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Decolonization and the Cold War in South East Asia (SEA) received considerable attention before the end of the Cold War and increasing assessments in the past twenty years. The twenty-three page bibliography in *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in South East Asia, 1945-1962* provides ample evidence of this along with recent and forthcoming H-Diplo roundtables and reviews.¹ Christopher Goscha's and Christian Ostermann's edited collection of fifteen essays by scholars based in a number of the participating countries has profited from the earlier scholarship, newly available post-Cold War archival sources, and an integrative approach that connects decolonization after WWII with the emergence of the Cold War with attention to not only the views and policies of the major Cold War contestants, the United States, Soviet Union, and Mao Zedong's China after 1949, but also the SEA leaders and states as they struggled to gain their independence and respond to the Cold War.

In their introduction to the collection, Goscha and Ostermann identify "four principal historical trajectories" to highlight the connections between the Cold War and decolonization. First, they note that the process of decolonization started in Asia with the overthrow of the European colonies by Japan and then spread across the South to Africa. Second, they suggest that the "Cold War and decolonization collided most intensely at first in Asia" and contributed to mixed results, most notably in Vietnam where the French were able to return and ultimately gain U.S. support for their effort to restore French control largely as a result of Washington's multiple Cold War concerns. Third, they emphasize contingency on decolonization with the Dutch and French determined to reclaim their empires in Indonesia and Indochina and the British maneuvering with India on the perimeter and Malaya. In their essays Anne Foster, Samuel Crowl, and Mark Lawrence discuss how Washington aligned itself with non-communist Indonesian nationalists to pressure the Dutch to retreat and took the opposite stance in Vietnam against Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh. Fourth, the authors give significant attention to the perspectives of leaders in the new SEA states and their efforts to deal with not only the internal challenges in each state but also the continuing presence of the Western powers and Cold War issues. They identify the Bandung Conference of 1955 as an expression of this quest to find the third way of neutralism toward the Cold War contestants as Washington led by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles maneuvered against this path and China led by Zhou Enlai, according to Chen Jian's essay, shifted Chinese policy to coexistence with the new SEA states and to encourage their resistance to the West. (1-4)

¹ For a recent roundtable, see "Asian Cold War Symposium," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*: 40 (October 2009): 441-565 at <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XI-30.pdf> and forthcoming on Ang Cheng Guan's *Southeast Asia and the Vietnam War* (2010); and "1948 Insurgencies and the Cold War in Southeast Asia Revisited," *Journal of Malaysian Studies*: 27:1 & 2, 2009.

The reviewers are impressed with both the thematic focus of the collection as well as with the organization of the essays. As Karl Hack notes, the complexity of the interconnections “can be intriguing, apparently important, and yet infuriatingly opaque and endlessly complex all at the same time.” (2) Yet Hack and S.R. Joey Long conclude that the editors and authors are successful in meeting the challenge in four sections that explore in order, the “Western Trajectories into Southeast Asia,” the “Internationalist Communist Intersections in the Region,” the “Southeast Asian Alignment and Non-alignment,” and “Cultural Connections: Religion, Society, and Civilization”. Long applauds the archival and primary sources that the authors use for their studies to demonstrate how the Cold War and independence struggles “profoundly shaped Southeast Asian societies and domestic politics. By providing multifaceted and multidimensional perspectives on literally the East-West-North-South tussle in Southeast Asia, the book offers a sophisticated analysis of the cold war in Asia.” (2)

The attention devoted to the perspectives of SEA leaders is especially welcomed by the reviewers and considered a most important contribution of the study. Ragna Boden, for example, favorably reviews the essays by Goscha, Tuong Vu, Edward Miller, Danny Wong Tze Ken, Daniel Fineman, and Samuel Crowl that explore the views and policies of leaders in North and South Vietnam, Malaya, Thailand, and Indonesia with respect to the Cold War competition, internal political issues, and relations with other SEA states. Katharine McGregor also devotes considerable attention to the articles that explore the different approaches of the SEA states to alignment with one side or the other in the Cold War or non-alignment. The evolution of Indonesia from its independence struggle to support for non-alignment led by India is well- covered by Crowl, and McGregor emphasizes the complexity of the SEA responses, most notably in Danny Wong Tze Ken’s assessment of the impact of the Indochina conflict on Malaya and its intersection with the conflict in Malaya with the Malayan Communist Party and Thailand’s alignment with the Bao Dai government in South Vietnam and the U.S. as developed by Fineman. McGregor finds a definite pattern in SEA during the Cold War in the “many authoritarian regimes that resulted from or were boosted by backing the U.S. in the Cold War. As long as communism was repressed in certain circumstances authoritarianism could also be tolerated or excused.” (5) Long would have welcomed more attention to the views of local actors in several of the essays. Regarding Martin Thomas’s essay on British intelligence and operations in SEA, he suggests the memoirs of Malayan communist leaders. Long does note that Richard Mason’s study on nonalignment and Indonesia explores how “Southeast Asians attempted to play off one Western power against the other or manipulate the Cold War adversaries to advance their local interests” with Jakarta pushing nonalignment to protect itself and at the same time hoping to obtain aid from both sides. (3)

The reviewers do question some of the interpretations, most notably on the communist side of the Cold War where the least amount of primary sources are available. As Boden emphasizes, communist powers hoped that socialist revolution would spread across SEA but the Soviet Union, China and North Vietnam had differences over strategy, tactics and timing. Hack applauds Ilya Gaiduk’s essay on Soviet strategy, noting Stalin’s priorities and reservations about revolutionary prospects in SEA. Long and McGregor, however, have

more reservations concerning Vu's conclusion that, based on official Vietnamese documents, the Indochinese Communist party leaders "were ideological and revolutionary in their world views rather than merely nationalistic." Long and McGregor question whether official views were designed as propaganda for the party cadre and whether ICP officials privately expressed similar views. "To what extent did the Vietnamese communist party feel betrayed by the Soviets placing greater importance on the French communist party than the ICP," McGregor wonders, and "how did they rationalize the early lack of support for their cause from the international communist movement?" (3)

Yet the value of the overall approach of *Connecting Histories* and the quality of the essays leaves the reviewers asking for more assessments and the inclusion of more issues such as economic and military themes as mentioned by Boden. In the last section, "Cultural Connections: Religions, Society, and Civilization," Hack points to the successful inclusion of religion in Michael Charney's assessment of Burma and Premier Thakin Nu's campaign in a "civil war of decolonization"—Hack's term—against domestic communists and the premier's use of Buddhism as a bulwark against communism. Long agrees with Rémy Madinier's study of Islam in Indonesia and the escalating conflict between the Masjumi, a major Islamic political party, and the Parta Komunis Indonesia; an example of Cold War interests at play within a country as noted by McGregor. Finally, Edward Miller examines the impact of the concept of personalism on Ngo Dinh Diem in his efforts to maintain relationships with other SEA leaders and not just follow the guidance of the U.S.

In their response Goscha and Ostermann review what they hoped to accomplish with the collection's focus on the intersection of the Cold War and decolonization in Southeast Asia and both the resulting destruction and "opportunities for local actors" that emerged and influenced "important parts of local, regional, and global histories that are with us to this day." The editors affirm the necessity for a "connected history, in which 'Asians' as much as 'Westerners', 'communists' and 'non-communists', and culture and religion as much as high politics and diplomacy maintain their agency." (2-3)

Participants:

Christopher E. Goscha is Associate Professor of History at the Université du Québec à Montréal. He received his Ph.D. from the Sorbonne. He is the author of a number of studies including *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution (1885-1954)* (1999); and forthcoming a two-volume dictionary of the Indochina War with the University of Hawaii Press/Nordic Institute of Asian Studies entitled *Historical Dictionary of the Indochina War (1945-1954): An International and Multi-disciplinary Approach and State of War: The Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945-1954)*, Paris, Armand Colin.

Christian F. Ostermann is Director of the European Studies and the History and Public Policy programs at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Cologne, Germany. He is editor of the *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* and author of many articles in the *Bulletin* and *Uprising in East Germany, 1953: The Cold War, the German Question, and the First Major Upheaval Behind the Iron Curtain* (2001).

Ragna Boden received her Ph.D. from the Philipps University of Marburg, Germany in 2005. Her recent publications include Soviet-Indonesian relations in the first postwar decade (1945-1954), in: Parallel History Project: <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=100702&nav1=1&nav2=8&nav3=1>; "Cold War Economics - Soviet Aid to Indonesia," *Journal of Cold War Studies*:10 (2008): 110-128; and a forthcoming article "Soviet world policy in the 1970s: a three-level game". She is currently working on a book on the Russian military colonies in the 19th century.

Karl Hack is at the Open University in the United Kingdom. His books include *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001). He recently edited, with Geoff Wade, the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40, 3 (October 2009): a special 'Asian Cold War symposium' issue. His present projects are: a history of war and memory in Malaysia and Singapore (with Kevin Blackburn); *Singapore from Srivijaya to Present: Reinventing the Global City* (edited with Jean-Louis Margolin and Karine Delaye, forthcoming with NUS Publishing); and a book on the analysis of empires. He has interviewed communists up to the rank of Secretary-General (C.C. Chin and Karl Hack, ed., *Dialogues with Chin Peng* Singapore University Press, 2004), and his most recent article on counterinsurgency is: 'Extracting Counterinsurgency lessons: Malaya and Afghanistan', at: <http://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C4B14E068758F1/>.

S.R. Joey Long is assistant professor of history and international affairs at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. His articles have been published in *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *Diplomatic History*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, *Rethinking History*, and *South East Asia Research*. He has also coauthored two monographs on Singapore's water security, and contributed papers to edited volumes on Asian security and Singapore's history. His first single-authored book, tentatively titled *Safe for Decolonization: The Eisenhower Administration, Britain, and Singapore*, is forthcoming from Kent State University Press. Long received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Cambridge in 2006, and his current research interests are in Singapore-U.S. relations during the Second Indochina War and contemporary Asia-Pacific security.

Katharine McGregor is Senior Lecturer in Southeast Asian history at the University of Melbourne. She is author of the book, *History in Uniform: Military Ideology and the Construction of Indonesia's Past*, Singapore University Press, University of Hawaii Press and KITLV and the Asian Studies Association of Australia, Singapore, 2007. She is currently working on a major project on Islam and the Politics of Memory in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia.

International relations on the whole and especially the Cold War period are ideal fields for the “geohistorical” approach suggested by Christopher E. Goscha and Christian F. Ostermann in their book on policy making on and in South East Asia. (10) The volume thus contributes to the field of cross-connected histories of decolonization and the Cold War, a topic which has recently emerged in the context of the new Cold War history. The fresh approach applies to several categories: 1) the sources, which means documents from Western and Eastern – in this case also Asian – archives, 2) the views of historians from the three continents involved, and 3) the concentration on the dynamics rather than on the origins of the Cold War. All of the contributions have a transnational approach, some have a multi-archival perspective, others consult documents in Asian languages. The four sections of the book are dedicated to Western and various communist perspectives, Southeast Asian alliances within the region and beyond it, as well as cultural connections. Many articles naturally fit in more than one category (e.g. ch. 7: to part II or III) and include a variety of perspectives (ch. 1, ch. 11 etc.). This shows how far historiography on Cold War topics has diversified since the period has become history.

Geographically, the book focuses on the major Western and Southeast Asian protagonists, whereas the East European, namely the Soviet side is represented with one article only. A certain concentration, however, is acceptable given the broad scope of the topic and the in-depth analyses. The book includes often-studied nations like the United States and Great Britain, but also France and the Netherlands as the other major Western players and colonial powers in the region. On the side of the Southeast Asian nations, Vietnam and Indonesia are dominant, but Burma, Malaya and Thailand are represented as well. China and the Soviet Union are dealt with in one chapter each in the context of the communist struggle for the region. (ch. 5, ch. 6)

Christopher E. Goscha, for instance, examines on the basis of U.S., British and Vietnamese archival and published material on how Indian, Indonesian and Burmese protagonists perceived the “Vietnamese option.” In this regard, his article is the pendant to Mark A. Lawrence’s contribution on French, British and U.S. policy vis-à-vis Bao Dai. Besides Vietnam, Indonesia is the second prominent Asian country in the volume. With Sukarno’s strong interest in the Afro-Asian movement and the non-alignment movement, the U.S. was far more interested in Indonesia’s foreign orientation than in its internal structure. (45) According to Richard Mason, the Republic of Indonesia was a promising example to introduce Western-style democracy in Asia. (46) It is remarkable in this context that during the early period of the Cold War not just parts of the Indonesian political elite sided with Washington, but that the Dutch, the retreating colonial power in Indonesia, became a loyal ally to the U.S. (Anne L. Foster, 81) In comparison, Soviet prospects in the region were very restricted as long as Stalin was anxious not to overstrain Soviet capacities for non-European projects, as Ilya V. Gaiduk demonstrates in his article. (134) Rather, Stalin relied on China’s support in the region, as Chen Jian shows. (ch. 6) The support was mainly confined to ideology given Beijing’s limited resources, but interestingly enough this was not due as much to China’s geographic position as it was to its struggle against Western

imperialism. Its active participation in the Bandung conference made Beijing an interesting role model.

Not just Asian politicians tried to learn from the dynamics of decolonization, but colonial powers as well. British intelligence studied the transfer of political knowledge in Vietnam and Indonesia in the immediate after-war years in order to find a solution for their own colony of Malaya. Martin Thomas finds that the intelligence reports may have contributed to British advances in Malaya at the time of French and Dutch setbacks in Southeast Asia (109), London's aim being the smooth transition from a formal colonial system to a commonwealth. (85)

It was typical of the Cold War situation that non-communist Asian protagonists tended to be reluctant to choose sides, e.g. in the Vietnamese case, as Christopher Goscha demonstrates in his article. (208) Where they opted for the communists, they still had to come to terms with the Sino-Soviet rivalry. The Vietnamese communist party (CP) did not – for reasons well known – lean to geographically nearer China, but to Moscow. Tuong Vu argues in chapter seven that the Vietnamese comrades were even more loyal to the USSR just because their bilateral contact was not too close. (193) The example of Vietnam was also of interest to the other countries in the region, although the effects of the Indochinese wars were often more indirect than immediate, as Danny Wong Tze Ken shows for Malaya. When Malaya became independent in 1957, its leadership was as anticommunist as Thailand. The latter's and especially Prime Minister Phibun's anticommunist stand was motivated more by the need to gain U.S. material aid to secure the military's support than by ideology. In this way, Thailand became Washington's most loyal ally in the region, as Daniel Fineman shows in chapter eleven.

With regard to discourse, Samuel E. Cowl and Ang Cheng Guan analyse published sources in order to find out how two of the key Cold War discourses influenced Southeast Asian policy. Cowl focuses on Indonesian diplomacy with regards to non-alignment and especially Indian and Australian support for the archipelago as a test case for cooperation among Afro-Asian countries. (254) Ang demonstrates how the variety of beliefs concerning the domino theory shaped the policy of politicians throughout Southeast Asia. He argues that the theory was well-founded in the communists' ambitions, and that it was believed in by most Southeast Asian governments at the time. Ngo Dinh Diem for instance supported the idea of a clear anticommunist stand of the "non-aligned" nations. (377) His political style of "personalism" was arguably special to him (see also Edward Miller's contribution), but it can in fact be traced in many of the new emerging nations' leaderships, of which Burma is just one more example (see Charney's article in the book).

While the classical topics of diplomatic and political history dominate the book, the fourth part is dedicated to cultural history, especially to the impact of religion. Michael W. Charney explains why prime minister Nu aimed at Buddhism to become Burma's state religion and how he tried to spread his political ideas through his writings and their distribution among the Burmese youth. Rémy Madinier shows the tensions between Indonesian communism and Islam as well as their shared convictions regarding social justice. (357) He sees the Cold War as a catalyst for identifying ideological differences and the Madiun revolt as the

point of change in the mutual relationship between Islamic and communist forces. This attitude resulted in a strong Western affinity of the most popular Muslim party, the Masjumi, and in their interest in Western style democracy.

Finally, it is interesting to ask whether Southeast Asia can be regarded as a model region for the intersection of the Cold War and the dynamics of the decolonization process. Asia was certainly an area where the Cold War and decolonization “collided most intensely at first.” (2) The volume shows that there can be no doubt about the significance of the Southeast Asian region for other areas in Asia as well as Africa and even Latin America. Even so, each of the ex-colonies and every region had to take into consideration its own specific conditions. As interesting as Southeast Asia is for the intermingling interests of the Western states, the USSR and China, Africa and Latin America also participated in the interaction and conflicts of the same Cold War states.

Due to of the broad geographical focus of this volume, not all areas are represented in detail. The Philippines, Laos, and Cambodia are just touched upon. On the other hand, non-Southeast Asian states are included as well, such as Korea, Australia, and India. Regarding the thematic focus, it would be interesting for future projects to add economic and military aspects to the diplomatic and cultural facets.

The book is a multifaceted contribution to the transnational history of the first period of the Cold War and the decolonization process, and the overlapping and competing interests of nationalism, regionalism, colonialism, communism and anticommunism. It is not and does not claim to be a handbook, but it helps clear the way for such projects by solid original contributions which include archival evidence as well as documents in Southeast Asian languages. Thus, they help to diminish the “white spots” of history, especially those deriving from a narrow view on the Cold War and international relations as an exclusively East-West oriented story.

Decolonization started as a drip-drip in Southeast Asia before the war, with the Philippines (1935) and Burma (1937) gaining a degree of internal autonomy. It gathered to a torrent under Japanese occupation, which stirred up *pemuda* or nationalist-tinged youth across the region, training and indoctrinating them. Then it let rip after 1945 with a cry against the returning colonial powers, creating wars of independence, and conflicts about what sort of society would inherit the postcolonial state, in Indochina (1946-75 with a brief pause around 1954), Indonesia (1945-49), and Malaya (1948-60). So complex is this process that many countries have not one, but two or more, dates for independence. For the Philippines, is the best date 1935, 1943, or 1946? For Indonesia, did independence come with the local, nationalist declaration in 17 August 1945 or with international sanction in 1949? For Burma, the highlighter hovers over 1937 (separation from India, internal autonomy), 1943 (courtesy of Japan) and 1948 (the British handover of power). For Indochina, there are numerous related declarations from September 1946 onwards. This process was in turn being pushed forward by the massive gears of change provided by events in China and India. 'Decolonization' was without a shadow of doubt the big story for this region from before *Connecting Histories'* starting date, to well afterwards.

Overview

The question for this book, then, is how and when did the 'Cold War' intersect with that longer, ongoing process of decolonization? Did it do so by creating additional fissures or 'civil wars' between nationalists (Madiun 1948, Malayan communists versus communalists, Indochinese communists versus non-communists), for example? Though this book does not explicitly conceptualise these conflicts as such, they can be seen as 'civil wars of decolonization'. Several of the book's chapters touch on the issue, though often by oblique angles, as in Mark Atwood Lawrence's chapter 1 on "Recasting Vietnam: The Bao Dai Solution and the Outbreak of the Cold War in Southeast Asia". Lawrence successfully fulfils his brief of showing why the UK and U.S. accepted Bao Dai as a necessary, non-communist bet, despite seeing him as an oft-failed playboy prince.¹ But this still leaves the question implicitly, but not explicitly, dealt with by this book, namely: how were these local 'civil wars of decolonization' formed and shaped by the changing contours of Cold War? What were Bao Dai's own, shifting calculations in Cold War terms?

By contrast, the book tackles another key question head-on, namely: how did the Cold War create choices and opportunities for local regimes in relation to international forces? For instance, between siding with the communists as a block (the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, or DRV, drift from 1948-50, in Tuong Vu's chapter 7), with the West (Thailand under Phibun Songkhram, as discussed in Daniel Fineman's chapter 11), or trying to

¹ Hans Antlov wonderfully described them as backing "a solution no one really wanted". See his "Rulers in Imperial Policy: Sultan Inbrahim, Emperor Bao Dai, and Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX", in Hans Antlov and Stein Tonnesson, *Imperial Policy and South East Asian Nationalism* (Richmond: Curzon, 1995, p. 246).

plough a Bandung, neutralist furrow (a route India, and for a time China, favoured for the region, and Burma and Indonesia toyed with; see Chen Jian on China in chapter 6, and Samuel Crowl on Indonesia in chapter 9). Alternatively, how far – as in Malaya (Malaysia from 1963) – did non-Cold War issues such as communal relations ultimately come to marginalise Cold War concerns, and set countries on a different path?

This book has been structured “to show how these themes overlapped, intersected, and connected at different points in time and space.” (5) It rightly argues that new scholarship – and since the end of the Cold War around 1989 new sources – allow us to probe these interconnections more deeply. But how can such complexity be rendered for us? As Christopher Goscha’s excellent, earlier work on international connections in Thailand has shown, they can be intriguing, apparently important, and yet infuriatingly opaque and endlessly complex all at the same time.² In part, the editors’ answer to this conundrum is that the organisation of their book will do the job. The idea is that individual chapters will provide essential building blocks, showing how discrete parties, states and groups dealt with ‘interconnections’, while the overall organisation will allow the reader to discern further connections between these building blocks. Since this structure is a major part of the message, it is worth listing the book’s main sections. These are:

Section I: “Western Trajectories into Southeast Asia”

Section II: “Internationalist Communist Intersections in the Region”

Section III: “Southeast Asian Alignment and Non-alignment”

Section IV: “Cultural Connections: Religion, Society, and Civilization”

What does each section achieve, and what are some of the highlights within each one?

Section I: “Western Trajectories into Southeast Asia.”

This consists of four chapters, each showing the international connections for a particular western power’s policy formulation. Mark Atwood Lawrence’s chapter 4 deals with the French attempts to sell the “Bao Dai solution” to Britain and United States. From a French perspective, though, as big a problem was how they could muster any sort of credible grouping of non-communist nationalists locally. In that sense Bao Dai’s personal limitations may have had a plus side, in making it easier for diverse groups to accept a symbolic monarch while jostling for power and space themselves. Richard Mason’s chapter 2 traces the United States’ attempts to funnel aid to Indonesia in 1950-52, and the way this tended as much to undermine pro-western stances in Indonesia as to support them. In other words, the interlacing of the domestic and international made the results of western interventions ambivalent, unstable, and unpredictable. Anne Foster does us a service in chapter 3 by outlining the way domestic Dutch politics interacted with international forces in Indonesia in 1945-49. The story of how US policy there swung from ambivalence, through supportive neutrality, to forcing the Dutch retreat by threatening withdrawal of military and economic aid, is well known. As such the emphasis here on the domestic

² Christopher Goscha’s *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution, 1885-1954* (Richmond: Curzon, 1999) was the clarion call for this approach.

political side is welcome. Non-Dutch speakers still know far too little about Dutch politics and figures to analyse that country's colonial policy adequately. Wider audiences and scholars of the region desperately need this to go further. Foster's concentration on Dutch policy could, for instance, be supplemented by reading Harry Poeze's recent work on what Indonesian communists were thinking in the period.³ Finally, Martin Thomas adopts a different tactic in his chapter 4, on "Processing Decolonization: British Strategic Analysis of Conflict in Vietnam and Indonesia, 1945-1950". He painstakingly maps the intricate web of intelligence and committee structures Britain developed across Southeast Asia and London, and how these filtered and formed views. He whets our appetite for asking: how did infrastructure for dealing with international interconnections affect decision making?⁴ The same approach could, of course, be employed for any other major Cold War power.

Section II: "Internationalist Communist Intersections in the Region"

Section II shifts focus 180 degrees, from Western, non-communist players to communist powers. Here Chen Jian does a competent job of outlining Chinese attempts to foster neutralism in the mid-1950s in his chapter 6. The two other chapters go a little further, and make extensive use of previously unavailable, or at least untapped, sources of communist documents and opinions. Tuong Vu's chapter 7 emphasises how the Vietnamese communists took their time in coming to an explicitly Cold War stance by 1950, and how this change in turn helped them to revolutionise politics and society at home. But for me the most fascinating chapter is Ilya V. Gaiduk's chapter 5 on "Soviet Cold War Strategy and Prospects in South and Southeast Asia". This reinforces the picture for 1948 recently presented by Larisa Efimova, and more indirectly by Harry Poeze.⁵ That is, that while local parties often read Moscow and Beijing pronouncements as if consulting the oracle at Delphi – desperately seeking guidance, or support for their faction's desired action - Moscow's stance was often slightly distant, and ambivalent. Hence in 1946, for instance, the Soviet Union had no desire to see events in Indochina undermine communist involvement in the French government in Europe. (125-126) In 1948, Southeast Asian communists saw the new communist international line (and events in Prague) as highly significant, even while Moscow was unsure how relevant these might be to the region. In 1950 Stalin urged caution on Indonesia's PKI. (131) One Soviet concern was to keep a broad united front against imperialists as possible in Southeast Asia, rather than risking uniting all against

³ Harry Poeze, "The Cold War in Indonesia, 1948", in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40, 3 (2009): 497-518, and in Dutch: *Verguisd en vergeten: Tan Malaka, de linkse beweging en de Inonesische Revolutie, 1945-1949* (Leiden: KITLV, 2007).

⁴ He considerably widens my own discussions of this in *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia: Britain, Malaya and Singapore, 1941-1968* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), though he could also have asked how far the Commissioner-General's Phoenix Park, Singapore, headquarters focused and brought together regional committees physically and so fostered consensus regionally. There are two minor typographical errors: "Maeso" (p. 106) is usually written Musso, and "Tenet" (p. 89) should read Gent.

⁵ For Poeze see footnote 3 above. Larisa Efimova, "Did the Soviet Union instruct Southeast Asian communists to revolt? New Russian evidence on the Calcutta Youth Conference of February 1948", in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40, 3 (2009): 449-70. See also Karl Hack, "The origins of the Asian Cold War, Malaya 1948", in *ibid*: 471-90.

communism by premature revolution. This chapter is truly fascinating when it allows the Soviet archives to speak directly to the reader. Hopefully future works will do more of that direct “voicing” of previously hidden documents, even while trying to establish their international “interconnections”.

Section III: “Southeast Asian Alignment and Non-alignment”

Section III again switches focus, this time from portrait shots of individual powers, to broader angle panoramas. The theme here is the wider study of Asian states’ responses to the developing Cold War, and how this led to a strong strand of “neutralism”. That strand was to culminate in the mid-1950s Chinese support for neutralising conflicts (as at Geneva in 1954), through the Bandung Conference of 1955, to the attempt to neutralise Laos from 1962. This book does a valuable service in bringing together five chapters on Southeast Asian perceptions of the choices they faced as the regional Cold War hardened from 1950. Should they incline to one side or the other, or try to chart a “neutral” course? These choices were made more stark as the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was inaugurated in October 1949, and took over the prime role of communist international influence in Southeast Asia. Goscha’s chapter 8, in particular, focuses on one moment of time – 1950 – and the Chinese recognition of the DRV in January. Like Tuong Vu in chapter 7, he emphasises how the DRV welcomed its role as part of the vanguard of revolution, and the “democratic camp”, in the region. He discusses the gradual distancing of Indochina from the more western or neutralist remainder of Southeast Asia that resulted, and would persist until the 1990s. He then traces the way India and Indonesia ultimately sought to avoid recognising either the DRV or Bao Dai, before Samuel E. Crowl pursues the topic of evolving Indonesian non-alignment in chapter 9. In reality, of course, these chapters show each of these parties tacking between different degrees of alignment and neutrality, in response both to domestic political shifts and international events.

A good example of this nuancing of stance by regional Asian powers is Malaya/Malaysia. Danny Wong’s chapter 10 shows how independent Malaya – while rejecting the western-led Southeast Treaty Organisation – quietly supported the Ngo Dinh Diem government of Vietnam from the late 1950s. Its own counterinsurgency against Malayan communists ensured that, underneath a public veneer of distancing from blocks, Malaya actually wanted to keep British bases on its territory and to succour Diem. For Asian states, the domestic and the international were intimately intertwined. Hence Daniel Fineman’s chapter 10 shows that the Thai government of Phibun Songkhram had multiple reasons for recognising the Bao Dai government in 1950, and then for sending troops to Korea. It was not just that they coveted American aid. The military also saw their own domestic enemies as more likely to gain by communist and leftwing advances elsewhere. The theme of varied local responses is continued into the 1950s by Ang Cheng Guan’s chapter 11 on “Southeast Asian perceptions of the Domino Theory”.

Perhaps more interestingly, Goscha’s and Ang’s chapters combined offer us some powerful ideas. First, were there certain key defining and creative moments or periods? I have argued elsewhere that late 1947 to early 1948, when various local communist parties tried to align themselves with the new communist international line by moving towards

violence, was one of these.⁶ In this book there is also a focus on the period between the U.S. adoption of a domino theory for Southeast Asia (NSC48/1 of June 1949, firmed up in NSC64 of February 1950, p. 303-4), and the recognition of the Bao Dai regime and DRV by various powers in January to February 1950. Certainly, one way of dealing with the extremely complex interconnections might be to take a cross-section at such a critical moment. But I also wonder whether there is now a need for more explicit recognition of several such moments or phases, and their interlinking. Hence, what is the relationship between the decisions taken by regional communists in late 1947 to 1948, and the subsequent actions (to some extent reactions) of non-communist powers (Asian and Western) traced in Section III for 1949-50?

There is always the danger that academics (myself included) will see their own particular group of decision-makers as the ones driving events, reducing other interconnections to the role of inputs to the core process. Yet what we see in this volume is that all groups of actors appear not as active or reactive, so much as interactive in extremely complex ways. If so, what is needed is further, very detailed work on each of these separate narratives, so that we can reconstruct history as the interaction of key groups each trying to unfold their own story. Goscha and Ostermann's book is an excellent step on the path to reconstructing the multiple narratives – domestic, international, Cold War, decolonising, communal – whose interaction shaped the Cold War. It is particularly valuable in the range of Asian narratives it includes, and the degree of agency it attributes to them. It may be an excellent catalyst in moving away from emphasis either on regional communist parties and nationalists alone, or on western policy-making processes alone. As the post-Cold War world throws out more and more documentary and oral sources, a more rounded, interactive, interconnected, multiple agent story of Cold War may emerge.

Section IV: “Cultural Connections: Religion, Society, and Civilization”

Briefly, this section of the book starts not with culture per se, but rather with Burma's response to the crisis of 1948-50 which we discussed above: a crisis in which Burmese communists resorted to revolt. Michael Charney's chapter 13 gives a much-overdue account of Burmese responses to the Cold War, through the eyes of its premier Thakin (later U) Nu. This involved a bitter “civil war of decolonization” (the term I invoked earlier), further complicated by the presence on the country's periphery of Guomindang troops. The switch over comes with Charney's explanation of how the crisis prompted the use of the Emergency Provisions Act of March 1950 to arrest or intimidate anyone who opposed the government, combined with increasing government propaganda.⁷ (342) Hence, for instance, the government sought to separate domestic from international communists, to encourage Buddhism as the state religion (formalised in August 1961), and the publication of key texts, as well as millions of pamphlets detailing communists' alleged attacks on culture (such as burning temples). The theme of religion as a bulwark against communism is continued in Remy Madiner's chapter 14 on Indonesian Islam. It is given a slightly

⁶ *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40, 3 (2009).

⁷ The Act was so all-encompassing that it included suborning public servants, spreading false news, or even reducing respect for government servants and the army.

different spin in Edward Miller's chapter 15 on Ngo Dinh Diem's philosophy of Personalism.

Conclusion

Connecting Histories is a valuable addition to new Cold War history. It supports attempts to put substantive regional agency back into the Cold War. It proposes or hints at multiple strategies for addressing interconnections – across time and space – such as using particular moments of time or groups as focussing devices, and structuring works to bring together key types of interconnection and players. It takes the agency of Asians and smaller countries seriously, while also addressing the superpowers. Within its pages are also several real nuggets for the dip 'n mix reader – such as Ilya V. Gadiuk's chapter on Soviet policy – which expose unused and underused documentary evidence. Overall, it is a valuable addition to regional and Cold War studies.

In an important work on Algeria's decolonization experience, the historian Matthew Connelly showed how Algerian nationalists exploited the international environment and advancements in global communication to mobilize international opinion against France. Exploiting the new media technology and outlets to draw global attention to the brutal French repression of the peoples of Algeria, the Algerian activists were able to garner moral sympathy and material support from former colonial states, China, and the United States for their national liberation movement. Their colonial policy severely criticized, their reputations heavily undercut, and their domestic politics bitterly divided, the besieged French would find themselves isolated in the world, internally split, and eventually compelled to grant Algeria its independence. The Algerians' capacity to exploit the Cold War and global dynamics to undermine France internationally and score a success in their anticolonial struggle marked a revolution in diplomatic affairs. The episode demonstrated that the nature of the post-World War II international system and the tools that were available in that system could be used by astute actors in the developing world to successfully wage a diplomatic campaign to overcome a more powerful state.¹

But Algeria "was not the first 'diplomatic revolution' in the post-1945 decolonizing South," (9) argue Christopher Goscha and Christian Ostermann in *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945-1962*. The Algerians, in fact, had learnt their craft from their anticolonial brethren in the global South or, more specifically, Southeast Asia. The strategies mounted by Algerian nationalists against the French were foreshadowed by the fight initiated by Southeast Asians against the colonial order since 1945. In accentuating the links and exchanges among the bloodied yet unwearied anticolonial community, Goscha and Ostermann bring into sharp focus the global nature of this fight for political independence within the developing world. The advent of the Cold War, the return of the colonial powers, the rise of nationalism, and the emergence of anticolonial movements in Southeast Asia produced a combustible mix that would affect regional as well as international politics.

Indeed, in this edited volume, Goscha and Ostermann stress the need for scholars to consider the connectedness of the developments in Southeast Asia to the region and elsewhere. Such an approach will "help illuminate historical linkages in the international system running horizontally from East to West, vertically from North to South, transversally across the South itself and in various thematic ways" (2). To that end, they have assembled fifteen excellent essays to address the following themes: the reactions of the Western and communist powers to the intersection of Cold War politics and decolonization in Southeast Asia, the attitudes of Southeast Asians within the context of decolonization toward Cold War alignment and nonalignment, and the manner in which the Cold War and decolonization intersected with cultural and religious issues in the subregion.

¹ Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

As a whole, the articles in the volume succeed in giving significant weight to the concerns harbored by all the actors involved in the history of the Cold War and decolonization in Southeast Asia. The capacity of the papers to bring a new dimension to the study of the topics is underpinned by the broad range of archival records and primary sources the authors use to advance their arguments. In addition to American and British archival papers, unpublished and published primary records generated in Australia, Burma, China, France, India, Indonesia, Malaya/Malaysia, the Netherlands, Russia, Thailand, and Vietnam have been utilized to paint a complex and fascinating picture of the developments taking place in Southeast Asia. Apart from considering the policies of the major and colonial powers, the essays also accentuate the agency and autonomy of local actors who resisted or adapted to the new international and domestic environment. The book further illuminates how the intensification of the global conflict and independence struggles profoundly shaped Southeast Asian societies and domestic politics. By providing multifaceted and multidimensional perspectives on literally the East-West-North-South tussle in Southeast Asia, the book offers a sophisticated analysis of the Cold War in Asia.

The policies of Washington and the colonial powers toward Southeast Asia are analyzed in the first section of the book. A key point that emerges from this section is that the end of the colonial empires in Southeast Asia was not a foregone conclusion after 1945. The Japanese interregnum certainly weakened the hold that the colonial powers had over the imaginations of their colonial subjects. Yet, while nationalists possessed an unwavering commitment to rid themselves of colonial rule after the war, the Europeans were likewise determined to restore their influence and authority over their empires. Complicating the colonized-colonizer conflict and European resolve was the profitability of empire, the Cold War, and the role that the superpowers played in imperial matters.

As Anne Foster argues in her chapter, the Dutch did not want to lose the East Indies. But the cost of holding on to the territory outstripped any profits to be gained. The United States also pressured the Netherlands to transfer power to noncommunist Indonesian nationalists who seemed capable of suppressing the communists within Indonesia. Finally and most importantly, according to Foster, was a change in the mindsets of Dutch elites who were “moving on, establishing for themselves and the nation a leading role as a cooperative, consistent, dedicated participant in the multilateral organizations designed to bring peace and prosperity to Europe, and ideally, the world.” (80) In contrast, as Mark Lawrence deftly shows in his essay, France was able to maintain its influence in Vietnam by playing Cold War politics. The crucial difference between the Indonesian and Vietnamese cases was the ideological proclivities of the nationalist leadership. While the noncommunist Indonesian leaders commanded popular domestic support, it was the communists who appealed in Vietnam. Such a circumstance enabled France to maneuver the Americans into backing its cause. Portraying the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the popular Ho Chi Minh as inextricably tied to international communism and positioning French endeavors to build an alternative noncommunist regime under the Vietnamese emperor, Bao Dai, as the solution to communist expansionism in Indochina, France would successfully rally the United States behind what was essentially a restoration of the French empire in Southeast Asia.

As their task was to focus on the Western powers, it would be inappropriate to criticize Foster and Lawrence for underplaying the parts performed by local actors in their stories. It would be interesting, nevertheless, for some of that history to be integrated into their essays. Likewise, Martin Thomas, in his chapter on British intelligence, is interested in and concentrates on British operations in Southeast Asia. He persuasively argues that the political intelligence and lessons derived from a study of Dutch and French actions in their colonies helped the British to implement effective counterinsurgency operations in Malaya. Still, although Thomas refers to two important works and other secondary materials to assess the workings of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), the inclusion of more local voices could have added to his analysis. Good use could have been made of memoirs published by MCP cadres to affirm or qualify what Thomas contends is the astuteness of the British analyses of the Malayan situation.² The credibility of the communist threat in Southeast Asia could also be better measured. Similarly, it would be intriguing to find out the extent to which Southeast Asians attempted to play off one Western power against the other or manipulate the Cold War adversaries to advance their local interests. Richard Mason's chapter in this section, in fact, attempts such an analysis. His exploration of Indonesia's policy of nonalignment provides insights into Jakarta's intent. Determined to preserve its sovereignty, the postcolonial state championed nonalignment to protect itself from being exploited by the major powers in the Cold War. At the same time, by officially leaning to neither side, it hoped to acquire aid from both sides. Indonesia, however, could not have anticipated the intensity of Washington's intolerance of nonalignment. The Americans, conversely, would find their efforts to use military aid to compel Jakarta to align with the West becoming increasingly counterproductive. If Indonesia initially harbored positive sentiments toward the United States for aiding it in the anticolonial campaign against the Dutch, much of that goodwill was undercut by intransigent American diplomacy during the 1950s.

Apart from addressing the Western powers' attempts to preserve their interests in Southeast Asia, *Connecting Histories* also tackles the communist powers' dealings with the subregion and vice versa. Overall, it is clear from the papers by Ilya Gaiduk, Chen Jian, Christopher Goscha, and Tuong Vu that members of the communist camp hoped the socialist revolution would advance across Southeast Asia. There were differences, however, over strategy, tactics, and timing. According to Gaiduk, Soviet leader Josef Stalin adopted a cautious approach to communist expansionism in Southeast Asia. He doubted the ability of his Asian comrades to further the revolution without Soviet assistance. But Moscow was

² The two sources Thomas refers to are Aloysius Chin, *The Communist Party of Malaya: The Inside Story* (Kuala Lumpur: Vinpress, 1994); and C.C. Chin and Karl Hack, eds., *Dialogues with Chin Peng: New Light on the Malayan Communist Party* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004). Recently published works that would have been relevant include: Chen Jian, ed., *Langjian Zhumeng: Yu Zhuyue Koushu Lishi Dangan [A Pioneer Leader's Dream: Oral History Recordings of Eu Chooi Yip]* (Selangor: Strategic Information and Research Development Center, 2006); Chin Peng, *My Side of History* (Singapore: Media Masters, 2003); and Fang Zhuangbi, *Magong Quanquan Daibiao: Fang Zhuangbi Huiyilu [The Plenipotentiary from the Malayan Communist Party: The Memoirs of Fang Zhuangbi]* (Selangor: Strategic Information and Research Development Center, 2006).

consolidating its position in Europe and did not wish to have to also confront the West in Asia. The Soviet Union consequently preferred a policy of restraint in Southeast Asia.

In contrast to the Soviets, the revolutionary fervor of the Chinese government was more intense. For ideological and domestic political reasons, China championed the decolonization movement and advocated world revolution. What Chen translates from Chinese documents as the “intermediate zone” was ripe for both decolonization and revolution. This sector in the international system, comprising the nation-states and newly-emerging states of Asia and Africa, was sandwiched between the American and Soviet spheres of influence. From the late 1940s, Chinese discourse underlined the importance of communists operating to check Western aggression in the intermediate zone. Although Chinese foreign policy toward the intermediate zone appeared to moderate by the mid-1950s, Chen reminds his readers that China remained a revolutionary state. China’s adherence to the “Bandung discourse” of Afro-Asian solidarity and peaceful coexistence was underpinned by a pragmatic desire to consolidate the communist party’s control in China and enhance the Middle Kingdom’s international reputation. The peaceful coexistence principle applied only to relations among socialist states and with the newly-emerging states. Western aggression and influence in Asia should thus continue to be challenged.

Significantly, such views were welcomed in countries like Vietnam. Goscha indicates that Vietnamese communists initially did not garner external support for their cause. They procured the desired assistance after reaching out to Moscow and Beijing. Following the Sino-Soviet powers’ recognition of the DRV in 1950, China, in particular, aided Ho Chi Minh and his comrades against the French. Yet, while the Vietnamese were inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution and valued Chinese aid, they were not submissive Soviet or Chinese pawns. Goscha notes that the Vietnamese ultimately conceived of themselves as allies in the socialist cause. Tuong Vu likewise acknowledges this nature of the Indochinese Communist Party’s (ICP) relations with Moscow and Beijing. After analyzing official Vietnamese documents generated from 1940 through 1951, he nevertheless asserts that ICP leaders were ideological and revolutionary in their worldviews rather than merely nationalistic. ICP policymakers held a binary view of the world, with the United States perceived as an imperialist power and the Soviet Union a positive force for social justice and revolution, and entertained little thought of reconciling with the capitalist camp. While the conflict between the United States and DRV during the 1960s was not inevitable, Tuong Vu submits that it was not inconceivable. The Vietnamese cadres were committed to the international communist cause, and sought to establish closer relations with other communist parties in Southeast Asia—aspirations that would have alarmed Western decision-makers.

In Vietnam, then, it seems that the ICP was strongly tied to the communist kite, regardless of what the Western powers might do. In skillfully bringing forth this strong view from the official documents, Tuong Vu has made an important contribution to the historiography of the Vietnam War. One wonders, nonetheless, whether he has neglected to offer some nuance to the ideological stridency of the party papers. They were, after all, generated for consumption by party cadres, and produced to sustain their revolutionary zeal. It would be

interesting to find out whether the official documents contained frank dissenting or even unflattering views of communist conduct in the Cold War. Adding another layer of views obtained from confidential personal papers (if these are ever available) into the mix may also provide further insight into the ICP officials' thinking about regional and international politics. In this regard, one is reminded of the intent some years ago by Vietnamese censors to excise sections of an official translation of William Duiker's *Ho Chi Minh: A Life* that portrayed Ho as possessing a social life beyond the revolution.³ Downplaying Uncle Ho's libido, the image of a dedicated revolutionary giving his all to the cause prevails. Giving space to the more colorful aspects of his life, Ho's heroic quality suffers. Doing so, however, brings forth his basic humanity, and makes his aspirations, motivations, and inner conflicts more fathomable. The point here is that it is perfectly worthwhile and legitimate for scholars to exposit the content of party documents. But it is also necessary to appreciate the limits of those sources, even if they are of indigenous origin.

While developments in Vietnam eventually plunged the country into violent conflict, they also had ramifications for the rest of Southeast Asia. The response of the Southeast Asian states to the Cold War is another important theme that *Connecting Histories* covers. The communist powers' recognition of the DRV and the Western countries' recognition of the French-backed Associated State of Vietnam in 1950 not only split the country, but they also prompted other Southeast Asian states to chart a third path between Soviet communism and Western liberal-capitalism. As the Cold War came to Vietnam, Goscha insightfully observes that noncommunist Southeast Asian states and India wanted to avoid openly taking sides. Concerned about advancing domestic economic development and political stability, these countries did not wish to become victims of foreign interventions or see the region embroiled in conflicts. Goscha correctly observes in these aspirations the seeds of the nonaligned movement. These were also some of the considerations furthering the formation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967.

Indonesia, which strove to shield itself from the Cold War, was one of the leading proponents of the nonaligned movement and ASEAN. In his profoundly perceptive essay, Samuel Cowl argues that the nature of Indonesia's fight for independence enabled it to emerge as one of the important leaders of the nonaligned states. Before Algerian nationalists had embarked on their diplomatic campaign against the French, Indonesian activists had employed international diplomacy to undermine the Dutch and secure Indonesian autonomy. Indonesians successfully lobbied Australia, which referred their case to the United Nations. India, other members of the international community, and eventually Washington would back the Indonesians against the Dutch. Indonesia's successful diplomatic offensive thus served as a model for others to emulate. Its initiative would also lay the foundation for continued cooperation among states that eschewed formal alignment with the Cold War adversaries.

Like Indonesia, many Southeast Asian states formally signed on to the nonaligned movement to safeguard their hard-won independence and resist pressures to opt for either

³ "Great 'Uncle Ho' may have been a mere mortal," *The Age*, 15 August 2002, <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/08/14/1029113955533.html>.

Cold War blocs. Noncommunist Southeast Asian regimes, in particular, feared that communism would advance rapidly across the subregion and threaten their freedoms if South Vietnam fell to the North. They appeared, in other words, to subscribe to the viability of the domino theory. This is the conclusion Ang Cheng Guan reaches in his paper, after examining the public statements of Southeast Asian leaders, their memoirs, and documents published in the U.S. State Department's *Foreign Relations of the United States* series. One consequence of entertaining the domino belief was that it encouraged their intervention in the Indochina conflict. Danny Wong details in his essay the Malayan government's response to the local and external communist threat from 1946 through 1963. Although the violent leftist insurrection in Malaya had largely been pacified by the mid-1950s, Malayan officials believed communist victory in Indochina might revive the MCP and shift the communist threat closer to Malaya's border. Kuala Lumpur acted by tactfully channeling weapons and providing training to South Vietnamese security forces. Anxieties about falling dominoes served to stiffen the anticommunist resolve of Malayan leaders.

Whether or not it was logical, then, there is evidence to indicate that Southeast Asian governments shared similar American nightmares of falling dominoes. Yet what have been the consequences of the belief for domestic politics in the noncommunist Southeast Asian states? To what degree did the predominantly rightwing statesmen, which Ang and Wong study, deliberately raise the specter of falling dominoes for domestic political reasons? Foreign policy texts have their domestic contexts. Rather than taking their public statements and conversations with U.S. diplomats at face value, it would be useful to probe, if not to rule out, the extent to which rightwing governments played the communist card in order to justify repressive policies against domestic critics. Some of these regimes might have also adopted a Cold War stance to cultivate external powers, obtain material benefits, and firm up their domestic positions. In fact, the Thai case, as Daniel Fineman argues in his chapter, conforms to such a pattern. By invoking the communist threat and inclining Thai foreign policy toward the United States, the military government of Phibun Songkhram garnered American economic and military aid, which it dispensed to consolidate its authority over the politicized and faction-ridden armed forces. The consequence was that military authoritarianism in Thailand was sustained, underpinned by a foreign backer which believed its Cold War policy would be furthered if it continued to channel material assistance to Bangkok. The Cold War's impact on Southeast Asian domestic politics, in sum, should not be ignored.

While the Cold War affected Southeast Asia politically, it also provoked ideological and cultural reactions among the subregion's societies and governments. In Burma, as Michael Charney notes in his contribution, officials coped with Cold War pressures as well as an internal insurgency by imposing tight government control of the media. Rangoon also pushed forth competing ideas of its own such as nonalignment, Buddhism, and anticommunist propaganda to counter external interference in Burma's affairs and leftist ideas. The state apparatus fashioned to wage that battle, however, endured, buttressing an increasingly repressive form of governance in Burma. In Indonesia, according to Rémy Madinier, the Cold War brought political Islam to the fore. Uncompromisingly opposed to communism and viewing themselves as defenders of parliamentary democracy, members of the Masjumi, a major Islamic political party, pitted themselves against the Partai

Komunis Indonesia. By hardening the political fault-lines in Indonesia, the Cold War led the country “down the dangerous road of increasingly violent confrontations, ones which would lead to the disappearance of democracy in the archipelago between 1960 and 1999” (372). Finally, in South Vietnam, the worldview operating in Ngo Dinh Diem’s court proved to be fascinatingly complex. Edward Miller argues that Diem sought to create a “personalist republic” (378). The president adhered to personalism, an outlook drawn from communitarianism, anticommunism, anticolonialism, and an appreciation of civilizational differences among states. Thus, although Diem professed anticommunism, he also expressed solidarity with other developing nations such as India. While he conveyed respect for Chinese civilization, he was less enamored of Cambodian culture, which he held to be primitive. In all, the three essays in the last section of the book serve as a useful reminder that the Cold War was not merely a contest among three sets of ideas: liberal-capitalism, communism, and nonalignment. There were other competing and complementary worldviews that jostled for space to express themselves in the global conflict. Charney, Madinier, and Miller should be thanked for bringing them to light.

The early Cold War period, then, was the best of times and the worst of times for Southeast Asia. The end of wartime violence, privations, and social restrictions seemed to herald a new dawn of national liberation and self-determination for Southeast Asians who saw World War II wreck the colonial territories in the subregion overnight. As the elites and masses organized and tussled to exact their competing visions on how their fledgling postcolonial states should be organized, the Cold War came. If “war makes states,” as Charles Tilly once pointed out, so did the Cold War.⁴ On each postwar Southeast Asian state is the imprimatur of that global conflict. The essays collected by Goscha and Ostermann demonstrate amply how the actions of international, regional, and subregional actors affected state-making and sociocultural change in Southeast Asia. They further show how developments in the area impacted on policymaking in the capitals of the external powers. While the papers are models of their kind for their sophistication and empirical content, the profound analytical framework which Goscha and Ostermann developed to organize them into a coherent whole also deserves special mention. For anyone interested in studying as well as writing about the history of the Cold War and decolonization in Southeast Asia, *Connecting Histories* should be an indispensable work for reference and emulation.

⁴ Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in *Bringing the State Back In*, Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 170.

Connecting Histories: Decolonisation and the Cold War in Southeast Asia 1945-62, edited by Christopher Goscha and Christian Ostermann, offers the reader a variety of case studies examining key connections between Southeast Asia and the wider world. The work is significant because it offers new and interesting angles on the two broad and important themes of the Cold War and decolonisation. The innovation of this work lies in the attempt to recover how Southeast Asians, the Chinese, colonial powers and the U.S., Soviet Union and UK linked developments in the wider region with events within one country. Such an approach offers a more complete picture of how key players negotiated this period of dramatic change both from within and outside the region of Southeast Asia. In doing so the contributors to the book also avoid privileging the actions and wishes of the two superpowers as the key determinants in how each country in the region negotiated both the Cold War and decolonisation. A novel feature of the book is that it offers a more comprehensive view of how Southeast Asians shaped and responded to developments in the region.

In part one of the volume four chapters deal with how the U.S., Dutch and British negotiated the intersection of the Cold War and decolonisation.

In his chapter on the Bao Dai solution, Mark Atwood Lawrence attempts to challenge the view that the Bao Dai solution was a failure. One element of success in this project, in Lawrence's view, is that the French attempted here to manufacture an alternative nationalism, which became a catalyst for an international coalition behind the French extending also to some anti-communist countries in Southeast Asia. Lawrence notes the initial hesitancy of the U.S. and UK to be seen as supporting a resumption of colonial control due to fears of an Asian backlash and resistance particularly from liberals in UK and USA to supporting Bao Dai. In the end, however, the U.S. and Britain were very keen to see an alternative to the DRV because they were growing increasingly fearful of the prospects of communism in the region after the Malayan insurgency of 1948 broke out and after the rise of Mao in China in 1949. There is not much elaboration in this chapter as to how successful Bao Dai was in convincing other Southeast Asian countries to recognise his rule, but this is taken up in later chapters.

Richard Mason shifts tack by examining how Indonesian leaders skilfully negotiated a position of non-alignment in the context of strong pressure from the U.S. in the brief period of 1950-52. Building on Lawrence's article, Mason examines how the Indochina issue strained U.S./Indonesian relations on the basis of the U.S. desire for Indonesia to be an anti-communist base in the region. Indonesia was strongly opposed to the Bao Dai regime and supportive of Ho Chin Minh and the DRV. On the issues of recognising the PRC and the Korean war, Indonesia and the U.S. were also split. Through a series of evocative quotes Mason captures attempts by U.S. Ambassador Merle Cochran to pressure Indonesian leaders to be more supportive of the U.S. with offers of aid in return, and powerful statements from Mohammad Hatta and Sukarno repelling these requests. Mason also captures shifts in U.S.-Indonesian relations through the many cabinet changes of this period

leading him to conclude that despite Indonesia's official position of non-alliance it in fact leaned more closely to the USA. It is interesting to compare this later period to the years 1948-1949 in which Frances Gouda suggests Hatta was willing to do more to secure US support. She argues that Hatta ensured his condemnation of the Soviets was always noticed and that he endorsed the execution of key communist party leaders following the Madiun uprising in part to ensure stronger U.S. support for the Republic.¹ In the post independence period the Indonesians were able to hold more steadfastly to the principle of non-alignment.

Anne Foster focuses on how the Dutch attempted to reposition themselves in the Cold War by claiming a new international role. She examines party politics and a range of positions on Indonesian independence. The chapter offers further insights into Dutch political and economic considerations concerning whether they should fight to hold on to Indonesia and the chapter implies that many answers to the change of heart in 1949 lie in these factors. There is not much attention here to the rising condemnation of the international community and the impact this had on Dutch views. Some attention to this theme would have provided a good link to Samuel Crowl's later chapter. The author hints at a new positioning of the Netherlands post-1948, but there is only a short paragraph on this and this point really should have been more developed to link the chapter with the theme of the Cold War as well. On the topic of Dutch views on the struggle and shifts in Dutch/U.S. relations, Frances Gouda's work is again extremely informative especially concerning how the Dutch exaggerated communist influence in Indonesia to play on Cold War fears and to try to get the U.S. on board.² I am surprised that the author did not engage more substantially with the work of Gouda, although her work is commended briefly in a footnote.

Chapter Four by Martin Thomas examines the importance of Southeast Asia to the British after the loss of India and Palestine and in the context of fears of China's turn to communism. Like Foster, Thomas also offers some insights into internal debates within Britain on these issues, adding nuance to the idea that there was only one national view on this topic. Thomas examines the considerations of British access to raw materials, uncertainty re British territories, and fears of the consequences of anti-colonial wars in Indochina and Indonesia destabilising the region. He concludes that based on lessons from across the region the British believed in the need to first control the civilian population in the countryside in order to defeat the MCP and second to include the Chinese in a sense of national identity within Malaysia.

Part Two of the book focuses on international communist views on the region of Southeast Asia.

¹ Frances Gouda with Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia: US Foreign Policy and Indonesian Nationalism, 1920-1949*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2002, 277-279, 285, 288-291.

² Gouda, *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia*, 272.

Ilya Gaiduk's chapter, based on analysis of new documents released from the Soviet archives, elucidates how Russian policy towards the region varied according to the specific location and context. Gaiduk reinforces the view that for the Soviet Union Europe was the first area of concern and that in the region of Southeast Asia a strategy of educating leaders first before any revolutionary action was preferred. Through the example of Vietnam he highlights how Soviet support was withheld due to the primacy the Soviets placed on their relations with the French communist party, whose interests might be harmed by Soviet support for the DRV. Stalin disliked the independence of both Mao and Ho and advised both the Indonesian and Indochina communist parties that a progressive path to revolution was needed in these countries due to their differences with China. The people needed to be won over first and a careful analysis of local conditions needed to be made. It was only after the mid 1950s that Stalin became more attentive towards Southeast Asia.

In Chen Jian's chapter on Bandung Discourse in China he suggests that from 1946 the Chinese communist party was already aware of the need to be more independent from the Soviets because they were forced to negotiate with the nationalists in 1946 at Stalin's behest. From 1946 the CCP had already articulated an idea of a new intermediate zone. From 1954-55 just prior to Bandung the Chinese discourse shifted from a strong emphasis on class-based struggle to a more accommodating discourse, which complemented an emerging discourse of non-alliance elsewhere. This chapter would have been more appropriately titled 'Precedents to the Discourse of Bandung', as technically the argument is that these ideas preceded Bandung. The chapter does, however, stress that China's decision to attend Bandung was guided not just by pragmatic reasons, but also by a commitment to an alternative path in the Cold War. It would be interesting to consider to what extent Chairman Mao supported Bandung for the purposes of furthering his role as leader of the Asian revolutionaries, a role Stalin designated to Mao.

In Tuong Vu's chapter on Vietnamese Communists he argues, contrary to existing scholarship, that the ICP welcomed the Cold War and the new rigid global order. Most scholars have stressed the nationalist and independent focus of the ICP. He traces strong support within the ICP even before the Cold War for a binary worldview. Vu challenges the dichotomisation of communism and nationalism in scholarship on the ICP claiming they were not necessarily contradictory. Vu stresses the ICP's reverence for the Soviet Union and a firm belief that the Soviet Union was an ideal model to follow. Although the onset of the Cold War reaffirmed to some extent their belief in a binary world, one would presume that the ICP would have been deeply disappointed by the lack of Soviet support for their cause before 1950 (which Gaiduk's chapter highlights). Although official documents may not reveal accurately the thoughts of Vietnamese leaders on this topic their continued reverence for the Soviet Union could also be the subject of more scrutiny. To what extent did the Vietnamese communist party feel betrayed by the Soviets placing greater importance on the French communist party than the ICP, especially if they were truly cheering the arrival of the Cold War and volunteering for the cause? How did they rationalise the early lack of support for their cause from the international communist movement?

Part Three examines various positions on alignment and non-alignment in the region.

Christopher Goscha's chapter on the two Vietnam's examines how the pressure to support either the DRV or Bao Dai impacted on Vietnamese communist relations with the Soviets and the Chinese. Although they themselves wished to align with the Soviets and the Chinese, the DRV had no outside support until 1950. Many non-communist countries however such as Indonesia, India and Burma refused to choose one Vietnam over the other and held fast to the principles of non-alignment. When the PRC recognised the DRV, the Soviet Union followed and then the U.S. and UK moved to back Bao Dai. By siding with these camps the ICP also invited increased focus on the region. Goscha also highlights the sense of the ICP seeing itself as the leader of communism in the region of Indochina and thus as in charge of the Laotian and Cambodian causes as well, despite no formal delegation of this role from the Soviets. Goscha's analysis here builds nicely on his earlier work on competing ideas within Indochina on the form the final nation would take in which he also traces the vicissitudes between Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian people.³

Samuel Cowl focuses on the role of the broader international community in determining the outcome of the Indonesian independence struggle. He suggests that many studies of the struggle over-emphasise the armed struggle. This is certainly true of official Indonesian histories, but several scholarly accounts such as those by Anthony Reid and George Kahin pay attention to both the diplomatic and military fronts of the struggle.⁴ This chapter is, however, innovative in several ways because it traces how several individuals and small groups of Indonesians like students and union workers fostered important sources of international support for Indonesia's cause by lobbying either the unions or governments of countries like Australia, New Zealand, Ceylon, Singapore, the Philippines and China. There is certainly some scholarship on country to country links in this period especially on the Australian and Singaporean side,⁵ but Cowl also traces how Indonesians secured broader support from India by means of several international conferences, such as the 1947 New Delhi conference on Asian relations, where the Indonesian case was discussed. Through these various means the Indonesians gained allies from a broad alliance of non-superpower countries including a host of Islamic countries like Egypt, Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan. Cowl thus captures a creative range of Indonesian efforts to secure support in a very volatile environment. He positions Indonesian individuals, not just the elite diplomats, also as key players in the success of the struggle for independence, more so than most studies of this period. At the same time he acknowledges that U.S. pressure on the Dutch was also crucial to the collapse of the Dutch side, but this pressure was also the product of the growing broader alliance of support for Indonesia. Through this model of a broad alliance Indonesians also, heavily influenced by India, became committed to non-alignment.

³ Christopher Goscha, 'Annam and Vietnam in the New Indochinese Space 1887-1945', in Stein Tonneson and Hans Antlov, *Asian Forms of the Nation*, Curzon Press, Surrey, 1996, pp. 93-130

⁴ George Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1952 and Anthony Reid, *Indonesian National Revolution 1945-50*, Longman, 1974.

⁵ Rupert Lockwood, *Australia and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1942-49*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1982 and Yong Mun Cheong, *The Indonesian Revolution and the Singapore Connection*, Singapore University Press, Singapore, 2003.

Danny Wong Tze Ken focuses on a case study of the impact of the conflict of Indochina on the region of Malaya, particularly with regard to how the CPM and the British responded to developments in Indochina. The CPM gave support to the Viet Minh by means of volunteers and also funds. On Malayan independence Tunku Abdul Rahman chose to recognise the Diem regime of Southern Vietnam and Malaysia helped train military and police personnel, gave weapons to the South and also allowed U.S. soldiers to use Malaya for rest and relaxation. Due to the emergency in Malaya, run largely by the Malayan Communist Party, Malay leaders were keen to align themselves with the non-communist block. Wong suggests that military strategies of isolating village hamlets were also borrowed by the Southern Vietnamese regime from the British in Malaya (p. 269). Wong notes also that events in Indochina shaped the format of the new proposal for a Federation of Malaya. In effect Indochina reinforced the Malayan anti-communist stance.

Daniel Fineman shifts our attention to trace the reasons for the choice of alignment in another country in the region, Thailand. Fineman describes Phibun Songkram's decision to align as a 'policy revolution' suggesting that Phibun took this course largely for the purpose of consolidating his own position as a military leader tempted also by the possibilities of American military aid. Having chosen this alignment Phibun recognised the unpopular Bao Dai government of South Vietnam and also sent troops to fight with the U.S. in the Korean war. Fineman importantly traces disagreements within Thailand over Phibun's choices despite quite broad support for anti-communism. The result of Phibun's concessions was increased military aid, but also a heightened domestic campaign against the left and an intensified form of authoritarianism. This is a fascinating case study of just one of many authoritarian regimes that resulted from or was boosted by backing the U.S. in the Cold War. As long as communism was repressed in certain circumstances authoritarianism could also be tolerated or excused.

Ang Cheng Guan offers a survey of views on the domino theory throughout the region. He maps a variety of views on this throughout Southeast Asia. Some of these mini-surveys are more successful than others. In the case of Indonesia, he focuses on how nationalists and anti-communists viewed the PKI and then only briefly considers the broader views of the spread of communism via the Indonesian campaign of Confrontation. In other case studies he tracks fears of the spread of communism via local ethnic Chinese communities in Thailand and the Philippines. In case of Cambodian leader Sihanouk, we are told he believed that the whole of Southeast Asia would turn communist, but there is not much elaboration on why he believed this. The surveys are thus a bit thin for some countries.

The final section of the book focuses on cultural connections in the Cold War. The chapters in this section are quite diverse but also creative in their approaches.

Michael Charney offers some fascinating insights into how Burmese leader U Nu negotiated communist influence within Burma especially by means of plays and other forms of propaganda that tried to draw out the lessons from the civil war sparked by the Burmese Communist Party. Despite Nu's neutrality, Charney also traces how through the translation of Nu's works a pro-U.S. slant was placed on his thinking so that foreigners would gain the

impression Nu was on the side of the U.S. Charney also links Nu's move towards embracing Buddhism with the rising popularity of the communist party.

Continuing the theme of links between religions and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, Remy Madinier offers another internal case study of how an Islamic party in Indonesia negotiated the rising strength of the Indonesian communist party. Interpretations of the Madiun uprising vary greatly, yet Madinier accepts the view put forward first by George Kahin that the communist party had long been planning the uprising.⁶ Madinier importantly stresses the impact of the Madiun incident of 1948 on the Islamic party Masyumi, noting that because Masyumi members were killed by communists in this episode an enduring antagonism towards communists was cemented.⁷ He states that from then on political Islam and communism were antithetical. Although this is true for Masyumi, Greg Fealy has demonstrated how the Nadhlatul Ulama which split off from Masyumi in 1952 was far more accommodating towards the PKI until the mid 1960s.⁸ Through a number of extracts and nicely chosen newspaper images, Madinier demonstrates how Masyumi continued to attack the PKI as anti-religious, authoritarian and as loyal to international leaders. He also points to the ways in which Masyumi, despite professing neutrality, also courted the U.S. Through the example of the Permesta rebellion which Masyumi leaders and the U.S., Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia backed, Madinier also points to how the Cold War heated up in Indonesia. He highlights Masyumi's fears that Indonesia's increasing support for anti-imperialism through the New Guinea campaign and the seizure of Dutch assets would lead them to a closer alliance with the Soviet Union. This chapter offers an interesting case study also of sub-national groups and how other sorts of alliances also emerged in this period beyond elite national alliances. The chapter reminds us that the Cold War was also negotiated within the countries of the region.

The final chapter by Edward Miller examines the diplomacy of personalism and discourses on culture and civilisation present in the thinking and policies of Ngo Dinh Diem, leader of Southern Vietnam. In this chapter Miller probes the extent to which Ngo's policies were shaped not just by the Cold War, but also by a sense of solidarity among nations of the developing world born out of the colonial experience. The concept of personalism, derived from the Catholic philosopher Mounier, led Diem to foster individual relations with leaders

⁶ George Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1952. Anne Swift, for example, suggests it is very difficult to prove that the PKI backed the move based on the circulation of many false documents. Anne Swift, *The Road to Madiun, The Indonesian Communist Uprising of 1948*, Cornell Modern Indonesia Program, Monograph Series No. 69, Ithaca, New York, 1989. More recently, however, Harry Poeze has also argued that there is clearer evidence of communist involvement. Harry Poeze, 'The Cold War in Indonesia, 1948,' *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40, 2009, 497-517.

⁷ I have made a similar point in my recent article: Katharine McGregor, 'A Reassessment of the Significance of the 1948 Madiun Uprising to the Cold War In Indonesia', *Kajian Malaysia*, 26(1), 2009, pp. 86-119.

⁸ Greg Fealy, *Ijtihad Politik Ulama: Sejarah NU 1952-1967*, LKiS, Yogyakarta, 1998.

in the region. Diem also subscribed to a theory of Asian passivity and spirituality combined with a belief in the idea that Asians could also awaken. Diem was open, for example, to diplomatic links to non-aligned India because of his belief in a shared cultural heritage, but not to Pakistan because of presumed differences. Diem also believed, following a form of orientalism also hinted at by Goscha in terms of the views also of the ICP, that the Cambodians and Laotians were behind the Vietnamese. This chapter interestingly challenges, however, the claim made by Danny Wong Tze Ken that the Vietnamese adopted the hamlet program of isolating villagers from one another from the British in Malaya (p. 393). Miller claims it was a far broader military strategy. Through a series of examples in the region Miller attempts to convey how Diem also played a role in negotiating support from various leaders in Southeast Asia. In doing so he rejects the idea that Diem was merely an American puppet.

Overall this is a fascinating book offering many new insights into the intersection of the Cold War and decolonisation in the region. In particular it will be a valuable resource for those of us who teach about the region.

Author's Response by Christopher E. Goscha, Université du Québec à Montréal and Christian F. Ostermann, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Let us begin by thanking very sincerely all four reviewers for their thoughtful comments on *Connecting Histories, Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945-1962*. We are particularly grateful, for we know that it is no easy task to review an edited volume, especially one weighing in with fifteen chapters. The reviewers naturally assessed the volume in terms of the individual contributions as well as the organizational and thematic take on the subject presented in the introduction. We would have done the same. However, given that there do not seem to be any major theoretical or methodological disagreements with the individual chapters, we felt it best to focus our response here as editors on critiques of the book's overarching arguments and approach.

It might be useful to preface our response by saying what our volume, and the Euroseas conference (European Association of South East Asian Studies) initiated in 2004, was not designed to do. It was never an attempt to “decenter” the Cold War from “North” to “South”¹, dethrone “Western” or “East Bloc-centered” approaches, or to “re-orient”² international history towards Asia, much less Southeast Asia. In fact, we were less motivated by any desire to favor one side over another than to understand how the different sides “connected” as a whole. We found inspiration in Christopher Bayly's recent study of *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914*, in which his overarching goal was not to “reorient” world history one way or another, but rather to show how different historical processes came together to make “world history”.³ Recent work on commercial, cultural, religious, and diplomatic connections in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia for pre-nineteenth century history was also of great interest to us, for example that of Sanjay Subrahmanyam on the networks of the Indian Ocean.

Why Southeast Asia? Part of our choice was of course predicated on our own areas of expertise. Most of our common work in Cold War and decolonization studies intersected in this part of the world. However, we also felt that this part of the world provided the right ingredients for teasing out the different ways in which the historical trajectories of the Cold War and decolonization intersected and linked up with equally important cultural, religious and domestic forces moving down below. What also made Southeast Asia interesting, in our view, was that although the Allies put an end to the Japanese imperial project in Asia in 1945, they could not do it before the Japanese had themselves overthrown Western colonial states in the region. The same dynamic did not occur, at least not as comprehensively, say in North Africa between 1940 and 1942. Third, while the Cold War certainly emerged and intersected with colonial questions in other parts of the south

¹ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

² We borrow the term from Andre Gunder Frank, *ReORIENT: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

³ While he never says so, Bayly is clearly taking a swipe at Gunder Frank's attempt to promote Asia at the expense of the West. Bayly no more advocates a Western-centered history than he does an “Asian centered one”.

in the late 1940s (Iran certainly comes to mind), what struck us was the force with which the Cold War shifted eastwards along a Eurasian axis from 1949-50, ensuring that decolonization and Cold War battles would inextricably mix in Asia in general and in Southeast Asia in particular (until the 1991 Paris Peace Accords ended the third Indochina War). Fourth, and we should have spelled this out better as suggested by our readers, we wanted to try to understand how local actors could use these connections to their advantage in different points in time and space. Southeast Asia seemed to provide some particularly interesting case studies, ranging from Vietnam (both of them) to Indonesia by way of Thailand and Burma. Lastly, we needed a framework that went beyond individual nation-states to adopt transnational trajectories moving into, emerging out of, and crossing through the region, up above and down below. Ideally, we needed every author to think in such terms, which was no easy task. To facilitate things, we thus set up geo-historical trajectories around which we organized the papers in order to render the connections “visible” for the reader.

As the reviewers point out, it is notoriously difficult to accomplish this and some will no doubt be disappointed. Should we have plotted the trajectories along specific conjunctures, as Karl Hack suggests? We considered this but could not organize the papers around a sufficient number of dates or time frames to make the volume work methodologically. Karl Hack and Geoff Wade certainly did in their excellent special issue of the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* devoted to the topic of the origins of the Cold War in Southeast Asia, in which 1948 plays the key date (the volume was recently reviewed on H-Diplo).⁴ Lorenz Luthi’s recent “nexus” conference at McGill University in Montreal used four conjunctures in the Cold War to get at connections in the Cold War. However, the contributors must be willing to *jouer le jeu* lest we fall into defending our own “turf” and, in so doing, implicitly miss the bigger picture we are trying to build.

We could not agree more with one reader who reminds us of Charles Tilly’s provocative essay arguing that war destroys as much as it creates (although Tilly leaves his argument open when it comes to the wave of decolonization characterizing post 1945 world). That said, at the heart of *Connecting Histories* is the idea that while the Cold War and decolonization intersected in particularly destructive ways in Southeast Asia, this also created opportunities for local actors. The intersection of the Cold War and decolonization also combined with civil wars, influenced debates over culture and religion, and became an important part of local, regional, and global histories that are with us to this day, for better or worse. But our main point is that we cannot fully appreciate or understand the full significance of these influences without situating them in some sort of a connected history, in which “Asians” as much as “Westerners”, “communists” and “non-communists”, and culture and religion as much as high politics and diplomacy maintain their agency. And this, we believe, is one of the major contributions of this volume.

⁴ “Asian Cold War Symposium,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3 (October 2009): 441-565. See the H-Diplo Roundtable at <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XI-30.pdf>.

However, in response to an important critique of our volume, we are certainly not pushing the idea that “Southeast Asia” is “first” or the “best” for this type of approach. It is just one possibility among others. One could profitably do something similar with the “Middle East” or “Latin America” or perhaps even “Eastern Europe”.

If we want to write transnational histories, and we personally think we should, we might look to the recent work being done that leaves out national names, in favor of one that connects a range of countries and phenomena via different geo-historical groupings. Those working in world history, but who are not bent on “reorienting” it, have started using wider connective spaces such as the Indian Ocean or the Asian Mediterranean to organize their histories. Can one write an international history of the Cold War and decolonization along similar lines, capable of linking a host of actors without using a national or regional framework? Or should one focus on conjunctures situated across time and space as Karl Hack and Lorenz Luthi have done? We are certainly for both approaches. Goscha has attempted to look at the wars for Vietnam from the “South China Sea” and the Vietnamese revolution in Indochinese terms. That said, do we truly have the necessary knowledge for writing such a connected international history for all of Asia? Bruce Cumming’s recent book suggests that we might be moving in that direction, as his title provocatively suggests, *Dominion From Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power*⁵ But we might be careful to avoid the desire to “reORIENT” at the expense of missing the wider connections, whether they come from the East or the West, the North or the South. It is our modest hope that, taken together, these essays might contribute to “seeing that”.

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⁵ Bruce Cummings, *Dominion from Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).