

Vantage Southeast Asia: Timeline 16th Century to the Early 20th Century

This timeline covers the history of Southeast Asia from the 16th century to the early 20th century, summarizing the economic, political, and cultural motives of imperialists, their “tools of empire,” different models of rule (for example, direct rule vs. indirect rule) and varied local responses (including compromises and resistance). Particular attention is paid to the position of Japan as it began to modernize in the late 19th century. And, it also consider the ways in which Southeast Asians looked at themselves, at outsiders, and how in turn they were regarded by other Asians and Westerners.

Timeline

16th century: *Europeans reach Southeast Asia in search of spices and to spread Christianity; Japan is unified under a long period of internal wars*

1494: Treaty of Tordesillas divides the non-European world between Spain and Portugal

1511: Portuguese conquer Melaka (formerly Malacca), the great Malay trading port on the Straits of Melaka. Portuguese posts also established in the Spice Islands of Eastern Indonesia

1520: Spanish under Ferdinand Magellan reach the Philippines and East Indonesia – circumnavigation of the globe

1565: Spanish establish settlement in the Philippines

1570: Spanish capture of Manila – they decide to stay in the Philippines

1568: Warlord Oda Nobunaga begins process of unifying Japan by capturing Kyoto

1590: Hideyoshi Toyotomi unifies Japan

1592: Hideyoshi’s attempt to invade China through Korea

1597: Hideyoshi’s second campaign to invade Korea fails

17th century: *The State-supported Dutch East India Company (VOC) become the dominant European power in Southeast Asia.*

The VOC gradually gains larger amounts of territory on Java in exchange for assisting rulers against rivals. Powerful kingdoms develop in modern day Indonesia, especially in Aceh (north Sumatra), central Java, and Makassar (Sulawesi), but they are defeated or compromise with the Dutch. On Java, the Dutch begin to develop a plantation and cash crop economy, using local labor. Outside Java the Dutch only maintain beachheads of control.

In the Philippines, the Spanish consolidate their power, except for the Muslim south. European traders and missionaries frequent the mainland states, especially Burma (Myanmar), Siam (Thailand), and Vietnam, but here the local kingdoms are very powerful and there is no commercial incentive for Europeans to establish large posts or territorial control.

Japanese hostility towards European missionaries increases, culminating in the introduction of the policy of sakoku (the closed country) from 1633.

1602: Dutch East India Company (VOC) founded

1619: Batavia (present-day Jakarta) established as center for VOC operations

1641: Dutch capture Portuguese Melaka and squeeze the Portuguese out of eastern Indonesia

1669: Dutch capture Makassar (Sulawesi)

1633-1639: Policy of *sakoku* initiated in Japan.

18th century: Weakening of VOC power, and defeat by the English in the Anglo Dutch War, 1781-4; English gain more territorial power in India, and surpass Dutch in cartography and maritime technology, and in the profitable trade between India and China. New and powerful dynasties develop in Siam and Burma, and from 1802 in Vietnam.

19th century: Colonial control gradually advances in Southeast Asia. The British consolidate their "sphere of influence" in the Malay Peninsula (British Malaya) and Burma, and use migrant labor (Chinese and Indians in Malaya, and Indians in Burma) to develop the export economy. The French establish control in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos (French Indochina); the Dutch extend their control over Indonesia (the Netherlands East Indies). In 1898, the Americans "buy" the Philippines from Spain following the Spanish-American War. Meanwhile, Japan is forced to open up to the West and begins a process of modernization, while renewing its interest in territorial expansion.

1819: Singapore established under British control; largely a Chinese city

1824: Anglo-Dutch treaty creates Dutch and British "spheres of influence" by a line drawn down the Melaka Straits.

1825-30: Dutch victory in the "Java War"; beginning of forced delivery of crops such as coffee, sugar, indigo etc.

1826: British defeat Burma in First Anglo-Burmese War

1853: British defeat Burma in Second Anglo-Burmese War; now control Lower Burma

1853: The four "black ships" commanded by Commodore Matthew Perry arrives in Edo Bay (old name for Tokyo Bay).

1854: Treaty of Kanagawa opens Japanese ports to American ships.

1855-93: Siam makes concessions to the Europeans, which enable it to avoid colonialism

1857: Indian "Mutiny": British government establishes direct control in much of India

1858: Dutch begin a "forward move" in Sumatra, the French also move into Vietnam

1859-61: French begin attacks on Vietnam in response to treatment of missionaries

1860: Eduard Dowes Dekker (1820-87), under the pen name of Multatuli, publishes *Max Havelaar*, which exposes the corruption rampant in Dutch-controlled areas of Indonesia

1863: French control southern Vietnam (Cochin China) and rule directly
1867: French protectorate over Cambodia accepted by Siam

1868: The 15-year-old King Chulalongkorn comes to power in Siam (Thailand), and subsequently initiates era of modernization

1868: The 16-year-old Meiji Emperor comes to power in Japan

1870s: Dutch establish firmer control over southern and eastern Borneo, Sulawesi, and east Indonesia

1873-1908: Dutch war with Aceh (north Sumatra)

1874: British sign the first of numerous treaties with Malay Sultans that established their indirect rule over the entire Malay Peninsula (by 1919); British influence in western and northern Borneo expands

1876: Japanese gain privileges in Korea at China's expense

1883: Northern and Central Vietnam (Tonkin and Annam) become French protectorates.

1885: British defeat Burma in Third Anglo-Burmese War, and all Burma is annexed, despite guerilla war.

1887: Jose Rizal (1861-96) publishes his *Noli Me Tangere*, a scathing critique of Spanish colonial rule in the Philippines.

1892: Founding of anti-Spanish *Katipunan* in the Philippines

1893: French challenge Siam, and occupy territories in modern Laos previously controlled by Siam; a French protectorate is established over Laos

1894-5: Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese War, but intervention by France, German and Russia forces Japan to give back ceded territory, although Japan does retain Taiwan

1896: Filipino Revolution against Spain; Rizal executed

1898: Philippine revolutionary leaders declared independence, but this is not recognized by the United States and hostilities break out.

20th century to Pearl Harbor, Dec. 1941: Colonial introduction of Western education leads to the rise of a small group of elites aware of democratic developments overseas. They become leaders in new nationalist movements. The formation of the Communist Party in Russia and China has marked effects in the archipelago. Strong communist movements develop in Vietnam, Indonesia, among the Chinese in Malaya, and in the Philippines. All colonial powers are strongly opposed to left-wing movements, and give little hope for independence, apart from the Philippines, where the Americans promise independence in 1946. In the Muslim world, the rise of Turkey, together with improved communications connecting Southeast Asia and the Middle East, encourages both the notion of Pan Islam and Islamic modernist education. Rising resentment is also fostered by the effects of the depression, which linger well into the 1930s. Siam (Thailand from 1939) is free from anti-colonialism, but a coup in 1932 installs a constitutional monarchy. Meanwhile, Japan views expansion to the Asian mainland as a means of increasing its international standing. Korea becomes Japan's colony in 1910, and in 1915, Japan presents China with the Twenty-One Demands. Siding with the Allies, Japan emerges as one of the Five Big Powers at the close of the First World War. By the 1930s, the Japanese army is gaining increasing control and influence within Japan; by 1933 the Japanese have conquered all of Manchuria and in China the "undeclared war" breaks out in 1937.

1901: In the Netherlands Indies the Dutch introduce the Ethical Policy, which provides for more money to be spent on health and education of the local population.

1902: US Congress passes Philippine Government Act, affirming its authority over the Philippines.

1904: Japanese defeat Russia in the Russo-Japanese War.
1905: Korea becomes a Japanese protectorate, and in 1910 a full colony. Any resistance is fiercely suppressed.
1906: In Myanmar (Burma) the Young Men's Buddhist Association is formed (to assert Burmese cultural identity; university students strike against British, 1911-12: Formation of new nationalist movements in Netherlands Indies
1908-1915: Vietnam sees continued peasant rebellions against French
1914: Outbreak of World War I.
1915: Japan demands major concessions from China in the "Twenty-One Demands."
1918: End of World War I.
1920: Indonesian Communist Party is formed; uprisings in 1926-27 are premature and are quickly suppressed.
1927-1928: Japanese expeditions attempt to block nationalist movement in China; crackdown on Japanese Communists.
1927: In Netherlands Indies Sukarno (future President of Indonesia) founds a nationalist party, but he and other leaders are imprisoned and exiled.
1929: Worldwide depression; prices of agricultural and primary products collapse. Southeast Asians suffer, especially in rural areas, and in some places (e.g. Vietnam), there is widespread famine

The 1930s and the build-up to World War II

1930: Nationalist "Our Burma" party formed in Myanmar; influence of independence movement and philosophy of Gandhi in India.
1930: London Naval Agreement limits Japan's naval build-up and angers Japanese military
1930: Formation of Indochina Communist Party under Ho Chi Minh
1930 VNQDD (Vietnamese nationalist party) are opposed to communists but stage a revolt, which the French put down brutally
1931: Vietnamese Communist Party also attempts a rebellion, but this fails as well.
1930: Formation of Philippine Communist Party; peasant unrest through the 1930s
1930: Formation of Malayan Communist Party (mostly Chinese)
1932: Bloodless military coup in Siam; martial law imposed
1932: Japanese army declares puppet state of Manchukuo
1933: Japan withdraws from League of Nations, and the following year from international naval treaties that limit rearmament
1935: Sakdal Revolt in the Philippines
1935: Commonwealth of the Philippines established as prelude to full independence. General Douglas Macarthur is military adviser
1936: Japanese cabinet dominated by military
1937: Japanese army moves further into China; attack on Nanjing.
1937: British separate Burma from India
1938: Japan announces "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" as part of its "New Order" in East Asia.

Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere

1938: In British Malaya Malays form a radical pro-independence group that seeks union with Indonesia and is opposed to Chinese.

1939: Communist Party of Burma founded

1939: Siam (now Thailand) proclaims neutrality in war, but signs treaty with Japan in June 1940

1940, June: France overrun, signs armistice with Germany; as a result, French colonies have to co-operate with Japanese

1940, September: Japan, Germany and Italy sign the Tripartite Pact; Following negotiations with French Vichy government, Japan moves troops into Indochina and French order an end to all resistance.

1941, July: The United States, Britain, and the Netherlands freeze Japanese assets

1941, August: Japan makes overtures to US because of declining oil supplies and reduction in foreign trade

1941, October: General Hideki Tojo becomes Prime Minister of Japan.

1941, December 7: Japanese attack on US Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor and other military installations on Oahu, Hawaii.

1941, December 8: The United States declares war on Japan

Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia begins on December 8, and by March the entire region apart from French Indochina and Thailand is under Japanese control.