



Historical Dictionary of United States-Southeast Asia Relations (Historical Dictionaries of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations)

By Donald E. Weatherbee

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Southeast Asia consists of the countries of Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Historically, U.S. policy and diplomacy with Southeast Asia is defined by U.S. interests in the region, whether it's maintaining free lanes of communication through the South China Sea, gaining access to the resources and markets of Southeast Asia, or containing the spread of Communism. Since World War II, the U.S. has constantly been involved in conflicts in the region: providing material and financial support for France during the First Indochina War, direct involvement in the Vietnam War, providing support to Thailand during the Third Indochina War, and the declaration that Southeast Asia is the second-front in the war on terror after September 11.

The *Historical Dictionary of United States-Southeast Asia Relations* identifies the key issues, individuals, and events in the history of U.S.-Southeast Asia relations and places them in the context of the complex and dynamic regional strategic, political, and economic processes that have fashioned the American role in Southeast Asia. This is done through a chronology, a bibliography, an introductory essay, appendixes, and several hundred cross-referenced dictionary entries on key persons, places, events, institutions, and organizations.

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Historical Dictionary of United States-Southeast Asia Relations (Historical Dictionaries of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations) By Donald E. Weatherbee Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #6958884 in Books
- Published on: 2008-04-23
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.79" h x 1.37" w x 5.89" l, 1.70 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 472 pages

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Editorial Review

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Seventh in the series Historical Dictionaries of U.S. Diplomacy, this volume details U.S. foreign relations with 11 Southeast Asian nations—Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Period coverage is primarily from the nineteenth century to the present. The heart of this source is the collection of 480 or so entries, of which about one-third covers people. Author Weatherbee (University of South Carolina) includes academics, activists, clergy, foreign-service workers, heads of state, military officers, terrorists, and others. Additional entries cover events, key documents, and organizations and agencies as well as general topics such as Boat people, Environmental issues, Human rights, Religious freedom, and Vietnam syndrome. Entries in general range from 75 to 250 words, with some exceptions. The longest entries are devoted to countries. For example, the article on Thailand is 7 pages. Although country entries do provide some background information (e.g., economy, geography, early history), emphasis is placed on topics related to U.S. foreign relations. For example, the article on East Timor (2.5 pages), described as “about the size of Vermont” and the “poorest state in Southeast Asia” with a history of colonial rule, informs readers about USAID programs, a status of forces agreement, and U.S. representation in East Timor independence celebrations. Weatherbee includes a modern map of East Asia; a chronology; a 25-page introductory historical survey; a list of U.S. presidents, secretaries of state, and assistant secretaries of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (1950–2007); and a 27-page unannotated bibliography. The Dictionary of American Foreign Affairs (1993), with about 1,400 entries, covers some of the same topics but is older, doesn’t include country entries, and lacks the Southeast Asian focus of Weatherbee’s dictionary. Suitable for large public and academic libraries. --Stephen Fadel

Review

Reading about this topic can be confusing, which is why a dictionary such as this one is so useful....This is a required item for Asian collections, and is certainly suitable for other academic and large public libraries. (*American Reference Books Annual*)

Suitable for large public and academic libraries. (*Booklist*, November 15, 2008)

About the Author

Donald E. Weatherbee is the Donald S. Russell Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of South Carolina.

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