The Management of Threats in Singapore: Civil-Military Integration

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Introduction

Compared to many other militaries around the Southeast Asia region, the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) has remained "one of the least politically-oriented national military forces in Southeast Asia" (Huxley, 1993, p. 1), with the government having firmly established civilian supremacy over the military. With a large citizen army due to a policy of conscription requiring every Singaporean male to serve two years of "National Service" (NS), and a long-running tradition of military scholar-officers permeating the ranks of the civil service and political leadership, one would expect the SAF to play a political role in a highly militarised state. Instead, as Chan Heng Chee (1985, p. 136) notes, "the most striking feature of the Singapore scene is the undisputed predominance of the civilian sector over the military." This phenomenon is often attributed to a strong "civil-military fusion," where the military functions as an integral part of the administrative structure of the state, complementing its social and economic domains, and identifies fully with the "values, interests, and national goals" of the civilian government instead of having its own ideological positions (T. Y. Tan, 2001, p. 278).

However, most explanations of civil-military relations in Singapore focus more on institutional explanations. What has been underexplored are how structural factors, such as international and domestic threats, affect relations between state, society, and the military and hence the level of civilian control over the military. A key proponent of this approach, Michael Desch, predicts that in a country like Singapore, which has arguably experienced high and persistent levels of internal and external threats for most of its history, should suffer from degraded civilian control of the military (Table 1). This is because "heightened internal threats may lead civilians to adopt subjective mechanisms," and competing internal and external threats might split civilian institutions while simultaneously unifying the military and "increasing its capacity for effective action" (Desch, 1999, p. 17). A challenging domestic threat environment may also lead to internally oriented military doctrines being developed, weakening civilian control (Desch, 1999, p. 113).

Table 1: Desch's Theory of Civilian Control as a Function of Location and Intensity of Threats

	High External Threats	Low External Threats
High Internal Threats	Poor	Worst
Low Internal Threats	Good	Mixed

(Adapted from Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military*, p.14)

Hence, why is it that Singapore's defence policies in response to their challenging external and internal threat environment has not led to degraded civilian control over the military? In this essay, I extend the "civil-military fusion" thesis and posit that the Singaporean state has mainly used civilian institutions and mechanisms to handle internal threats, while external threats are the domain of the SAF. Furthermore, the state positions the SAF as only one component of a comprehensive security strategy, maintaining primacy of civilian control over the SAF even when responding to issues that pose both an internal and external threat. The SAF is firmly integrated with the wider civilian society and administrative structure as well, effectively civilianising the military sphere. Thus, while recognising the importance of institutions in civil-military relations, I argue they play an intervening role in the management of threats, and there is a need to examine how the state utilises and structures such institutions.

I develop my essay in five parts. Firstly, I briefly detail the history of the SAF, the state of the literature on civil-military relations in Singapore, and Singapore's perceived threat environment. Secondly, I elucidate how Singapore has historically responded to internal and external threats and outline the demarcation of responsibilities in threat response between civilian institutions and the military. Third, I expound on the strategic doctrine of Total Defence and how it subordinates the military to just one component of a larger comprehensive security strategy to respond to threats. In particular, I highlight Singapore's response to the transnational threat of terrorism, which is portrayed as posing both an internal and external threat, as an example of how this doctrine is put in practice. Fourth, I explicate how NS and the development of soldier-scholars in the SAF civilianises the military sphere and enhances civilian control. Lastly, I conclude.

History of the SAF, Civil-Military Relations in Singapore, and Threat Perceptions

Prior to independence in 1965, Singapore largely lacked a military or martial tradition. In 1854, the Singapore Volunteer Rifle Corps (SVRC) was established, and was subsequently expanded into a Singapore Volunteer Force (SVF) comprising of Eurasian, Malay, and Chinese infantry soldiers that fought alongside the British Army during World War II, but it was disbanded in June 1946 (Chan, 1985, p. 139). An attempt to establish a conscript army by the British colonial government in 1952 was unpopular amongst Chinese school students and largely curtailed, so by 1965, Singapore's military was comprised of only two infantry battalions (Chan, 1985, p. 140). After independence, the Singapore government immediately established the Ministry of the Interior and Defence (MID), led by Dr Goh Keng Swee. As two-thirds of the infantry battalions were non-Singaporeans, the government set about establishing the army and a volunteer People's Defence Force (PDF) (Huxley, 2000, p. 10). The NS (Amendment) Act was then passed in 1967 to build a conscripted army, which was seen as vital to build self-reliance in defence, especially after the British withdrew their forces by 1971 (Huxley, 2000, p. 13). In 1970, the MID was then split into the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), with each ministry taking on the task of external and internal security respectively.

Over time, the SAF has evolved into one of the most powerful militaries in the region, bolstered by large defence spending (up to 6 percent of GDP every year). It also utilises advanced technology, drawing from the concepts of Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) to optimise their defence capabilities (Tay, 2016, p. 29). Yet, Singapore has had no problems with the civil-military problematique as posed by Peter Feaver, which is ensuring a military that is strong enough to defend against external threats also obeys its civilian masters (Feaver, 1996, p. 150). This is unlike other countries in the region like Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand.

In explaining this puzzle, previous literature on civil-military relations in Singapore has largely focused on the political and administrative roles of military elites. Tim Huxley (2000, p. 240) notes how senior SAF officers have been channelled into administrative and political roles, and argues that this may have been a way to maintain political stability against the threat of opposition movements. However, he believes they will not intervene politically due to a lack of political uniformity amongst those who join the government. Sean Walsh (2007, pp. 271–

272) argues that civilian and military elites in Singapore are "linked socially and functionally" like the Western European model of aristocratic families dominating both politics and the military. Because they have common social origins, he states that the cross-linkages of elites between the military and the political-administrative sphere leads to "functional integration" between both sets of elites, fostering a "partial civilianization of the military" and hence stable civil-military relations.

Singaporean scholars have focused more on the close institutional linkages between the civilian and military domains. Documenting the lucrative scholarship scheme for SAF officers, Chan (1985, p. 147) states that "dissatisfied young officers do not stage coups. They merely resign to join the lucrative private sector with their highly marketable skills." She also states that the lack of a military tradition that led civilian authorities to shape military organisations, as well as an emphasis on a "strictly professional role" in the SAF's Code of Conduct, has led to a depoliticised military that is subordinate to civilian leadership (Chan, 1985, pp. 151–153). And as previously mentioned, Tan Tai Yong posits that there is a "civil-military fusion" where the military is integrated with the bureaucracy and political leadership and identifies fully with their values. He argues that Huntington's theory of "objective civilian control"—where the military's political power can be reduced by increasing its professionalism—is inapplicable to Singapore precisely because of this fusion, which places the military firmly under control and sees security and defence as the "collective responsibility of the entire government and nation, not just the armed forces." (T. Y. Tan, 2001, p. 278)

Going beyond the "fusion" paradigm, Alan Chong and Samuel Chan (2017, pp. 365–367) explore how the "cross-fertilization" of the civilian and military spheres in Singapore has created a "militarized citizen" that believes military and civilian values are interchangeable and equally suited to the task of maintaining peace. However, there is a civil-military tension between the civilian "fear of casualties" over training incidents and the military belief that cultivating effective soldiers requires simulating "military suffering as a badge of pride" (A. Chong & Chan, 2017, p. 367). Hence, the state manufactures "crises" alongside a calibrated sense of nationalism, propagating an insecure reading of Singapore's strategic threat environment to keep the "militarised citizen" viable (A. Chong & Chan, 2017, p. 368).

While explanations of Singaporean civil-military relations focusing on the close institutional linkages between the military and politico-administrative realms are not wrong, they neglect a crucial element which Chong and Chan have hinted at: how is this civil-military fusion maintained when responding to national security threats? Even if civilian and military elites are linked and share the same values, why then have they not adopted military doctrines that degrade civilian control and give more political influence to military elites in response to threats, as this would be convenient to do? Hence, this necessitates a closer examination of Singapore's strategic threat environment and how the state handles such threats.

Threat Perceptions and Responses to Internal and External Threats

While national security is commonly thought of in terms of the military protecting the territory of a nation-state, in reality, what comes under the paradigm of national security and the strategies undertaken to guarantee it is defined by the state itself. In Singapore, the state has identified two main national security concerns: 1) protecting national sovereignty and 2) maintaining public order (Vasu & Loo, 2016, p. 22). These security concerns inform how the state perceives threats, which are also situational and dependent on Singapore's historical context, location, and size. As Singapore has never fought in a war or handled any major border disputes, its threat perceptions are largely subjective, hence military doctrines should be more significant in determining what is considered a threat (Desch, 1999, p. 13). However, in the case of Singapore, what is unique is how the state effectively defines internal and external threats while effectively dictating responses to each. This leaves no room for internally oriented military doctrines to develop independently that may threaten civilian control.

Internal Threats

Scholars generally acknowledge that Singapore faced the twin internal threats of volatile racial and religious tensions as well as communist insurgents after independence in 1965 (Huxley, 2000, pp. 14–15; Vasu & Loo, 2016, p. 26). In his inaugural address to Parliament, the first President of Singapore, Yusof bin Ishak, declared that "Communalists and the Communists" opposed the "creation of a tolerant multi-racial society" that guaranteed Singapore's "future as a distinct and separate people in South-East Asia" (Parliament of Singapore, 1965). He stated that the Communalists tried to push for the consolidation of Malay as the main language of

education, while the Communists appealed to "chauvinist and communal sentiments" to disrupt the state's "consolidation of national identity" (Parliament of Singapore, 1965). The communal threat was that Communalists could spark racial riots and undermine the social fabric of Singaporean society, while the Communist threat was because they were allegedly undertaking revolutionary armed struggle to take control of state power (Quah, 1985, pp. 187–198). Hence, in the eyes of the state, these two groups posed an internal threat to national sovereignty and public order by undermining domestic stability.

Two main civilian mechanisms have been used in the management of internal security threats. The first is the Internal Security Act (ISA), a statute that allows for preventive detention of people suspected to be "prejudicial" to the internal security of Singapore (Internal Security Act, 1985). The Internal Security Department (ISD) under MHA carries out these arrests. Originally enacted in Malaysia and extended to Singapore after merger in 1963, the ISA was retained by the government after independence in 1965. Before independence, the Internal Security Council of Malaya had used the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance (PPSO), the predecessor of the ISA, to detain 113 left-wing political activists in February 1963, in what is now known as Operation Coldstore (Huxley, 2000, p. 14). This included core leaders from the main opposition party, the *Barisan Sosialis* (Socialist Front), who were accused of being Communists or Communist sympathisers. This would set a precedent for such practices to continue after independence, as the ISA was used to arrest more than 800 individuals who had allegedly provided aid to insurgents from the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) in the 1970s (Parliament of Singapore, 2011). These insurgents were accused of inciting "illegal strikes, riots, and civil strife" to destabilise the state, as well as instigating 35 arson and bomb incidents between 1970 and 1974 (Parliament of Singapore, 2011). Although the Communist threat dissipated in the late 1970s, the ISA was used again in 1987 to detain 22 Christian social activists who had supposedly colluded with former student activist Tan Wah Piow under the cover of Christian organisations in a "Marxist Conspiracy" (Mauzy & Milne, 2002, p. 130).

Information on these operations remain confidential and are only sporadically referenced to by government officials, such as when Goh Keng Swee mentioned in 1967 how the ISD would infiltrate "communist open-front mass organisations," identify the leaders and evaluate their capabilities and intentions, and arrest and detain them without trial if need be

(Quah, 1985, p. 209). Hence it cannot be ascertained whether these groups actually posed a credible security threat. Some individuals who were detained have consistently maintained that they did not seek to violently overthrow the state, and that these operations were politically motivated. The government has consistently maintained that they were pursuing a "subversive Marxist political agenda," and hence this necessitated the use of the ISA to maintain domestic stability (Parliament of Singapore, 2011). Nevertheless, the use of the ISA under the ISD, which is under the command of the Ministry of Home Affairs is an example of how the state has used a civilian mechanism to handle what they perceive as internal security threats.

The second mechanism is the use of the Gurkha Contingent in internal policing. Formed in 1949, it is comprised of Nepalese soldiers. They were used to quell racial and religious riots and labour strikes in the 1950s and 1960s, and are now used for anti-terrorist efforts as well as providing political protection for government figures (Z. L. Chong & Zakaria Zainal, 2014, pp. 28–32). Singapore's first Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, opined that the Gurkhas were needed as a policing force, as "to have either Chinese policemen shooting Malays, or Malay policemen shooting Chinese would have caused widespread repercussions" (Z. L. Chong & Zakaria Zainal, 2014, p. 33). Hence, since the Gurkhas "were not partial to ethnic or ideological appeals," they could be trusted to handle internal security threats, especially those regarding communal unrest (Z. L. Chong & Zakaria Zainal, 2014, p. 32). The presence of the Gurkhas guarantees an internal security force comprised of perceptibly-neutral foreign soldiers that is firmly under civilian control while providing an additional layer of political protection against potential encroachment by the military, who might be tempted to step in should the police fail.

External Threats

Although the SAF was called upon to assist the police during the 1969 race riots, Huxley (2000, p. 16) notes that the SAF's internal security role was "essentially peripheral" to its main role of defending against external threats. Singapore has never fought a war, but its small size and lack of natural resources has imbued it with a sense of vulnerability of being sandwiched between its two larger and more populous neighbours, Malaysia and Indonesia. Racial geopolitics was the main consideration, as Singapore was often referred to as "a Chinese nut in a Malay nutcracker" by leaders in the early years of independence (Huxley, 2000, p. 50). In his 1965 address, Yusof bin Ishak also highlighted the possibility of Indonesia embarking on

"greater and more hazardous external adventures" should it face economic difficulties, while also cautioning against expecting the Malaysian government to be "if not friendly at least be neutral and unaggressive," and cited how they viewed "an independent multi-racial Singapore with considerable distaste and apprehension" (Parliament of Singapore, 1965). This could be attributed to memories of *Konfrontasi* (Confrontation) where Indonesian commandos carried out several bombing incidents in Singapore. And while Malaysia and Singapore have generally maintained good relations, tensions have arisen several times due to Malaysia threatening to cut off Singapore's water supply and border incursions in the air and sea (Huxley, 2000, pp. 47–48). Hence, although Singapore has never explicitly named Malaysia and Indonesia as its main external threats, it is quite clear that it considers them as such and seeks to protect its territorial sovereignty from them.

The primary way in which Singapore seeks to defend itself from external threats is to build up the SAF to act as a deterrent. While initially adopting the "poisonous shrimp" strategy to deter aggressors by increasing the costs of invading Singapore, the SAF's defence posture morphed into a "porcupine" and then a "dolphin" by the 2000s, symbolising its capability of launching pre-emptive strikes to achieve a "swift and decisive victory" (Huxley, 2000, p. 57; Tay, 2016, p. 25). It has done this through high and consistent military spending to acquire advanced technologies and weapon systems, allowing it to strengthen its deterrence posture and maintain a balance of power in the region despite its small size (Tay, 2016, p. 27). When introducing the NS (Amendment) Bill that established the policy of conscription, Goh Keng Swee stated the need for a large citizen army to "be a more valuable partner" in regional defence alliances (Goh, 1967). Hence, conscription has arguably allowed Singapore to develop a large defence force and pull its weight in the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), a regional defence alliance with Singapore, Malaysia, UK, Australia, and New Zealand. This further deters potential attacks.

As noted by many scholars, the military in Singapore was essentially created by the civilian government specifically for external security, and that has guided its raison d'être until this day. The military's main role is to deter external threats, while internal threats have been handled by civilian mechanisms under the MHA. This demarcation of responsibilities, guided by the state, enhances civilian control of the military.

Strategic Doctrine of Total Defence

This demarcation of responsibilities in responding to threats is further highlighted by the role of the SAF and civilian institutions in Singapore's strategic doctrine of Total Defence. Introduced in 1984 to "unite all sectors of society – government, business and the people – in defence of Singapore," Total Defence is comprised of six pillars: military, civil, economic, digital, social, and psychological defence (Matthews & Yan, 2007, pp. 380–381). In brief, military defence is the building up of the SAF to deter potential aggressors; civil defence is the cultivation of vigilance and self-reliance in civilians when responding to threats; economic defence is building a strong and resilient economy, social defence is about maintaining social cohesion in a multicultural society, digital defence is adopting good cybersecurity practices, and psychological defence is building up the collective will of the people to respond to threats ('Total Defence', n.d.) The logic behind Total Defence is that through a whole-of-society effort, Singapore would be able to deter any aggressors.

Crucially, this "subordinates the purely military aspect" of deterrence to a broader notion of defence (Matthews & Yan, 2007, p. 380). Tan See Seng and Alvin Chew (2008, p. 249) posit that in comparison to other Southeast Asian countries like Thailand or the Philippines that view the military as the principal provider of national security, the SAF is viewed more as a "hard-security deterrent" that complements other "soft-security deterrents." The SAF is not the only institution with the duty to take care of national security and respond to threats. Other civilian institutions have a similar role to play in defence; for example, National Education (NE) programmes in schools seek to build psychological and social defence by instilling in students the commitment to defend the country and maintain social cohesion, while the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) conducts emergency exercises and trains people to respond to crises (Huxley, 2000, pp. 25–26). Hence, Total Defence can be interpreted as a comprehensive notion of security, where responding to threats necessitates all six pillars working in tandem, instead of just a focus on the role of the military.

However, Total Defence is not free of criticisms. It has been labelled as a way to mould total subordination to the state using a narrative of vulnerability, entrenching the political rule of the People's Action Party (PAP) by suppressing alternate narratives (KJ, 2009). Huxley (2000, p. 26) also points out how the arrest of political dissidents has been justified by the

government by claiming that "foreign elements" were attacking Singapore's "psychological and social defences." Furthermore, Adrian Kuah (2009) has noted how Total Defence in practice is quite different from the theory, as the size and resilience of the military budget, even in the face of recessions, appears to place military defence at the centre of Total Defence, with the others merely playing auxiliary roles. Hence, Total Defence can also be seen as a top-down effort to securitise the state for political control, and its success depends on the ability of state institutions to manage this, rather than the efforts of the people, contrary to the rhetoric.

Nevertheless, the doctrine of Total Defence ensures that the task of defending Singapore against threats is not seen as solely that of the SAF's, but of the government and society's as well. This ensures that the SAF do not see themselves as "guardians of the national interest," so "there is no justification whatever for the military to lay claim to political power" in any situation (T. Y. Tan, 2001, pp. 285–286). The SAF does not bear the sole burden of threat response and is thus less likely to develop an internally oriented security doctrine of its own that could degrade threat response.

Terrorism: A Unique Transnational Threat?

Especially on transnational threats like terrorism, the government cites the importance of Total Defence as a framework for "framework for a comprehensive and coherent response," and integral to building up "collective resilience" (National Security Coordination Centre (Singapore), 2004, p. 60). Before 9/11, Singapore had suffered from sporadic and largely isolated incidents of terrorism such as the 1974 Laju Incident and the hijacking of Singapore Airlines Flight 117 in 1991, and the responses to such incidents were treated as such and not part of a wider national security strategy. However, post 9/11, terrorism has been portrayed as posing both an internal and external security threat to Singapore, necessitating closer linkages between the military and civilian spheres and whole-of-society responses to potential attacks. In Singapore's 2004 National Security Strategy report, it is stated that due to the threat of "transnational terrorism," a "stove-piped approach to internal security and external defence will no longer work," and enhanced coordination is needed between security agencies (National Security Coordination Centre (Singapore), 2004, p. 8). Terrorist attacks may come from both overseas and internally, as evidenced by an uncovered local Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) plot in 2002.

However, while both the SAF and civilian agencies do tackle terrorism together, there are differences in the ways the state manages this.

Since the 1990s, the ISA has not been used against political dissidents and mainly used against suspected terrorists. It was used in late 2001 to break up the local JI network which had been planning an attack in Singapore. From 2002 to 2019, over 130 people suspected of engaging in terrorism-related activities have been detained under the ISA ('Number of radicalised individuals on ISA orders at highest in 7 years', 2019). Many have been foreign domestic workers who were radicalised to carry out terror attacks, and although not necessarily in Singapore, have been deemed a security threat. They are then rehabilitated by civilian institutions such as the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG). The state's security infrastructure was also enhanced, with a new National Security Coordination Secretariat (NSCS) formed, under the command of the Prime Minister (see Figure 1). The NSCS is supported by the National Security Coordination Centre (NSCC), which co-ordinates counter-terrorism strategic policy amongst different agencies, and the Joint Counter Terrorism Centre (JCTC), which provides intelligence and threat assessments from different agencies (National Security Coordination Centre (Singapore), 2004, pp. 37–38). Under this security framework, the SAF plays a part in deterring attacks through providing technical expertise, firepower, and special forces for counter-terrorist efforts, as well as carrying out joint exercises with police and patrolling of key installations (A. Tan, 2002, pp. 13–14).

Figure 1: National Security Architecture in Singapore

(National Security Coordination Centre (Singapore), 2004, pp. 37)

Hence, while the ISA has been used to detain individuals suspected of carrying out terrorist-related activities and prevent terror plots, the military works together with civilian agencies to gather intelligence on terrorist groups, practice responding to terror attacks, and protect critical infrastructure. However, the SAF's management of terrorism is still under the purview of the NSCS, which is firmly under civilian control. Hence, despite a convergence in internal and external security agencies to manage responses to terrorist threats, there is little prospect of the military independently formulating internal security doctrines that could threaten civilian control as they are incorporated in a larger comprehensive security strategy that demarcates specific responsibilities for the military and civilian institutions alike.

NS and the Development of Soldier-Scholars

From just two infantry battalions at the time of independence in 1965, the SAF can now draw on 72,500 active personnel and an additional 312,500 reserve forces ('Chapter Six', 2019, p.

303). This has been attributed to the institution of NS, with a large conscripted force allowing the SAF to substantially increase its defence capabilities. However, the nation-building element of NS must not be forgotten as well. When tabling the NS (Amendment) Bill, Goh (1967) stated that "Nothing creates loyalty and national consciousness more speedily and more thoroughly than participation in defence and membership of the armed forces." Through the common experience of military training, NS was expected to create a national identity that could cut across ethnic, class, religious, and ideological lines. This focus on the "moral cause" of NS when developing citizen-soldiers instead of the military aspect develops a sense of loyalty in them towards the larger nation, not just to the armed forces as an institution (T. Y. Tan, 2001, p. 288).

Hence, the cultivation of a citizen army via NS not only helps to deter against external threats by building a large defence force, it bolsters resilience against the internal threat of communal instability. This is supported by studies and surveys of both servicemen and regular Singaporeans, who affirm that NS forges stronger ties and links across different racial groups, and fulfils a "social mission beyond its defence mandate" (Leong, Yang, & Ho, 2013; Yan, 2019, p. 98). The nation-building aspect of NS forges a "symbiotic relationship between the defence establishment and the society it serves to defend," minimising civil-military tensions (A. Chong & Chan, 2017, p. 357). The SAF is thus seen more as an institution that ameliorates potential internal security problems primarily by developing a strong sense of national identity in its citizen-soldiers. This civilianises the SAF, depriving military generals of a "natural military element" that they can potentially exploit as a political base (T. Y. Tan, 2001, p. 289).

This civilianisation of the SAF takes place even at the highest echelons of the armed forces. In the early years of independence, there was a traditional dislike of soldiering amongst the majority Chinese population, due to a lack of military tradition and the history of China's warring years, where people had been bullied by invading armies (Yan, 2019, pp. 98–99). To enhance the status of the military, MINDEF launched a scholarship scheme to attract academically bright Singaporeans to the ranks of the SAF. Three categories of scholarships were created: 1) the SAF Overseas Scholarship (SAFOS), which sent the best officers to renowned overseas universities like Oxford and Cambridge, 2) the SAF Overseas Training Award (OTA), which sent combat officers to overseas military academies, and 3) local

scholarships which paid for officers' education at local universities (Chan, 1985, pp. 145–146). However, many scholars complained about the inflexibility of career advancement in the military, and often resigned after serving the minimum bond period, leading the SAF to develop "Wranglerships" to groom elite young officers to take command at a higher level and pursue projects they would not be routinely assigned if they were non-scholars (Chan, 1985, p. 147).

When the SAF still could not attract the brightest graduates compared to other civilian agencies, a "dual-career scheme" was introduced in 1981, where soldier-scholars could be seconded to the civil service or statutory boards as well as the elite Administrative Service (public service leaders) on a permanent basis once they reached the middle or high ranks (Huxley, 2000, p. 232). This was aimed at attracting higher quality graduates by promising them the opportunity to enter the lucrative civilian sector after a period in the military. By 1993, 10 percent of the Administrative Service were SAF dual-career officers, and many senior or retired SAF officers have been appointed to senior positions in the public sector, where they can influence strategic decision-making and policy-making (Huxley, 2000, pp. 233–235). This shows the popularity of the dual-career scheme, but also how closely interconnected the civilian and military elite domains are, leading one political observer to opine that the officer corps were more "armed bureaucrats" rather than soldiers (Barr, 2014, p. 81).

Furthermore, retired soldier-scholars have entered politics, with the first being Lee Hsien Loong, Lee Kuan Yew's eldest son, who was elected as a PAP MP in 1984. He has been the Prime Minister of Singapore since 2004. Although soldier-scholars do not make up a majority of the cabinet, there were concerns that this would result in an undue preference towards the military or defence and security considerations in the formulation of public policies, as well as influencing a more hawkish outlook towards other countries, potentially eroding civilian control (T. Y. Tan, 2011, p. 160). Yet, there has been no evidence of this occurring, as defence budgets have stayed consistent, diplomacy is still a key aspect of Singapore's foreign policies, and as seen by the country's response to terrorism, there is still a strong emphasis on civilian institutions and Total Defence in threat response. Hence, the development of soldier-scholars so far has resulted only in the creation of a "common pool of national leaders who can be deployed interchangeably in all institutional fields", and not a military takeover of the civilian sphere (T. Y. Tan, 2011, p. 161).

Thus, through NS and the development of soldier-scholars to enter the civilian sector and government, the military sphere has become increasingly civilianised. While there is inevitably some militarisation of the civilian sphere, a focus on nation-building and channelling human resources to the civilian sector in the military has enhanced civilian control of it, as not only is there a lack of a political base for military leaders to appeal to, former military leaders in politics have used civilian institutions to respond to internal security threats as they have become ensconced in the civilian sector.

Conclusion

Studies about civil-military relations in Singapore have often focused on the institutional explanations for the integration between the civilian and military spheres, but this essay has sought to show that this is an incomplete focus. Since independence, the state has utilised civilian mechanisms under civilian institutions to tackle internal threats, while external threats are left to the military to handle. Furthermore, the strategic doctrine of Total Defence formulated by the state ensures that when responding to threats, the SAF is only positioned as one component of a larger comprehensive security paradigm. For example, on issues like terrorism that pose both an internal and external threat, the counterterrorism threat response strategy integrates the civilian and military spheres, but with the SAF under command of civilians and having specific responsibilities. This demarcation of responsibilities preserves civilian control of the military. Lastly, NS and the development of soldier-scholars civilianises the military sector, ensuring that if the military is required to respond to internal threats, there is neither a political base of soldiers nor the proclivity of military generals to seize power present. The SAF is firmly integrated with the wider civilian society and administrative sector, leaving little possibility of it formulating internally oriented doctrines that could erode civilian control.

Hence, this essay has sought to establish that when accounting for civilian control of the military, there is a need to examine how a country has responded to both international and domestic threats, and more crucially, which institutions are used to do so. But it is imperative to note that Singapore presents an intriguing case, as the ruling People's Action Party has been in power since 1959, effectively allowing it to consolidate its hold over state institutions and demarcate responsibilities for threat responses. Further research on this topic could be done by

comparing Singapore with another country that has experienced similar high external and internal threats but with turnovers in the ruling party, and to see if there is a similarly strong civilian control of the military, who might be tempted to intervene.

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