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THREE SIDES IN SEARCH OF A TRIANGLE



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THREE SIDES IN SEARCH OF
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Singapore-America-India Relations

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For
My Parents-in-law,
Sri Phani Lal Ghosh
and
Srimati Eva Ghosh

Shob thai mor ghor aachhey, aami shei ghor mori khujiya.
Deshey deshey mor desh aachhey, aami shei desh lobho jujhiya...
Ghorey Ghorey aachhey poromatyio, tarey aami phiri khujiya.

— “*Probashi*”

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Preface

Singapore is America's closest security partner in Southeast Asia. The United States has decided to help India become a major world power in the twenty-first century. Singapore's relationship with India is an increasingly pertinent feature of Southeast Asia's political and strategic landscape. Whether these three realities lay the basis of a triangular relationship among America, India, and Singapore is the question that this book seeks to answer.

This book is an essay in diplomatic history. It begins with a review of the literature on the notion of a *Pax Americana*, which provides an introductory framework for the subsequent arguments. The book then goes on to describe the state of bilateral relations among the three countries as they stand since the end of the Cold War. Subsequently, it analyses three core issues — the Global War on Terror, the rise of China, and the agency of democracy in international relations — that play a defining role in relations among Singapore, the United States, and India. The book concludes by suggesting some directions in which the relations might move.

Several caveats are in order here. No attempt is made in this work to study each bilateral relationship — say, between Singapore and the United States — in terms of the other two relationships, that being an exciting exercise, no doubt, but one fraught with the dangers of hypothesis given the paucity of official or scholarly material on how each relationship affects and

is affected by the others. Clearly, too, an essay of this scope cannot hope to provide a detailed analysis of America's prosecution of the Global War on Terror; the complexities of China's rise and its effect on relations with the United States, Singapore and India; or of the consequences of America's desire to spread democracy, itself a contested term in the regional contexts in which it purportedly is taking place. Nor are these imperatives the only factors that bear on the possible emergence of a triangular relationship among Washington, Singapore, and New Delhi: there are economic, social, and security issues, including energy security, that are important in themselves and deserve scrutiny separately. There are also regional institutions, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, and the East Asian Summit process, that will influence eventual outcomes. Last but not least, policies pursued by Japan and Russia impinge on those outcomes; these policies are outside the scope of this study. What this book seeks to do is to demonstrate the nevertheless critical roles played by the War on Terror, China and democracy in relations among the three countries, while keeping in view the broader international context in which these factors originate and function.