Teaching international relations in Singapore 1956–2008: from supporting development to global city aspirations?

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Abstract

This preliminary survey of international relations (IR) teaching in Singapore argues that while the hegemonic goals of the nation-state have been pervasive since 1956, the influences upon IR teaching have become more complex and subtle in tandem with Singapore's transition from pristine developmentalism to an aspiring global city. Today, IR teaching has acquired characteristics of a division of labor among the main universities, research institutes, and business-oriented schools. Nonetheless, the dialectics of whether the future lies in open-ended

knowledge inquiry or hewing to some version of state-associated prag-matism remains unresolved.

1 Introduction

International relations (IR) as a social science has been framed by debates about development in Singapore. In 1960, Goh Keng Swee, the Minister of Education, wrote in his introduction to the inaugural issue of *Bakti: Journal of the Political Study Centre* that 'The people of Singapore, and particularly our civil service, cannot afford to be ignorant of and apathetic to political realities. We believe that through analysis and discussion of the present political, economic and social situation in Singapore, the challenge which this new democratic state faces will clearly emerge' (Goh, 1960, p. 3). The Political Study Centre had been constituted by the newly elected People's Action Party (PAP) government on 17 August 1959 to inculcate a sense of national mission to the role of the civil service. The journal *Bakti* was established in tandem to generate discussion within the frame of development for a practical purpose. It is telling that a civil servant reminisced in that very inaugural issue about the 'internationalized' dimension to policy-making encountered at 'the first course' at the Centre: 'So amidst groans emanating from brains that must now think new and fast, the group settled down. There were stimu-lating lectures, lively questions and answers, and uninhibited discussions covering the general history of [the] East–West relationship, population changes in Singapore, our economic problems, our problems in nation building, communist tactics both here and in the Federation with their threats to Malayan nationalism. Theory and practice were equally studied and political institutions were studied against the background of political thought. Both the Western and Eastern political scenes were dealt with … If the histories of other modern states with their mistakes, sorrows and achievements are not studied in their relation to our own history, there is the danger of losing the significance of our own national-ism' (Cheong, 1960, p.27). These excerpts suggest that developmental-ism, as defined by the PAP government, meant the fostering of a mentality conducive toward a united multiracial nationhood and peace-ful democratic statehood, amidst a drive to eliminate poverty on a sus-tainable basis in spite of the ongoing Cold War. Moreover, this was to be achieved by comparing foreign realities with domestic needs, and

consequently, following judicious analyses, selecting the appropriate pathways for development. Alternatively, the better parts of foreign examples could be pragmatically synthesized for a Singaporean way. The purpose of these lengthy quotes is not to reiterate the propaganda of the period in question but to illuminate the interaction between state ideology and the teaching of IR in Singapore. Some political scientists in the older universities have even dissented somewhat against the pragmatic uses of IR knowledge. K.J. Ratnam, the first Malayan-born Head of Political Science at the Singapore Campus of the then University of Malaya, argued that between social scientists and policy-makers,

> . . . even when they are not set apart by incompatibilities in their ideological orientation and intellectual background, the different professional *milieux* in which they operate make it difficult for them to interact smoothly and without friction. The academic social scientist sees himself as the custodian of the traditions of free inquiry, intellectual curiosity, open discussion and the free flow of information. He is not, or feels ought not to be, encumbered by external pressures and is not unduly constrained by codes of professional conduct which encourage conformity or which require deference based on rank. Where he does have external obligations or political and other affiliations, these tend to be personal and voluntary . . . To question and to doubt, to probe and to explain – these remain the hallmarks of his vocation and lie at the root of his intellectual activity' (Ratnam, 1980, p. 6).

These quotes are meant to situate this entire study within a three-way dialectic between a governmental political communication of the appropriate application of social science for national development; a non-governmental choice to align with the political propaganda for national development; and a universalistic claim to academic objectivity in relation to any development. The dialectics between the three discourses are contextualized within the PAP-articulated vision of developmentalism. The limited space afforded by this preliminary study does not allow us to take any normative position among the three as each has its own internal moral claims with degrees of incommensurability. This might constitute the subject for a separate study.

Nonetheless, in relation to the evolution of IR teaching in Singapore, these dialectics between discourses must be taken seriously for a fuller account. While there is ample reason to claim that Singapore's academic

and policy-making IR worldview is generally inclined toward Realism (Singh, 1999; Leifer, 2000), it has to be recognized that there are degrees to which the teaching of IR has linearly socialized such a worldview. There are ample official speeches by ministers spouting the familiar tenets of describing IR behavior as akin to the law of the jungle; or where the big fish in the ocean prey upon smaller fish, shrimp and plankton; connoting an environment where 'might' is frequently the synonym for 'right'. This suited the PAP's early nationalist narrative that Singapore was a small state permanently at the mercy of larger predators. This straightforward reading implies Realism with a 'big R' of the form that IR students associate with Thucydides, Meinecke, Machiavelli, Morgenthau, and Mearsheimer. But as others (Margolin, 1998; Dent, 2002; Ganesan, 2005; Chong, 2004, 2006) have argued, Singaporean IR realism is sometimes a chameleon better characterized with a 'small r'; this takes into account some liberal, pragmatic, and constructivist aspirations in the Singaporean worldview. Interestingly, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew illustrated this point in a speech in 1965: 'The manifestations of [IR] motivations whether they are greed, envy, ambition, greatness, generosity, charity, inevitably end in a conflict of power positions. *And how that conflict is resolved depends upon the accident of the individuals in charge of a particular tribe or nation at a given time*' (Lee, 1965, p. 5, italics ours).

Controversies concerning the cultivation of the future Singaporean toward a chameleon-like agility to adjust to circumstances will be evident in the plan of our argument. We will examine IR as a training ground for citizenship and global orientation in the course of the tracing of Nanyang University through to the National University of Singapore as battlegrounds for defining IR syllabi. Next, the strategic and security studies enterprise surveys the security aspects of developmentalism with the evolution of both the Singapore Armed Forces' Training Institute and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies. Thirdly, the newer institutional ventures of UniSIM (Singapore Institute of Management University) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Diplomatic Academy occasion a return to the pristine developmental mentality of the 1960s. The fourth section looks at the 'repackaged IR' that emerges within the business-oriented schools. Through these quasi-historical narratives, a picture should emerge of three dialectics contesting and shaping rival meanings of Singaporean developmental 'realism'.

2 IR for citizenship and beyond: from adult education and Nanyang University to the National University of Singapore

The advent of the IR curriculum in Singapore mirrors the nationalist struggle. The British colonial authorities who founded the island colony were obsessed only with trade and minimal administration for well over a century. This was notwithstanding the claim by its founder, Stamford Raffles, to produce both a great commercial centre and in tandem, a beacon of civilization through education. Raffles' successors adopted a laissez faire attitude toward the nascent society of colonial subjects mixing the indigenous Malays with natives from the furthest reaches of Southeast Asia, Arabs, South Asians, and Chinese from almost every major province of China. John Furnivall (1948) has of course coined this 'the plural society' where pragmatic interracial transactions in the marketplace do not translate into the thick imagined community of nationhood. This was all the British officially needed to maintain the prosperity of Singapore. The early histories of modern education in Singapore, from the 1860s to the 1940s, can be traced to the voluntary efforts of western missionaries, and the initiatives of the various ethno-religious leaders among the respective immigrant and native Asian communities. By the time the British reconsolidated their authority following the end of the Japanese Occupation, nationalist ferment was in play with some 10 nationalist parties, including the PAP and the Labour Front, jostling to be the first to articulate education toward citizenship. In this way, IR education had assumed salience under the cover of a desirable Singaporean citizenship as 'an attitude of mind and a habit of action ... This spirit must be distilled from the feeling of belonging in a unique way to Singapore, the feeling of equally belonging' (Thomson, 1958, p. 1). These missionary words were printed in an official pamphlet sanctioned by the erstwhile Labour Front government of Lim Yew Hock in March 1958 under a constitution that reserved Singapore's foreign affairs responsibilities exclusively for Great Britain. As a result, the nationalist politicians from both the Left and the Right were competing in varying degrees of urgency with programs for preparing the semi-literate and illiterate racial communities with what Benedict Anderson has termed the 'unified fields of exchange and communication' (1991, p. 44) in language, literature, perception, and emotion. Available annual

reports of the erstwhile Singapore Council for Adult Education that was established in 1950 suggested that awareness began with area studies courses such as 'History of Malaya' and 'History of Southeast Asia', leading on to the more conceptual 'Economics and Public Affairs', 'Freedom and Social Organisation', 'Marxism and Modern Thought', and 'International Organisations' between 1957 and 1958 (SCAE, 1959, p. 10). Lecturers in Economics, Sociology, History, and Political Science from the then University of Malaya (Singapore Campus) and Nanyang University were invited to teach these adult classes that combined the equivalent of primary and secondary curricula into a single educational certificate. Vocational courses complemented the social sciences and humanities. As the report for 1957–8 indicated, the Labour Front government was inadequately matching its progressive rhetoric with funding and staffing for Adult Education. The report declared that even with a lean grant from the government, 'we have to expand our work; there is no such thing as a stand still stage in adult education, especially in a young country rapidly changing its political status' (SCAE, 1959, p. 1). A founding PAP member, and soon to be Singapore's first foreign minister, Sinnathamby Rajaratnam, was co-opted into the Further Education Committee of the Council.

2.1 IR at Nanyang University: from Chinese worldview to developmentalism

Evidently, the educational aspects of nation-building were being translated into a top-down situational awareness of Singapore's geopolitics among its citizens within a context of gradual decolonization through a combination of nationalist pressure and British connivance. On the ethnic front, the Chinese community made another significant stride by campaigning hard for a Chinese-stream university. The story of the controversial Nanyang University started with the influence of intellectual currents from China dating back to the 1800s. The notion of the 'international' began with the facts of a politically dispersed diaspora whose mental focus lay with preserving a transnational cultural Chineseness. As Andrew Lind's (1974) monograph *Nanyang Perspective: Chinese Students in Multiracial Singapore* argues, respect for education, verging on reverence, runs deep in the traditional Chinese psyche regardless of their location. Unsurprisingly, the evolution of Chinese education since the

late 1800s was politicized by its connection with events in China. Schools founded by wealthy Chinese merchants were concerned with the cultural and material sustenance of the local Chinese community. The British encouraged these intra-racial welfare initiatives as a means of maintaining peace and prosperity at minimal costs to themselves. Not surprisingly, the local Chinese community provided succour for the anti-Manchu movements in the 1890s and played a part in the financial upkeep of Kuomintang efforts in governing China following the 1911 revolution. When the Chinese Communist Party led by Mao Zedong seized power in 1949 in Beijing, overseas Chinese in Singapore were alarmed by the new regime's campaign of systematic marginalization of traditional Chinese philosophy, arts, and other culture in the name of anti-feudal revolution. Furthermore, the political odium earned by Maoist China from its role in actively supporting the Malayan Communist Party's (MCP) largely Chinese insurgency ensured that the British authorities, the Malays, the Indians, and non-communist Chinese paid particular attention to the socio-political currents among the local Chinese. Within this context, Nanyang University was proposed by prominent Chinese entrepreneurs in Singapore and Malaya such as Tan Lark Sye, Lee Kong Chian, Lien Ying Chow, and Tan Cheng Lock. It was meant to be a Malayan university with Chinese as a medium of instruction, providing a mixture of courses in Chinese history and culture and modern technical subjects. Although they unabashedly intended to preserve a Chinese stream in higher education as an alternative to the English medium University of Malaya, the progenitors of Nanyang were mindful of racial sentiments in Singapore and Malaya by deliberately choosing 'Nanyang' (i.e. South Seas) over names that explicitly included 'Chinese' and 'China' (Tan, 1972, pp. 28–29). Non-Chinese media and political parties in both territories attacked the idea of Nanyang as a huge spanner thrown into the making of a multiracial Singapore and Malaya given the progress made toward self-government in both territories by 1953. The spectre of communism gave further ammunition to Nanyang's critics, especially since MCP propaganda accused 'British Imperialists' of placing obstacles to the founding of Nanyang as part of a systematic plot to eradicate Chinese education (Freedom News, 2008a, p. 145). Yet ironically, that very MCP propaganda machine also castigated 'the big capitalists such as Lee Kong Chian, Tan Lark Sye and Tan Siak Kiu etc., [for] incessantly making

slavish utterances to the people in praise of the "Bi-lingual education" of the British Imperialists' (Freedom News, 2008b, p. 156). The only way Nanyang's founders could demonstrate their independent good intentions was to adhere to the spirit of a politically popular Singaporean developmentalism in offering 'the alternative of a system geographically in Malaya but culturally inspired by Chinese thinking . . . and an interesting experiment in a mixed society of confused cultural loyalties and linguistic habits' (Pro-Nanyang publication quoted in Tan, 1972, p. 25).

This had implications on the IR curriculum that finally appeared in print in the first edition of the Nanyang University Calendar in 1963. It was thus eminently pragmatic that IR was subsumed under a Department of Economics and Political Science which also taught initially the first-year courses of the College of Commerce. These commenced full-fledged teaching only in March 1956. According to the 1963 Calendar, a separate Department of Political Science only emerged in the preceding few years. This hewing to the line of developmentalist caution was evident in the line up of courses. Three-quarters of the syllabus between 1963 and 1978 comprised courses classifiable within the fields of Comparative Politics, Public Administration, and the occasional Political Theory. The former two subfields were heavily premised upon the structural–functional political analysis associated with Gabriel Almond, Sidney Verba, Seymour Lipset, and Karl Deutsch. Comparative government introduced students to the governmental structures of Great Britain, France, the United States, and the USSR. The 'History of Political Thought' accounted for the nature and role of the state with reference to ancient Greece, Rome, the Middle Ages 'down to the modern period' (Nanyang Calendar, 1963, p. 60). Among the 13 required courses for majoring in Political Science in 1963, only four were distinctively IR and offered only at undergraduate third and fourth division levels: 'International Law', 'International Relations', 'History of Diplomacy', and 'International Organizations'. Among the courses required for a minor, one-third could be classified as IR, and these were the above-mentioned 'International Law' and 'International Relations'. The stated content of these IR courses implied a very conservative functionalist approach that persisted throughout the rest of the 1960s and 1970s: 'Pol.313 (subsequently, GPA.34) IR: (1) Basic factors affecting Interstate Relations; (2) Instruments for the Promotion of National Interest; (3) Control of Interstate Relations; (4) Shaping of National Policy; (5) Conflict and Change in the Postwar

World; (6) Building of a More Stable World Order' (Nanyang Calendars, 1963, p.61; 1970–1, p. 251). Likewise, the 'International Law' course covered its sources, subjects, rights and duties of states, Law of the Sea, and pacific settlement. The 'History of Diplomacy' (subsequently, 'Diplomatic History of Europe') was both Eurocentric and chronological treating the important diplomatic conventions and controversies from the Congress of Vienna through World Wars One and Two, to the United Nations (UN), and the rise of Afro-Asian diplomacy. The course 'International Organizations' likewise takes a descriptive approach toward the League of Nations and the UN, analyzing their functions, failures, and peace-keeping operations.

The course contents appear to play up to the widely perceived need to be utilitarian in servicing the manpower requirements of a developmental state in need of diplomats and other functionaries to negotiate with the aid-giving western powers. Marxism and liberal approaches to IR appear to be marginalized. Not surprisingly, the 1966–67 Nanyang Calendar showed that the Department of Political Science had morphed into the Department of Government and Public Administration. Initially, the teaching of IR was consistently confined to its 25% curricular position under Chinese as well as non-Asian heads of department. Interestingly, both Victor Fic (Ph.D. Columbia *and* Ph.D. Indian School of International Studies) and George Thomson (M.A. Edinburgh and Oxon) who were the Heads in 1969–71 and 1974–75, respectively, signaled positive rapport with the PAP government by publishing in the earlier-mentioned government journal *Bakti* on issues of public administration, political economy, and Asian communist insurgencies. Under Victor Fic's headship, more practical IR courses, such as 'Foreign Policy of Major Powers' at undergraduate level and 'Advanced International Relations and Organisation: New States in World Politics' at graduate level, were introduced and taught by the stalwart IR specialist in the Department since the early 1960s, Li Hsiang-Lin (M.A. Tokyo). George Thomson in turn served as Director of the Political Study Centre and lectured interns at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Wu Teh Yao (Ph.D. Harvard), who was previously Head of the University of Singapore's Political Science Department between 1971 and 1976, served briefly as Head of Nanyang's Department of Government and Public Administration in 1976–77 where he encouraged a more behavioralist and methodological tinge in the IR curricula. For instance, the briefly

amalgamated undergraduate course 'GP205 International Relations and Organization' admitted topics such as 'The Making of Foreign Policy' and 'Action, Reaction and Interaction among Nations in the Postwar World and the Nature of Contemporary National Power' in a nod toward a more explicit theoretical focus (Nanyang Arts, 1976–77, p. 75). Incidentally, this trend of scientifically rigorous IR reached a kind of plateau in the transitional year of 1980–81 when Nanyang merged with the University of Singapore to constitute the National University of Singapore (NUS). 'PS202 International Relations' now offered 'analysis of some major theoretical models of international relations; international system, balance of power, bipolar etc . . . . Emergence of Asia and its impact on international politics. Superpowers, small powers and the place of China in the international system' (Nanyang Arts, 1980–81, p.47). Two new fourth year courses 'International Politics and World Order' and 'Strategic Studies' problematized international order and war as global concerns of mankind and other 'new approaches'. This was a reflection of the nuances of Third World development and the beginnings of regional peace initiatives (read ASEAN) making headway into the Cold War agendas of foreign ministries.

2.2 IR from the University of Singapore to National University of Singapore: discipline to sophistication?

If the politics of higher education and nation-building intruded upon Nanyang University's IR curricula in a major way, parallel currents were also affecting the University of Singapore. Following the end of the Japanese Occupation, the patchwork existence of the King Edward VII Medical College, Raffles College, and the Sultan Idris Teachers' Training College, separately located in Singapore and Malaya respectively, gave grounds for both the British and Federation governments to consider the developmental possibilities of erecting a University of Malaya 'system' to prepare the populations of both territories for the responsibilities of a modern economy and administration (Khoo, 2005). Right from its founding in early October 1949, it was envisioned that with the British Commissioner-General for Southeast Asia lending his prestige as the Chancellor of the University of Malaya, this university could function as the supreme portal of higher education notwithstanding the fledgling aspirations of Nanyang University. The first priorities of the University

of Malaya were the engineering and sciences. It was only following the presentation of a report from two consultants from the University of London in 1955 that the University of Malaya's Senate decided to establish a Department of Political Science. Yet it was not until May 1961 that such a Department appeared as a distinct field. Unlike Nanyang's ability to draw upon the Chinese academic diaspora displaced by Mao's Revolution in China, the University of Malaya had few dedicated political scientists, much less IR experts. Nascent political science expertise had been 'sheltering' under the History Department within syllabi treating the histories of the various parts of Asia, as well as a course curiously titled 'History of Modern International Relations'.

An expatriate, Robert Stephen Milne (R.S. Milne), was appointed the first Head of Political Science (1961–65), with K.J. Ratnam, the first Malayan-born political scientist, serving alongside as core faculty in the start-up phase (Ratnam interview, 2008). As published output by both Milne and Ratnam suggest, there was certain urgency to establishing a corpus of curricula and research that enlightened undergraduates about the circumstances within which they were born into new nation-states. It is also notable that the first graduands schooled under Milne and Ratnam continued to probe at the nature of developmental political science in Singapore, and by extension, of IR more than two decades later. Pang Cheng Lian's thesis titled *The People's Action Party*, and Chan Heng Chee's works on the politics of Singapore's survival and the sources of the PAP's dominance at the grassroots, have attained the status of standard readings on courses covering Singapore's politics. Milne was not driven by pressure to align with the PAP's developmentalism; he pursued the study of topics such as the Malaysian Parliamentary Election of 1964, comparative studies of public administration, and Philippine political economy, of his own accord (Milne interview, 2008). In academic year 1962–63, he was recorded in the University of Singapore Annual Report (1962–63) as a member of a Working Party on Training set up by the Singapore Civil Service. His successor as Head, K.J. Ratnam (1965–70), was also sympathetic to the government's developmentalism but from a professional distance. This translated into a purely academic focus in his research and lecturing. He worked collegially with Milne to produce what both felt were urgent curricula for a developing nation: some rudiments of political theory; politics of ethnicity; electoral systems and especially, the politics of Singapore and

Malaysia in keeping with the popular interest in the destinies of the new Asian states (Ratnam interview, 2008). The standing of the other permanent staff such as Joseph Jiang and Robert Gamer, supplemented by visiting scholars like David Wurfel, attest to this emphasis. Obaid ul-Haq, a Pakistani, was sole IR specialist who was teaching while also working on his doctorate for an American university. Between 1962–63 and 1969–70, area studies and comparative politics courses such as 'Federalism. The Politics of Multi-racial Societies', 'Public Administration Theory' and 'Political Parties and Elections' dominated; a single omnibus course, 'International Relations', registered its presence as either one-sixth or one-eighth of the undergraduate curriculum in any given year. There were no graduate courses taught; graduate and post-graduate degrees were purely research achievements that lent themselves to practical topics of the day. By the final year of Ratnam's tenure as Head, a significant expansion of Comparative Politics had taken place including the domestic institutions of the Superpowers, China, and Eastern Europe. IR had differentiated into a half segment under 'PS102(b) Introduction to IR', a 'PS302 International Relations', and 'PS404 International Organizations'. The latter three mirrored Nanyang's content in terms of the basics of the international system, making of the national interest, and the workings of the League and UN. These syllabi coincided interestingly with an expansion in Singapore's foreign affairs activism under the shadow of the nadir of America's war in Vietnam. Even so, the fact that IR courses constituted no more than one-sixth of the full complement of Political Science indicated that priorities lay overwhelmingly in domestic governance and stability. The promise of a potentially richer IR curriculum had to await the mid-1980s.

Despite these private initiatives toward developmentalism, and its gradualist impact on IR teaching, the PAP government had wanted to involve the Department staff in active campaigns for national education. This led to some resistance and the 'crisis' of 1970–71. As many former Department heads explained it, the PAP government experienced an acute sense of embattlement in the years immediately following the unhappy separation from Malaysia on 9 August 1965 (Ratnam; Lau interviews, 2008). The idea of developmentalism took on an urgency in terms of re-orienting both the public mindset, and the perceptions of fresh graduates, toward the PAP narrative of survivalism. Premier Lee Kuan Yew himself devoted several talks on campus

to the direction of Singapore's foreign policy in integrating great power stakes into Singapore's prosperity. One expatriate lecturer at the time, Roland Puccetti (1972), recorded his perceptions of a string of instances of governmental interference in a provocative article titled 'Authoritarian Government and Academic Subservience: the University of Singapore'. What is illustrative are the instances in 1969–70 where Puccetti recounted Premier Lee's many furious ripostes toward academic and student critics at forums on campus, among which he related one that unfolded on 2 June 1969 at the National Theatre. On this occasion all first year Arts and Social Science students heard a lecture by Lee addressed in particular to staff of the Departments of Political Science, Sociology and Philosophy, because these 'were "value-prone" subjects which could not be taught independently of what was going on in society. They invited a critical assessment of social problems, which was not the case with mathematics, for example, or engineering' (Puccetti, 1972, p. 232). K.J. Ratnam was mentioned in this account as one of Lee's protagonists in the question-and-answer session. In an exclusive meeting with staff of the three Departments immediately afterward, Lee reportedly informed them 'that he knew what "twaddle" they were teaching students about Singapore, the rupture with Malaysia in 1965, etc. Some of this teaching, he went on, was not just of poor quality but dishonest . . . He wanted the staff to understand one thing: Singapore citizens could criticise all they liked; it was their country, and if they didn't like his policies they could always form their own party and try to defeat him at the polls. Malaysians were always welcome but if they meddled in Singapore politics they could just catch the next bus across the causeway to Johore. Other foreign malcontents would be put on a plane within 24 hours' (Puccetti, 1972, p. 233). In Puccetti's assessment, the University's potential had been whittled down, 'its teaching staff polarised by citizenship, foreign staff demoralised and students bewildered and intimidated' (p. 223). This account captures the occasionally sharp confrontation between the three dialectical positions of governmental developmentalism, non-governmental volition in aligning with developmentalism, and the supporters of full academic freedom highlighted in our argument's introductory framework. Ratnam (interview, 2008) had even argued that research and teaching could most credibly support the PAP's goals by precisely arguing for them through

independently arrived conclusions. The crisis of 1970–71 played out as an exodus of expatriate staff from Political Science, but it was also an epistemic shift since it meant that the PAP leaders had indirectly disciplined IR through their version of developmentalist political science. The staff strength of Political Science declined to two at the end of the 1971–72 academic year as a result of the departures, and thus began what the first Department handbook described as the phase of 'localization' (PSNUS, 1984–85, p. 6).

Professor Wu Teh Yao seemed just the right person for the restoration of the department in academic year 1970–71. A doctorate from Harvard and a believer in Confucianism, he tried, as the new Head of Department, to reconcile the need for academic independence and the priorities of politics and foreign policy in an *Asian* developmental context. In Wu's words, 'it is so because politics is a very highly emotionally-charged human activity which embraces all human activities. Where does a political scientist stand? To be just neutral? Maybe this is a way out. But Political Science at any time in any country and in any age is not a "value free" discipline ... To use such jargons such as dictators, totalitarians and label those in power could be occupational suicide. Occupational suicide or no suicide, it is a Western ill-wind that blows no Southeast Asians any good. Furthermore, by indulging in political labelling, political scientists will miss the opportunity to make their vocation a relevant and constructive one' (Wu, 1973, p. 8). He foresaw parallels between the historical context of Confucius during China's warring states era (722–481 BC) and the Cold War context of Southeast Asia. Hence, Confucius' admonition to academics was worth heeding in Singapore; Wu quoted this telling passage from the sage: 'When your country is in difficulty and has not established an orderly society, your conduct should be lofty and bold. But your words must be considerate and subdued' (Wu, 1973, p. 9). Likewise, Wu extrapolated this approach for the IR curricula: 'the international society must be perceived as a whole and the whole must also be viewed from its related parts'. IR should be understood humanistically: 'A nation which does most to contribute to the peace and stability of the world and to raise the spiritual and material welfare of mankind will win the hearts and minds of men. Who wins the hearts and minds of men in this way deserves to command the respect of and influence over mankind' (Wu, 1979, pp. 7, 20). This provides a strong clue to the curricula trajectory for IR between 1971

and 2008 in its transition to the NUS. Courses in IR, as in the other political science subfields, ought to be in tune with the needs of the times and be grounded geographically in Singapore and Southeast Asia. Great powers and even local politics need to be comprehended from the perspective of helping the young republic steer a stable course amidst the uncertain waters of international politics. The Cold War added only more grist to the mill of curricula content.

On paper, the range of courses offered did not alter significantly from the previous headships, what was more pronounced was the injection of more of an Asian focus to the case studies in theory courses. The first-year undergraduate received an introduction to IR as one of four subfields, and then went on to do the omnibus 'PS202 International Relations', followed by 'PS304 International Politics of Southeast Asia', 'PS405 International Organization', and 'PS409 International Politics and World Order'. The 'International Politics of Southeast Asia' was essentially a new creation from 1973 onwards, intended to complement the domestically oriented 'Government and Politics of Southeast Asia'. The former's content dealt with 'the processes of international politics with emphasis on the problems of stability and security in Southeast Asia. Specific fields of study will be related to regionalism, regional security, irredentism, communism and the foreign policies of selected countries in Southeast Asia' (UOS, 1973–4, p. 46). This was a clear reflection of Singapore's emerging policy emphasis on making greater efforts relating to the Southeast Asian neighborhood given the early trials of its membership in ASEAN. Subsequently, 'PS306 Foreign Policies of the Major Powers' was added to raise awareness of the intrusion of the dominant Cold War system of great power interaction into the region – the US, China, the USSR, and Japan comprised the focus. The emphasis on security encouraged the introduction of 'PS406 Strategic Studies' to further inculcate an appreciation among students of the strategies of war and peace in theory, across regions, and to ponder their applicability to Southeast Asian security. By the late 1980s, this course had also spun off a separate module titled 'Regional Security in the Asia Pacific', and by the 2000s, even a master-level module 'Contemporary Asian Diplomacy'. These emphases allowed the Department to mint its own identity for over two decades as a premier research centre for *Asian* Comparative Politics and IR.

Associate Professor Lau Teik Soon, who was the longest serving Head during the post-1971 period (1977–85, 1988–92), argues that the

Department had a mission to prepare undergraduates for the foreign affairs, military, and intelligence agencies by acquainting them with the complex realities of the region Singapore was operating in. Consequently, they could explain policy-making issues more accurately to the public. The Political Science Department ought 'to be policy-oriented and attempt to be current in its research. It should also attempt prediction where reasonable' (Lau interview, 2008). As a reflection of this, most Singaporean staff were either former civil servants, played active roles in policy-relevant think-tanks (e.g. Singapore Institute of International Affairs, Institute of Policy Studies and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies), or served as consultants to various branches of the civil service (PSNUS, 1989–90). Since there is little by way of published analyses of the histories of these think-tanks, one is unable to ascertain the degree of distance between governmental developmentalism and participating IR academics. Lau captures, nevertheless, the 'Realism' of that generation of IR staff: 'to me, the laboratory test was whether Singapore could survive. IR theory seemed to me to lack substantive relevance to Asia, whether you label it 'International Politics', 'International Law' or simply 'International Relations Theory'. I always go for the bottomline when explaining IR. You can scrutinize any variety of schools of thought and then try applying the reality test. Theories should be regarded as means to ends. I must say that in my experiences at conferences, the interpretations of the "reality testers" are not even being heard as an alternative' (Interview, 2008). In this way, the focus on understanding Asia coincided with the overwhelming concern with Singapore's 'small state' dilemmas in the minds of local IR academics. This was reflected in a number of publications by Singaporean staff (Singh, 1988, 1999; Lau, 1991; Ganesan, 1991, 1998).

Nevertheless, this sense of the post-1971 consensus on nationalist and *realist* IR appears to have diluted somewhat with the PAP's shift in emphasis toward developing Singapore into a regional, if not global, educational hub in the late 1990s. In university terms, this meant providing a research environment that was 'world class'. The US' cluster of Boston area universities served as a model for the future of the NUS in tandem with Nanyang Technological University (NTU), and the Singapore Management University (SMU). The longest serving Head of the Department of Political Science presiding over this new policy was Lee Lai To. His direction favored eclecticism in IR, inclusive of 'more

theoretical, conceptual, and methodological components' (PSNUS, 2003). Courses on 'International Political Economy', 'Politics and Foreign Policy of the US', and 'Theory of International Relations' became regular features at upper levels; the security stream became reinforced with 'Singapore's Foreign Policy', 'International Conflict Analysis', 'International Security', and 'The Study of War'; fresh departures by Singaporean standards include European IR ('European Foreign Policy'), political communication with a critical angle ('International Politics of Communication'), and international political theory ('Justice, Community and the State', 'International Law and Institutions', and 'International Political Theory'). In 2008, IR courses occupy 33% of the curricula from undergraduate to postgraduate levels (PSNUS, 2008). Under the present head, Professor Terry Nardin (Ph.D. Northwestern), the trend toward IR eclecticism within an all-rounded political science curricula seems assured so long as the present return to a staff complement of a two-thirds expatriate line-up coexisting with a minuscule Singaporean core can thrive where the scenario of 1969–71 failed. Nevertheless, the mood of experimentation under Nardin came under some critical scrutiny by a Visiting Committee comprising professors of Asian politics and public administration from Oxford, Wisconsin, and Pittsburgh. The Committee's evaluation noted that 'while the position of Singapore in Southeast Asia argues for a strong emphasis on Asian politics in the comparative politics sub-discipline, there is little or no coverage of other major areas of the world [such as the European Union, USA and the Middle East]...These courses are important not just because these are major political systems, but more so because students who may be using political science as a background for public service or industry may need to know how these political systems operate for purely practical reasons' (VC Report, 2006, p.6). Therefore, as of 2008, one cannot conclude that NUS political science-cum-IR has earned wide recognition of its global standing.

3 An era of strategic/security studies: the SAFTI Military Institute and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Mirroring the experience of the main universities, the rise of the strategic and security studies enterprise in Singapore is closely tied to teaching

institutions with affiliations to the Singapore Ministry of Defence (Mindef) and the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF). Much as it had been with other local tertiary institutions, key individuals made signal contributions in shaping the pedagogical content and intellectual agenda of the strategic/security studies enterprise in Singapore. Where the education of SAF servicemen and servicewomen is concerned, this task has principally been taken up by the Singapore Armed Forces Training Institute (SAFTI) – later re-launched as the SAFTI Military Institute in 1995 – and its various departments and schools. Yet the SAFTI Military Institute did not operate alone in this respect; it subsequently collaborated with other institutions, in particular the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) that was established in 1996 (and which eventually became the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies [RSIS] in 2007).

At the risk of oversimplification, strategic/security studies education in Singapore can be broadly divided into three distinct pedagogical phases. The first, lasting from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, can arguably be described as the *utilitarian* phase. In a sense, pedagogy is always functional and purposeful. As we understand it, this initial phase treated security education as a principally instrumental enterprise whose aim was to develop, in a relatively brief span of time, capable and knowledgeable citizen-warriors through a 'hothousing' process of sorts. In this regard, the security education of this period consisted in a traditional syllabus of the sort championed by conventional war studies departments of tertiary institutions, with subjects such as military history and strategic thought comprising its core. The second stage, lasting roughly from the early 1990s to the present, can be viewed, for want of a better term, as the *utilitarian-normative* phase. In this respect, the dominant orientation toward developing citizen–warriors is tempered with a growing appreciation for the post-Cold War regional milieu and the emerging security challenges confronting Southeast Asian countries and militaries, not least Singapore's. Security education is thereby utilitarian in keeping with the overarching aim to develop a robust officer corps and non-commissioned officer (NCO) cadre, yet sufficiently 'normative' in introducing new and/or alternative concepts of security that ostensibly fit better with the changing realities of the post-Cold War era (Baylis *et al.*, 2007). Finally, against the backdrop of the second phase, a third phase has arguably emerged in the academic context of the IDSS/RSIS. Since the creation

of the IDSS/RSIS in 1996, pedagogy in IR and security studies has gradually assumed a *deontological* character, particularly where post-graduate education, initially offered to mid-career professionals from Singapore's national security establishment but subsequently to a more diversified student body, is concerned. In this regard, security education is treated in the broadest possible way, where students are exposed to 'the state of the art' in historical as well as contemporary IR and security studies scholarship.

3.1 Phase 1 – IR/security education as a 'utilitarian' enterprise

If the exigencies of nation-building have proved crucial where local university education in IR is concerned, then it has been all the more so with the systematic education of Singapore's military personnel (both professional and conscript) in strategic/security studies, although it is probably fair to use the latter term to describe Singapore's armed forces given that the overwhelming bulk of its officer corps as well as rank and file – more than 90 percent, according to some estimates – are drawn from the citizenry (Huxley, 2003). In this respect, the task of educating Singapore's soldiers, sailors, and airmen has long been viewed as essentially instrumental and functional. According to this logic, the role and raison d'être of the Singapore military is less to develop a professional armed forces than to instill within the citizenry an unequivocal commitment to the defense of their country – a pervasive concern best encapsulated by Singapore's Total Defence philosophy and strategy introduced in 1984 (Tan and Chew, 2008). In former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's words, the Singaporean serviceman or servicewoman 'is part of a reservoir of people who understand discipline, who understand the mechanics of self-defence, and who can, in an emergency, help to defend their own country' (cited in Tan, 2001, p. 276). As in the case of civilian tertiary institutions engaged in the teaching of IR during the formative years of Singapore's nationhood, it is safe to say that a developmentalist imperative motivated security education within the SAFTI Military Institute, whose remit, after all, was to convert civilians into warriors. Here, the old Latin adage, *Si vis pacem, para bellum* ('if you want peace, prepare for war') – arguably taken from Vegetius' *Epitoma Rei Militaris* – holds true not only where the 'hardware' aspect of military readiness is concerned, but also the 'software', that is, the intellectual face of preparedness.

Following national independence in 1965, the People's Action Party (PAP) government was confronted with the urgent task of developing, from scratch, an indigenous military force within a social context that, despite the existence therein of two infantry regiments – 'hand-me-downs' from the British colonial administration – had little to no local military tradition or establishment of which to speak (Mayerchak 1986; Tan, 2001). The General Education Branch (GEB) was formed in the late 1970s, whose remit was to provide instruction to Singapore's nascent group of military leaders. In a crucial sense, the lack of an indigenous military tradition and establishment meant that the embryonic military, thanks to the wholesale transfer of Singaporean public servants into military service, was virtually a 'civil service in uniform' (Peled 1998; Walsh 2007). Given the significant advisory role played by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) – the infamous swarthy 'Mexican agricultural advisers' (Abadi, 2004, p. 178) – in helping to establish the SAF, the so-called 'Israeli model' of security education aimed at 'hothousing' the officer corps, which consisted of an intensive training course lasting nine months, was roundly adopted by SAFTI (Kwa interview, 2008; Sng interview, 2008). As a historian has noted:

> The Israeli methods of fast, intensive, and compact training, coupled with their emphasis on skills and adaptability, were regarded as particularly suitable for Singapore. (Of course, the point was not missed by Singapore's immediate neighbours that the Israelis were perhaps chosen because of the similarity in the security conditions of the two countries [i.e., Israel and Singapore]) (Tan, 2001, p. 282)

Pedagogy during this initial phase, for all intents and purposes, was extremely utilitarian and teleological in scope: to provide a no-frills education program to SAF officers, where only the 'need-to-know' information of war-fighting is required.

3.2 Phase 2 – IR/security education as a 'utilitarian-normative' enterprise

Two important developments in the education of SAF leaders took place in the early 1990s and subsequently a decade later, both with interesting ramifications. The first revamp occurred with the formation, in SAFTI, of the Department of Strategic Studies (DSS). With the

likes of the late Dr Ong Chit Chung, a military historian and Member of Parliament, and Kwa Chong Guan, whose long-time government service included stints with the defence and foreign affairs ministries as well as Singapore's National Museum, the intellectual agenda of officer corps education was modified to include courses on national security and on regionalism and the regional security of Southeast Asia, including the politics of the ASEAN region (Kwa interview, 2008). The second and still ongoing development involves a major overhaul of the intellectual agenda of the Singapore Command and Staff College (SCSC), a preparatory ground for aspiring senior military commanders, with the further inclusion of courses in IR. The evolving syllabi during this phase echoes the wider, post-Cold War intellectual debate in IR and security studies, where traditionalists argue for keeping the concept of security war-focused and state-centric, whereas revisionists appeal for a conceptual redefinition, enlargement and deepening of security to include consideration of 'non-traditional' concerns and non-state subjectivities (Walt, 1991; Kolodziej, 1992; Baldwin, 1995; Betts, 1997). Crucially, the overhaul is no mere academic exercise but a concerted attempt to help SAF officers gain an informed appreciation for their new 'operating environment' and the exigencies of their 'mission creep' (Loo interview, 2008). In essence, today's military role is one that transcends conventional war-fighting to include 'operations other than war', where militaries become involved in peacekeeping, humanitarian missions, disaster relief operations, and the like (Caballero-Anthony and Acharya, 2005).

Thus understood, the first development associated with the establishment of the DSS in a sense reflected a limited appreciation for broader considerations in the form of concerns and issues that are, as an ex-DSS lecturer has put it, 'good to know' (Loo interview, 2008). Knowledge of regional relations and ASEAN affairs, which a traditionalist might disregard as a prerequisite of a relevant military education, was nevertheless included in the course syllabi. In this respect, pedagogy in the education of military commanders had, by the 1990s, assumed a normative dimension in addition to the predominant necessity of making warriors out of regular citizens. This utilitarian-normative enterprise would continue into the early twenty-first century, where the transition from a syllabus narrowly confined to *strategic* studies to a significantly broader one oriented

toward *security* studies is rendered complete, where the once formidable line separating knowledge on war and strategy (i.e., 'hard' security), on the one hand, and knowledge on regional and international affairs (i.e., 'soft' security) on the other becomes blurred. In short, what was once viewed as merely 'good to know' has become 'need to know' in a contemporary era where militaries do not only fight conventional wars, but help to keep the peace, provide humanitarian service, and do more saving than taking of lives.

3.3 Phase 3 – IR/security education as a 'deontological' enterprise

To call pedagogical activity in the former Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, now rechristened the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 'deontological' is not to imply that the intellectual agenda of the IDSS/RSIS lacked a goal-oriented focus. As a 'leading research and graduate teaching institution in strategic and international affairs in the Asia-Pacific', its objectives are fairly clear: to produce students who are not only academically sound but possess policy-oriented skills. The formation of the IDSS/RSIS provided an alternative to NUS for prospective students interested in a tertiary education in IR. Its three-fold mission is to,

> provide a rigorous professional education that blends high standards of academic scholarship with a strong, practical, real-world emphasis; conduct real-world, policy-relevant research to serve national needs, and the regional and international community; and, finally, build a global network of like-minded professional schools to share knowledge and gain access to international best practices (IDSS, 2006, p. 3).

That said, despite the implicit teleology behind IDSS/RSIS' research and teaching agenda, the fact that its faculty members and research staff enjoy significant freedom to design and implement course syllabi, with little to no interference from the relevant authorities, has essentially meant that knowledge dissemination has occurred in a more or less deontological fashion, with teachers educating their students about the debates, theories, concepts, claims, and research programs germane to the respective knowledge domains for which they are broadly responsible. As such, with pedagogy decoupled from the immediate specific demands

of nation-building, the theoretical paradigm and ideology most associated with the state – Realism and/or *realpolitik* – is but one among many theories taught at the Rajaratnam School. Students are exposed to radical perspectives – such as critical theory, feminism and post-structuralism – as well as mainstream state-centered theories – neoliberal institutionalism, constructivism and of course Realism – in IR courses. Further, students are introduced to a plethora of quantitative and qualitative research methods, requisite analytical tools in social science research without which any elite postgraduate IR education is at best incomplete.

It bears reminding that since its inception the remit of the IDSS/RSIS has included both research and teaching. Further, since it was conceived as an institution that would proffer alternative perspectives on security concerns to those provided by the official Singaporean defense establishment, the question of 'intellectual freedom' was for the most part a non-issue, except where extremely sensitive matters involving Singapore's ties with Indonesia and Malaysia, and only then very selectively so, were concerned. That said, even if the received wisdom regarding the institution's raison d'être was that it exists to 'watch the region' for possible threats against Singapore's security, this logic arguably did not figure prominently in the institution's corporate praxis (Khong interview, 2008). During the early years under the helm of the founding director of IDSS, S.R. Nathan, research orientations at IDSS were structurally configured along lines reminiscent of Singapore's foreign ministry, where analysts were tasked to 'watch' – to systematically observe and critically analyze – the affairs of this or that country (Liow interview, 2008). Nevertheless, region-watching even during the Nathan-led era (1996–99) was seldom if ever conducted with an eye toward the security of Singapore (Khong interview, 2008). There are policy-oriented centers at the Rajaratnam School today whose research mandates are unambiguously Singapore-centric, but those are the exceptions rather than the rule.[1] Indeed, more than anything else, the near-guarantee of intellectual

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[1] Of recent vintage is the development of a 'risk assessment and horizon scanning' (RAHS) capability within the Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), a constitutive component of the Rajaratnam School (CENS, 2007; Quiggin, 2007). To an extent, the work of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), another component of RSIS, also partially involves research and educational activities focusing on issues with dire consequences for Singapore's security.

freedom was amply demonstrated by the institution's hiring policy from its formative period to the present, beginning with non-Singaporean professional academicians such as Yuen Foong Khong, a Harvard-trained Oxford don from Malaysia, and Amitav Acharya, a Canadian scholar originally from India. Both Khong and Acharya played significant roles in defining the intellectual *milieu* at IDSS/RSIS, often by appealing to international academic conventions, norms, and standards. Further, the pattern of foreign hires would continue to the present, where, at the time of writing, out of a faculty and senior research staff of 38, more than half (21) at the Rajaratnam School are non-Singaporeans.

If academic research and scholarship at IDSS/RSIS enjoyed relative autonomy, the same held true where pedagogy were concerned. Although the institution only received official recognition as a postgraduate school in late 2006, its teaching program was established as early as 1998 with an inaugural class of 10 students in its Master of Science in Strategic Studies degree program. At the time of writing, student enrolment at the Rajaratnam School has risen to nearly 160, which, other than Strategic Studies, now has another three specialized degree programs from which to choose, namely, Asian Studies, International Political Economy, and International Relations. The School also runs a small PhD program. To be sure, it could be argued that, not unlike SAFTI, the IDSS/RSIS could conceivably have been driven by a highly utilitarian pedagogical agenda, not least at the beginning of its existence. But the influence of key players – in particular, Professor Lawrence Freedman of Kings College London, who served as a long-time consultant to IDSS/RSIS; other external consultants such as Professor Stephen Walt of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government; Vice-Chancellor Steve Smith of Exeter University; and of course the crucial in-house roles played by Professors Khong and Acharya and other faculty members – helped at various stages of IDSS/RSIS' evolution to ensure that the institution kept an even academic keel even as it was gravitating toward a policy orientation.

Does an apparent deontological orientation in the pedagogy of IDSS/RSIS imply at all that local tertiary education in IR may finally be shedding its developmentalist suppositions? On the contrary, we argue that the bulk of intellectual ideas purveyed and disseminated in courses offered at the Rajaratnam School – a condition that likely describes many, if not most, educational institutions of IR in Asia – suggests that

institutions such as IDSS/RSIS for the most part continue to 'look West' – to Western categories, norms, standards, and terms of reference – for intellectual inspiration (Tan, forthcoming). This is not to say that there is therefore no interesting research and teaching being conducted in non-Western locales. However, their apparent reliance on Western ideas and ideals implies that the task of Singaporean and/or Asian contributions to IR knowledge, whether intended or otherwise, is to supply local color or flavor to what are essentially Western interpretations of international affairs (Acharya and Buzan, 2007). In this regard, there remains a broader developmentalist imperative to intellectual activity within Singapore's institutions of IR, whose ideational indebtedness to and emulation of the West lead them on an incessant intellectual game of 'catch me if you can'. As the Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy once put it, 'Clearly, the 21st century and the next millennium will prove to be very challenging for Asian societies. For most of the past 500 years, they have fallen behind European societies in many different ways. There is a strong desire to catch up. The real answer to the question "Can Asians think" will be provided if they do so' (Mahbubani, 2000, pp. 32–33).

4 The new return to official developmentalism: IR curricula at UniSIM and the diplomatic academy

In the last few years, two newer institutions have bucked the trends toward open-ended knowledge inquiry in IR. One outstanding pragmatic sample comes from the UniSIM (Singapore Institute of Management University) that asserts its appeal as the Republic's 'only privately-funded university focusing on the upgrading and learning needs of working professionals and adult learners' (UniSIM, 2008). It is clearly modeled upon the British Open University concept with a social welfare provision in mind: offer degree-level education for working adults who have had to forego the normal systematic progression toward higher education, as well as those in vocational and semi-skilled professions desiring to enhance their skill sets for continuous employability. In line with this, one IR lecturer had been teaching a single University of London-approved course: 'Introduction to International Relations'. This course focuses on war and peace in the international system by introducing the theories of Realism, Liberalism, and Marxism at the start. It then goes on to examine the impact of

nationalism in IR, the national interest, diplomacy, the UN, non-state actorness, world poverty, contrasts in regionalism between ASEAN and the EU, and environmental politics. The lecturer of this course felt that the course content was too theoretical and abstract; it was also Eurocentric; and yet it aimed to deliver background insights for graduates in the Bachelor in Banking and Finance jointly sanctioned by the University of London (Teo interview, 2008). This minimalist approach clearly reproduced much of a British view of IR for a practical audience in Asia that had no intention to specialize in IR alone. By 2007, staff from the Rajaratnam School of International Studies had been invited to draw up plans for a stand alone Bachelor of Management and Security Studies that was to be designed for officers of the Singapore Police Force. The remit of the program's 'Security Studies' component was to provide training in selected aspects of IR-related knowledge within its modules on regional security and counterterrorism. Thanks in no small part to globalization, a plethora of ramifications, not least the threat of financial crisis, pandemics, transnational criminal activities, religious militancy, and terrorism have become issues of growing concern for Southeast Asia's police forces. This orientation toward policing meant that IR/security concepts and issues could not be presented and discussed in abstract fashion in classrooms, but in ways that matter *vis-à-vis* Singapore's strategic considerations. One of the authors of the present article had the honor of teaching the inaugural batch of students for 'PSZ320 Security Studies I (National Security)'. His syllabus accentuated pragmatism by mooting content such as 'Singapore and the National Security Strategies of Small States', 'Threat Perception and Risk Assessment', 'Contemporary Threats – Flu Pandemic and Cyber Threats', 'Development, Human Rights, Civil Society and Democracy', and 'Social Resilience and the Politics of Difference'. Other curricular topics included introductions to the contemporary history of Southeast Asia, defense needs and military modernization in Southeast Asia, the different dimensions of terrorism in Southeast Asia, and the role of international institutions in Southeast Asia.

In March 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also officially launched its nascent in-house socialization program under the label 'MFA Diplomatic Academy'. Foreign Minister George Yeo commented that this represented a significant improvement upon the tenuous state of training Singaporean diplomats received in the past. Yeo declared that 'we cannot afford to have diplomats who are hidebound. Experience and

tradition are useful only to the extent that they provide a guide to the future. They should not be blinkers preventing us from exploring a wider range of possibilities' (Yeo, 2008). President Nathan's inaugural lecture on the occasion recalled that 'mistakes and improvisations' characterized the foreign service of the 1960s, which had then comprised 'a collection of information gatherers and messenger boys' (Quoted in Lee, 2008a). Interestingly, Nathan attributed the latter quote to the late Southeast Asia expert Michael Leifer. The Singaporean government intends the Diplomatic Academy to be a self-renewing repository of experience whereby the lessons of the early generation of MFA officers will be stored and passed on to their newer colleagues through 'classroom teaching, storytelling and "fireside" chats' (Lee, 2008a). At the time of writing, its curriculum offers a five-week induction for new recruits and courses in diplomacy and IR. Clearly, this signals a trend toward the professionalization of the developmental orientation of IR teaching while retaining the latter's pragmatic tone.

5 The proliferation of higher education in the 2000s: repackaging IR at business-oriented schools?

Outside the main universities and strategic studies institutes, the marginality of IR proliferation appears to be very much the trend. This is explained by the government's emphasis on nurturing technical and service industry-relevant curricula. Since 2002, the state investment promotion agency, the Economic Development Board, has attempted to woo foreign universities to set up either partial or full campuses in Singapore under its 'Global Schoolhouse Initiative'. As of May 2008, seven foreign universities ranging from the Chicago Graduate School of Business and France's INSEAD, to University of Nevada Las Vegas and India's S P Jain Center of Management have set up shop offering primarily Master of Business Administration programmes, design art, digital animation and hospitality management (Lee, 2008b). These are all prominently following the priorities of Singapore's higher profile indices of a knowledge-based economy. The nature of these facets of the 'information society' industries is such that politics tends to be downplayed in favour of what Chan Heng Chee had termed in 1975 the Singaporean 'administrative state', where technocratic logic rules the day. The social sciences

are relevant insofar as they service the softer aspects of business dealing such as avoiding cultural and political insensitivities and practising investment risk analyses. This is very much the train of thought even among the newer local schools that purport to train their students for global competitiveness in their distinct fields. The degree awarding computer school Informatics targets its non-university and working adult audiences with a succinct course titled 'INR1000 International Relations in a Globalising Era' within a Bachelor of Mass Communication jointly packaged with Australia's University of Southern Queensland. This module tracks closely to the popular post-Cold War IR textbook *The Globalization of World Politics: an Introduction to International Relations* edited by John Baylis *et al* (2007), and takes students through a survey of the major schools of IR thought along with slices of regionalism and international regimes (Informatics, 2008a). A veritable crash course in IR dovetailed for mass communication students, this joint degree reveals no continuity in IR learning after the introductory level 1000. Likewise, another of Informatics' hybrids, the 'Master of International Business' run by Australia's Macquarie University reportedly offers 'a modern business degree with a global perspective'. This is supposed to endow its graduands with business knowledge for career mobility across borders, especially appointments involving global operations and marketing (Informatics, 2008b). In many ways, business schools tend to cherry pick components from an IR syllabus to blend into courses addressing transnational marketing techniques and dilemmas.

The fledgling SMU appears to have taken a broadly similar pragmatic approach to the establishment of a small corps of social scientists representing every disciplinary stripe from economics to political science and sociology in token fashion. The raison d'être of the SMU lies in producing business graduates first and foremost. Yet, it claims to have responded to demand for an Oxford-like 'Philosophy, Politics and Economics' program by creating a School of Social Sciences alongside a School of Economics. The SMU Bachelor of Social Science claims to deliver social science with 'business and economics applications in the Asian marketplace' (SMU, 2008). A glance at the SMU's standing syllabus for 2006/7 onwards reveals a heavy emphasis on public policy theory, development issues, political economy, and Asian comparative politics, a view confirmed by informal discussions with both current and former staff, and local exchange students. There are, however, two

cryptically titled courses addressing 'The Globalization of World Politics: Theories, Practices and Issues' and 'The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers, 1500 to Present'. Like one of the courses at the computer school Informatics, the SMU course on 'Globalization of World Politics' tracks the syllabus provided by Baylis *et al.*'s *Globalization of World Politics*, thereby supplying some theoretical exposure that supplements Realist thought. The course treating 'The Rise and Fall of Great Powers' relies heavily on Paul Kennedy's book of the same name and attempts to supply the historical context to IR thought in tandem with the trajectories of imperial moments from the Renaissance to the Post-Cold War era. John Mearsheimer's works on 'offensive realism' get an airing in this syllabus. There is thus an attempt at pluralism in IR knowledge within the rubric of business-flavored pragmatism.

Likewise, a business-savvy angle might be said to be the inspiration behind the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy's (LKYSPP) curricula. While nominally a subsidiary of NUS, the LKYSPP (2008) has branded itself as an Asian equivalent of a leading US public policy school. In that regard, it is unsurprising that its IR syllabus mirrored that of the University of Singapore political science department at its inception – favoring area studies with strong coloring from Comparative Politics and Public Administration approaches. Like at SMU and UniSIM, IR had to be packaged as one integral fabric within the vaster tapestry of studies of good governance. In this way, 'business-and-governance-friendly' IR curricula become quantitatively marginal to the wider analysis and represent a peculiar blend of global orientation with a pragmatic tinge. In this regard, perhaps, the closure of the University of New South Wales Asia (UNSW Asia) in Singapore in 2007 after barely a year of operation is to be lamented since it would have given NUS and RSIS competition in full-fledged IR teaching. In a telling move at the time of writing, the Singaporean government had announced plans for an unnamed fourth full university to cater to industry-relevant and business education to be built upon the site originally intended for the permanent premises of the UNSW Asia Campus.

6 Conclusion: IR realism, with pluralism

What has emerged in this preliminary survey of the main trends of teaching IR in Singapore is the stark reality that the dialectical contention

between the advocates of practical social science for development, non-governmental volition in aligning with developmentalism, and supporters of academic objectivity remain very much alive even after 50 years of formal IR teaching. An overlapping survey conducted by Ganesan in 1999 within the narrower ambit of 'IR research within Political Science in Singapore' yielded the comment that even after the Republic had graduated from the profile of a Third World stereotype, 'what is less clear . . . is whether the pulls between security and sovereignty on the one hand, and economic opportunities on the other, are always and entirely compatible' (1999, p. 175). There appears to be a division of labor between a 'rainbow-colored' approach to IR at NUS, the strategic/security studies cluster at RSIS, the 'professional-pragmatic blend' at UniSIM and MFA Diplomatic Academy, and the 'business/governance packaged IR' at SMU, the Lee Kuan Yew School and the computer schools. The Government of Singapore's officially articulated global city aspirations have suggested a cosmopolitan and more inclusive approach toward con-stituting the miniscule island state as a world class knowledge hub. This is a logical extension of foreign minister Rajaratnam's vision of the Republic as a city connected to a global economic and technological hin-terland that could be expediently transcendental of Southeast Asia's geopolitics.

Faced with these patterns and aspirations, it is likely that the jury will remain out on whether developmentalism will continue to be regarded by some as an authoritarian evil that must be resisted at all costs in the name of progress. After all, the academic socialization and promotion of a Singapore Model of Development *qua* the interdependence among 'good governance', 'dominant party stability', and a 'pragmatic internationalist' outlook in foreign affairs is an asset for Singaporean soft power. Supporters of academic objectivity might also consider reflecting on whether their position translates into continued reliance upon western IR constructs in interpreting Singapore and Asia, thereby stunting the growth of original indigenous scholarship as an unforeseen side effect. In any case, the state of IR teaching in Singapore has to be described at this stage as pluralist in nature even if developmentalism is not dead. After all, many local academics often have to justify to their bureaucratic superiors why their research is both 'good-and-need-to-know' for their target audi-ences. For now, Singapore's IR curricula seem tilted in favor of 'realism'

over 'Realism'. Any future inquiry into a 'Singaporean approach' to IR will have to commence with its unresolved internal dialectics.

Acknowledgements

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