



South-East Asia, c. 1844–1975: British Foreign Office Confidential Print

Collection Summary

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The history of South-East Asia over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is fascinating, complex, and deeply entwined with Britain's own experience in that period. **According to the Foreign Office's own interpretation, the region known as South-East Asia extended from the Indian subcontinent, through present-day Thailand and Vietnam, and out to the island groupings of modern Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.**

Throughout the period, competing empires vied for supremacy in this region alongside influential independent states, such as Siam. Later, the region formed a crucial theatre of the Second World War, as Japanese expansionism came up against European and American colonial forces. **After the war, decolonisation accelerated but was often accompanied by conflict and bloodshed, most notably in the case of British Malaya (now Malaysia) and French Indochina (now Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia).** As more independent countries emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, South-East Asia experienced new opportunities and challenges.

This collection comprises 285 items, many of which are bound volumes in excellent condition, amounting to a total of approximately 44,000 pages. This material is principally correspondence and reports, sent between British diplomats and envoys across the region, and civil servants in the Foreign Office in London. It offers unrivalled insights into British foreign policy in South-East Asia, as well as into the complex interplay between vast colonial empires (the British most prominently, but also the French, Dutch, and American). It likewise spotlights local actors, whether leaders or regular citizens. **It contains fascinating material on the Burmese campaigns of the Second World War, the partition of India and Pakistan, the so-called Malayan Emergency, and the Vietnam wars.**

This collection will be of interest to historians of the region, of empire, of war, and of diplomacy. **It will also appeal to students, educators, and researchers situated within the fields of political science, economics, geography, and religious studies.**

Sources Include:



