



Cold War Southeast Asia

Malcolm H. Murfett

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As World War II came to an end, a period of distrust settled over the world. Southeast Asia was no different. The spectre of Communism stalked the stage. The threat of a global nuclear war hung thick in the air. The struggle for domination between the Americans and the Russians came up against the burgeoning nationalism of the liberated states. In this highly combustible climate, what was to emerge? This book reveals in fascinating detail, country by country, how the Cold War shaped the destiny of Southeast Asia. The competition among the world powers – the USA, USSR, Britain, China – led to dramatically differing fates for the region. Vietnam was to be the worst affected, effectively destroyed in the clash between superpowers, at tremendous cost to all sides. In Malaya and Singapore, the British fought a long-drawn-out Communist insurgency that broke out in 1948 – an insurgency they saw as part of a consolidated Cold War movement inspired by Moscow or Beijing. But was it? As this volume shows, the states of Southeast Asia were never mere pawns in an international war of ideology. Many local players in fact strategically manipulated Cold War doctrines to their own political advantage – chief among them Indonesia's Suharto, who played the anti-Communist card with aplomb. Till now, no book has examined this watershed era across the entire region. Cold War Southeast Asia in doing so not only offers a panoramic account of a turning point in SEA history, but also illuminates the global ramifications of the Cold War, and the makings of the world order as we know it today.

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