

tion and emphasize the transnationality of the war experience. After all, history has always been more complex than nationalists would have it.

**Ang Cheng Guan: Southeast Asia's Cold War. An Interpretive History, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 2018, 306 pp.**

Reviewed by  
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A concise political history of Southeast Asia during the Cold War provides orientation in a complex international setting. This is what Ang Cheng Guan achieves with his survey over 70 years (1919–1989), the “interpretive” elements being on the one hand the Asian perspective instead of US or European points of view (p. 1), on the other hand a focus on communist parties and leftist movements. Ang indicates that since the latter had turned out to be the “losers” of the Cold War, their perceptions might otherwise sink into oblivion (p. 194).

With some exceptions of US, British, and Australian archival documents, Ang Cheng Guan's book is based on published sources exclusively in English, including his own works on the war in Vietnam, on Singapore and Cambodia. Ang narrates the key political developments in mainly chronological order arguing that what might be regarded as a somewhat old-fashioned

treatment (p. 198) in fact serves as a basis for other, more recent research interests.

The six chapters vary with regard to time span, length and emphasis. To begin with, Ang defines a period of 30 years (1919–1949) as a pre-history to the classical Cold War period. He traces the antagonisms in the region and the rising of global communist forces. Somewhat schematically, Ang states that before World War II, communists did not pose a threat to European colonial powers (p. 36), and even the famous Calcutta conference in 1948 seems to him “a somewhat messy gathering” (p. 51), by which he indicates a lack of discernable guidance. Besides, communist China (PRC) is introduced as a new major political power.

The period dealt with in chapter two comprises the five years until the Vietnamese communists' Dien Bien Phu victory in 1954 with the overall focus on the PRC's influence in the region and the development of each regional state as well as global interconnections, touching upon Japan from a US point of view.

In chapter three, covering a mere two years (1954–1955), attention shifts to multinational agreements, organisations and movements such as the Geneva agreement on Indochina, the founding of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the global outreach of the non-alignment movement initiated at Bandung. These three events constitute quite different approaches to Southeast Asian development: the military victories of regional forces in Indochina against colonial powers, the establishment of a Western inspired organisation with just two South-east Asian members of the SEATO, Thai-

land and the Philippines, versus a decidedly anti-colonial movement.

Chapter four (“Antagonisms”) concentrates on the ten years up to 1965. In reaction to the Sino-Soviet split most of the Southeast Asian communist parties opted for Beijing, some split, others manoeuvred. In terms of East-West confrontation, Indonesia’s turn from socialist to Western ally, including the precursory murder of generals and the subsequent massacre against Indonesian leftists, re-balanced the regional zones of influence as well. Interpreting two highly controversial aspects, Ang follows the line that the attempted coup which affected the Indonesian military caught Washington by surprise (p. 121) and that the Communist Party of Indonesia was not the mastermind of the 1965 assassination of the generals (p. 124). In chapter five Ang narrates the next ten years with a focus on the war in Vietnam and the founding of yet another regional union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with its shared “aversion to communism” (p. 140). Meanwhile the Burmese government tried to balance ties to Beijing and Washington (p. 132). Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia supported the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war, while the “uneasy coalition” (p. 153) of the Communist Parties of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia led to another war in the region. It was directed against the Khmer Rouge regime and Vietnamese military action against it respectively, each side involving allies on a global scale.

This war is elaborated on the the last chapter, titled “Ending Cold War Chasm”. It addresses the events during the last fifteen years. Here, Ang skilfully presents the complex imbrication of the Cambodia

conflict in the global Cold War. At this point Ang abandons his impartiality and dedication to give a balanced view (p. 7). He explicitly takes sides against communist ideas with regard to economy (pp. 192-193). Apart from that, he remains aloof throughout the book even of the many atrocities from all sides involved, communist, non- or anti-communist – so much so that reviewers hold a certain lack of empathy with his narration against him.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Ang barely tells the stories of suffering. This is part of his concept of political history. Still, a historiography including the not-so-new history of emotions seems rather appropriate in such a study.

The brief conclusion (pp. 194–198) not only sums up each chapter, but also refers some more recent theses on the Cold War like the well-established idea of multiperspectivity. Interpreting the events in the region from within, Ang sees the various conflicts in Southeast Asia as being “no proxy wars” (p. 195), but as conflicts resulting partly also from inner-regional animosities and antagonisms. This is disputable at least in the case of the wars in Indochina.

Ang does not present new theories. He adds a coherent and convincing political perspective “from within” instead. His book stands out as a current, dense overview of English-language contributions, bridging the gap between a multitude of first-hand pure research books, articles and editions from new sources around the world, and a voluminous opus still to be written which would discuss details for every state, relevant group, influential personality and transnational institution separately. Such an extensive approach

would ideally include more ephemeral players like India, Japan, Australia, and the non-anglophone colonial powers in the region such as France and the Netherlands. It would examine economic, military and classical diplomatic topics as well as aspects of culture and society. Ang has paved the way for further studies in the field and for all those who appreciate a compact account of major events and positions in the region.

#### Note

- 1 See the Review by Kenton Clymer in H-Diplo Roundtable Review Volume XX, No 39, 20 May 2019, <http://www.tiny.cc/Roundtable-XX-39>.

**Unternehmen Mammut. Ein Kommando-einsatz der Wehrmacht im Nordirak 1943, hrsg. von Bernd Lemke und Pherset Rosbeiani (= Cognoscere Historias, Bd. 26, hrsg. von Ulrich van der Heyden), Bremen: Edition Falkenberg 2018, 224 S.**

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Die in der Reihe Cognoscere Historias von Bernd Lemke und Pherset Rosbeiani edierte und eingeleitete Aktenpublikation hat eine weithin unbekannte Episode des Zweiten Weltkriegs zum Inhalt. Bereits in der Einleitung (9–33) ziehen die Herausgeber folgendes Fazit: „Dies ist die Geschichte einer Unternehmung der Wehrmacht, die begonnen wurde, um den Irak und letztlich ganz Arabien dem britischen Empire zu entreißen und unter deutsche Kontrolle zu bringen. Der Kommando-

führer Johann Gottfried Müller hoffte, mit minimalem Aufwand maximale Wirkung zu erzielen. Mit nur wenigen Agenten sollten die Kurden im Nordirak zur Rebellion aufgestachelt werden, die dann um sich greifen und schließlich die britische Herrschaft zum Einsturz bringen sollte“ (9). Der Kommandotrupp, darunter ein kurdischer Student namens Ramzi al-Nafi, sprang im Juni 1943 im Nordirak ab. Detailliert schildern Lemke und Rosbeiani die Vorbereitung dieses Unternehmens und benennen dessen Protagonisten wie Werner Otto von Hentig und Oskar Ritter von Niedermayer. Kurz und präzise erfolgt eine Einordnung des Unternehmens Mammut in den historischen Kontext des Nahen und Mittleren Ostens, wobei auch auf die deutsch-freundliche Regierung des irakischen Ministerpräsidenten Raschid Ali al-Gailani eingegangen wird, der den Durchmarsch britisch-indischer Truppen durch den Irak verweigerte und militärischen Widerstand leistete. Nach dem militärischen Scheitern der wenigen deutschen Flugzeugstaffeln – eher eine symbolische Geste gegenüber dem Irak – konzentrierte sich die Wehrmachtsführung, insbesondere die sogenannte „Abwehr“, auf Sabotage- und Diversionsakte wie das Unternehmen Mammut. Eine prägnante Schilderung der Struktur der Abwehr und ihrer führenden Köpfe verdeutlicht die Planung und Vorbereitung des Unternehmens, offenbart aber auch bereits grundlegende strukturelle Mängel.

Trotz des Desasters von Stalingrad, das die Pläne für ein Vordringen in den Orient beendete, wurde Mitte Januar 1943 das Unternehmen in Gang gesetzt. „Müller hielt man aufgrund einer 1935/36 unternommenen Orientreise, die ihn bis in die