, USA: MIT Press, 2013), xxii.

²³⁸ Jeremy Au Yong, “International Monetary and Financial Committee Thanks DPM Tharman for Leadership as Chairmanship Ends,” *The Straits Times*, April 19, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/international-monetary-and-financial-committee-thanks-dpm-tharman-for-leadership-as>.

²³⁹ Tanya Laohathai, “Small and Medium-Sized States in the Age of Uncertainty: The Art of Punching Above One’s Weight” (demosEuropa Centre for European Strategy and Singapore Institute of International Affairs Working Paper, October 2012), 22.

²⁴⁰ Andrew Toh, “Little Red Specks in the United Nations,” in *50 Years of Singapore and the United Nations*, ed. Tommy Koh, Li Lin Chang and Joanna Koh (Singapore: World Scientific, 2015), 204.

Singapore leaders also have an intimate understanding of both the East and the West and this enables Singapore to play a role as an interlocutor between the US and China. An example is Singapore's founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew who not only provided advice to every US president from Richard Nixon to Barack Obama, but was also the "most influential counselor outside of China" to every Chinese leader from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping.²⁴¹ Singapore therefore "provides a useful bridge between the 'Asian way' and the 'western style' of diplomacy and politics, and acts as an 'honest broker' and even 'interpreter' for the two sides."²⁴² Singapore's unique position as an interlocutor allows it to influence its security environment by shaping the US-China relationship and facilitating understanding between the two countries.

Can Singapore Continue to Influence its Security Environment?

The previous analysis indicates that Singapore has been successful thus far at influencing its security environment. However, projected changes in the external environment such as more intense competition between the US and China could have an impact on Singapore's continued ability to do so. This analysis will identify three key success factors that have enabled Singapore to achieve its influence and then determine the impact of projected changes in the external environment on these factors.

²⁴¹ Graham Allison et al., preface to *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World* (Cambridge, MA, USA: MIT Press, 2013), xxv–xxvi.

²⁴² Evelyn Goh, "Singapore's Reaction to Rising China: Deep Engagement and Strategic Adjustment" (Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies Working Paper, no. 67 May 2004), 7.

First, Singapore's economic success has allowed it to remain relevant to the world such that others have an interest in its continued survival. Economic success has enabled Singapore to establish itself as a critical node in the global economy, which then strengthens its global connectedness. Economic success also provides the necessary resources to develop a credible and respected military that can effectively conduct defense diplomacy. With more intense great power rivalry, Singapore's economic success could be affected if economic competition between the US and China or Chinese assertiveness in disputed territories disrupts international trade, which the Singapore economy is extremely reliant on. This scenario is assessed to be possible, but unlikely to take place for a prolonged period because the US and China are also reliant on international trade for economic growth. Another possible impact is that with reduced foreign policy space, political relationships could be affected if Singapore is perceived to favor one country over another, which could then have adverse repercussions on economic relations. To mitigate this impact, Singapore could adopt a policy of economic-pragmatism that allows it to compartmentalize its relationship, such that even if the political relationship with either country is affected, economic relations will continue to remain positive.

Second, a world governed by the rule of law and international norms that respect the sovereignty of states has been exceptionally critical for Singapore to punch above its weight. This is an external factor that could potentially be affected by projected changes in the external environment. China has declared that it is a "staunch defender and builder of [the] international rule of law" and President Xi has said that countries should "jointly promote the rule of law in international relations . . . abide by international law and well-

recognized basic principles governing international relations.”²⁴³ However, China’s actions in relation to its territorial disputes have not been consistent with this claim. China has boycotted the proceedings on South China Sea territorial disputes in the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague, which were raised by the Philippines in accordance with international law, because it asserts that the Tribunal has no jurisdiction over this dispute.²⁴⁴ China has also appeared to “cherry pick” provisions of international treaties that it is willing to comply with as it disavows UNCLOS against the Philippines, but invokes UNCLOS provisions in claims against Japan.²⁴⁵ The Chinese perspective is that international law, specifically UNCLOS, should not be used to adjudicate China’s claims in the South China Sea because its claims are based on historic rights, which precede international law.²⁴⁶ Therefore, to the extent that the rule of law and international norms are undermined because of Chinese assertiveness, Singapore’s ability to influence

²⁴³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Wang Yi: China, a Staunch Defender and Builder of International Rule of Law,” People’s Republic of China, October 24, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/2461_663310/t1204247.shtml; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Carry Forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence To Build a Better World Through Win-Win Cooperation,” People’s Republic of China, June 28, 2014, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1170143.shtml.

²⁴⁴ Jill Goldenziel, “International Law Is the Real Threat to China’s South China Sea Claims,” *The Diplomat*, November 3, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/11/international-law-is-the-real-threat-to-chinas-south-china-sea-claims/>.

²⁴⁵ Daniel Wagner, “The Rule of Law is China’s Challenge in the South China Sea,” *The World Post*, June 26, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-wagner/the-rule-of-law-is-chinas_b_7146296.html.

²⁴⁶ Xiaoqin Shi, *UNCLOS and China’s Claim in the South China Sea* (Australia: Australian Defence College, Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, October 2015), 1-2.

its security environment will be reduced. This scenario is assessed to be possible but will be mitigated by a counterweight provided by US desire for a rules-based international order as articulated in National Security Strategy 2015.²⁴⁷

Third, Singapore's exceptional leaders enable Singapore to play an outsized role in contributing to global discourse. Singapore's meritocratic system supports the selection of capable leaders and diplomats to represent Singapore. To the extent that Singapore can continue to be led by exceptional leaders who are able to contribute useful perspectives to global discourse, it will be able to influence its security environment. Indeed, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong recognized that exceptional leaders have contributed to Singapore's influence when he noted that "because we had an extraordinary leader, people have regard for us."²⁴⁸ This emphasis on exceptional leadership is a continued focus for Singapore with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong highlighting that "to stay exceptional . . . we need outstanding leadership."²⁴⁹ However, an increased level of competition between the US and China could reduce foreign policy space available to Singapore's leaders. Even with exceptional leaders, this could affect Singapore's ability to act as an "honest broker" and its role as an interlocutor for the US and China and therefore limit its ability to influence its security environment. This

²⁴⁷ Office of the President of the United States, *National Security Strategy* (Washington DC: The White House, February 2015), 2.

²⁴⁸ Prime Minister's Office Singapore, "Transcript of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's May Day Rally speech on 1 May 2015," Government of Singapore, May 1, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.pmo.gov.sg/mediacentre/transcript-prime-minister-lee-hsien-loong-may-day-rally-speech-1-may-2015>.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

scenario is assessed to be possible and will need to be mitigated by adept foreign policy actions and by leveraging other multilateral platforms to engage both countries.

Summary

In summary, Singapore is able to influence its security environment and it has been successful at doing so across the three factors of actor's quality, participation in international organizations and the ability to provide ideas that contribute to global discourse (see table 3). In terms of actor's quality, Singapore's global relevance enhances its security because it makes others have an interest in Singapore's continued survival. In addition, Singapore's credible and respected military capabilities contribute to its soft power and expansion of its international influence, which allows it to punch above its weight. In terms of participation in international organizations, Singapore is a strong proponent for the UN and its central role in international affairs. Singapore also proactively protects its interests by establishing informal groupings of like-minded countries to provide a bigger voice at the table to speak out on issues that affect its interests. In terms of providing ideas that contribute to global discourse, Singapore's leaders and diplomats play outsized roles on the international stage. Singapore's role as an interlocutor for the US and China also allows it to shape its security environment by facilitating understanding between the two countries. However, projected changes in the external environment can have a possible impact on Singapore's ability to influence its security environment if international trade is disrupted, if Chinese assertiveness undermines international law or if reduced foreign policy space restricts Singapore's interlocutor role. Overall, it is assessed that this impact can be mitigated and that Singapore will have sufficient tools to continue influencing its security environment.

Table 3. Can Singapore Influence its Security Environment?			
Factors that enable Smaller States to Influence Larger States	How Singapore Influences its Security Environment	Singapore's Key Success Factors	Impact of Projected Changes in the External Environment
Actor's quality	- Global connectivity to ensure relevance - Credible and respected military that enables defense diplomacy	Economic Success	Possible impact if international trade is disrupted, but unlikely to be prolonged.
Participation in international organizations	- Strong proponent of international organizations (e.g. UN) - Proactive establishment of informal groupings (e.g. FOSS, 3G)	International Rule of Law & International Norms	Possible impact if Chinese assertiveness undermines international rule of law. Mitigated by US desire for rules-based international order.
Ability to provide ideas that contribute to global discourse	- Outsized roles by leaders and diplomats on the international stage - Role as interlocutor between US and China	Exceptional Leadership & Meritocratic System	Possible impact if reduced foreign policy space restricts interlocutor role. Mitigated by adept foreign policy actions.

Source: Created by author.

Section III: Singapore's Security Strategy

This section addresses the third secondary research question by proposing a security strategy for Singapore to safeguard and advance its national interests. It uses the ends, ways and means framework to describe this security strategy. The ends are core national objectives of survival and prosperity articulated by Singapore's political leaders. This thesis proposes a hedging approach as a way to achieve these ends. A hedging approach enables Singapore to maintain strategic ambiguity and to be nimble amidst the relatively uncertain security environment defined by the rise of China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific. This thesis then describes the means to support this strategy, including a combination of diplomatic, military and economic efforts.

“Ends” of Singapore’s Security Strategy

Singapore’s core national interests (“ends”) are survival and prosperity. The need to ensure Singapore’s survival is deeply embedded in the psyche of Singapore’s leaders because of the acute sense of vulnerability experienced at independence. Indeed, Singapore’s founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew explained in his memoirs that “I thought our people should understand how vulnerable Singapore was and is, the dangers that beset us, and how we nearly did not make it.”²⁵⁰ Furthermore, as noted in the literature review, small states have broad security interests that include existential threats and the survival of their nation as well as the prevention of political encroachment to maintain political independence. Singapore is no different and therefore survival to Singapore means the continued existence of both a sovereign and independent Singapore. This interpretation was also articulated in the proclamation of Singapore upon separation from Malaysia. The proclamation declared that Singapore “should thereupon become an independent and sovereign state” and that “Singapore shall be forever a sovereign democratic and independent nation.”²⁵¹

Singapore’s core national interest of survival as a sovereign and independent nation is analyzed in the context of the security environment given a rising China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific. It is assessed that a more assertive China does not pose a direct threat to Singapore’s survival as a sovereign state because of the large

²⁵⁰ Kuan Yew Lee, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Times Editions, 1998), 8.

²⁵¹ Kuan Yew Lee, “Proclamation of Singapore,” August 9, 1965, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.parliament.gov.sg/sites/default/files/Proclamation%20of%20Singapore%201.jpg>.

geographical distance between the two countries and because Singapore is not a claimant state in the South China Sea and does not have territorial disputes with China. However, Singapore's independence could be vulnerable to pressure by great powers vying for influence in the region. For example, Singapore could be pressed to take sides on a political issue where the US and China have opposing views. The ends of Singapore's security strategy to ensure independence will therefore need to encompass the ability to resist such external political influence and the ability to select policy choices without being constrained by external powers.

Another core national interest is prosperity. Prosperity is as important to Singapore as survival. Singapore's leaders view survival and prosperity as two sides of the same coin—surviving as a nation allows Singapore to prosper, while prosperity guarantees Singapore's survival.²⁵² Former President S R Nathan described former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew as “totally preoccupied with our survival and prosperity.”²⁵³ More recently, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong noted that “we are a small country in this part of the world and to survive you have to be exceptional . . . and to stay exceptional, we need a successful economy.”²⁵⁴ Singapore's economic success also allows it to remain relevant to the world such that other countries have an interest in our

²⁵² Lim and Lim, *The Leader, the Teacher and You*, 11-13.

²⁵³ Warren Fernandez, “Singapore's Founding Father Mr Lee Kuan Yew Dies Aged 91 at 3.19am on Monday,” *The Straits Times*, March 23, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/singapores-founding-father-mr-lee-kuan-yew-dies-aged-91-at-318am-on-monday>.

²⁵⁴ Prime Minister's Office Singapore, “Transcript of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's May Day Rally Speech on 1 May 2015.”

continued survival as a sovereign and independent nation. Founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew emphasized the importance of ensuring that Singapore continues to remain economically successful and noted that “Singapore cannot take its relevance for granted . . . Singapore has to continually reconstruct itself and keep its relevance to the world and to create political and economic space. This is the economic imperative for Singapore.”²⁵⁵

Regional peace and stability is an essential condition for Singapore’s core national interest of prosperity. Former Foreign Minister K. Shanmugam affirmed this in parliament when he noted “We need a stable peaceful prosperous region for economic growth.”²⁵⁶ Singapore’s position on the South China Sea disputes provides further insights on the need for regional peace and stability. Foreign Minister Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan emphasized that “Every state whose trade passes through the South China Sea . . . has an interest in upholding the right of freedom of navigation and over-flight. This includes Singapore, for whom the South China Sea is a vital life line.”²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Prime Minister’s Office Singapore, “Speech by Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Minister Mentor, at the S. Rajaratnam Lecture.”

²⁵⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “MFA Press Release: Remarks by Minister for Foreign Affairs K Shanmugam, Second Minister for Foreign Affairs Grace Fu, and Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Masagos Zulkifli in Parliament during the Committee of Supply Debate on 5 March 2015,” Government of Singapore, March 5, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/media_centre/press_room/pr/2015/201503/press_20150305.html.

²⁵⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “MFA Press Statement: Introductory calls on Minister for Foreign Affairs Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan,” Government of Singapore, October 28, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/media_centre/press_room/pr/2015/201510/press_20151028.html.

Another important external condition that supports Singapore's prosperity is positive economic relations with both the US and China. As noted in the literature review, the US and China are important trading partners for Singapore. A Singapore member of parliament noted "It used to be said that when the US sneezes, the rest of the world catches a cold. Now, China's economic and financial woes seem to have the same chilling effect on the rest of us."²⁵⁸ Indeed, both the US and China are large economies and positive economic relations with both countries are essential for Singapore's continued prosperity. Singapore's ends of survival and prosperity will define the ways and means of Singapore's security strategy.

"Ways" and "Means" of Singapore's Security Strategy

A hedging approach enables Singapore to cultivate a middle position and to avoid having to choose sides explicitly. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong aptly summed up the rationale of a hedging approach by noting that "No country wants to choose sides between the US and China."²⁵⁹ Hedging supports Singapore's core national interests of survival and prosperity. In terms of survival as an independent nation, hedging ensures that Singapore is not overly reliant on either the US or China, thereby providing Singapore the latitude to make unconstrained policy choices. In terms of prosperity,

²⁵⁸ Parliament of Singapore, "Parliamentary Debates Singapore: Official Report Thirteenth Parliament First Session," January 25, 2016, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/report.jsp?currentPubID=00008468-WA>.

²⁵⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Transcript of Keynote Speech by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the Shangri-La Dialogue on 29 May 2015," Government of Singapore, May 29, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/overseasmission/geneva/press_statements_speeches/2015/201505/press_20150529.html.

hedging allows Singapore to benefit from regional peace and stability provided through US-led security arrangements and to maintain positive economic relations with both the US and China. In contrast, bandwagoning with China or balancing against China have consequences that are not congruent with the ends of Singapore's security strategy.

Bandwagoning with China undermines Singapore's political independence. As noted in the literature review, bandwagoning implies a degree of subordination and Singapore might have to accept diminished autonomy and decision-making powers if it adopts this approach. A Singapore that is subordinate to China would make it irrelevant on the international arena because it would lose its credibility as an honest broker. This would weaken Singapore's ability to influence its security environment. Singapore's ASEAN neighbors, especially ASEAN member states that have claims in the South China Sea, would also begin to view Singapore's actions more suspiciously. This would adversely affect the cohesion and dynamics within ASEAN, which has thus far provided a stable platform to promote economic growth and regional peace and stability.

Singapore also risks alienation by the US if it bandwagons with China. Singapore would lose its position and the associated benefits of being a trusted US regional ally. The possible consequences include losing access to US military technology, equipment and training opportunities, which the SAF critically depends on to build a credible and respected military. There would also be lost economic opportunities with the world's largest economy, which would have a significant impact on the Singapore economy.

Balancing against China also has its shortcomings. As the threat posed by a rising China remains potential rather than actual, Singapore would not want to antagonize China prematurely and unnecessarily. Any effort at balancing against China could

provoke a hostile reaction from China, especially if seen as actions supporting a US policy of containment. This approach would cause Singapore's diplomatic and economic relations with China to suffer. Given the importance of the Chinese economy to Singapore, the potential loss of economic benefits would be significant, especially if China decides to use economic levers to exert pressure on Singapore.

Furthermore, if balancing against China becomes the norm in the region, it could result in instability. Many countries balancing against China would heighten China's sense of insecurity and further reinforce China's view that the US is deeply opposed to China's rise and is seeking to prevent China from taking its rightful place in the global order. This could lead to an expansion of Chinese military capabilities and increased assertiveness over territorial disputes as a pushback against actions to balance against it.

A hedging approach comprising both return-maximizing and risk-contingency options is therefore preferred. Singapore will need to leverage return-maximizing efforts to reap economic and diplomatic benefits from a rising China, while maintaining risk-contingency options as a hedge against Chinese dominance. The three conditions required for hedging, which were identified in the literature review, are an absence of an immediate threat, an absence of polarizing ideological fault-lines and an absence of an all-out great power rivalry that compels smaller states to choose sides. The analysis of the security environment indicates that all three conditions required are present and are likely to remain present in the near future. Specifically, the analysis indicates that China is not an immediate threat to Singapore, the ideological differences between the US and China are not polarizing and the intense competition between the US and China is unlikely to escalate towards an all-out great power rivalry. A hedging approach is therefore feasible

for Singapore. However, a hedging approach can be challenging to implement because it is an abstract concept that is subjective. Consequently, Singapore will need to communicate clearly that its policies do not favor one country over the other, but are instead based on its core national objectives of survival and prosperity. This thesis proposes to implement a hedging approach using Kuik's components of hedging.

First, Singapore can adopt the risk-contingency policies of indirect-balancing and dominance denial by facilitating continued US presence in the region as a counterweight to China's growing power. Indeed, this has been a longstanding view among Singapore's leaders with founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew stating that Singapore should "stick with what has worked so far" and that the US presence is "essential for the continuation of international law and order in East Asia."²⁶⁰ Singapore's preference for the US to continue acting as the "regional sheriff" is supported by the belief that the US has no territorial ambition in the region and that the US has an interest in ensuring regional peace and stability to support global economic growth. More recently, Minister for Defence, Dr. Ng Eng Hen highlighted to parliament that the US "has been a resident power in the Asia-Pacific for over half a century, whose presence has been a vital force for stability and prosperity."²⁶¹ Singapore's alignment with the preponderant power

²⁶⁰ Yuen Foong Khong, "Coping with Strategic Uncertainty: The Role of Institutions and Soft Balancing in Southeast Asia's Post-Cold War Strategy," in *Rethinking Security in East Asia: Identity, Power, and Efficiency*, ed. J. J. Suh, Peter J. Katzenstein, and Allen Carlson (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 182.

²⁶¹ Ministry of Defense, "Speech by Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen at the Committee of Supply Debate 2012," Government of Singapore, March 6, 2012, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press_room/official_releases/ps/2012/06mar12_ps/06mar12_ps.html#.VxXf56Q3PIU.

maintains the existing imbalance in favour of the US. The intent is to maintain the existing stable regional order with the following hierarchy of power: the US as the global superpower; China as the regional great power; and other powers, such as India and Japan, as major regional powers. This risk-contingency approach provides a hedge against uncertainties associated with the rise of China and the possibility that China's rise might not be peaceful.

Singapore can use diplomatic and military means to facilitate a strong US presence in the region. Singapore can engage the US to be a strategic partner in the region by building on security arrangements in the Strategic Framework Agreement. Singapore's approval for the deployment of up to four littoral combat ships on a rotational basis and for the inaugural deployment of the P-8 Poseidon surveillance aircraft in Singapore is a step in the right direction. Other actions that Singapore can take to strengthen bilateral defence relations include expanding training opportunities with the US military. In particular, Singapore can leverage its purchase of US military equipment to conduct bilateral training using equipment that both countries have in common. Singapore can also continue to support the US-led global war on terror by providing niche contributions that the US find operationally useful.

However, the risk of this approach is that Singapore's efforts at facilitating a strong US presence in the region could offend China. Singapore will therefore need to tread carefully and be sensitive to Chinese reactions and perceptions. In mitigating Chinese perceptions, Singapore's position is that facilitating US presence should not be seen as Singapore picking one side over the other. Dr. Ng explains this philosophy with his remarks that "all the leaders understand that no relationship needs to be exclusive . . .

We can step up relationships with countries without having to diminish the importance or depth of relationships with others.”²⁶²

Second, Singapore can adopt a policy of economic-pragmatism by compartmentalizing its economic and political relations with China such that both countries can continue to benefit economically even if political problems exist between the two countries. Singapore can implement this policy by broadening and diversifying its economic relations with China to include a greater proportion of business-to-business and people-to-people ties. Such ties are typically more resilient to political problems than government-to-government ties because the profit motive will continue to incentivize businesses and individuals to continue trade and investment activities even if there are political problems between the two countries.

In addition, Singapore should also ensure that China’s economic benefits from doing business with Singapore far outweigh the cost of linking potential political problems with economic relations. These benefits include Singapore’s trade and investment relations with China that were described in the literature review. Singapore can also do more by facilitating the integration of China's economy into ASEAN by positioning Singapore as a launchpad for China to raise capital and expand into other ASEAN markets. China might find such a role valuable because it requires a business centre in Southeast Asia that has strong support infrastructure and banking services. Besides providing China with the necessary information and business intelligence to

²⁶² Jeremy Au Yong, “US Presence Remains Critical for Stability in Asia, Says Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen,” *The Straits Times*, December 10, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.straitstimes.com/world/united-states/us-presence-remains-critical-for-stability-in-asia-says-defence-minister-ng-eng>.

access ASEAN markets, Singapore can also play a role in establishing connections between China and the region's companies, which want to do business with China. These efforts strengthen economic partnership with China such that it is in China's continued interest to maintain positive economic relations with Singapore even if there are political problems between the two countries.

The risk of this approach is that China can reject compartmentalizing economic relations and political problems if it intends to use its economic power to achieve political aims. For example, China might be prepared to accept short-term economic losses for longer-term political gains, such as increased influence in the region. In such a situation, diversifying economic relations with businesses and individuals would not be effective because China is a one-party state and it would have political leverage to undermine business-to-business and people-to-people ties. To mitigate this risk, Singapore would need to diversify its economy such that it is not overly reliant on China to the extent that frosty economic relations would be crippling for the Singapore economy.

Third, Singapore can adopt a policy of binding-engagement through deep engagement with China and omni-enmeshment of major powers via regional institutions. Deep engagement with China involves forging a constructive relationship that socialises China with prevailing norms and gives it a stake in regional stability. This provides China "every incentive to choose international cooperation" and enables China to "slowly understand that integration with other major economic powers will be much more beneficial than going it alone and trying to extend its sphere of influence."²⁶³ The

²⁶³ National Archives of Singapore, "Speech by Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew at the Architect of the New Century Award Ceremony on Monday, 11 November 1996 in

objectives of deep engagement with China are to avoid a situation where China feels threatened or isolated by US presence and to harness opportunities from the growing Chinese economy, which would strengthen economic interdependence and serve as a binding force for peace and stability.

Singapore can implement this policy through diplomatic and economic means. In terms of diplomatic means, Singapore can leverage its role as an interlocutor between the US and China to facilitate understanding between the two countries and mitigate China's distrust of US presence in the region. Singapore can also use its position as coordinator of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations, which it recently assumed, to further cooperation and mutual benefit. In terms of economic means, Singapore can tap on the economic initiatives discussed previously under economic-pragmatism. Singapore can also leverage ASEAN-China free trade agreement to facilitate China's access to ASEAN markets, thereby deepening China's economic engagement with the region. The intent is to engage China as a key stakeholder in the region's economic growth.

A policy of binding-engagement can also include omni-enmeshment via regional institutions. Enmeshment refers to the process of engagement to draw an actor into deep involvement with a community and to envelope it in a dense web of sustained exchanges and relationships, with the eventual aim of integration. Omni-enmeshment goes a step further by enmeshing all powers, including both great powers (i.e. US and China) and major powers (i.e. India and Japan) that can influence regional security. The objective is to create overlapping spheres of influence that promote interdependence and a stake in

Washington DC," Government of Singapore, November 11, 1996, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/data/pdfdoc/086-1996-11-11_lky.pdf.

the region's security and stability.²⁶⁴ Former Singapore Ambassador to the US, Chan Heng Chee highlighted in a speech that “By creating multi-layers of relationships, and parallel multilateral institutions in the region, each open and inclusive but with different combinations of participants, it [ASEAN] engages new powers by integrating them in the regional order and borrows weight to balance against the giants that bestride the scene.”²⁶⁵ Omni-enmeshment allows major powers to “keep an eye on each other” and act as mutual deterrence to aggression. Over time, interdependence can lead to a realisation that common interests are not a zero sum game and that mutually beneficial relationships are possible. This can result in a positively reinforcing loop of engagement and accommodation with the region.²⁶⁶

Singapore can implement this policy through diplomatic means by facilitating the omni-enmeshment of major powers in the region. ASEAN should be the key platform for the engagement of external powers because working collectively through ASEAN gives individual ASEAN members a bigger and louder voice. The East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum are examples of regional platforms that include all the major powers, including the US, China, Japan, India and Australia. Singapore should leverage

²⁶⁴ Evelyn Goh, “Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies,” *International Security* 32, no. 3 (Winter 2007/2008): 120-121.

²⁶⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “China and ASEAN: A Growing Relationship - Speech by Ambassador Chan Heng Chee at the Asia Society Texas Annual Ambassadors' Forum and Corporate Conference, Houston, Texas, 3 February 2006,” Government of Singapore, February 3, 2006, accessed April 26, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/overseasmission/washington/newsroom/press_statements/2006/200602/press_200602.html.

²⁶⁶ Goh, “Great Powers and Southeast Asian Regional Security Strategies,” 12.

its diplomatic influence to encourage the use of these forums to discuss issues that are of strategic importance to the region. It can also work towards expanding the membership of other regional platforms to ensure that there is a “dense web of sustained exchanges” between major powers in the region to facilitate dialogue and mutual understanding.

The risk of this approach is that great powers might use their influence to reshape regional institutions and rules to advance their interests, thereby undermining the neutrality of these institutions as a platform for discussion. Another risk is that great powers might favour less inclusive forums, where they have a relatively larger influence, so that they can control the agenda, which would be opposed to the intent of omnienmeshment. For example, China attempted to increase the standing of the ASEAN Plus Three forum, which includes ASEAN, China, Japan and South Korea, at the expense of more inclusive forums like the ASEAN Regional Forum.²⁶⁷ This risk will need to be mitigated by clearly articulating and maintaining the purpose of each forum so that each forum has a distinct function and will therefore not be overshadowed by other forums.

Fourth, Singapore can adopt a policy of limited-bandwagoning to obtain political and economic benefits from a rising China. Singapore can implement this policy through diplomatic means by supporting China on selected issues that are in Singapore’s interests. Singapore can support China’s desire to be a regional power by facilitating China’s rise with caveats that China abides by international rules and norms and that China accepts US presence in the region. Singapore can also support China’s “One Belt, One Road” initiative, which would provide business opportunities for Singapore in the areas of

²⁶⁷ Goh, “Great Powers and Southeast Asian Regional Security Strategies,” 16.

transport, finance and trade. Singapore can also support the establishment of Chinese-led institutions. For example, despite US efforts to dissuade allies from participating, Singapore supported the establishment of the Chinese-led AIIB as a founding member because it was in Singapore's economic interest to do so. This is another instance where although Singapore has appeared to have taken sides, it is not because Singapore favors one country over another, but rather because it is in Singapore's interest to do so.

Singapore's leaders have been cautious at implementing a policy of limited-bandwagoning because of the risks involved. Singapore is acutely aware that its predominantly Chinese ethnic demographic could trigger perceptions that Singapore is a third China, especially from its two Malay-Muslim neighbors Malaysia and Indonesia. Such perceptions could potentially lead to increased tensions with Singapore's immediate neighbors and be destabilizing to the region. Singapore has therefore been sensitive to having overly strong political affiliations with China. As noted in the literature review, the extent of Singapore's paranoia led it to defer formalizing relations with China until all ASEAN founding states had done so to avoid misperceptions that Singapore is a Chinese vassal state. The risk is that a policy of limited-bandwagoning could reinforce perceptions that Singapore seeks to avoid.

Summary

In summary, the ends of Singapore's security strategy (see table 4) comprise the core national interests of survival and prosperity. Survival is defined as the continued existence of a sovereign and independent Singapore. In the context of great power rivalry with the rise of China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific, maintaining political independence is the greater challenge. An independent Singapore will need the

ability to resist external political influence and the ability to make unconstrained policy choices. Prosperity is as important to Singapore as survival. Singapore's core national interest of prosperity is dependent on regional peace and stability as well as positive economic relations with both the US and China.

A hedging approach best serves the ends of Singapore's security strategy. Singapore can use risk-contingency options, comprising indirect-balancing and dominance-denial to facilitate continued US presence in the region to maintain the existing stable regional hierarchy of power. These policies provide a hedge against uncertainties associated with China's long-term intentions and the possibility that China's rise might not be peaceful. Singapore can also adopt return-maximizing options, comprising economic-pragmatism, binding-engagement and limited-bandwagoning to gain economically and politically from a rising China. This involves policies to broaden and diversify economic relations with China, to provide strong incentives for China to sustain economic relations, to deepen engagement with China, to omni-enmesh major powers in the region and to align with China politically in a limited manner.

"Ends"	"Ways"		"Means"	Risks
(1) Survival - Sovereignty - Independence (2) Prosperity - Regional peace & stability - Positive economic relations with US and China	Indirect-Balancing & Dominance Denial (Risk-Contingency)	- Facilitate continued US presence in the region to maintain stable regional hierarchy of power	- Build on security arrangements in the SFA - Expand training opportunities - Support US-led global war on terror	- China could be offended if it perceives Singapore as picking the US over China
	Economic-Pragmatism (Return-Maximizing)	- Broaden & diversify economic relations with China	- Expand business-to-business & people-to-people ties	- China might use its economic power to achieve political aims
		- Provide strong incentives for China to sustain economic relations	- Sustain strong trade and investment relations - Facilitate economic integration & access to ASEAN markets	
	Binding-Engagement (Return-Maximizing)	- Deep engagement with China	- Use interlocutor role to mitigate China's distrust of US presence - Use ASEAN-China coordinator role to advance cooperation - Use ASEAN-China FTA to facilitate China's integration & access to ASEAN markets	- Great powers might reshape regional institutions and rules to advance their interests - Great powers might favor less inclusive platforms to control the agenda
		- Omni-enmeshment of major powers	- Use ASEAN as key platform for engagement - Expand membership of other regional platforms	
Limited-Bandwagoning (Return-Maximizing)	- Limited political alignment with China	- Support China's desire to be a regional power - Support "One Belt, One Road" initiative - Support establishment of Chinese-led institutions	- Could trigger perceptions that Singapore is a third China	

Source: Created by author.

Conclusion

The analysis was divided into three sections to address the three secondary research questions. Section I described the security environment and the associated security challenges in the next 10 to 20 years defined by the rise of China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific. It identified the aggravating and mitigating factors in the US-China relationship that could result in an outcome of either war or no war. The

analysis indicates that while conflict between the two countries is possible because of aggravating factors arising from great power rivalry, it is not inevitable because of the presence of mitigating factors and because a conflict is not in the interest of either party. As a direct confrontation is unlikely, the security environment will instead be marked by more intense competition between the US and China in the next 10 to 20 years as China seeks regional dominance. The associated security challenge is the development of a stable regional hierarchy of power that supports peace and stability. The key challenge is to find a balance between competing tensions that arise because of China's desire to be the regional hegemon and the need for US presence in the region to provide stability.

Section II analyzed Singapore's ability to influence its security environment and concluded that it has been successful at doing so across the three factors of actor's quality, participation in international organizations and the ability to provide ideas that contribute to global discourse. The analysis also concluded that while projected changes in the external environment could have an impact on Singapore's ability to influence its security environment, the impact can be mitigated and Singapore will continue to have sufficient tools to influence its security environment.

Given the security environment described in Section I and the conclusion in Section II that Singapore will continue to have the ability to influence its security environment, Section III proposes a hedging strategy to safeguard and advance Singapore's core national interests of survival and prosperity. Such a strategy would comprise risk-contingency policies as a hedge against China's long-term intentions and the possibility that China's rise might not be peaceful. It would also contain return-maximizing policies to gain economically and politically from a rising China. A hedging

approach is the optimal strategy because it enables Singapore to maintain strategic ambiguity and to be nimble in terms of foreign policy responses in a security environment marked by more intense competition between the US and China.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis started by identifying Singapore's strategic dilemma given a rising China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific. The analysis of the security environment subsequently indicated that such a dilemma of having to choose between the US and China is a false dichotomy and that Singapore has the policy option of taking the middle ground through a hedging strategy. This concluding chapter summarizes and links the key findings of each of the secondary research questions to answer the primary research question, which is "What strategy can Singapore adopt to navigate a security environment shaped by a rising China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific?" It then conducts a sensitivity analysis to provide some preliminary thoughts on how the proposed hedging strategy can be refined if assumptions and projections of the security environment changes. This preliminary analysis provides a basis for further research. The two scenarios analyzed are: (1) a scenario where the US reverses its policy of rebalancing and significantly reduces its presence in the Asia-Pacific; and (2) a scenario where an all-out great power rivalry between the US and China occurs.

Summary of Key Findings

This thesis identified three characterizations of existing US-China relations. First, there is mutually assured misperception because China sees the US as deeply opposed to China's rise and using a containment strategy. However, the US rejects this and instead sees China seeking to push the US out of Asia. Second, there is a mutual distrust of long-term intentions because of different political systems and cultures, a lack of mutual

understanding and a closing gap in power status. Third, both countries are simultaneously cooperating and competing in both the security and economic domains. However, both countries also adopt a pragmatic approach towards managing relations, as they believe that disagreements should not prevent cooperation where there can be mutual benefits.

This thesis then overlaid the Thucydides Trap Case File factors on existing US-China relations to develop an understanding of the aggravating and mitigating factors that could increase or decrease the probability of conflict between the US and China. The following three aggravating factors increase the probability of conflict. First, although China does not yet aspire to replace the US in providing global leadership because it benefits from the US-led international order, China desires regional hegemony and is dissatisfied with the existing balance of power. Second, China feels insecure because of US support for regional allies, especially with respect to territorial disputes in the East China and South China Seas. This contributes to increased military spending by China to mitigate its vulnerabilities. Third, there is a strong sense of Chinese nationalism shaped by a golden era of 5,000 years and a century of humiliation (1842-1945). This contributes to increased assertiveness bordering on aggressiveness by the Chinese, especially with regard to its territorial claims.

While the cited aggravating factors increase the probability of conflict between the two countries, there also exists mitigating factors that decrease the probability of conflict. These include a distracted US that is pressured to focus its attention on competing priorities in other parts of the world. While this reduces the probability of conflict, it is potentially destabilizing for the region because the resulting power vacuum could cause regional powers to compete for influence to optimize their relative positions

in the hierarchy of power. Other mitigating factors include the nuclear deterrent that both countries possess and structural restraints in the form of regional forums that facilitate dialogue and mutual understanding. This thesis concludes that a conflict between the two countries is possible because of misunderstandings and aggravating factors, but it is not inevitable because a conflict is not in the interest of either country. Such a security environment will be marked by more intense competition and great power rivalry. The current trend of increased military spending in the Asia-Pacific will also likely continue in the near future.

A hedging strategy for Singapore is not only feasible, but also optimal given the security environment described above. Hedging is feasible because the three conditions required for hedging are present and are likely to remain present in the future. First, China is not an immediate threat to Singapore because of the large geographical distance and the absence of territorial disputes between the two countries. Second, although there are ideological differences between a democratic US and a communist China, neither country is trying to impose its values on the other explicitly and therefore there is an absence of polarizing ideological fault-lines between the two countries. Third, both the US and China seek to avoid a direct confrontation and therefore even with more intense competition, it is unlikely to escalate towards an all-out great power rivalry. These conditions make it possible for Singapore to choose the middle ground and hedge.

Hedging is the optimal strategy to navigate the security environment described above because it allows Singapore to safeguard and advance its core national interests of survival and prosperity. A hedging strategy consists of both return-maximizing and risk-contingency policies. Return-maximizing policies increase Singapore's upside by

allowing it to benefit economically and politically from a rising China, while risk-contingency policies minimize Singapore's downside by mitigating the possibility that China's rise might not be peaceful. Singapore can implement a hedging strategy using Kuik's components of hedging, which include policies of indirect-balancing, dominance-denial, economic-pragmatism, binding-engagement and limited-bandwagoning.

To implement a hedging strategy successfully, Singapore will need to leverage its ability to influence its security environment. Singapore will need to leverage its economic success, which makes it relevant and makes others interested in its continued survival, to facilitate continued US presence in the region, thereby supporting the hedging policies of indirect-balancing and dominance-denial. Singapore will also need to leverage the influence and skills of its leaders and diplomats to draw major powers into the region in support of a binding-engagement policy. Singapore's ability to punch above its weight and shape its security environment supports the implementation of a hedging strategy.

The key challenge of implementing a hedging policy is that Singapore risks losing the trust of both the US and China if its foreign policies are perceived to be inconsistent or are confusing to great powers. To mitigate this risk, Singapore will need to communicate clearly that its policies are not designed to deliberately favor one country over another, but are instead developed based on its core national interests of survival and prosperity. In this context, the quote from Minister for Defence Dr. Ng Eng Hen is worth repeating. He said that "no relationship needs to be exclusive" and that "We can step up

relationships with countries without having to diminish the importance or depth of relationships with others.”²⁶⁸

Sensitivity Analysis

A sensitivity analysis is useful to determine the required adjustments in strategy if initial assumptions and projections do not hold true. Two scenarios are analyzed: (1) a scenario where the US reverses its policy of rebalancing and significantly reduces its presence in the Asia-Pacific; and (2) a scenario where an all-out great power rivalry between the US and China occurs. This thesis discusses the likelihood of each of these scenarios and then provides some preliminary thoughts on how the earlier proposed strategy should be refined, which would provide a basis for further research.

Scenario #1: Reversal of US Policy to Rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific

This thesis started with the assumption that the US will sustain its rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific region for the long term because of the following three reasons. First, the Asia-Pacific region will continue to be strategically important to the US because US long-term economic and security interests are inextricably linked to the region. Second, the rise of China will oblige the US to remain engaged in the region because it is in US interest to maintain its regional influence and not readily cede power to China by withdrawing from the region. Third, the US has structural commitments, such as collective defense agreements, which bind it to the region. Furthermore, the US has had

²⁶⁸ Jeremy Au Yong, “US Presence Remains Critical for Stability in Asia, Says Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen.”

decades-long involvement in the Asia-Pacific region and many aspects of the current rebalancing are an expansion rather than a transformation of existing policy.

Despite these compelling reasons to remain in the Asia-Pacific region, it is not inconceivable for the US to reverse its policy to rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific for two reasons. First, there is political traction for a more restrained US foreign policy globally. This traction is evident in the political support for presidential candidate Donald Trump's foreign policy of retrenchment.²⁶⁹ Advocates of retrenchment argue that US global leadership results in free-riding on US security guarantees by allies, who should shoulder greater responsibilities for their own defense.²⁷⁰ Second, competing priorities in other parts of the world, such as the Middle East and Europe, could pressure the US to redirect its attention away from the Asia-Pacific. This situation is compounded by shrinking defense resources with sequestration and budget cuts facing the US military.

A significant reduction of US presence in the Asia-Pacific could be potentially destabilizing for the region, especially if there is an abrupt power transition, because the resulting power vacuum could cause regional powers to compete for influence. In this scenario, the objective of Singapore's security strategy should be to facilitate regional peace and stability by supporting a gradual power transition as the US pulls back. The proposed hedging strategy should be refined in two ways. First, Singapore should increase limited-bandwagoning efforts with China by expanding political support to gain

²⁶⁹ Alex Ward, "Why Donald Trump Should Be Taken Seriously on Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy*, October 27, 2015, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/27/donald-trump-is-right-about-foreign-policy/>.

²⁷⁰ Barry R. Posen, "Pull Back: The Case for a Less Activist Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 1 (January/February 2013): 122-123.

the goodwill of the Chinese. Singapore should then use this goodwill to influence China to abide by international rules and norms and to step up as a responsible regional power to fill the power vacuum left by the US. As the hedging strategy shifts towards the bandwagoning end of the spectrum, the key risk is that Singapore could be seen as a Chinese vassal state, potentially leading to increased tensions with Singapore's two Malay-Muslim neighbors. Second, Singapore should leverage ASEAN as a risk-contingency option to hedge against potentially destabilizing actions by China. While ASEAN as a counter-weight to China would likely be less effective than US presence in the region, it is a better alternative than engaging China individually because working collectively through ASEAN provides individual ASEAN members a bigger and louder voice. The key risk is that ASEAN cohesion might be split between claimant states that are wary of China's intentions (e.g. Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei) and states that have been traditionally under the influence of China (e.g. Cambodia).

Scenario #2: All-Out Great Power Rivalry between the US and China

The analysis of the security environment indicated that an all-out great power rivalry between the US and China that compels other states to choose sides is unlikely. The reason for this assessment is that the US-China relationship has aspects of both cooperation and competition and it is in the interest of both sides to avoid a direct confrontation. However, it is not inconceivable for more intense competition to escalate to an all-out great power rivalry. Such a scenario could involve a conflict between the two countries or could be precipitated by the desire to establish separate spheres of influence by the US and China that compels countries in the region to choose sides.

There could be two possible causes for this scenario. First, increased Chinese nationalism could pressure the CCP to do more to realize the “Chinese Dream” by establishing itself as a regional power and expanding its sphere of influence. Second, as China’s power status increases significantly, there could be a pronounced shift in US sentiments fearing that China might displace the US as the ruling power. The US could feel increasingly threatened by the rise of China and hence actively seek to contain China’s rise by expanding its sphere of influence in the region.

An all-out great power rivalry between the US and China that compels states in the region to choose sides could be potentially destabilizing for the region because such an adversarial stance could easily escalate towards a conflict between the two sides. It also risks tearing the region apart into separate spheres of influence that compromises regional integration and threatens ASEAN cohesion, which is critical for regional peace and stability. In this scenario, the objective of Singapore’s security strategy should be to facilitate regional peace and stability by influencing its security environment to reduce the probability of conflict between the two sides. While such a scenario would significantly reduce Singapore’s foreign policy space and violate Kuik’s conditions required for a hedging strategy, it is assessed that the strategy can still be selectively applied by refining the proposed hedging strategy in two ways.

First, Singapore would need to scale back indirect-balancing and dominance-denial efforts in facilitating continued US presence in the region as well as reduce limited-bandwagoning efforts in supporting China politically to avoid being perceived as favoring one country over another. Second, Singapore would need to increase economic-pragmatism and binding-engagement efforts. The aim of economic-pragmatism is to

maintain positive economic relations with both countries even as political relations take a step back, while the aim of binding-engagement is to facilitate dialogue and mutual understanding to reduce the possibility of conflict. Overall, the key risk in maintaining a hedging strategy in this scenario is that in not choosing sides explicitly, Singapore might inadvertently offend both great powers.

Conclusion

This chapter summarized the key findings in this thesis by answering the primary research question, which is “What strategy can Singapore adopt to navigate a security environment shaped by a rising China and the US rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific?” Overall, this thesis concluded that a hedging strategy is not only feasible, but also optimal in a security environment marked by more intense competition between the US and China. A hedging strategy allows Singapore to maximize its upside by benefitting economically and politically from a rising China and to minimize its downside by mitigating the possibility that China’s rise might not be peaceful.

This chapter then concluded with a sensitivity analysis on two scenarios: (1) a scenario where the US reverses its policy of rebalancing and significantly reduces its presence in the Asia-Pacific; and (2) a scenario where an all-out great power rivalry between the US and China occurs. The intent is to understand the extent to which the proposed hedging strategy would need to be refined if assumptions and projections on the security environment changes. The preliminary analysis, which provides a basis for further research, indicates that a hedging strategy is still viable in both scenarios, albeit with some refinements.

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