

Singapore: An Emerging Arctic Actor

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This paper analyses the extent to which Singapore has an Arctic policy and what factors may be driving that policy. Although a small, Southeast Asian territory located near the equator, Singapore is an influential maritime actor that has articulated its interest in Arctic governance through government statements, diplomatic initiatives and an application for observer status to the Arctic Council. We find that Singapore has considerable economic and political interest in the development of international maritime policy, including the Arctic, and is concerned by the potential local impacts of the climate change already visible in the Arctic. Singapore also has specific interests in the development of its domestic maritime industries. As a developmental state, there are close links between Singapore's state institutions and major commercial enterprises. Singapore's competence in the management of complex port infrastructure and the fostering of global leaders in the offshore marine and engineering industry are of particular note in analyzing factors driving the Singapore government's interest in the Arctic's potential. We conclude that Singapore's Arctic policy is in its early stages of definition. It is not yet clear whether Singapore's efforts to contribute to Arctic governance represent a foreign policy objective in its own right, or if Singapore's Arctic diplomacy is driven primarily by an ambition to exploit an emerging market niche in which it sees itself as a technological and expertise leader.

Introduction

As a Southeast Asian city-state of 5 million people, lying just over 100km north of the Equator, Singapore may not immediately strike one as having any significant interest in the Arctic region. Singapore has little history of engagement in the polar regions to infer a general policy direction. However, there are ongoing discussions in academic and policy circles in Singapore as to how the impacts of climate change in the Arctic will affect Singapore in the future. Singapore has articulated an intention to play a role in Arctic governance, through government statements (Hean, 2012), its submission for Observer status at the Arctic Council and the creation of an Arctic Envoy role, raising the question of what is motivating these various activities.

We find that Singapore is actively seeking an Arctic role, and that this engagement stems from Singapore's significant interest in global maritime affairs and the strong role of the state in managing the Singaporean economy and its strategic industries of port management and vessel construction.

An Overview of Singapore's Arctic Engagement

To date, Singapore has not publicly articulated an overall Arctic policy or strategic direction, therefore it is useful to briefly summarise the actual activities of the Singaporean government.

In December 2011, Singapore submitted a request to the Arctic Council to be considered for permanent observer status at the next Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in May 2013, under the current Swedish Presidency.

In January 2012, the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs appointed a Special Envoy for Arctic Affairs, Ambassador Kemal Siddique (Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012). This position lies within the MFA, heading up a Working Group that includes officials with area responsibility in Europe and Southeast Asia.¹ However, a wide range of government agencies, the private and academic sectors cooperate on Arctic issues.²

Singapore joins China, Japan, Korea, the EU and Italy in seeking permanent observer status. However, due to changes in the Arctic Council's Rules of Procedure from May 2011, Singapore may not attend Arctic Council meetings or working groups as an ad hoc observer.³ This rule does not apply to states that applied for observer status prior to May 2011.

Singapore is viewed as an active candidate for the Arctic Council and as having diligently embraced the application criteria set out in the May 2011 SAO report.⁴ The Singaporean government, for its part, has been encouraged by the response to their application and acknowledgement of their 'legitimate interests'.⁵ Singapore officials have attended meetings in Sweden during the Swedish Arctic Council chairmanship (albeit in the margins), joined a High North Study Tour to Svalbard organized by the Norwegian government in August 2012 and participated in the 10th Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region in September 2012. A number of representatives of the Arctic Council's Permanent Participants visited Singapore at the government's invitation in May 2012.

These efforts and the appointment of an Arctic Envoy indicate an assessment by the Singaporean government that achieving a consensus decision by Arctic Council states on Singapore's status requires a dedicated diplomatic effort. Singapore's future participation in Arctic Council matters will rest on Council member's general position on inclusivity towards non-Arctic states. In this regard, the Nordic members have proven most open to granting permanent observer status to applicants that live up to the criteria adopted at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting in May 2011.

Singapore's Interest in the Arctic

In this paper, we identify two areas that have, to varying degrees, been advanced by Singaporean policymakers as having Arctic relevance:

1. Singapore's importance as a maritime stakeholder.
2. Threats and opportunities for the Singaporean economy, particularly related to (a) Singapore's hub port status and (b) commercial potential for the offshore and marine industry.

Singapore as a Maritime Stakeholder

Singapore has played an important role in the global governance regimes and institutions for ocean management and transportation as an island state and a major shipping hub.⁶ Singapore is a longstanding member of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and was re-elected to the IMO Council for the 10th consecutive term in November 2011 (Singapore Ministry of Transport, 2011). Singapore has played a role at the IMO that is disproportionate to the size of the country (IMO, 2004).

Singaporean officials have also articulated views on UNCLOS that indicate official thinking on relevant issues. They have stated that freedom of navigation represents an issue of "vital interest", that the high seas are the common heritage of mankind and that there must be improved cooperation between littoral and user states. For Singapore, "discussions on ocean governance must be open, inclusive and involve all interested stakeholders" (Hean, 2012).

We can therefore say that (1) Singapore has a keen interest in international ocean law and the development of global shipping; (2) it has committed diplomatic resources to influence these; and (3) it has a set of principles it applies to these issues. Seen from this perspective, it is not surprising that Singapore is seeking to follow the development of Arctic shipping and resource exploration more closely.

Some Arctic Council member states have acknowledged Singapore's maritime heritage as a legitimate factor in its application for Observer Status,⁷ while Singapore's Arctic Envoy also reasons that IMO competence is an area of expertise Singapore can share with the Arctic Council.⁸

Singapore's Economic Stake in Arctic Developments

Aspects of Singapore's interest in Arctic affairs are best understood by acknowledging Singapore's history as a developmental state ruled by a single party, the People's Action Party (PAP), since 1959.⁹

Singapore is characterized as a developmental state (Low, 2001), whereby the legitimacy of the state derives from economic growth and the state involves itself in the education of the labour force and adaptation of the national economy to changes in the global economy (Airriess, 2001: 240). This developmental statism can be observed in (1) the significant degree of involvement of state institutions and government officials of the ruling PAP in the management of the Singaporean economy and its major commercial entities (Liow, 2011); (2) the creation of large-scale initiatives such as competence clusters and hubs across government, academia and industry and the adoption of a long-term strategic approach to foreign economic policy; and (3) the identification of challenges to Singapore's economic wellbeing as representing national security threats (Dent, 2001).

The Singapore government's direct intervention in the management and direction of the economy and strategic enterprises and sectors means that wider economic initiatives and concerns do, in part, drive Arctic engagement. Of particular note are concerns about (a) the long-term challenge to Singapore's hub port status that future trans-Arctic shipping may represent, and (b) the commercial potential of the strategically important offshore and marine sector.

A. The Northern Sea Route (NSR) as a Challenge to Singapore's Shipping Hub

Some analysts assert that more northerly Asian ports could benefit from a reliable Arctic passage, at the expense of Singapore (Ho, 2011; Ramberg, 2010). As a large proportion of ships transiting the Malacca Straits currently are either Chinese or carrying cargo to China, this would impact Singapore. It is also argued that projected energy resources in the Arctic and the transit potential may shift energy import patterns in the energy hungry economies of Northeast Asia, namely China, Japan and Korea. The Malacca Straits are an acknowledged strategic chokepoint (US Energy Information Administration, 2011), and with the problem of piracy and political instability in the Middle East potentially impacting the Strait of Hormuz, the case for alternative energy supply routes through the Arctic would seem compelling.

In opposition, other analysts challenge the extent of the threat to Singapore's hub port status. Questions remain about the near-term potential of large-scale, highly regularized Arctic shipping, related to navigational safety, transit time, capacity restrictions, limited seasonal access, as well as an uncertain Russian bureaucracy and lack of existing infrastructure (Lasserre & Pelletier, 2011). On the displacement of Singapore as an international hub, there are "few grounds for concern" and the NSR is likely to have a "marginal effect on global shipping movements" (Graham, 2012). Furthermore, the role of Chinese ports and Singapore are complementary (Tongzon, 2011), and the

rise of Chinese ports, due to Arctic shipping or otherwise, need not impact the Port of Singapore negatively. Indeed, there may well be an upside to a fully-operational NSR: the state-owned¹⁰ Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) has internationalized its footprint, particularly in the last decade,¹¹ and Singapore's broad expertise in the running of major port facilities may be an opportunity for PSA International as new northern port infrastructure is required to facilitate Arctic shipping.

Nevertheless, a potential future in which Singapore's status as a maritime node is threatened presents a challenge to Singapore's economic wellbeing. For a developmental state where the legitimacy of the PAP leadership and the bureaucratic management of the economy is intertwined with economic success and effective planning, major challenges to the economy are perceived as national security challenges (Dent, 2001: 2). Therefore, on the one hand, the challenge of the NSR to Singapore may prove to be overblown, but integrating Singapore into the Arctic governance system represents a means of hedging risk¹² while understanding and influencing Arctic change.

B. Potential for the Offshore and Marine Industry

Singapore is home to global leaders in Offshore and Marine Engineering (OME), a critical sector for Singapore's economic strategy. In 2007, the Chairman of the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) made an explicit connection between developments in the Arctic and Singapore's OME sector:

It [the offshore and marine engineering sector] must look beyond its current capabilities and products to stay relevant and remain at the top. It is thus essential to invest in R&D, especially in areas that can overcome future challenges faced by the global offshore oil and gas industry. Some of these technological challenges include the extraction of oil and gas from marginal fields and the development of oil and gas fields in deeper waters and in the arctic regions where climactic conditions are extreme. (Ong, 2007)

Certainly, among some observers linked to the Arctic Council, this aspect of Singapore's interest in Arctic affairs is viewed as the most significant.

Singapore's developmental statism helps explain the link between Singapore's OME sector, the Arctic and the actions of the Singapore government. The importance of Singapore's Maritime Cluster (SMC) and Singapore's strategic ambition to establish itself as a "global maritime knowledge hub" by 2025 (Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, 2009) indicate that Singapore's wider state initiatives have a bearing on Singapore's Arctic engagement.

The SMC comprises more than 5000 maritime establishments (Khong, 2012) and has strong linkages to the rest of Singapore's economy, with a total direct and indirect value-added contribution of around 9% of GDP (Wong, Ho, & Singh, 2010). Significant effort is being expended to transform this maritime cluster into an international leader, adopting a top-down, coordinated multi-agency approach to developing the cluster (Wong, Ho, & Singh, 2010: 111). The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) has overall responsibility for the development of the international maritime cluster and official institutions have been proactive in investing in core infrastructure and moving vulnerable industries, for example ship repair, into more modern niche markets.

The OME sector is central to the SMC and the development of the maritime knowledge hub. It accounts for 20% of total value added in the SMC and 25% of total maritime employment in Singapore (Wong, Ho, & Singh, 2010: 88). Singapore's OME sector accounts for 70% of the world's jack-up rig-building market¹³ and 2/3 of the global Floating Production Storage and Offloading (FPSO) platform conversion market (Singapore Economic Development Board, 2012), both crucial technologies for offshore drilling in hostile environments. Singapore's Keppel Offshore and Marine and Sembcorp Marine dominate these markets (Wong, Ho, & Singh, 2010: 96) and have close ties to state institutions.¹⁴

Keppel Offshore and Marine entered the Arctic icebreaker market in 2008, delivering two vessels to Russia's LUKOIL that are currently operating in the Barents Sea (Keppel Offshore & Marine, 2012a). In February 2012, Keppel and ConocoPhillips announced their intention to jointly design a pioneering jack-up rig for offshore Arctic drilling, with project completion expected by the end of 2013 (Keppel Offshore & Marine, 2012b). The success of Keppel OM and Sembcorp in particular has fueled growth in related industries, such as supply vessels, logistics, IT repair and support (Wong, Ho, & Singh, 2010: 98).

In the development of the maritime knowledge hub, there is a close state-industry-academia cooperation, as is typical of the developmental state (Airriess, 2001: 240). The Singapore government has sought to grow Arctic expertise to complement its existing industrial expertise. It has instituted a number of R&D initiatives involving the MPA, the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the private sector. Most notable are Arctic research projects at the Centre for Offshore Research & Engineering (CORE) at NUS (Elias, 2008). CORE was established in 2004 "to strengthen Singapore's performance as an oil and gas hub in the wake of high growth forecasts for

the industry globally” (Wong, Ho, & Singh, 2010: 99). The Keppel Corporation is a founding member of CORE.

Conclusion

Singapore has not, to date, articulated a public strategy on the Arctic. Singapore’s Arctic interest likely represents the logical extension of its more general interest in important developments in international maritime policy, including the importance it places on UNCLOS, the IMO and regional maritime cooperation. However, Singapore, at the state and institutional levels, has important strategic economic interests related to the opening up of the Arctic for shipping and resource extraction. Singapore’s competence in the management of complex port infrastructure and the fostering of global leaders in the offshore marine and engineering industry represent important new niches for two industries that are critical to the Singapore economy and closely linked to the Singapore government.

Singapore’s application for observer status at the Arctic Council and the appointment of an Arctic envoy in early 2012 indicate that Singapore has Arctic ambitions. Singapore is viewed as expending significant diplomatic effort to obtain a consensus on its Arctic Council status.

Singapore’s Arctic policy is in its early stages of definition. It is not yet clear whether efforts to contribute to Arctic governance represent a long-term foreign policy commitment or if Singapore’s Arctic diplomacy is driven primarily by an ambition to exploit an emerging market in which it sees itself as a technological and expertise leader.

Notes

1. Conversation with Singaporean MFA official, October 2012.
2. Communication between Singapore’s Arctic Envoy, Ambassador Siddique, and the authors.
3. “Ad-hoc observer status for specific meetings may be granted to the present applicants for observer status according to the Rules of Procedure until the Ministers have decided upon their applications. Ad-hoc observer status will no longer be applied otherwise and appropriate amendments will be made to the Rules of Procedure.” - Senior Arctic Officials (SAO) (May, 2011) *Report to Ministers*, Nuuk, Greenland, 51. Retrieved (10.5.12) from, <http://www.arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about/documents/category/20-main-documents-from-nuuk?download=76:sao-report-to-the-ministers>
4. Interviews with diplomatic and civil society personnel familiar with Singapore’s activities at the Arctic Council.

5. Communication between Singapore's Arctic Envoy, Ambassador Siddique, and the authors.
6. Singapore is currently the world's second largest container port and was only overtaken as the world's leading port by Shanghai in the past few years.
7. Interviews with diplomatic and civil society personnel familiar with Singapore's activities at the Arctic Council.
8. Communication between Singapore's Arctic Envoy, Ambassador Siddique, and the authors.
9. Singapore was granted full internal self-government by the British in 1959. Singapore became fully independent in 1965.
10. PSA International is 100% owned by Temasek Holdings (<http://www.internationalpsa.com/about/investorrelations.html>). Temasek Holdings is wholly owned by the Singapore Ministry of Finance (http://www.temasekreview.com.sg/2011/governance/governance_framework.html).
11. PSA International manages a number of terminals in the ports where trans-Arctic shipments are predicted to arrive in Northeast Asia, including a total of 29 berths across Dalian, Tianjin, Busan and Incheon, with a total capacity of 14,350 kTEU (PSA International, 2012) that is far beyond predictions for volumes of trans-Arctic shipment through to mid-century (Peters et al., 2011: 5314).
12. For more on 'hedging' and Singapore's general foreign policy stance, see Kuik (2008) and Leifer (2000).
13. A jack-up rig is a "self-contained combination drilling rig and floating barge, fitted with long support legs that can be raised or lowered independently of each other." See Schlumberger, (<http://www.glossary.oilfield.slb.com/Display.cfm?Term=jackup%20rig>).
14. Temasek Holdings, whose sole shareholder is the Singapore Ministry of Finance (Temasek, 2012), owns 20.74% of Keppel Corporation (Keppel Corporation, 2012) and 60.91% of Sembcorp Marine (Holmes, 2012).

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An Arctic Strategy for Scotland

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As Scotland moves increasingly to assert its position on the international stage, this paper asks whether Scotland should develop its own Arctic strategy, comparable to those developed by the eight Arctic states and if so, what the contents of such a strategy might be. This paper will introduce the main reasons why Scotland might pursue an Arctic strategy, taking into account its international audience, its domestic audience and, not of least importance, the audience in Westminster. It will identify Scotland's distinct historical, social, economic and political interests in the Arctic and show how these differ from the United Kingdom. Some potential contents for a Scottish Arctic strategy are outlined, with an emphasis on governance and cooperation, economic development, and environmental and scientific cooperation. The paper concludes that there are both costs and benefits in publishing a formal Arctic strategy, but nevertheless, a coherent, unified and holistic approach to the Arctic is wanting in Scotland and the Scottish government should begin by establishing a dedicated Arctic division within its international department to conduct further research into what Scotland can offer the Arctic and what opportunities the Arctic presents.

Introduction

Depledge and Dodds (2011) discussed the perspective of the United Kingdom (UK) on the High North and the potentials for a UK strategy. Elsewhere in this inaugural *Arctic Yearbook*, Depledge continues this theme examining potential governmental participants in such a programme. What has not yet been discussed to any significant degree is the possibility that notwithstanding complacency in Whitehall, Scotland might develop its own Arctic strategy. Although an intrinsic constitutional part of the UK, Scotland has quite distinct historical, social, economic and political interests in the Arctic which will form the subject matter of this article.

Following this introduction, section two will outline in general terms the interests of Scotland in the High North and the pertinent competencies of the Scottish government. Some of the potential contents of a Scottish Arctic strategy are examined in section three, with an emphasis on governance and cooperation, economic development and on environmental and scientific cooperation.

The paper ends with a brief evaluation of the costs and benefits of preparing a formal strategy and concludes that whether or not such is developed and published, some kind of coherent approach to the Arctic is wanting in Scotland.

Why Scotland?

The current Scottish Parliament was created by the Scotland Act 1998 of the United Kingdom Parliament in Westminster. Under it, certain matters are reserved for Westminster and any attempts by the Scottish Parliament to pass law on these will be *ultra vires* and hence ineffective (s. 28(2)(b)). The reserved matters are outlined in Schedule 5 of the Act and these include “international relations including relations with territories outside the UK, the European Communities... and other international organisations” (Scotland Act, Schedule 5, Part I, s.7(1)) and military defence, including naval, military and air forces (Scotland Act, Schedule 5, Part I, s. 9(1)). For these reasons, issues of military security and search and rescue are not extensively covered in this analysis although they would be prime candidates for a UK strategy. Most energy governance is likewise reserved for Westminster, pointedly the oil and gas supplies lying off Scotland’s shores. But, nuclear aside, renewable energy is not reserved in the Scotland Act and cooperation in this field is considered below (Scotland Act, Schedule 5, Part II, Head D).

The pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP) majority government intends to hold a referendum on independence in 2014, possibly with an additional option of enhanced devolution (Scottish Government, 2012). Increased devolution and even full independence would impact both the contents and tone of any Scotland Arctic strategy, most notably on military security. However, as both these possibilities remain hypothetical and in any event, are some years off, they remain outside the scope of this article.

Under the leadership of the SNP, Scotland has already drawn up a broad International Framework, as well as more detailed plans for the USA and Canada, effectively “strategies” with defined objectives, areas for action, planned actions, and follow-up (Scottish Government, 2008; Scottish Government, 2010c; Scottish Government, 2010d). Less developed plans for India and Pakistan have also been developed (Scottish Government, 2010a; Scottish Government 2010b). In the International Framework, Scotland looks to its “comparators” in the “Arc of Prosperity” (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, and Norway) as exemplars of high educational and economic achievement (Scottish Government, 2008, para. 19(2)). Scotland’s International Framework was published in April