THE COLD WAR IN SOUTH EAST ASIA, 1945-1979
Today’s Themes

- Decolonization/Cold War.
- Regional dynamics
- Boomers: memory of lived history of a period that is now being historicized. (cultural forgetting, mythicization, recovery).
- Cold War genocides.
THE VIETNAMESE REVOLUTION

Revolution, Civil War, and the Vicissitudes of Memory
1945-Present
Timelines and Interpretations

- Indochina Wars (1946-1986).
French Indochina
Japanese Invasion of Indochina
A Brief History of the Vietnamese Communist Party

Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969)
Ho’s International Trajectory

- Son of Confucian scholar, French educated.
- 1910s, travels throughout world, working on ships and as a cook.
- 1917 or 1919, returns to Paris, involved in socialist political activities.
- Moscow, Thailand, Shanghai, Hong Kong (arrested), Russia.
- Returns to Vietnam in 1941.
End of Japanese Occupation

- 1945, French authorities interned by Japanese.
- Bao Dai named leader of Vietnam.
- Vietminh capitalize on famine, breakdown of institutions.
- Japanese surrender, Vietminh fill vacuum, independence declared on Sept 2 1945.
- French troops reenter, war ensues.
First war of resistance (1946-1954).

- 1946-1949, guerrilla resistance, limited arms or funding.
- 1950-1954, increased internationalization of conflict (USSR and China vs. US, Britain).
- 1954, French defeat at Dien Ben Phu.
Chinese Supply Line
America’s Support for French Colonialism

- FDR, anti-colonialist, believed in tutelage.
- Resurrection of global capitalism, strategy of containment.
- South East Asia important for resources for Britain and Japan.
- Origins of domino theory.
- Vietnam is an abstraction!
Domino Theory
First war of resistance (1946-1954).

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1954 Division of Vietnam
Aftermath of 1954 Geneva Conference

- Vietnam “temporarily” divided along 17th parallel.
- Unification elections promised, postponed.
- Voluntary population transfers. More move south.
- Both sides begin to build separate states.
Diem’s rule

- Conservative, Catholic, Autocratic.
- Works to restore landlord power.
- Attacks and alienates Chinese capital.
- Mass repression.
The Communist Movement (1954-1960)

- North seeks to consolidate its rule and build a socialist state.
- Heavy handed land reform (later admits to “excesses”).
- 1959 onward, increasing uprisings against Diem.
- Southern initiatives, northern backing.
- 1960, National Liberation Front formed.
- Revolutionary dynamics crucial.
Kennedy’s Vietnam Strategy

- Could Kennedy have avoided the war?
- Committed to southern state, skeptical of American involvement.
- 16,000 “advisors” by the time Kennedy is assassinated.
- Vietnam still minor priority.
Diem’s rule begin to collapse
Kennedy’s Vietnam Strategy

- Could Kennedy have avoided the war?
- Committed to southern state, skeptical of American involvement.
- 16,000 “advisors” by the time Kennedy is assassinated.
- Nov 2, 1963 Diem is assassinated in coup.
The Build up to War


- China: Support revolution, but question timing. Internal matters of great concern. Did not want a war with the US.

Why Vietnam?
Why Vietnam?

- Communist side: The 1965 Politicide in Indonesia.
- US: Structural commitment.
- Three “credibility” thesis.
Johnson’s Escalation

- 1964, Gulf of Tonkin Incident.
- Operation Rolling Thunder (bombing of the North).
Turning Points in 1968

- 1967, Hanoi concedes that war at best is stalemate.
- “Tet Offensive”. Surprise attacks on lunar holiday.
- Vietcong defeat, psychological victory.
- Domestic support in America collapses.
Protests
1968 Peace Initiative

- October 1968, secret talks between US and USSR to negotiate peace.
- Kissinger alerts Nixon camp, Nixon orders Halderman to “throw a monkey wrench” in the initiative.
- Anna Chennault encourages SV President Thieu to stall the talks until after the election.
- Also pressure CIA head, Richard Helms.
Richard Nixon

- “Peace with honour”.
Le Duc Tho
Kissinger’s Peace Prize

Henry A. Kissinger
The Nobel Peace Prize 1973

- “Peace with honour”.
- “Operation Freedom Run”.


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- 1970 invasion of Cambodia.
The Bombing of Cambodia
Bombing of Laos

Each tiny red dot represents the location of a dropped bomb.

- “Peace with honour”.
- “Operation Freedom Run”.
- 1970 invasion of Cambodia.
- 50,000-150,000 dead, 2 million refugees, political destabilization.
- Scorched Earth?
American Withdraw and Communist Victory

- Rapid collapse of SVN forces.
- North wins conventional battle, April 1975 fall of Saigon.
Fall of Saigon
Consequences

- 3.8 million Vietnamese deaths (close to 50% civilian).
- America, 58,000 dead, 168,000 wounded.
- Unexploded Ordinances.
- Agent Orange and environmental impact. (20,000,000 gallons).
- Initially the domino's fall.
- 1978, Vietnamese invade Cambodia.
- 1979, Sino-Vietnamese war. Nationalism over communism.
Agent Orange
PART TWO: COLD WAR GENOCIDES IN INDONESIA AND CAMBODIA.
Cold War Genocides and the Problem of Memory

- Preservation vs erasure.
- Ethnicity and violence and memory.
- Internationalization.
The Indonesian Politicide, 1965-1968

- Indonesia and Dutch colonialism.
- Ethnic make up of Indonesia.
Provincial map of Indonesia
Japanese Invasion of Indochina
Sukarno
The Indonesian Politicide, 1965-1968

- Indonesia and Dutch colonialism.
- Ethnic make up of Indonesia.
- Contradictions in National movement (Islamist, Developmentalist, Communist).
- Five Principles: Nationalism, humanism, democracy, social justice, and Islam.
Prelude to Mass Violence

- August 1945, independence declared. 1949, Dutch concede.
- 1949, Islamist and communist uprisings.
- 1949-1957, chaotic period of parliamentary democracy.
Guided Democracy

- Sukarno suspends parliamentary rule 1957.
- Musjawarah.
- Triangular power system.
Economic Peril, Cold War Politics, and the Rise of the Left

- Political economy of Indonesia (Army and Industries).
- US/USSR competition.
- Non-violent growth of the PKI.
- Increased rumour and suspicion.
September 30th Movement.

- Leftists in army seek to preempt rightist coup.
- Badly organized and executed, Sukarno aloof.
- Suharto launches counter-revolution.
Hejji Suharto
The Indonesian Politicide

- Early October, Suharto launches demonization campaign.
- Militias first to kill in Aech.
- 400,000 - 3 million killed.
- Victims? Members of PKI, some Chinese victims.
The Indonesian Politicide

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- 400,000 - 3million killed.
- Victims? Members of PKI, some Chinese victims.
- Why no resistance?
Perpetrators?

- Two streams vs top-down interpretation.
- Two streams: Role of militias and communal violence. Release of built of tensions.
- Top-down: Army organized Politicide.
- Sukarno?
- Role of US?
Consequences

- Resolution to tensions within Indonesian nationalism.
- Precursor to genocide in East Timor 1972.
- Mass injection of foreign capital, international capital takes control of key enterprises.
- Prevention of “another Vietnam”? 
The Killing Fields in World History

- East Asia’s long war (1931-1979).
- Vietnamese Revolution.
- Decolonization/cold war.
- Peasant Question.
The Killing Fields of Cambodia (1976-1979)
French Indochina
Why Cambodia?
Background Causes of the Cambodian Genocide

- Re-imposition of French rule sparks indigenous resistance. 1951, Cambodia communist party set up.
- 1954, Cambodia becomes independent. Monarchy.
- Domestic appeasement/suppression of communists. Cold War “neutrality”.
- 1962, Communist party fractured. Young radicals take over.
Saloth Sar (Pol Pot)
Background Causes of the Cambodian Genocide

- 1962, Young radicals begin armed rebellion against Prince.
- 1967, civil war in Cambodia.
The Bombing of Cambodia
Background Causes of Cambodian Genocide

- Republic controls urban area, Khmer Rouge controls country side.
- Increasing repression of minorities, Vietnamese in particular.
- 1975, Khmer Rouge enter Phnom Pen
Ideology of the Khmer Rouge

- Valourization of the peasant. Maoism.
- Nostalgia for glorious past.
Angkor Wat
Ideology of the Khmer Rouge

- Valourization of the peasant. Maoism.
- Nostalgia for glorious past.
- Racism.
- Anti-modern. Modern techniques.
- Sexually prohibitive.
Who Were the Victims?
Victims of the Khmer Rouge

- Deurbanization.
Victims of the Khmer Rouge

- Deurbanization ("old people"/"base people").
- Intellectuals/bureaucrats.
- Vietnamese (100%).
- Ethnic Chinese (50%).
- Cham Muslim Minority (40%).
Geography of Mass Killings
Killing Fields
Tuol Sleng
Kang Kek Lew
Ending the Genocide and Aftermath

- 7 January, Vietnamese troops overthrow Khmer Rouge.
- Justice delayed until 1990s (end of Cold War).
I encouraged the Chinese to support Pol Pot. I encouraged the Thailand Thai to help the Khmer Rouge. The question was how to help the Cambodian people. Pol Pot was an abomination. We could never support him. But China could.

— Zbigniew Brzezinski —

AZ QUOTES
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