

CHAPTER III

SINGAPORE INFORMATION

This chapter will be discussing about Singapore. The general description about Singapore is; geography, demography, economy, government, economy, and military. Those aspects will lead to Singaporean decision-making process. This chapter will also discuss about agreements between Indonesia and Singapore in this case.

A. The History of Singapore

Long years ago, there was no man dreamed that this little state at the point of Malay peninsula would be very rich. This very small island, with less than 800 km² in total area and fewer natural resources, no one would imagine that this state would be one of the richest states in the world, today. Long years ago, in 600 AD, Singapore Island just became the sea guard post and meeting point for traders under Sriwijaya Empire.

Jean E. Abshire in his book *The History of Singapore* even calls that Singapore was a poverty-stricken country with many people living together in a slum area along a river that doubles as a sewer.¹ It reflects how poor Singapore at the beginning. Many people living that Jean E Abshire wrote refers to so many nations that lives in Singapore. From Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Arab.

Before belong to Sriwijayan Empire, Temasek, the previous name of Singapore, was known as the dangerous place for ships. There were so many *orang laut*, Malay word for sea people, sometimes attacked the ships. *Orang laut* was local people who lived among this area. *Orang laut* usually attacked the trading ship by surrounding the ship with some numbers of small

¹ Abshire, Jean E. *The History of Singapore*. Greenwood. 2011. P. 1

boats. Sometimes, the trading ship could escape from *orang laut* by using winds, if the winds were favorable. By using the winds, the trading ship, which had bigger shape than the *orang laut*'s ship could easily break through the small boats. In fact, most of them were caught by *orang laut*².

The king of Sriwijaya, made a cooperation with them and used them as the sea guard. This made sailing through this region was preferable for the maritime trade. This made this region was officially belonged to Sriwijaya. By controlling this region, the king of Sriwijaya forced the trading ships which across this area to stop in Sriwijayan Port. By stopping the ships to Sriwijayan Port, the ships were forced to pay some duties as an exchange to cross over the sea lane safely. These duties made income for Sriwijaya. There was no other way than passing this area since Sriwijaya controlled this sea lane from the north side of Malay Peninsula by using *orang laut*³.

Sriwijaya monopolized this trading route and became prosperous until Sriwijayan leader was kidnapped by Chinese Empire. It was assumed that Sriwijayan leader died in captivity. And for the next century, Tamil trading company from southern India dominated this region although the domination of Tamil trading company was still weaker than Sriwijayan Empire's control. However, it was the turn back of Sriwijayan control under this region.

After 1000 AD, the influence of Sriwijayan Empire was slowly gone and it turned into the Ancient Singapore from 1200 AD. According to *The History of Singapore*, there was a prince named Sang Nila Utama, the *Rajah Palembang* tried to find a new occupation. First he went to Bintan, an island which is located southeast of Singapore. Sang Nila Utama made the new city in Bintan. One day, he landed on Temasek to go hunting. He was disappointed because there were only few animals in this island. Suddenly, he saw a very big animal appeared then disappeared. His minister said that the animal had similarity appearance of an ancient lion. Sang Nila Utama

² E. Abshire, Jean. *The History of Singapore*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2011.

³ Ibid

was interested to make a new colony in this island and called this island Singapura, the lion town. This was the story how Singapore got its name. Then, Sang Nila Utama built his new kingdom here, in a place that today is known as Fort Canning Hill⁴.

It is noted that there were several kingdoms that rules Singapore after Sang Nila Utama's empire. After the Ancient Singapore was conquered by second invasion of Majapahit, there was a new empire just about north of Singapura, Kingdom Malaka, from about 1398 until 1511. Although, it is said before that Majapahit conquered this region, but the distance between this region and the capital kingdom made Majapahit hardly controlled this region. This situation was used by Kingdom of Malaka to establish a new colony in Singapore. After Kingdom of Malaka, there was Kingdom of Johor ruled this region from 1511 until 1699. After this kingdom, there was Kingdom of Johor-Riau and Bugis from 1699 until 1818. This kingdom was the successor of Kingdom of Johor. It is also noted that from these two kingdoms era, Europeans started to come to this region as an expansion effort. Although there were so many kingdoms that ever ruled Singapore, those kingdoms had one similarity, those kingdoms used Singapore as a port⁵.

After those kingdoms, there was a colonialization era. British used Singapore as its colony and made this region a port to control East India Company (EIC) trade. British placed its fleets in Singapore to protect the trading ship from pirates as EIC's trading ship tried to sail from Indonesia to Calcutta in India as the main base of EIC. EIC trading ship was in Indonesia to get spices and to sell it in Europe. It was a trend that a kingdom, like British, made a colonialization overseas.

Before British colonialization made Singapore as a colony, British colonialization that was led by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles already occupied Bengkulu. Bengkulu was chosen by Raffles

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

because Bengkulu was near to spices plantation and quite far from Jakarta (Batavia) as the central Dutch colonialization. He thought that Bengkulu was quite safe from Dutch⁶.

Unfortunately, Bengkulu also quite far from the main trading route also. Then, Raffles thought of making new colonialization. He saw that making a new colonialization in Penang had a good opportunity. He tried to secure the trading route with China. He believed if peace could be made with Aceh Empire, across Penang, this trading route would be very secure and strategic. Unfortunately, he suddenly thought that Penang was located too north from the critical main route that was located at the point of Malaka Peninsula. Then, he tried to get Singapore as a new colonialization, the most strategic place in the region⁷.

As the time went by, Singapore became very important port for EIC. At the beginning, Singapore was under control of EIC colony in Bengkulu. Knowing that this region was very strategic for EIC, it shifted the status of Singapore from under control of EIC in Bengkulu to under control of main base EIC in Calcutta. EIC took this action because EIC realized that this region was very important to protect trading route between EIC and Chinese trader. And as the time went by, EIC united three EIC colonies, Penang, Melaka, and Singapore, into one administrative unit, with the headquarters in Penang. Again, the status shifted to strait settlement.

For over 144 years of British colonialization, Singapore was merged into Federation of Malaya, Serawak, and North Borneo created Malaysia. Singapore finally got its full independence and separated with Malaysia in 7 August 1965. Since its independence, Singapore tried to increase the way of life of its citizens like housing, education, and health. One way to make this happen is by good political development toward a free and democratic state. There is general election that is held by the government but, the government limits the freedom of speech and press, and

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

suppresses political opposition. While, in economy, Singapore tried to become an industrialization state. Singapore tried to produce and replace some goods that were imported before like textiles⁸.

B. Singaporean Government and Foreign Policy

Singapore is a republic parliament state. Singapore head of state is president and the head of government is led by Prime Minister. Prime Minister is appointed by the president from majority party. While, the cabinet is elected by the president on the advice of Prime Minister. The parliament consists of 84 elected member.

In foreign policy, Singapore is very unique state. It has small area but very rich. The power of money gives Singapore ability to develop its national power. The economy of Singapore is very stable also that what makes Singapore have unlimited budget. It is also supported that Singapore is one of the commonwealth states that makes Singapore can get help from other commonwealth states. In short, the national power of Singapore reaches beyond its area.

Singapore's major party People Action Party (PAP), dominates political hegemony in Singapore. PAP as the government party needs to maintain political hegemony in this state. How strong PAP in Singapore can be seen from the assumption that the government of Singapore is the reflection of PAP and vice versa. Everything that PAP states is the reflection of the government of Singapore, the policy from government is the policy of PAP. This was acknowledge in PAP's journal *Petir* in 1982

The PAP is, of course, a registered political association. But it is more than that. It is not concerned just with winning elections. It is not concerned with political posturing and playing to the gallery. It is concerned with our nation, with our people, with our future and our survival... The PAP is the vital nerve center of the entire nation... Without the PAP, there will be no

⁸ Ibid

Singapore as we know it today, as the Secretary General Comrade Lee Kuan Yew has stated, 'I make no apologies that the PAP is the government and the government is the PAP.'⁹

The government makes the citizens of Singapore think that PAP has very vital role in establishing and developing Singapore. As Minister of Information and the Arts George Yeo said to PAP activist in 1993, Without PAP, we would not have been able to complete the last lap. Without PAP, we will not be able to run the next lap.¹⁰ it reflects the important role of PAP.

The interesting topic talking about PAP's hegemony is how PAP maintain its ideological hegemony in Singapore. This action is facilitated by the state control of information and knowledge dissemination channels such as media and education system. There is no media which can easily criticize the government. The potential of foreign newspapers and journal publication which criticize the condition of Singapore or the government is restrained by the government. This action is legalized by the amendment of Newspaper and Printing Presses Act in 1986 which states that the government has a right to renew the annual license of Newspapers and Press under the stringent condition. Based on that act, there is no way for oppositions to criticize the government or to publicize their views.

In school, consent is controlled through moral education by creating curriculum which suitable with 'Asian values' to student. The 'Asian values' is influenced by Confucian orientation. The values include the unquestioning reverence for higher authorities, and respect for scholars and the state. This makes the Singaporeans are easy to be ruled by the government.

PAP relies on the majority status of Chinese in Singapore. Some policies were made to increase the numerical majority status of Chinese. Lee Kuan Yew stated that the decreasing of

⁹ Petir, Editorial, December 1982: 3 as quoted in Rahim, Lily Zubaidah. "The Singapore dilemma: The political and economic marginality of the Malay community." (1998) p. 30.

¹⁰ Ibid as quote from ST WOE, 8 May 1993.

Chinese birth rate was becoming one of the three main national problems. In 1989, there were already 4,707 families that emigrated from Hong Kong to Singapore.¹¹

PAP believes that Malay are very lazy, indisciplined, lack of motivation, and apathy. Malay tends to blame the state about their life and rely on state subsidy. It is not reflecting the 'Asian values' which is applied by the government. The government promotes that every person is responsible for his/her own life and every Singaporean has to be competitive. Lee Kuan Yew said that the egalitarian society which empathizes on state subsidy would not make the economic grow well.¹²

Those unfair policies are justified by the massive economic growth of Singapore. The economic growth of Singapore is very impressive. Singapore is considered as the developed states from the economic growth.

Figure 3. 1 . Singapore Economic Growth



¹¹ Rahim, Lily Zubaidah. *The Singapore dilemma: The political and economic marginality of the Malay community*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1998.

¹² Ibid

In the official site of World Bank, it is stated that Singapore collected gross national income of \$55,150 per capita in 2014. Singapore collected an average GDP growth 7,7% since independence. The first 25 years topped to 9,6%. In 1980, Singapore already joined Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan as the newly industrializing countries in Asia. Singapore may only have a few natural resources, but Singapore can maximize manufacture and service sector as the twin pillar of economic growth in Singapore.

Figure 3. 2 Singapore GDP in last decade



In foreign policy, Singapore tries to maintain regional stability to develop the economics. Singapore realizes that security is the main aspects to maintain the economic growth. In other hand, Singapore keeps aware with its neighbor like Malaysia and Indonesia. The government gives more attention to the military. This action is shown when the government spends the National Budget and Expenditure to buy the latest military equipment.

Singapore also tries to make some agreements to its neighbor to maintain its security without losing its impressive economic development. Singapore has an alliance with other former British colonial called Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), consist of Great Britain, New Zealand, Malaysia, Australia, and Singapore itself. Singapore also had an agreement with Indonesia called Military Training Area (MTA) in Soeharto era and Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) in 2007. Those agreements allow Singapore to do military exercise in Indonesian area. Indonesia also let Singapore to control the Air Traffic Control at the point of Malay Peninsula and Riau which will be discussed in Chapter IV.

For a quarter of century, the relations between Indonesia and Singapore were conducted in a relative stable situation because of the close relations between former President of Indonesia Soeharto and former Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew. During President Soeharto era, there were some of important agreements between Indonesia and Singapore. Unfortunately, this stable condition was not long because of the downfall of Soeharto in May 1998. His successor, president Habibie did not have a close relations with Singapore. Even president Habibie had a personal grudge against Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew for casting doubt on the credential of vice-presidential office when president Habibie was a vice-president. Fortunately, this situation did not last long, President Habibie only lasted for a year. The next president of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid acknowledged the important of Singapore's role in Indonesia during economic recovery after monetary crisis and offered a close friendship to Singapore.

C. Singapore's Military System

Singapore is considered as one of the strongest state in military aspects in Southeast Asia region. This is because Singapore spends a lot of money to buy the latest military equipment. Singapore spends overall 4% of National Budget and Expenditure to Military aspects, and in 2015, it increased to 5,7% of National Budget. Singapore also requires the citizens to join national military service for two years either in Singapore Armed Force (SAF), Singapore Police National Force (SPNF), or Singapore Civil Defense Force (SCDF). The Singaporean will be selected to join one of them based on physical and medical fitness. This policy is applied by the government since the population of Singapore is not quite big.¹³

¹³ Gady, Franz-Stefan. *Singapore's Defense Budget Climbs 5.7 Percent*. 19 March 2015. 26 June 2016. <www.thediplomat.com/2015/03/singapores-defense-budget-climbs-5-7-percent/>.

SAF is led by Chief of Army who has rank as Major General who is responsible under Chief of Defense Force as the highest position in Singapore Army. SAF is reinforced by 72,000 active frontline personnel and more than 900,000 reserve personnel who are divided into three task force, HQ Island Defense, HQ Joint Task Force, and HQ Special Operations Task Force; and six division. The personnel of SAF is also divided with various specialty like infantry, guards, command, armor, artillery, combat engineers, signals and command system, army intelligence, army medical, maintenance and engineering support, transport, supply, and military police. SAF is also equipped with so many latest weapon which support the soldiers to do their duty. SAF is supported by various kinds of tanks from main battle tank like Leopard-2A4, Bionix II in infantry fighting vehicle, M113A2 Ultra IFV in armored personnel carrier, SM-1 Launched Bridge to ease the movement of units of soldiers, until Firefinder mobile radar.¹⁴

In navy, there is Royal Singapore Navy (RSN) which is led by Rear-Admiral, to secure the naval area of Singapore. As informed in its official website, RSN is equipped with the latest technology in region. RSN has frigate class ship, victory-class missile corvette to prevent airstrike and submarine, patrol vessel, Minecountermeasure vessel to sweep the sea mines, Large Ships Tank to move or transport the tanks and helicopters, submarine support vessel to assist the submarine, and Littoral Mission Vessel as warship. Based on the official website of RSN, it is stated that the frigate class ship of RSN is equipped with stealth mode which means it cannot be detected by other ship radar. RSN also has Challenger-Class submarine and Archer-Class submarine, missiles like harpoon missile, torpedo, and cannon. RSN also has UAV, maritime patrol aircraft and naval helicopter with torpedo to attack submarine.¹⁵

¹⁴ <https://www.mindef.gov.sg/army>

¹⁵ <https://www.mindef.gov.sg/navy/>

In Airforce, Singapore is one of the strongest Airforce in region. In its official website, RSAF, which is led by Major General, has fighter aircrafts, F-16D Block 52+ and F-15 SG from US. Those kinds of fighters are multirole fighter which means can be operated to intercept other aircraft and to give air support for ground personnel. Although Singapore does not have Air Superiority Aircraft and Air-To-Ground Aircraft like Indonesia with its Sukhoi Su-30 Mk and EMB-314 Super Tucano, but F-16D and F-15 SG are enough to protect Singapore completely. Singapore also has AH-64D Apache Longbow Helicopter to give ground support. Singapore is also known as the operator of KC-135 Stratotanker, an Air-Refuel Aircraft to support the aircraft. This KC-135 Stratotanker is very useful in combat area. This allows RSAF to take off with fully loaded of weapon, cruise to combat area, and do dogfight or give ground support without landing to the nearest airbase.¹⁶

With its strong armaments, RSAF faces a very serious problem. Singapore does not have a sufficient area for its Airforce. The fighters will face the border before it reaches the minimum altitude. As example, from Tengah Airbase, F-16 will face the border less than 5 minutes after taking off. The area of Singapore also does not meet the requirement to conduct an Airforce exercise. From Tengah Airbase, F-16D only needs less than two minutes from take off to the border. It means that F-16D will reach the border before it reaches the minimum altitude to conduct military exercise. If it reaches the minimum altitude, the pilot faces another problem because the pilot needs to turn avoiding the border also. RSAF also has a problem where RSAF can test its weaponry system like SAM and AIM-9 Sidewinder.

The Singaporean Army, SAF, RSN, RSAF, also conducts some joint military exercise with its neighbor and its ally. As the impact of FPDA, Singapore joins in joint military training

¹⁶ https://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/mindef_websites/atozlistings/air_force/index.html

annually with other FPDA members. Singapore also conducts a joint military training with Indonesia. The latest joint military training with Indonesia was held in 2015. This gives benefit to Singapore since Singapore does not have a wide area to conduct military exercise with a big scale. Big scale means Singapore cannot test all of its military equipment together in same time. As example, Singapore needs a swamp area or big river to test its SM-1 Launched Bridge.

Beside the Joint Military Exercises, Singapore's Army also takes a part in some of military operation and humanitarian operation that was conducted by UN and FPDA. SAF took a part in Peacekeeping Force in East Timor and Iraq. The army also took a part aiding some catastrophe victims like in Sumatera earthquake in 2005. It is important as a member of UN to take a part in any UN mission.

In relations with Indonesia, Singapore has an agreement with the government of Indonesia to use some of its area to conduct military exercise. The first agreement was called Military Training Area in 1995. Indonesia and Singapore had agreed that RSAF had a right to conduct military exercise upon Indonesia area. This agreement was expired in 2001. Then, in 2007, Indonesia and Singapore made a defense agreement called Defense Cooperation Agreement. This agreement, beside renewed the MTA, also explained in which area RSAF could conduct a military exercise and in which area RSN could test the weaponry system. Those agreements will be discussed in chapter IV.

At the end, Singapore is the highest spending on military compared to Indonesia and Malaysia. Singapore, as it was stated by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, relies on its defense system and Singapore government also feels that the country is in danger all of the time. Singapore realizes that its amount of soldier cannot exceed Indonesia or Malaysia and to

overcome this problem and create a balance of power in the region, especially among Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia, Singapore uses other way to strengthen its army by buying the latest weaponry systems and establishing relations with other states. With its strategy, other state will think twice to attack Singapore. As example, Indonesia will think twice to attack or to suppress Singapore because claim a war with Singapore means claiming a war with Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and Malaysia at the same time.