

## Singapore and the Cold War (1965-91) (Part 3/3)

**Factors shaping Singapore's responses: national interests, regional and Cold War developments.**

*For each of these areas, there is a need to demonstrate your understanding of how each factor led to a particular response of Singapore. Eg. (factor) led to (action) in response to (development of the Cold War).*

### 1. Principles behind Singapore's Foreign Policy: Sanctity of Sovereignty; Insistence on Rule of Law; Relevance to International Community

*"We are now arbitors of our foreign and defence policies, and our strategic importance makes our foreign and defence policies a matter of interest not just to our immediate neighbours but to a much larger group of nations whose ideological and power conflicts have gripped the world in a cold war since the end of the Second World War. There have been shifts in the balance of power between the two world blocs, and there have been shifts even within each of the blocs. Singapore, first, must decide where its long-term interests lie. And, within the context, a foreign policy must be designed to bring us the surest guarantee of our survival and our prosperity."*

*Lee Kuan Yew, 1965 speech.*

- **Sanctity of Sovereignty as a principle of Singapore's foreign policy was observed:**

- Singapore's foreign policy during the Cold War period was deeply rooted in the principle of safeguarding its sovereignty. Having gained independence in 1965, the nation was keen on asserting its autonomy in international affairs.
- Non-alignment was a key tenet, as Singapore aimed to avoid entanglement in the ideological disputes between the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. This was to be garner recognition as a sovereign state on the international stage – non-alignment also aided economically as will be addressed later.
- Actions that demonstrate its principle of sovereignty:
  - Upon independence, Singapore offered to work with all the countries that would recognise her territorial integrity and sovereignty
  - Towards the end of August 1965, during a television interview, the Prime Minister served notice to the British authorities that the

British troops could be ordered to 'quit' the island within twenty four hours if his government so decided.

- Then with even greater drama the Prime Minister launched a sensational attack on the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He accused the CIA of having earlier attempted to obtain through financial encouragement secret information from a Singapore Government security officer when this incident was discovered, the U.S. Government allegedly offered M\$10 million to Singapore for economic development to 'hush up' the affair. The dramatic nature of the denouncement and Washington's initial denial and later humiliating admission exaggerated this episode into a magnificent international scandal. At the end of it Lee had made his point. The Americans lacked the experience and wisdom to understand Asian leaders. He would not tolerate an American foothold on the island if the British withdrew their forces.

The CIA plot was confirmed later in History:

<https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP75-00149R000700100029-6.pdf>

- Many diplomats were puzzled by the urbane politician's seemingly senseless outburst. The verbal attack seems to have been prompted by Lee's concern about the slow response from the African nations to Singapore's independence. After almost a month of independence only 30 Afro-Asian nations had recognized the new state but the majority of the Afro-Asian bloc in the United Nations had not accorded the new state recognition. Thus on the eve of Singapore's application for membership in the UN, Lee probably felt expedient to assert strongly his country's genuine non-alignment.
- As Singapore's independence became widely recognised and accepted and as her Government made fresh calculations of her international assets, the Singapore government's anti-West stance mellowed considerably
- Demanding Vietnam's withdrawal from Cambodia and demanding Khmer Rouge maintain its seat

#### ● **Insistence on Rule of Law:**

- Singapore consistently emphasized adherence to the rule of law in international relations. This commitment was reflected in its diplomatic

engagements and efforts to promote a stable and rules-based global order.

- The nation actively participated in international organizations like the United Nations, contributing to discussions on global governance and legal frameworks.
- Actions that demonstrate its insistence on rule of law:
  - Singapore ambassador Tommy Koh had chaired two important global conferences involving all UN member states – the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea (1980-1982) and the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio Conference) from 1990-1992

- **Relevance to International Community:**

- Despite its small size, Singapore recognized the importance of being an active member of the international community. The nation sought to engage diplomatically with a wide range of countries to promote mutual understanding and cooperation.
- Indeed in 1963, Singapore's leaders had already developed a definite style and approach to foreign politics and a set of attitudes on the major international issues. Prime Minister Lee appeared to strive for an identification with the non-alignment and anti-colonial ideology of the Afro-Asian countries.

*Our policy of neutrality, non-alignment between the two power blocs together with an active identification with the Afro-Asian world gives us a good start with the growing consumers' world in Afro-Asia. Trade missions will soon be sent to these markets.*

*Finance Minister, Lim Kim San, Budget Day address to parliament*

- Economic diplomacy played a crucial role, as Singapore positioned itself as a global trading hub, fostering ties with nations irrespective of their Cold War alliances.

*Friendship, in international relations, is not a function of goodwill or personal affection. We must make ourselves relevant so that other countries have an interest in our continued survival and prosperity as a sovereign and independent nation. Singapore cannot take its relevance for granted. Small countries perform no vital or irreplaceable functions in the*

*international system. 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.*

*To achieve this, we have to be different from others in our neighbourhood and have a competitive edge. Because we have been able to do so, Singapore has risen over our geographical and resource constraints, and has been accepted as a serious player in regional and international fora. We earn our living by attracting foreign investments and producing goods and services useful to the world. Hence, we must always have the ability to be ourselves and be different from others in the wider region of East and South Asia. Had we disported ourselves like our better endowed neighbours, we would have failed. For Singapore, unlike others in our neighbourhood, is of no intrinsic interest to any developed country when they can invest in our larger neighbours endowed with more land, labour and natural resources.*

*Speech by Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew at the S. Rajaratnam Lecture on 9 April 2009.*

- Actions that demonstrate how its foreign policy kept it relevant to the international community:
  - Singapore kept its relevance through participation in regional and international organisations
  - It was a founding member of ASEAN in 1967
  - Non-aligned stance towards US and USSR

## **2. National Interests: Experience of Separation; Economic and Security Realities**

*As you read the following extract, identify how the experience of separation, and economic and security realities, influenced foreign policy?*

I had many pressing concerns: first, to get international recognition for Singapore's independence, including our membership of the United Nations. I chose Sinnathamby Rajaratnam (affectionately called Raja by all of us) as foreign minister. He was eminently suitable, with anti-colonial nationalist credentials from his student days in London before and during the war, but no rabid radical. Friendly, urbane, sincere, he had the right balance between standing up for principles and the need for diplomatic compromise. He was to be much liked and respected by all those he worked with at home and abroad. As messages of recognition flowed in, Toh Chin Chye, the deputy prime minister, and Raja as foreign minister set off to New York to take our seat at the UN that September of 1965.

My next concern was to defend this piece of real estate. We had no army. Our two battalions were under the command of a Malaysian brigadier. How were we to build up some defence forces quickly, however rudimentary? We had to deter and, if need be, prevent any wild move by the Malay Ultras (extremists) in Kuala Lumpur to instigate a coup by the Malaysian forces in Singapore and reverse the independence we had acquired. Many Malay leaders in KL believed that Singapore should never have been allowed to leave Malaysia, but should have been clobbered into submission. If anything were to happen to Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Abdul Razak would become the prime minister and he could be made to reverse the Tunku's decision by strong-minded Ultra leaders. It was a time of great uncertainty.

While wrestling with these major concerns I had to attend to another pressing need – keeping law and order. We feared that pro-UMNO Malays would run amok when they realised they had been abandoned by the Malaysian government and were once again a minority. Our policemen were mostly Malays from the kampungs of Malaya and their loyalty would be strained if they had to take action against Malay rioters who wanted to rejoin Malaysia. Our troops, two battalions, were also mostly Malays from Malaya.

To my relief, Goh Keng Swee was willing and eager to take on the task of building up the forces. I decided to have him take charge of home affairs and defence, put together into one ministry called MID (ministry of interior and defence). This would allow him to use the police force to help in the basic training of army recruits. (To this day licence plates of Singapore Armed Forces vehicles carry the letters MID.) Keng Swee's transfer left a void in the finance minister. Kim San had a practical approach to problems. Moreover, he could work closely with Keng Swee without friction, thus allowing Keng Swee to contribute informally to policies on finance.

My third and biggest headache was the economy – how to make a living for our people? Indonesia was “confronting” us and trade was at a standstill. The Malaysians wanted to bypass Singapore and deal direct with all their trading partners, importers and exporters, and only through their own ports. How was an independent Singapore to survive when it was no longer the centre of the wider area that the British once governed as one unit? We needed to find some answers and soon, for unemployment was alarming at 14 per cent and rising. Furthermore we had to make a living different from that under British rule. I used to see our godowns filled with rubber sheets, pepper, copra and rattan, and workers laboriously cleaning and grading them for export. There would be no more imports of such raw materials from Malaysia and Indonesia for processing and grading. We had to create a new kind of economy, try new methods and schemes never tried before anywhere else in the world, because there was no other country like Singapore. Hong Kong was the one island more like us, but it was still governed by the British and it had China as its hinterland.

Economically it was very much a part of China, acting as China's contact with the capitalist world for trade with non-communist countries.

After pondering over these problems and the limited options available, I concluded an island city-state in Southeast Asia could not be ordinary if it was to survive. We had to make extraordinary efforts to become a tightly knit, rugged and adaptable people who could do things better and cheaper than our neighbours, because they wanted to bypass us and render obsolete our role as the entrepot and middleman for the trade of the region. We had to be different.

Our greatest asset was the trust and confidence of the people. These we had earned by the fight we had put up on their behalf against the communists and the Malay Ultras, our refusal to be browbeaten and cowed at a time when the police and the army were both in the hands of the central government. The communists jeered at my colleagues and me as running dogs of the colonialists imperialists, and cursed us as lackeys and henchmen of the Malay feudalists. But when things got bad, even the sceptical Chinese-speaking left-leaning types saw us, a group of bourgeois English-educated leaders, stand up for them and defend their interests. We were careful not to squander their newly gained trust by misgovernment and corruption. I needed this political strength to maximise what use we could make of our few assets, a natural world-class harbour sited in a strategic location astride one of the busiest sea-lanes of the world.

The other valuable asset we had was our people – hardworking, thrifty, eager to learn. Although divided into several races, I believed a fair and even-handed policy would get them to live peacefully together, especially if hardships like unemployment were shared equally and not carried mainly by the minority groups. It was crucial to keep united Singapore's multilingual, multicultural, multi-religious society, and make it rugged and dynamic enough to compete in world markets. But how to get into these markets? I did not know the answer. Nobody had asked us to push the British out. Driven by our visceral urges, we had done so. Now it was our responsibility to provide for the security and livelihood of the two million people under our care. We had to succeed, for if we failed, our only survival option would be a re-merger, but on Malaysian terms, as a state like Malacca or Penang.

I did not sleep well...I was then in my early forties, young and vigorous; however hard and hectic the day had been, I would take two hours off in the late afternoon to go on the practice tee to hit 50-100 balls and play nine holes with one or two friends. Still, I was short of sleep. Late one morning, when the newly arrived British high commissioner, John Robb, had an urgent message for me from his government, I received him at home lying in bed, physically exhausted. Harold Wilson, the British prime minister, must have been told of this for he expressed his concern. On 23 August 1965 I replied, "Do not worry about Singapore. My colleagues and I are sane, rational people even in our moments of anguish. We weigh all possible consequences

before we make any move on the political chessboard...Our people have the will to fight and the stuff that makes for survival.”

While brooding over these daunting problems, on the night of 30 September 1965, alarm bells rang with the news of a coup in Indonesia. Pro-communist officers killed six Indonesian generals. A bloodbath followed as General Suharto moved to put down the coup. These further uncertainties deepened my concerns.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> day of August 1965, I started out with great trepidation on a journey along an unmarked road to an unknown destination.

*Lee Kuan Yew, From Third World to First – The Singapore Story: 1965-2000, 2000.*

- **Experience of Separation:**

- The traumatic separation from Malaysia in 1965 left an indelible mark on Singapore's psyche. The experience underscored the need for the nation to navigate its security challenges independently.
  - Although it was necessary to register the sovereignty of the new state on both a regional and global basis, independence was defined, above all, with reference to Malaysia of which Singapore had been a constituent part and with which the independent island would be obliged to march in perpetuity.
  - Conscious also of the alienating potential regionally of the conspicuously Chinese cultural identity of the new Republic, an attempt was made to register symbols of statehood acceptable within its Malay locale.
  - To that end, while English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil continued to enjoy equal status as official languages, Malay was confirmed as the national language. The design of the national flag acknowledged Islamic symbolism, while the first indigenous head of state, Yusof bin ishak, who succeeded the former British colonial governor, was also a Malay.
  - As a consequence, the style of foreign policy, with Malaysia much in mind, was a paradoxical combination of symbolic accommodation and pugnacity.

- Singapore's foreign policy aimed at ensuring its survival as a sovereign state, with a focus on building strong defence capabilities and forging alliances to safeguard against potential threats.

- **Economic Realities:**

- Singapore recognized the importance of economic development as a cornerstone of national security. The nation actively pursued economic growth and diversification to ensure self-sufficiency and resilience.
  - Singapore's real per capita GNP measured in 1990 constant Singapore dollars stood at \$4224 in 1965.
  - By 1999 Singapore's real capita GNP was at \$34965.
- The government implemented pragmatic economic policies, attracting foreign investments and establishing itself as a global economic powerhouse.
  - Singapore has since 1965 plugged into the international economic grid - it welcomed Multi-National Companies (MNCs) to invest and manufacture in Singapore when the conventional wisdom was that MNCs exploit Third World countries. As an open economy, it took full advantage of globalisation.
  - The government identified key industries, such as electronics, chemicals, and textiles, where foreign investment could play a crucial role.
  - Singapore adopted an export-oriented growth strategy, emphasizing the importance of exports to drive economic development. The government encouraged both domestic and foreign companies to focus on producing goods for export markets.
  - The Singapore government introduced tax incentives to attract MNCs. This included tax holidays, reduced corporate tax rates, and other financial incentives to encourage foreign companies to establish operations in Singapore.
  - Companies could apply for pioneer status, which exempted them from taxes for five years. The Malaysia Mosquito Spiral Manufacturing Company Limited was one of the companies that received pioneer status from the Singapore government and opened in Jurong industrial estate in 1965. The factory produced mosquito coils for both local consumption and export.



- Singapore pursued a policy of open and free trade, establishing itself as a trading hub in Southeast Asia. The country actively participated in international trade agreements and promoted a liberal trade regime to attract MNCs looking for access to regional markets.
- In 1966, Singapore had moved too close to the US to be accepted as a serious non-aligned country it had already benefited from the advantages of an early identification with a neutral policy.
- As a result of her diplomatic efforts to advertise and seek profits from her ideological position Singapore signed trade pacts with the Soviet Union, Poland, Bulgaria, and between 1967 and 1968 she added Hungary, Rumania, the Democratic Republic of Korea, United Arab Republic and Israel to her list of trading partners and signed memoranda of understanding with Indonesia and Zambia.
- Regional partnerships
  - 45% of Singapore's total trade is within the region
  - At the time of separation Lee's view on the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) was that insofar as ASA envisaged regional cooperation for mutual benefit it was commendable, but the Singapore leader felt that the organisation bore the taint of a cold war partisan.
  - The fact that Malaysia was the originator of this association may also account for Lee's indifference, particularly immediately after separation
  - Instead, Finance Minister Lim Kim San on behalf of the Singapore Government was attempting to lead the Southeast Asian countries to new co-operative efforts. At an Economic Development Conference in Tokyo, Lim spoke of regional specialization and division of labour and measures that should be taken to harmonize and coordinate future industrialization programmes in the region.
  - A good starting point, suggested the Singapore leader, would be the establishment of an international regional shipping line

### ● Security Realities:

- In light of regional uncertainties during the Cold War, Singapore adopted a pragmatic approach to security. The nation engaged in defence partnerships and sought alliances to bolster its security infrastructure.
- US

- In early March 1966, William Bundy, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, visited Singapore and Malaysia where he held 'frank talks' with Lee on the Vietnam issue and negotiated for the use of the island as a rest and recreation centre for U.S. troops stationed in Vietnam. The successful conclusion of the talks led to the arrival of the first batch of U.S. soldiers on the island on April 5, 1966.
- By this time, it was clear that Singapore's foreign policy had moved circumspectly out of the non-aligned "camp" and the Prime Minister no longer highlighted his speeches with anti-American criticisms. To appreciate why Lee decided to make this very "unneutral" contribution to the U.S. side in the Vietnam War, it is necessary to proceed to an examination of Singapore's interests in the matter.
- One of Singapore's main objectives in her present foreign policy is to secure a strong and dependable defence partner. In 1965, as already mentioned, there were indications that the high cost of maintenance and rising political pressure from the parties would force the Wilson Cabinet to recommend a cut in defence spending and ultimate closure of the Singapore base. In Feb 1966, after 15 months of careful consideration and debate some partial results of the Defence Review were announced proposing drastic reduction – one third – of British overseas forces. Singapore leaders likely believed that the British presence would not last beyond 1980.
- In Singapore's search for a new defence partner, the US would seem to be the best available alternative.
- In late 1966, Prime Minister Lee made three points:
  1. a foreign policy for Singapore must be one that would encourage the major powers in the world to find it in their interests to help the island or at least to see that her situation does not worsen.
  2. Singapore must offer to the rest of the world a continuing interest in the type of society she projects; she should identify herself with the mass of new nations, with the ideas of a modern forward-looking nation.
  3. Finally, and perhaps the most revealing of all his statements, Lee held that it was imperative for Singapore always to have "overwhelming power on our side."
- Israel
  - Lee's steps to ensure what he regards as an adequate defence apparatus for Singapore are fascinating to follow. To further strengthen his defence 'build-up' Lee has lined up an agreement

with Israel to accept Israeli military advisers and instructors. Why Lee has undertaken this new strategy is difficult to understand particularly since Malaysia is hardly insensitive to the Israeli presence. Lee may feel he has much to learn from Israel since the environments of the two countries seem to be congruent, but he may in fact be over-drawing the analogy

- India
  - On the question of defence, the Singapore Prime Minister believes that some form of multi-lateral force is the best solution to the maintenance of peace in the region. This belief was strongly expressed when Lee visited India in September, 1966. It was reported that the main objective of the Singapore leader's state visit was to enlist India's support for an organization of nations in the region to co-operate against certain "obvious pressures."
  - It is likely that the Singapore leaders favoured this arrangement for two reasons. With Singapore's strategic position and the extensive military facilities to be bequeathed by the British, it might be possible for Singapore to exert influence in a regional defence organization out of proportion to her size. The creation of an indigenous regional defence alliance could help lessen the degree of Singapore's dependence on the protection of the West.

### 3. Regional and International Developments: Inter-State Tensions in the Region; Cold War Developments

*"No tribe in proximity with another tribe is happy until a state of dominance of one over the other is established. Or until it has tried to establish that dominance, and failed, and it is quite satisfied that it is not possible, whereupon it lives in fear that the other tribe will try and assert dominance over it. And the cavalcade of man will go on. And if it goes on then I say we have reason to rejoice, for then we shall reach for the moon and the stars and the universe."*

*Lee Kuan Yew, 1965 speech arguing that international affairs are as old as mankind.*

- **Inter-State Tensions in the Region:**
  - Singapore faced challenges related to inter-state tensions in Southeast Asia. The Vietnam War and conflicts in neighboring countries created a volatile regional environment.

- All the non-communist countries of Southeast Asia were embroiled in disputes of varying intensity with one another. Singapore had just been “separated” from Malaysia and Indonesia was pursuing a policy of “konfrontasi” against Malaysia and Singapore.
- The Philippines claimed Sabah.
- Brunei with British help had suppressed an **internal** rebellion backed by Indonesia.
- There were also strong irredentist pressures on the borders between West Malaysia and Thailand, and between the Philippines and Indonesia.
- The nation worked towards fostering regional stability through diplomacy and actively contributed to regional organizations, promoting dialogue and conflict resolution.
  - ASEAN was formed in August 1967 amid great uncertainty in the region. In a low-key ceremony, the foreign ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand met in Bangkok to sign the declaration.
  - The war in Vietnam was spreading into Cambodia and the region was caught up in communist insurgencies
  - The aims of ASEAN (which LKY had called Lofty in his memoirs) were to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development, to promote peace and stability, to collaborate in agriculture and industry and expand trade. The unspoken objective was to gain strength through solidarity ahead of the power vacuum that would come with an impending British and later a possible US withdrawal.
  - Indonesia wanted to reassure Malaysia and Singapore that, with the end of the Sukarno era, its intentions were peaceful and it had abandoned Sukarno’s aggressive policies.
  - Thailand wanted to associate itself with its non-communist neighbours who were members of the Non-Aligned Movement
  - The Philippines wanted a forum to push its claim to North Borneo.
  - Singapore sought the understanding and support of its neighbours in enhancing stability and security in the region.

### ● Cold War Developments:

- A common enemy faced the countries of ASEAN – the communist threat in guerilla insurgencies, backed by North Vietnam, China and the Soviet Union.

- This was a push towards cooperation and cohesion as they collectively needed stability and growth to counter and deny the communists the social and economic conditions for resolutions.
- America and the West were prepared to help.
- While avoiding alignment with any superpower, Singapore pragmatically engaged with both the United States and the Soviet Union. This approach allowed the nation to leverage economic and security benefits without becoming entangled in ideological conflicts.
- From the Cold War years, US has played the role of the “balancer” but also provided economic leverage
  - After separation of Singapore from the federation of Malaysia in 1965 there was little that suggested that Singapore would view the US as a patron.
  - In terms of foreign policy Singapore focused instead on Britain with whom Singapore’s history had been intertwined.
  - However, Lee’s view on Singapore’s US relationship changed quickly after the British made some decisions which turned out badly for Singapore – in 1968, the British labour government devaluated the pound by 14% which had devastating effects on Singapore foreign reserves. On top of that, in 1971, the British announced they were closing the Singapore naval base almost immediately. These developments shocked Lee and after some damage control he flew to the US for a sabbatical at the JFK school of government at the Harvard university. In the same year he went to New York to speak for a large crowd of decision makers at the economic club of New York about the positives of investing in Singapore. Over the next year, Lee became a frequent visitor of Harvard and New York
  - This marked the beginning of a close relationship between Lee and the US political and business establishment.
  - In the 1960s until the 1990s, when the Soviets posed a threat to America and the world, Singapore and the US were in a good relationship because the strategic interest of both countries coincided.
  - The US wanted to balance out power in SEA against the USSR and communist China and so was Singapore.
  - With the fall of Saigon in 1975, Lee assumed that should the great powers successfully avoid war among themselves in the following two or three decades, China would eventually become the most

dominant force in Asia and regard the SEAsian region as its rightful sphere of influence.

- Lee believed in the need for the US to maintain a naval presence to balance against both the USSR and China
- However, convincing an America still reeling from its Vietnam experience that SEA countries needed US backing did not prove easy – both the administrations of President Carter and Reagan didn't sustain high level of interest in SEA after the Vietnam War.
- Singapore has never formally agreed on an alliance with the US, but Tim Huxley in his work *Defending the Lion City* describes the relationship as a quasi-alliance.
- In 1969, the US Navy opened an office in Singapore to control and coordinate the regular ship visits during the Vietnam War
- After the 1970s, the US and Singapore began managing joint naval exercises. During this time the US became the main defense supplier for Singapore and during the 1980s the US air force began using Singapore as a base for their operations in the Indian Ocean.
- Closer to home, Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in late 1978 made the prospect of the domino theory – the notion that should any SEA state fall to communism it would trigger a chain reaction whereby other regional states would go the same way – more conceivable to Singapore leaders.
- To prevent that prospect from being realised, Thailand's role as the buffer state – and, crucially, America's unequivocal support for its Thai ally – against potential Vietnamese aggression would become a key rationale for the ASEAN effort to mobilise international condemnation of Vietnam's invasion and occupation of Cambodia. Needless to say, Singapore played a key part in that mobilisation which would involve persuading the US to support ASEAN against not just Vietnamese aggrandisement, but importantly for the Singaporeans a Soviet-backed aggrandisement:

*“Singapore's strategic perspective was ostensibly influenced by the Soviet Union's support for the Vietnamese invasion. However, Singaporean calculations were even more subtle. Singapore believed that a stable balance of power in the region required the involvement of the US. By presenting the Vietnamese action as an example of Soviet expansionism, it attempted to draw US attention. Singapore still adhered to the domino theory of communist expansion...Singapore regarded itself as highly vulnerable; it could not afford to lose the buffer states between its and Vietnam. (Narine, 2002)*

- Besides military aid, Lee was not unaware that Singapore benefited from approximately \$300 million of export orders per year from South Vietnam as a result of the war, apart from the business brought by the troops on leave in Singapore.
  - The most immediate gains from LKY's August 1967 trip to US was economic. The PM and the members of the Economic Planning Unit met no fewer than 150 businessmen in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco "each of whom is worth US\$250 to US\$500 million personally". – an aim of this trip was to woo US capital to Singapore.
- Singapore's engagement with USSR
    - Singapore established full diplomatic relations with Russia in 1968 but contacts were minimal.
    - Russia had little economic value to Singapore beyond the catch of their fishing fleet that trawled the Indian and Pacific Oceans.
    - They formed a joint venture with one of the Singaporean companies to can their fish and also repair their vessels in Singapore dockyards.
    - The Soviets, however, were interested in Singapore because of its strategic location.
    - After 1970, Singapore would have no more high-level contacts with Moscow except for four visits from Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister NP Firiyubing to Singapore between 1974 and 1980.
    - They were suspicious of ASEAN as an anti-Soviet pro-US organisation.
    - After Vietnam invaded Cambodia, Russian propaganda had turned hostile against Singapore, speaking of 25 million Chinese who lived outside the People's Republic of China as China's proxies, a dangerous Fifth Column in their countries of residence.
    - After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Singapore joined the boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics, froze the cultural exchange programme and deferred all visits by their economic delegations. Singapore also denied repair facilities and even bunkering to their naval and auxiliary vessels in Singapore civilian dockyards, and overflight and technical stopover facilities for Soviet aircraft flying to Indonesia
    - The relations remained frozen for nearly a decade until Gorbachev introduced glasnost and perestroika.

- Singapore's commitment to diplomatic neutrality and economic openness contributed to its resilience in the face of shifting Cold War dynamics.
- In the first three years of Singapore's independence, the principal concern of the PAP Government has been to establish a firm economic and defence base. The indications are that Singapore will find that her interests are more bound up with the industrially advanced West than with the African, Asian or Southeast Asian countries. This seems to be reflected in her emerging foreign policy. Singapore may still wish to cultivate her ties with Afro-Asia and the Communist countries, and achieve as wide a spread of contacts as possible on the ideological spectrum, but ideology as a factor in foreign policy will clearly be subordinated to her more pressing economic and security interests.
- In conclusion, Singapore's responses to Cold War developments between 1965 and 1991 were shaped by a nuanced understanding of its principles, national interests, and the dynamics of regional and international politics. The nation's commitment to sovereignty, rule of law, economic growth, and regional stability laid the foundation for its success in navigating the complexities of the Cold War era.

**Read These:**

1. <https://www.pmo.gov.sg/Newsroom/speech-mr-lee-kuan-ye-w-minister-mentor-s-rajaratnam-lecture-09-april-2009-530-pm-shangri>
2. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20067737?seq=15>