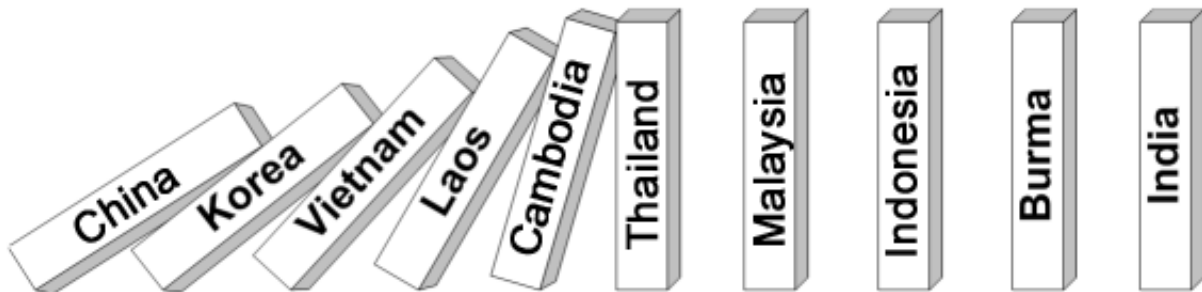
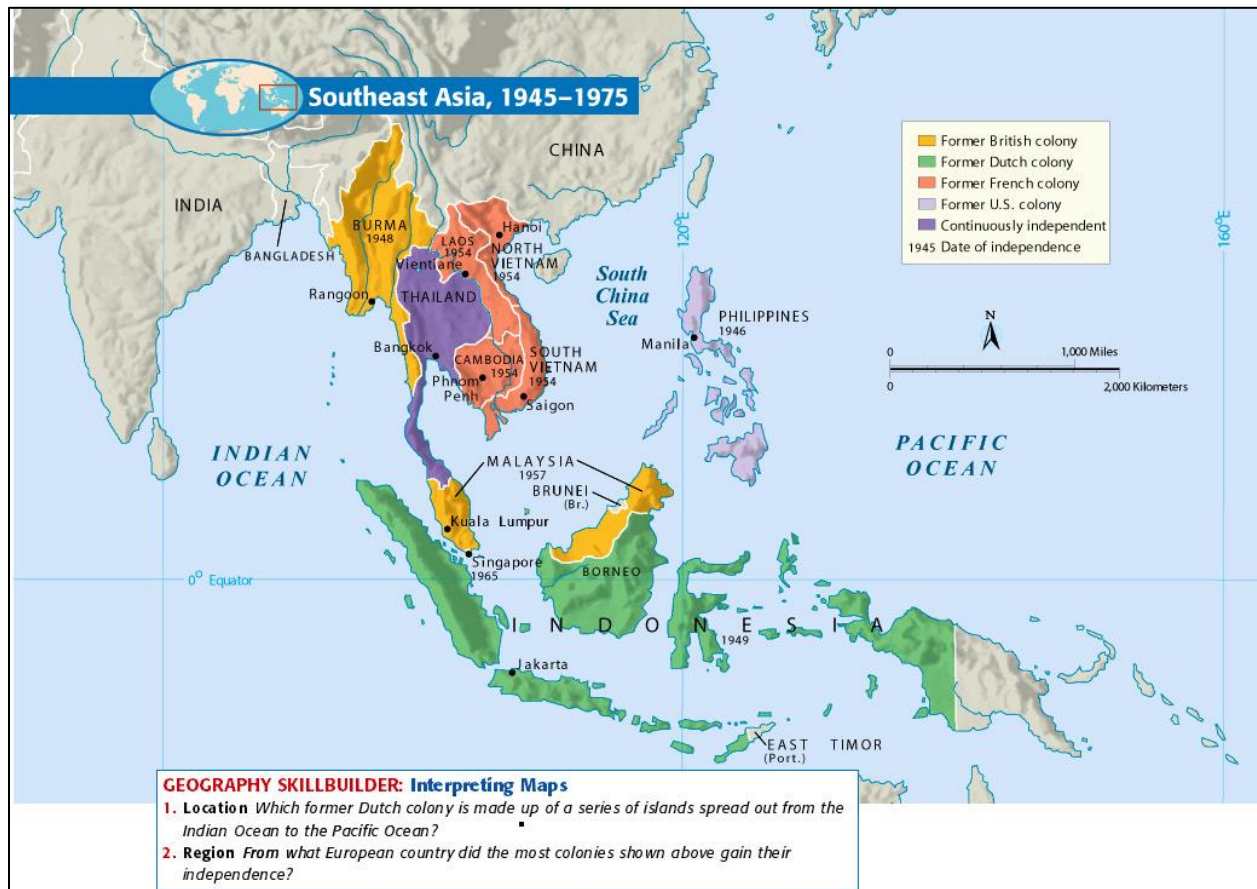


# Warm-Up: Domino Theory



President Dwight D. Eisenhower coined one of the most famous Cold War phrases when he suggests the fall of French Indochina to the communists could create a "**domino**" effect in Southeast Asia. The so-called "**domino theory**" dominated U.S. thinking about Vietnam for the next decade. In an attempt to rally congressional and public support for increased U.S. aid to the French, President Eisenhower gave an historic press conference on April 7, 1954:

Eisenhower spent much of the speech explaining the significance of Vietnam to the United States. First was its economic importance, "the specific value of a locality in its production of materials that the world needs" (materials such as rubber, jute, and sulphur). There was also the "possibility that many human beings pass under a dictatorship that is inimical [hostile] to the free world."

Finally, the president noted, "You have broader considerations that might follow what you would call the 'falling domino' principle." Eisenhower expanded on this thought, explaining, "You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is a certainty that it will go over very quickly." This would lead to the expansion of communism in Southeast Asia, with the "loss of Indochina, of Burma, of Thailand, of the Peninsula, and Indonesia following." Eisenhower suggested that even Japan, which needed Southeast Asia for trade, would be in danger.

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1. What did Eisenhower predict would happen if Vietnam fell to communism in 1954? Why do you think that this was referred to as the "domino theory"?
2. What are *two* reasons that Vietnam was important to the United States during the Cold War?
3. How did America's foreign policy of containment support American intervention in Vietnam?

### **Video Analysis:**

4. What American values did Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon claim America was defending in Vietnam?