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Singapore’s Use of Education as a Soft Power Tool in Arctic Cooperation

ABSTRACT
Singapore is expert at using education as a means of projecting soft power internationally. For years, it has offered free and subsidized education opportunities in Southeast Asia, and now, with its interests in the Arctic, it is offering education opportunities to indigenous peoples as a way to involve itself in regional governance.

KEYWORDS: Singapore, education, soft power, Arctic Council, Arctic indigenous peoples

INTRODUCTION
In public discussion of international affairs, power is often conflated with hard power resources (e.g., military size, GDP, and natural resources). This narrow view of power fails to account for the role of small states in international politics. Though they often have limited hard power capabilities, small states have developed creative ways to incorporate themselves into international politics. Small states, like Singapore, are very good at finding ways to further their national interests, leveraging their niche capabilities and often acting in subtle but forward-thinking ways to further their national agendas through the power of attraction: through soft power. Singapore is an excellent example of a small state that has a history of using soft power to influence the
normative context of international relations.\textsuperscript{1} Singapore’s approach to influencing its international environment is increasingly evident in how it is engaging with the Arctic region and the Arctic players through the Arctic Council since its 2013 inclusion as an observer in the forum.

Singapore is world-renowned for its status as a key international shipping hub. It is “a global maritime hub with connections to more than 600 ports and over 120 countries.”\textsuperscript{2} As a small Asian country without any major natural resources of its own, Singapore is dependent on its niche in the shipping industry. For this purpose, it has invested heavily in both infrastructure and human resources training to become a global expert in vessel construction and repair. In the process, Singapore has also gained legitimacy as one of the global leaders in the establishment of international regimes that ensure and promote the safe, peaceful, and legal use of the seas and keep open the global shipping routes and maritime choke points on which its prosperity depends. This leadership has been evident, for example, in Singapore’s role in the development of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), whose last three years of negotiations, between 1980 and 1982, were presided over by Singapore’s permanent representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Tommy Koh.\textsuperscript{3} Another example is Singapore’s adherence to and active promotion of International Maritime Organization conventions intended to uphold safety standards in international navigation, such as the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, and the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual. More recently, Singapore has become a main venue in Asia for settling disputes and proceedings before the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, an independent judicial body established by UNCLOS.\textsuperscript{4}


However, there has been an increasing number of voices warning that Singapore’s status as an international shipping hub might be threatened by developments occurring far from its shores, in the Arctic region. Though it has been argued that the “country has few concerns about the notion of the Northern Sea Route (NSR) undermining its position as a transport hub,” concerns about environmental change as a result of global warming and climate change, namely shrinking ice coverage and the resulting rising sea levels, have sparked interest in commercial shipping in the polar region as well as concern for ports and low-lying areas around the world.⁵

At the same time, global warming has resulted in renewed awareness of the Arctic region, with international interest in resource extraction opportunities and shorter shipping routes. It is not surprising, therefore, that Singapore has made a concerted effort to be as close to Arctic diplomacy as possible. As part of its participation in the Arctic Council, Singapore is providing in-kind support. According to the Arctic Council, in-kind support “often [comes] in the form of man-hours contributed by experts [to the Working Groups, though] . . . sources of in-kind funding are many and diverse.”⁶ Singapore has chosen to provide this support in the form of education opportunities, by establishing the Singapore-Arctic Council Permanent Participants Cooperation Package.⁷ By making education opportunities available to the forum’s indigenous permanent participants (PPs), officials are using an established method of cultivating soft power in the country’s international context. This can be seen in other regions, such as Southeast Asia, where Singapore has established scholarship programs to encourage international students to visit, study, and then return home.⁸

This paper addresses the question: how is Singapore’s active participation in the Arctic Council an extension of its soft power as an international shipping hub? To examine this question, the paper makes use of Alan

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⁷. Ibid.

Chong’s “leadership inside-out” (LIO) model of soft power projection. Soft power is understood by Chong as the capacity of a state to project “communitarian attractiveness” in international relations. This goal can be pursued via an LIO model that draws on a state’s “cultural symbols” and other “socialization factors” and that can be portrayed internationally as a unique model “worth of emulation and respect by other actors of international relations.” The objective of LIO is to “get others to empathize and to support one’s way of life, thereby securing it from physical and nonphysical harm.” Chong contrasts LIO with the “leadership outside-in” (LOI) model of soft power projection. This draws on a country’s preferred ideas, norms, and perspectives on international relations and seeks to embed these in international regimes and epistemic communities. It has the objective of shaping “parameters and performance standards in cooperative international relations, and in some cases, through institutional prescriptions for good governance” in ways compatible with, and conducive to, the fulfilment of a state’s objectives.

Singapore’s soft power projection as an international shipping hub can be understood as a combination of LIO and LOI. On the one hand, it relies on the projection of an international image of Singapore as a major center of expertise in shipping, the result of its continued investment in the development of its internal human, institutional, and infrastructural resources in the field. On the other hand, that international image gives Singapore the legitimacy to be a key voice in shaping international regimes regulating the use of the sea.

Drawing on these insights, the paper argues that Singapore’s participation in the Arctic Council is a clear expression of an LIO model of soft power projection in the region, one that reproduces the country’s successfully deployed soft power strategy in Southeast Asia. In this context, rather than focusing on its image as a center of excellence in international shipping, Singapore uses both its internal strengths in human resources training and its external skills in projecting and using an image as a benign international

10. Ibid.: 100.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.: 124.
actor. This strategy is clearly visible in the education package it has developed for the PPs in the Arctic Council. This is a form of forum participation that plays to Singapore’s strengths at participating in international cooperation while also subtly extending its global soft power and deflecting attention from its underlying motives. In the process, Singapore seeks to successfully integrate itself and use its education tools to project its soft power in the arena of Arctic affairs, namely in regard to future developments in the region that might affect its status as an international shipping hub.

This argument is developed in the following sections. First, the paper addresses the notion of Singapore as a small state. Then, it briefly discusses soft power and the role of education in its context. These discussions serve as the theoretical basis for the subsequent analysis of Singapore’s LIO model of soft power projection in Southeast Asia, and then for our use of the case study of Singapore’s education package for indigenous peoples in the Arctic as an example of its continued interest in cultivating soft power internationally through education.

SINGAPORE AS A SMALL STATE

A discussion of the foreign policy of a small state demands clarification of what we mean by smallness and the implications of that condition. Smallness can be defined in qualitative or quantitative terms, with the latter frequently referring to a state’s population, the size of its economy, or the extent of its territory. An interesting approach is to quantitatively define small states as those whose population, economy, or territory are smaller than the average in their region. This way, one avoids defining a state’s smallness in absolute terms, instead defining it relatively to other actors in the region. The characterization of a state as small emerges from the international networks in which it is enmeshed at any given moment.

From that perspective, Singapore is small in terms of population and territory. It has a population of 5.6 million—compare its neighbors Malaysia

at 32 million\textsuperscript{15} and Indonesia at 237 million.\textsuperscript{16} Singapore’s territory of 719 km\textsuperscript{2} places it after Brunei, which has 5,765 km\textsuperscript{2}.\textsuperscript{17} These characteristics make Singapore a particularly vulnerable country in the region, a condition reinforced by its tense history with its neighbors, Malaysia and Indonesia, and which continues to feed Singapore’s concern for independence, as addressed below.

However, Singapore’s smallness comes into question when we consider its economic power and its capacity to use that power to develop a series of domestic and foreign policies permitting the most efficient pursuit of its national interests at the regional and international levels. Since its independence in 1965, Singapore has made full use of its status as a hub of international shipping to support a development project that has turned it into the country with the highest GDP per capita in the region, US$ 52,000\textsuperscript{18} (followed by Brunei, with US$ 28,000\textsuperscript{19}) and the 36th-largest economy in the world.\textsuperscript{20} Furthermore, Singapore has made clever use of the success of its development process, in combination with its status as a “small” state, to pursue an LIO strategy of “virtual enlargement” in international politics.\textsuperscript{21} This amounts to combining its ample economic resources with its international image as a successfully developed, small—and thus non-threatening—state to promote its international role as a mediator of conflicts, a diffuser of good practices of government and economic management, and a supporter of third countries’ development processes. In this manner, the island-state


cultivates its soft power as a way to exert influence in international relations. Fundamental in this context has been Singapore’s status as a provider of world-class education on good governance and economic development. This has permitted it to employ educational programs in Southeast Asia that have served as an effective vehicle for diffusing its soft power throughout the region.

To analyze how Singapore has been using education in the context of its LIO model of soft power projection, and how this approach is framed in its wider orientation to international relations, it is important to first briefly consider the theoretical basis for our use of the concept of soft power and what education’s role is in this context.

SOFT POWER AND EDUCATION

Joseph Nye defines power as “the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes one wants.” Soft power is then “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and politics.” Elsewhere, Nye notes that the attractiveness of a country’s political values and politics depends on whether it lives up to its values both at home and abroad and whether its politics appear to others as legitimate and having moral authority. These three aspects of soft power, when deployed in a synergic and coherent manner, act as a form of “passive leverage” that, unlike hard power, “emphasizes the use of co-option,” attracting foreign countries into the state’s sphere of influence.

At the same time, “power resources cannot be judged without knowing the context.” That is, before you can understand who has power in any given situation, “you need to understand what game you are playing and how the

24. Ibid.: x.
value of the cards may be changing.”

The attractiveness of a state’s culture, political values, and politics depends on “what is important and valuable for people in a given moment: what they find necessary for their well-being.”

Furthermore, to be effective in influencing foreign audiences, the values projected from these soft power resources also have to be perceived as universal, rather than parochial expressions of time- and space-bound cultures. These are requirements that depend on a complex interaction between people’s historically variable orientations to the world and their contextualization in the changing structure of the political and economic world order.

Thus, there are serious limitations on the usability of soft power resources, since they “are slower, more diffuse, and more cumbersome to wield than hard power resources” and rest on the ability to shape the preferences of others. The effects of soft power can thus be described as unwieldy and potentially unpredictable, only becoming evident in the long term, because “culture and values take time to diffuse and take root”—though once they do, “they remain deeply rooted for a long time.”

The primary reason Nye notes for the difficulty of projecting soft power is that “many of its crucial resources are outside the control of governments, and their effects depend heavily on acceptance by the receiving audiences.” Thus, it becomes incorrect to speak of the way states “exercise” soft power “over others”—better to refer to how states project soft power, frequently with marginal control over its effects, which can manifest in both expected and unplanned ways. Soft power thus not only takes time to develop but also lacks the immediate tangibility and causal connection between intention and outcomes that comes from the purchase of a tank, for example.

28. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
Since Nye first theorized the notion of soft power, the concept has been developed by other authors. In this context, education has frequently come to be described as a fundamental aspect of soft power, given that it is understood as the quintessential “transmitter of culture and political ideals.” As mentioned, education is one of the key ways Singapore pursues an LIO strategy to project its soft power in international relations. Unlike religious or political values, which are more likely to be perceived as culturally specific, education is currently understood as a “universal value” and, as such, more likely to be “appreciated regardless of culture and country.” This characteristic of education is further reinforced by the conception that universities and other educational institutions in many countries usually cultivate “unbiased” perspectives and are sustained on the free “exchange of ideas, information, arts and culture.”

Education—either via accepting foreign students into a state’s national educational institutions or by creating educational institutions in the territory of foreign countries—is thus a particularly effective vehicle for soft power. Having former students in power positions in the public and private sectors back in their home countries, contextualizing and diffusing the knowledge learned in their foreign education, is an extremely valuable tool.

It is not education alone that makes it a valued resource of soft power, but the education experience as a whole, which also generally includes many students coming to live and immerse themselves in the foreign country’s society, learning and being exposed to its values, beliefs, and ideas. In this manner, foreign-educated students “bring with them the perspectives of the countries where they were educated back home.” Education can thus have a deeply transformative effect, as the private and public elites that have undertaken their education abroad are more likely to comprehend, represent, and adapt to the points of view, arguments, and even national interests of the state where they have studied.

SINGAPORE’S APPROACH TO FOREIGN POLICY

The specific contours of Singapore’s foreign policy have been described as a product of, first and foremost, the country’s ingrained sense of vulnerability.\textsuperscript{40} This vulnerability is intimately associated with the conditions of Singapore’s independence in 1965, when it was expelled from the Federation of Malaya in the wake of the race riots of 1964 and the \textit{Konfrontasi} with Indonesia between 1962 and 1966.\textsuperscript{41} As a small city-state with virtually no natural resources and with a predominantly Chinese migrant population locked between two potentially threatening Malay-Muslim neighbors—Malaysia, on which Singapore is dependent for water, and Indonesia—the country’s leaders came to view vulnerability as the “inescapable, permanent condition of Singapore as an independent republic.”\textsuperscript{42}

However, Singapore has also been described as an “exceptional” state to the extent that its ever-present sense of vulnerability has been translated since independence into a foreign policy characterized by a mixture of realist and liberal tenets, which has been remarkably successful in tackling its perceived threats.\textsuperscript{43} Hence, on the one hand, Singapore’s defense policy follows traditional security orientations, with a bet on the modernization and strengthening of its armed forces to ensure that they function as an effective and credible deterrent.\textsuperscript{44} On the other hand, Singapore has promoted an image of itself as a small, benign, and non-threatening state that is committed to multilateralism and to international cooperation, hence providing a model for the development of third countries.

This latter orientation is of particular interest for the present discussion and, as mentioned, exhibits Singapore’s LIO model of soft power projection in international relations. Ranking fifth in the United Nations Human

\textsuperscript{40} Michael Leifer, \textit{Singapore’s Foreign Policy: Coping with Vulnerability} (London: Routledge, 2000).


\textsuperscript{43} Leifer, \textit{Singapore’s Foreign Policy}: 9.

\textsuperscript{44} Narayanan Ganesan, \textit{Realism and Interdependence in Singapore’s Foreign Policy} (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005): 13.
Development Index and seventh least corrupt in the global Corruption Perceptions Index, Singapore’s development policies stand out both regionally and globally as a model of success. This success story is in large part attributed to what former Minister of Foreign Affairs S. Rajaratnam, in 1972, called Singapore’s quest to become a “global city.” It was Rajaratnam’s conviction, shared with the rest of the Singaporean elite, that Singapore’s unique geographical position made it likely to become a “key node in the international system, coordinating global flows of trade, money, materials, goods and people,” which effectively transformed the whole world into Singapore’s “hinterland.”

Ultimately, becoming a global city and an important hub in the world economy depended not only on geography but also on Singapore’s capacity to give both regional and extra-regional powers a stake in the small island-state’s continued well-being. In line with its LIO strategy, Singapore’s model of social and economic development thus became a key element in the city-state’s foreign policy by being portrayed by its leaders as something that other states could not only emulate but also be a part of, and benefit from, through the establishment of interdependent and mutually beneficial relations. In this manner, the success of Singapore’s development, and consequently the preservation of its independence, sovereignty, and way of life, became perceived as intrinsically connected with the prosperity of other societies in the region. In effect, Singapore’s foreign policy has sought to “make others want what it wants by convincing and attracting others to the idea of Singapore and its philosophy.”


47. Leifer, Singapore’s Foreign Policy: 35.


This LIO strategy can also be identified in Singapore’s attempts to promote soft power by establishing positive relations of interdependence with other states in the region. This has been expressed with particular acuteness in the role education has assumed in the Singaporean policies on foreign aid and support for international development. For example, the Singapore International Foundation, established in 1991, is a non-profit organization that relies on volunteer work with the stated objective of fostering development in third countries through the sharing of ideas, skills, and experiences via educational and training programs while cultivating greater understanding between Singaporeans and world communities.50 Under the slogan “Making friends for a better world,” the foundation supports the volunteer activities of Singaporeans overseas, and the travel of foreigners to Singapore, through scholarships and grants that fund programs of expertise training and skills transference in areas like the arts, business, environment, and healthcare.51

Another example is the Singapore Cooperation Program (SCP), established in 1992 under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its stated objective is to provide capacity-building training programs that share Singapore’s development experience and particular model of social and economic development with third countries in areas such as public administration, law and judiciary, trade and economy, education and teacher training, corruption prevention, heritage and preservation, leadership and governance, sustainable cities, and water and sanitation solutions.52 To deliver these training programs, four centers were established in the Southeast Asia region, in Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar. Recently, Singapore has expanded this foreign aid policy beyond Southeast Asia by opening three training centers in the Middle East, in Jordan, Qatar, and Oman.

SCP also provides scholarships to enable third-country nationals to travel to Singapore for postgraduate education in Singaporean higher education institutions. The main obligation of the recipients is that, once the training program is finished, they must go back to their country of origin and apply their newly acquired knowledge in the development of their national societies and economies. While the majority of SCP’s courses have been delivered to

52. Singapore Cooperation Program, “About Us.”
citizens of Southeast Asian countries, with 70,000 alumni there as of 2017, SCP has been widening its partnerships to extra-regional countries, with more than 170 countries represented in its total of 115,000 alumni.53

The focus of Singapore’s foreign aid has thus been in the provision of education and capacity-building programs rather than simple monetary aid to less developed countries. This approach expresses the island-state’s argument that its own developmental success reflects properly educated, trained, and managed people, constituting the best foundation for sustainable socio-economic development. At the same time, this foreign aid model is a privileged vehicle for Singapore’s soft power. From an LIO perspective, it not only permits Singapore to project a benevolent international image, but also helps form communities of influential third-country nationals who have greater insight into the Singaporean point of view and are thus more likely to accommodate and even represent Singaporean interests in their own societies. As Narayanan Ganesan notes, Singapore’s foreign aid approach ensures the formation of a worldwide community of “scholars and professionals trained in Singapore [who] in turn build up a reservoir of good will for a small state that takes neither its sovereignty nor its viability for granted.”54

As mentioned, the perceived success of Singapore’s use of education as a soft power tool in Southeast Asia is leading it to expand this policy to extra-regional countries, having already established three new training centers in the Middle East. However, as the next section shows, Singapore’s LIO model of soft power projection through education is reaching much further afield, having become a pillar of the island-state’s engagement with the Arctic Council.

SINGAPORE IN THE ARCTIC

Singapore is hyperaware of its small-state status and is driven toward decision-making that helps alleviate its repercussions, while simultaneously carving out a place for itself in international politics. According to Ian Storey, the answer to the question of why Singapore is interested in observer status in the Arctic Council is threefold: “long-standing, proactive involvement in international forums that address global governance issues; a desire

53. Ibid.
54. Ganesan, Realism and Interdependence: 22.
to better understand and respond to climate change; and an ambition to capture economic opportunities as well as prepare for potential commercial challenges.\footnote{\footnotemark[55]}

It is the economic opportunities, via commercial shipping prospects in the Arctic, which is a key point of interest for Singapore. Discussion of the opening of Russia’s Northern Sea Route emerged in the 2000s, and raised the prospect “of higher volumes of traffic on trade routes through the Arctic Ocean,” which “could take away some of Singapore’s lucrative shipping business.” Thus, Singapore “remains vigilant, as shipping is its bread and butter.”\footnote{\footnotemark[56]} At this stage there is doubt that the Northern Sea Route will be a cost-effective and reliable commercial shipping route, but this could change.\footnote{\footnotemark[57]} And theoretically, the development of practical Arctic shipping routes could threaten Singapore’s economy—even its survival.

Singapore has been compared to Renaissance Venice and its rise and fall in international shipping by academics and even by a former minister and member of the Singapore Armed Forces, George Yeo.\footnote{\footnotemark[58]} Venice’s power during the Renaissance came from its geostrategic position as a well-placed port along the commercial spice trading routes between Europe and Asia via the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Its role as a hub of international trade was undermined by the development of an alternative shipping route in 1501, when “the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama had sailed around Africa to India, bypassing the Mediterranean...and diverting the flow of pepper [the major spice in the trade] away from Venice.”\footnote{\footnotemark[59]} Singapore is aware that the development of new shipping routes in the Arctic could mean a Venice-style decline. Singapore’s interest in the Arctic and its keenness to be part of the discussion about regional development is thus part of a larger attempt “to avoid the risk of global irrelevance through capturing the

\footnotetext[55]{Storey, “Arctic Novice”: 66.}
\footnotetext[56]{Ibid.: 67.}
navigation, energy, and environmental dynamics in the new round of Arctic development.  

As discussed above, one of the ways Singapore has addressed its vulnerability is through an LIO model of soft power projection in international relations. The island-state has nurtured those internal resources that are understood as essential to project an international image that gives other states a stake in the survival and independence of Singapore and of its model of society. As argued, one way Singapore expresses this LIO strategy in Southeast Asia is by using its world-renowned educational institutions to develop its soft power in the region—a process which it is now trying to extend into the Arctic.

Singapore’s clearest contribution to the Arctic Council is its offer of education opportunities for the indigenous permanent participants. There are six PP groups in the Arctic Council that represent the indigenous peoples of the Arctic region: the Aleut International Association, the Arctic Athabaskan Council, the Gwich’in Council International, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), and the Saami Council.

Singapore established the Singapore-AC Permanent Participants Cooperation Package in 2013 to support these groups and their organizational development. The contribution is “a customised technical cooperation package designed to enhance the human resource development and governance capacity of the PPs.” PPs are using the package; four Arctic Athabaskan Council representatives, for example, used it to take a course on climate change impacts and adaptation strategies, and a RAIPON representative obtained a master’s in public policy.

The cooperation package is meant to “share Singapore’s experiences in areas such as maritime management with representatives from the AC PPs through study visits to Singapore and also through technical courses and training.” Of course Singapore’s promotion of its education system is also

62. Ibid.
part of its soft power cultivation, “designed to strengthen ties,” and expresses its eagerness “to forge new ties that accrue influence.”64 At the same time, education is a costly and valuable commodity. For PPs who are trying to operate at the same level as nation-states in the Arctic Council but with much fewer resources at their disposal, free education is an attractive and useful form of in-kind contribution to their work and efforts to build their organizational competencies.

Through the promotion of Singaporean culture and values via education, the state “can project a positive image, generate interest, promote exchanges, and engender trust for enduring partnerships.”65 Jack T. Lee argues that “cultivating relationships with individuals is a fundamental component of developing soft power,” and by extension, giving individuals education opportunities via the Singapore-Arctic Council Permanent Participants Cooperation Package is an effective investment in soft power.66 By inviting PPs to Singapore, the host country introduces “its culture and people to outsiders en masse. Through this connection, international students develop meaningful relationships with the host country.”67 Ideally, these students would then promote ties between their home country and the host country.

There are many possible reasons why Singapore is targeting its in-kind support toward the indigenous PPs in its effort to participate in Arctic politics. The PPs have an elevated status within the Arctic Council over the observers and have more opportunities to give input into, and impact, regional discussions. The PPs also have greater need of financial resources to participate in the Arctic Council than the nation-states, so they are more likely to be receptive to Singapore’s education offers. And the PPs represent indigenous peoples of the Arctic, which gives them high legitimacy both in the Arctic Council and in international discussions about the Arctic more generally, making them valuable allies in Arctic politics.

The rules for observer status state: “Observers may propose projects through an Arctic State or a Permanent Participant but financial contributions from observers to any given project may not exceed the financing from Arctic States, unless otherwise decided by the SAOs [senior Arctic

65. Ibid.: 354.
66. Ibid.: 357.
67. Ibid.
officials]. These rules, however, also restrict actors who are not the Arctic states from contributing without approval and a matching Arctic state’s commitment to projects. This is in large part to ensure that the Arctic states always remain in direct creative control of the forum’s work. Jian Yang argues that “by admitting extra-regional countries’ participation in this way, the Arctic Council has reached its dual goals of restriction and exploitation, and effectively enhanced the Arctic’s importance in global politics.”

But, while the Arctic states are restricting outside participation in the Arctic Council, those interested in the Arctic and who want to cultivate an influence in regional politics are not deterred by the forum’s procedures.

The PPs, while also restricted by the funding rules, are not in the same position as the observers when it comes to influencing the Arctic Council. They are at the table at all levels of the council’s work, from the SAO meetings to the task force projects. They have unprecedented participation in the forum’s work and internal procedures and access to the Arctic state delegates, who represent the states where the various indigenous peoples reside. This gives them more networking opportunities and more chances for input into the forum’s research, reports, and recommendations for state and regional changes and cooperation compared to the observer state delegates.

Thus, there are clear reasons for a small state like Singapore to develop soft power links with indigenous peoples from the Arctic, and Singapore has actively reached out to the PPs. In May 2012, for example, “[a] number of representatives of the AC’s Permanent Participants visited Singapore at the government’s invitation.” And two study visits were arranged following the May 2012 invitation. In June 2012, “Singapore organized a study visit for Arctic indigenous communities” to the country to display Singapore’s “keys of success, including urban planning, port management, and water recycling.” In November 2014, “senior representatives of the Permanent Participants of the AC” were invited for a follow-up study visit.

70. Tonami, Asian Foreign Policy: 94.
71. Ibid.: 98.
72. Ibid.
The PPs are a unique feature of the Arctic Council. While they are not formally empowered to the same extent as the Arctic states in the forum’s decision-making processes, the indigenous peoples represented by the PPs have a permanent status that gives them security in their ability to speak up against proposals by the Arctic states, unlike the observers, who can technically have their status revoked. The PPs, therefore, can have quite a lot of influence on the forum’s work and discussions. Some scholars even argue that since “the permanent participants must be fully consulted” this position “gives them close to a de facto veto should they all reject a particular proposal.”

The PPs also play a vital role in giving regional cooperation and governance efforts legitimacy, as they help redress past colonial approaches to Arctic governance by providing direct avenues for indigenous perspectives and participation, which is protected by the forum’s mandate. Thus, the PPs and their delegates are important and influential players in the Arctic Council, even if do not formally have a final say in decision-making. The involvement of the PPs in the Arctic Council also helps legitimatize the forum—a reality of regional politics which reflects the growing international recognition of indigenous peoples as legitimate actors in international politics. Natalia Loukacheva notes that “the growing involvement and representation of indigenous actors in international diplomacy, trans-national networks, and international bodies invite some recognition by their respective states of the degree of legitimacy of such actions.”

Monica Tennberg states that “in the context of the council, Arctic indigenous peoples [are] not only identified as victims of environmental changes, but [are] acknowledged as experts on Arctic environmental conditions and politics.” When it comes to issues of regional shipping, for example, indigenous peoples are likely to play a growing role in discussions at both the national and regional levels as the possibilities become more economically and technically feasible. Their treaties, agreements, and constitutional rights in the respective Arctic states will become more and more relevant to regional economic

development and dispute negotiations, making indigenous peoples more prominent stakeholders. The Supreme Court of Canada recently ruled that the rights of the Inuit community of Clyde River to be part of the federal government’s consultation process to permit offshore seismic testing by a Norwegian consortium were violated. The action of Clyde River, taking the government of Canada to court, illustrates that more and more Arctic indigenous peoples are becoming active political players at the national and regional levels and influencing how economic development unfolds in the region.

At this stage large-scale regional commercial shipping is still largely a speculative projection of future economic gains and opportunities, and Singapore benefits from this time lag in the development of shipping routes. Singapore has time to pursue its LIO strategy and cultivate positive relationships with indigenous peoples in the region, and its free education program for the PPs is one way to do this.

Funding is a major issue for the PPs, and it is an issue that has been receiving growing attention in the Arctic Council. According to Jim Gamble, former executive director of the Aleut International Association, the issue of the PPs’ funding capacity and how the observers could help were topics of discussion in the 9th Arctic Council Ministerial in Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada in April 2015:

During the Ministerial meeting the PPs also held a side event with AC [Arctic Council] Observers to outline the plan for the two PP support funds in addition to a discussion of the role that Observers might play in the support of the PP organizations. Given that the criteria for Observer status in the AC calls for a political willingness and financial capacity to support the work of the PPs in the AC, it seems clear that part of the solution to PP support and capacity may fall with the Observers.


With the number of observers growing in the Arctic Council, there is increasing interest in having them play a larger financial role in the forum’s work, and supporting the PPs is one way the observers are being called on to contribute.

The PPs lack many of the revenue streams the states have at their disposal, such as a population or industries they can tax and draw on, to fund their Arctic Council participation. Most of the funding the PPs have for their daily expenses associated with Arctic Council work, like travelling to numerous Arctic Council meetings, comes from the Arctic states and funding instruments they have set up, such as the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat. These mechanisms and sources of funds are not straightforward. The PPs represent peoples in more than one Arctic state, with the exception of RAIPON, which represents multiple different groups of indigenous peoples in Russia. Thus, most of the PPs have branches and offices in multiple Arctic countries, and the organizations’ various funding streams do not necessarily apply to all branches of the umbrella organizations that hold the PP seats.

Current funding limitations force the PPs to carefully plan any expenditure, such as supporting delegate learning opportunities and pre–Arctic Council meeting sessions, because they must have a representative from their organizations at meetings so that decisions are not made in their absence. Travel to the meetings, many of which are in Arctic locations, is very expensive. The need to be present at all meetings is a major financial strain for the PPs, made more complex when the budget of umbrella PP organizations is not clear due to divergences in funding streams at the national branches. David P. Stone states that

although the permanent participant organisations receive funding to attend meetings of the Arctic Council and are provided with a secretariat now located in Tromsø (Norway), there is no blanket funding to support their active participation in Arctic Council projects or programmes. In some cases, a national programme... may provide some project funding or the working group secretariat may be able to organise funding. Otherwise, significant

81. Arctic Council, “Permanent Participants.”
funding for participation in actual Arctic Council work tends to occur only when one or more of the permanent participants can carry out a component of that work.\(^{83}\)

Ultimately, states prefer to have direct financial relationships with the indigenous peoples within their own borders, which means that the PPs that represent peoples in multiple Arctic states can have funding which is only allocated to one branch of the organization, restricting how the funding can be used and by whom.\(^{84}\) Thus, there are clear openings for observers to step in and contribute to the PPs.

Singapore’s education program offers the PPs a way to increase their organizational capacity through training that can help delegates participate at all levels of the Arctic Council meetings. As such it is a positive and useful option for the PPs to cultivate their presence in the forum. For Singapore, having the PPs receive education in Singapore gives it access to key actors in regional politics. This permits the development of an LIO soft power strategy to foster good will and expose delegates to Singaporean culture, values, and ideas through education programs and general exposure to Singapore society. In the process, Singapore is attempting to increase its soft power influence next to some of the key players shaping the development of Arctic politics, regarding the potential opening up of the Northern Sea Route to commercial shipping and its implications for Singapore’s status as an international shipping hub.

**CONCLUSION**

Singapore has a long history of turning its vulnerabilities into strengths. This paper has addressed how Singapore deploys an LIO model of soft power projection that uses its status as a “small” and “vulnerable” state in terms of hard power to project an international image of itself as a non-threatening actor. This strategy uses Singapore’s successful development process and internal skills in education and human resources training to pursue a benign foreign policy focused on providing in-kind aid to third countries’ nationals—both abroad and in Singapore—through educational initiatives in the Singaporean model of development. Singapore is thus using education as

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a soft power tool to project a positive international image that interlocks with the development of third countries—and other actors such as the PPs of the Arctic Council—to its own and builds international connections with influential individuals who are more likely to understand, adapt, and even represent Singaporean interests in their political and economic activities.

Singapore has predominantly used education as a soft power tool to socialize Southeast Asian elites in ways that reduce its inter-state vulnerability in the region. But the success of these policies has recently led Singapore to try to use its education skills to project its soft power beyond Southeast Asia, namely into the Middle East and the Arctic. Education is a valuable asset which Singapore has offered as free in-kind support for the PPs to access and use. The PPs are a vital component of the Arctic Council and a unique and legitimate entity in Arctic governance discussions. As such, they are valuable and permanent players in regional politics that a state such as Singapore would benefit from developing positive ties with.

Though the PPs do not have the resources of the eight Arctic states, they aim to, and are expected to, participate in the Arctic Council as the Arctic states do. Singapore’s education opportunities are valuable resources. But education also exposes students to Singaporean ideas, culture, and values, which the government of Singapore could, for example, try to tap into to generate support for proposals to the Arctic Council or arguments against regional economic decisions, such as the possible development of a large-scale commercial shipping route in the Arctic, which would threaten Singapore’s status as an international shipping hub.

At the moment, the Singapore-Arctic Council Permanent Participants Cooperation Package is relatively new, and the number of participants is small. It will take time to see more clearly the extent of Singapore’s soft power in Arctic discussions, and how receptive PPs are to integrating Singaporean ways of doing things, and to seeing the world into how they conceptualize and analyze regional changes and consider alliances for their own objectives.