

descriptive analysis of the Malay world, its connections with European counterparts, and how it later shaped modern Southeast Asia. This is also a richly illustrated account of Jacques de Coutre the man and the story of his personal connections with the Malay world at this extraordinary time. The memoirs shed light on the Malay kingdoms of Johor, Pahang, Pattani, and Siam, and life in port cities such as Melaka. Borschberg's efforts to bring visibility to this neglected domain are a truly worthy intellectual contribution to the understanding of the socioeconomic history of Southeast Asia's early modern period, and this book will be a valuable resource for many scholars for years to come.

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To cage the red dragon: SEATO and the defence of Southeast Asia 1955–1965

By DAMIEN FENTON

Singapore: NUS Press, 2012. Pp. 324. Maps, Notes, Bibliography, Index.
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The label 'Cold War' applied to the period 1947–1991 is in many ways a misnomer. Although the armed forces of the United States and the Soviet Union never engaged in direct combat, their strategic rivalry contributed to internal conflicts and proxy wars in Latin America, Africa and Asia. These Cold War hotspots have captured the bulk of historical attention for, as David French observes in reference to the British Army of the Rhine in *Army, empire and Cold War*, organisations that never embark upon the war for which they are prepared leave historians with 'nothing dramatic to describe and analyse'. In sympathy with French, Damien Fenton argues that the concentration on Cold War conflicts has fragmented the history of the period, leaving a number of 'blindspots', and preventing a more holistic analysis of the strategic and doctrinal links between those 'small wars' and 'the determination on the part of the Western powers to avoid the escalation of such conflicts into something much more destructive' (p. 8). In *To cage the red dragon*, Fenton explores one of those 'blindspots' — the South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO).

SEATO had its genesis in the fears of further communist expansion in Asia following the partition of Vietnam in 1954. Along with NATO and CENTO (Central Treaty Organisation), it comprised a trio of collective security agreements underpinning the United States' global strategy of containment. SEATO consisted of eight member states — Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States — and operated for 23 years before being dissolved in 1977 and slipping into obscurity. As Fenton points out, historical analysis of SEATO has been limited and that which exists generally advances a 'paper tiger' interpretation, arguing that the alliance was a failure as it neither deterred communist action in the region, nor did it ever execute any of its contingency plans.

In *To cage the red dragon*, he seeks to add nuance to this assessment by analysing SEATO's ability to 'coordinate and prepare a credible collective military response' (p. 4).

Although it is never explicitly stated, *To cage the red dragon* is essentially a military history of SEATO; the civilian components of the organisation, such as its executive body the SEATO Council, are mentioned only in passing. The great strength of Fenton's work is its charting of the evolution of SEATO's standing military planning apparatus, culminating in the formation of the Military Planning Office (MPO), and the detailed analysis of the eight contingency plans it developed. This examination forms the bedrock of Fenton's refutation of the paper tiger thesis. He shows how each plan was shaped, and some ultimately shelved, in response to a continuing review of regional political and military developments by SEATO's Intelligence Committee. Fenton cites this process, particularly the swift incorporation of counter-insurgency contingencies into the plans of an organisation founded to deter conventional aggression, as clear evidence of the responsiveness of SEATO's military apparatus to a changing strategic environment. Although only five SEATO plans progressed to operational readiness, those that did were the product of much scrutiny and debate — evidence of the gravity attached to them — and included specific details such as force contributions, areas of operation, and commanders-designate.

Fenton, however, is not blind to the fact that operational planning does not occur in a political vacuum. In keeping with his appeal that the Cold War be treated as a 'comprehensive period of military history' (p. 8), SEATO's planning is set firmly amidst the context of the wider political and strategic circumstances of its member states, including Britain's struggle to remain a great power with global reach; the decline of French interest in Southeast Asia as it fought to hold on to Algeria; Thailand's quest for a Western security guarantee; and the United States' growing entanglement in the war in Vietnam. In this context SEATO's inherent weaknesses — the uneven level of military capability across the alliance, the reluctance of member states to subordinate national freedom of action to collective authority, and the difficulty in securing political agreement that the conditions for intervention had been met — are laid bare. These difficulties were particularly evident in SEATO's near organisational paralysis regarding intervention in Laos in 1961–1962, despite the existence of the well-developed Plan 5, and the United States' decision to turn its back on the alliance and act unilaterally in Vietnam; Fenton gives both episodes detailed treatment. Even amidst SEATO's apparent failure over Vietnam, however, Fenton injects fresh analysis pointing out that years of cooperation under the alliance had conditioned Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Philippines to link the fate of the wider region to their own strategic interests, thereby contributing to their positive responses to the United States' request for assistance.

Fenton's most difficult task is assessing the effectiveness of SEATO's deterrent function. A detailed analysis of the development of the armed forces of China and North Vietnam between 1954 and 1965 is provided in an early chapter, which starkly illustrates the overwhelming military superiority they enjoyed compared to their smaller Southeast Asian neighbours. Capability, however, does not necessarily equate to a threat and Fenton faces the same challenge still confronting defence analysts throughout the Asia Pacific: What is the nature of the threat, if any, posed by the expansion of

Chinese military capability? Fenton's analysis of communist intent is limited by his sources, a weakness of which he is aware: 'Until the day, should it ever come, that Beijing and Hanoi allow access to their archives from this period, these deliberations are fated to remain hostage to speculation' (p. 231). He relies on historical precedent, principally the Korean War, to demonstrate a communist willingness for conventional military action to seize perceived easy pickings, and then makes the deduction that the lack of such action against the troubled emerging nations of postcolonial Southeast Asia is sign of the deterrent effect of SEATO as a vehicle for intervention by the United States and its other Western allies. It is a problematic judgement, particularly in the light of the communist insurgencies that SEATO neither deterred nor acted against; perhaps SEATO, like Western military power more generally, was simply a contributing factor to a change in the character of warfare in Southeast Asia.

The value of *To cage the red dragon*, however, is independent of its judgements regarding what SEATO did, or did not achieve. The core strength of this book lie in its insights into the internal dynamics of a multinational alliance, particularly the iterative nature of operational planning in this context. Fenton also successfully links Southeast Asia's small wars with the broader strategic concerns of the SEATO member states and the shape, and ultimate fate, of its contingency plans; in so doing he has achieved his aim of contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the Cold War.

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Cambodia

Buddhism in a dark age: Cambodian monks under Pol Pot

By IAN HARRIS

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Ian Harris passed away in late December of 2014, just as I finished this review. His passing is a loss to Buddhist Studies, and especially to Cambodian Buddhist Studies. Harris's early training was in Buddhist studies; his research into the political aspects of Buddhism led him to realise the dearth of scholarly attention paid to Cambodian Buddhism, and specifically to the impact of the Khmer Rouge revolution on Cambodian Buddhist monks and institutions. This book focuses on that problematic.

This book is an important contribution as a resource, collection, and chapter-by-chapter analysis of how Buddhist monks in Cambodia fared under Democratic Kampuchea (Khmer Rouge) and their successor socialist regime, the People's Republic of Kampuchea. The highlights are the painstaking work of collection and narration, rather than a single sustained argument. Undoubtedly this is in