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The history of U.S.-Southeast Asian relations during the Cold War is dominated by studies of American involvement in Vietnam. If understandable, this state of affairs is nevertheless regrettable. For, even though U.S. cold warriors viewed the fates of Southeast Asia's states as interconnected and pursued a containment strategy focused on the entire region, scholars of U.S. foreign relations with Southeast Asia pay outsized attention to Vietnam. There remain disappointingly few major works on U.S.-Indonesian relations despite years of American interference in Indonesia due to its huge population, the one-time prominence of its Beijing-oriented communist party, and firm American support for the Suharto dictatorship.[10] Even the United States' alliances with Thailand and the Philippines remain woefully under-studied.[11] Kenton Clymer's 2015 book on the American relationship with Myanmar was the first major work on the subject since 1976.[12]

In comparison, the history of U.S.-Singapore relations has been a mite more fortunate. Daniel Chua's *U.S.-Singapore Relations, 1965-1975* arrives well within a decade of S. R. Joey Long's 2011 study of the triangular relationship between London, Washington, and British-controlled Singapore during the administration of President Dwight Eisenhower.[13] Where Long's account ends, chronologically speaking, is more or less where Chua's narrative begins. Long's study illuminated the complex dynamics of the Anglo-American relationship as Singapore's nationalists rose to increasing prominence in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Chua, on the other hand, explores how Singapore—newly independent in 1965 after ejection from the Malaysian Federation—formulated its foreign policy in response to the U.S. military campaign in Vietnam. Chua's is the first notable analysis of how Singapore's leaders grappled not only with the final days of Britain's imperial presence in Southeast Asia but also the United States' waning resolve to remain committed to Indochina and the wider Southeast Asian region.

Chua's work is also a welcome and valuable book-length elaboration of historian Ang Cheng Guan's 2009 article in the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, which until recently remained the one study dedicated to the bilateral U.S.-Singapore relationship during the Vietnam War.[14] But whereas Ang emphasizes the Singapore government's deepening intimacy with Washington and broad support of U.S. strategic goals from 1965 through 1975, Chua implies that the reality was more fraught. Chua's goal is to reveal the dynamic "interplay between America's containment strategy in Asia and

Singapore's foreign policy of neutralism" (6). And though, like Ang, Chua states that overall U.S.-Singapore ties "strengthened" during the city-state's first decade of independence, he attempts to trace how complicated local and regional developments saw Singapore's leaders not only proclaim that Singapore was neutral but also at times publicly lambaste U.S. policy and court the USSR. Per the title of his book, Chua views Singapore's pattern of behavior as "strategic non-alignment in the Cold War," which he uses interchangeably with "neutralism" (6).

To make his case, Chua conducted extensive multi-archival research, drawing on U.S. diplomatic records, Australian and British archives, as well as interviews with Singaporean diplomats (16). However, given that the book traces the U.S.-Singapore relationship from the administrations of Lyndon Johnson through those of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, it is curious that Chua has not tapped the collections at the Nixon Presidential Library. He certainly attempts to compensate for this, primarily with his substantial use of the U.S. national archives at College Park. The end result is commendable. Chua's study reminds us of the persistence of British military power in Southeast Asia, in the form of Britain's bases in Singapore, which remained under British control for almost two decades after the French had retreated from Indochina. Also, Chua's book explains what few historians have even attempted, an account of American efforts to have Australia fill Britain's shoes in Singapore as well as U.S. plans from the late 1960s onward to use the Singapore bases (115-134; 140-144). Crucially, Chua shows in rich detail that Singapore's economic success came in part from lucrative military contracts fed by, and feeding, the U.S. war machine in Vietnam, as well as the deepening U.S.-Singapore trade relationship and massive American investments in the city-state's fast-growing economy (173-187). But, he implies, influential Singaporean economists in the 1970s purveyed a lasting myth that their nation's economic growth came from "booms" in local hospitality, ship repair, and ship building industries, eliding the immense contribution of Singapore's intimate alignment with the United States (187).

Even so, Chua has elected to describe the U.S.-Singapore relationship as "intimacy at a distance," and as "strategic non-alignment" (260). Yet his book reveals that the moments of Singapore's non-aligned behavior were fleeting. He makes much of Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's "anti-American press campaign" which erupted in August 1965 and supposedly stemmed from "Lee's fundamental distrust towards the American administration" (61). U.S. officials, however, surmised that it was Lee's transparent attempt to "intimidate" the British military into remaining in Singapore.[15] Furthermore, Lee's criticisms of the United States faded by March 1966. When Lee met U.S. officials that same month, he declared a "new era" in relations with the United States and welcomed American troops from Vietnam for R&R in Singapore, a decision that brought a minor

spending boom to the country. Lee's role as an apologist for U.S. intervention in Vietnam and involvement in Southeast Asia stretches far longer than his six-month anti-American interregnum.[16] Likewise, Singapore's friendliness to Soviet shipping and trade in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which, Chua clarifies, was a hedge against potential U.S. withdrawal from Southeast Asia, pales next to the simultaneous and prodigious expansion of U.S.-Singapore trade. Chua shows that in 1970, for example, Singapore's trade with the United States was $1.34 billion while trade with the USSR reached only $174 million. By 1975, U.S.-Singapore trade had "shot to $4.8 billion whereas Soviet-Singapore trade shrank to $144 million" (205).

How, then, was Singapore's position in world affairs neutral or non-aligned? The evidence of Singapore's non-alignment in Chua's work amounts to scant particulars that are dwarfed by Singapore's general pro-U.S. trajectory. Early in the book, Chua even seems to concede that the Singapore government's "neutralism [possessed] a strong American bias" (5). It is tempting to conclude that Singapore's "strategic non-alignment" was but a deliberate falsehood crafted by Singapore's leaders, which U.S. officials well understood. If, as Chua argues, Washington was "content to let Singapore remain non-aligned in the 1960s," it is likely because the Americans had already discerned the Singapore government's true predilections (15).

To be clear, Chua's problematic use of 'non-alignment' to describe Singapore's foreign policy in no way diminishes the value of his work. His book represents the first sustained examination of U.S.-Singapore relations in the 1960s and 1970s. It remains a vital step toward a better understanding of the many overlooked, but no less important, Southeast Asian countries that surrounded Vietnam, all of which were entangled in the Cold War for the region.