

To what extent did the decolonisation of Malaysia inform or parallel the French withdrawal from Cambodia?

Pertter Bainbridge*

ABSTRACT

The accepted wisdom on colonialism by many historians is that the liberal democracies who had colonies (eg Britain and the USA) maintained generally good records with respect to the rule of law, civil liberties, political participation, open education, and economic opportunity. Both were willing to allow their colonies to become independent and had begun to prepare them for future independence before the Second World War began. A key factor was the concept of 'self determination' introduced by the League of Nations in 1919. Racism was still present, however.

On the other hand, repressive colonial governments such as the Spanish, Dutch and Portuguese had a very different attitude toward their colonies. They generally placed the European in a superior legal position, and locals had limited civil liberties. Political activities were discouraged. Access to modern education was restricted numerically and to certain social groups. Censorship was common. Southeast Asians were not encouraged to engage in modern political activities. And there were major problems of corruption in the Spanish and French colonial governments. These ideas are summarised well by Dr Constance Wilson ('Colonialism and Nationalism in SE Asia' ref:10) but historians differ on this.

The period after WWII was one of a general pulling out of imperial possessions and much was learned from each other among the de-colonisers. The de-colonisation of Malaysia (a process which took place from 1948 to 1960) and the French withdrawal of Cambodia in 1953 involved much discussion among the victorious European imperial powers : the UK and France. It was Winston Churchill who allowed and facilitated the Dutch in their return to Indonesia, the French to Indochina and the British to Burma, Malaya, Singapore – but the clock could not be turned back so easily.

This paper will focus specifically on two countries which were European colonisers. The UK for Malaysia and France for Cambodia. It will analyse the extent to which the de-colonisation processes can be compared and how they did not operate in isolation of each other. The French were well aware of the Malayan Emergency and the British were well aware of the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu and its implications for the region.

* Pertter Bainbridge M.A.,M.Sc., L.T.C.L. (London)
CamEd Business School
Email: peter@cam-ed.com

OVERVIEW OF MALAYSIA'S ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

In the post world war II's period of de-colonisation, Malaysia's independence stands out as being particularly complex and lengthy – but studied carefully for the lessons it did provide for other powers seeking a peaceful exit from their territories abroad. From 1948 to 1960 a number of well thought out schemes devised mainly by civil servants led to independence for Malaysia but did not, as hoped, achieve a long term fully functioning democracy. There were many obstacles which had to be overcome : Maoist insurgents, economic needs, racial differences, the legacy of cash crops dominating agriculture and client sultans with claims to overall suzerainty. The USA, in particular, was interested in how the Malaysian experience might inform their efforts against communism in Indochina in the 1960s. The UK was interested to learn from the experience of Malaysian independence on how to withdraw from other multi racial colonies.

Why did such a successful de-colonisation unravel into one party rule ? Dr Mahathir (Malaysian prime minister from 1981 to 2003) wrote a very introspective account in 1970 (ref 11) suggesting hereditary reasons to support the case for Malays to have some form of 'affirmative action' in their own country and a quota system to protect them in business, law and politics from the Chinese and Indian "immigrants". Malays feared the success and potential dominance of other races in their country.

The independence of Malaysia influenced the timing and nature of other other de-colonisations. But the rejoicing in 1960 at the end of the 'emergency' was tempered by the beginning of a period of intermittent turbulence and repression in what should have been a progressive and rich state.

In the absence of some experience of government, the leaders of independence and their political parties tended to dominate post liberation dates (often for decades). This was even more the case in Cambodia than Malaysia. The French did little to prepare Cambodia for independence and the dominant figure of Prince Sihanouk could manipulate the weak opposition to achieve his dominance of politics from 1955 to 1970. However Khmers felt secure in their own state and did not fear the Chinese-Khmers (in the same way as the Malays feared dominance of Indians and Chinese).

BACKGROUND OF THE MALAYSIAN 'EMERGENCY'

The nine Malay states and their Sultans formed the Federation of Malaya. The British influence started with Sir Stamford Raffles of the British East India company controlling the trading post of Malacca and establishing a settlement on Penang. Afterwards Raffles had the idea of making the Sultan of Johore's older brother (who was disappointed at being away and missing his chance to be Sultan) to suggest that the swampy island of Singapore (swapped with the Dutch) could be his Sultanate (in name only – not with any power, just a generous salary). In 1824. "Raffles had no doubt that Singapore was the right place for a new settlement" (Gendinning, Raffles 2012, p 218). After that, British influence spread rapidly through Malaya with the Sultans keeping particular rights and privileges. Tin and rubber were the main exports. It was a prosperous colony. The Second World War changed all of that. The Japanese invasion – cycling down the peninsula to Singapore they demanded General Percival's surrender. The British had prepared for a sea attack and the guns were famously set in concrete looking out to sea – not movable to resist an approach from the peninsula.

After the second world war Maoist insurgents were led by Chin Peng. Barber (p33, 1971) argues that 'he was a remarkable Malayan Chinese aged twenty six ... who had visited China in 1945 and 1946 and though some historians believe he was a puppet of Mao Tse Tung, nothing could be further from the truth. He was a product of Malayan soil, of his own times, as individual as Ho Chi Minh'. He certainly kept up a war of attrition and barbarity for 12 years.

Singapore, separately founded and administered became one of the 14 states of Malaysia from 1963 to 1965. Malaysia was formed on 16 September 1963 as a new political entity from the merger of the Federation of Malaya with the former British colonies of North Borneo, Sarawak and Singapore. The British colony of Brunei would have been included if it wasn't for the fact that its Sultan refused to accept the principle of rotating the role of King every five years among the ten sultans. The separate independence of Brunei reduced the rotation to 9 Sultans. Singapore was expelled by Kuala Lumpur from the federation on 9 August 1965. The 1964 race riots in Singapore and its overwhelming non Islamic Chinese population was seen as destabilising the new state of Malaysia. The solution, which was best for both sides, involved dividing the political entities. Lee Kuan Yew was disappointed at the time but, in fact, Singapore has never looked back.

MAJOR BACKGROUND EVENTS

The collapse of the Nationalists in China in 1949 was a watershed for the intensification of Maoist insurgency throughout the region. Guerilla wars were already underway in the Philippines, Malaya and Indochina. Ho Chi Minh famously declared independence from the French on the steps of the Hanoi Opera House in 1945.

Not only ideological ideas were in play in South East Asia but religions had their role too. The Prophet Mohammed had an encounter with the Archangel Gabriel in 610 CE. 'Few humans have had more impact on humanity' (Morris, 2011 p566). Karl Marx got straight to the point when he said that "Men and women make their own history ... but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves" (Marx, 1852 as cited in Morris, 2011). The Prophet Mohammed could have disappeared into obscurity (like many other prophets) but the caliphs who followed him were able to destroy Persia, blast Byzantium apart, divide the West in two and spread the faith from Granada in Spain to the Indonesian half of New Guinea (Irian Jaya).

Monotheism preceded the Prophet Mohammed but monopoly and centralisation were among his legacies in countries where his visions took root; in this case : Malaysia. These legacies came face to face with the equally uncompromising certainties of the Maoist interpretation of Marxism (agrarian rather than urban). The latter took the moral high ground in Malaya by opposing British colonialism and promising the liberation of the country. The Islamic religion, on the other hand, is noticeably short of democracies in the lands where it predominates.

In between were the British who accepted the notion of 'self determination' enshrined in the mandates of the League of Nations (USA membership of which was rejected by the USA Congress when Woodrow Wilson returned from Versailles). In 1945 a landslide victory for the Labour Party (socialists) in Britain in 1945 on the slogan of building a 'land fit for heroes' brought in a new impetus for de-colonisation. The concept of timetables for independence was a feature of the new Labour government. Lord Mountbatten had to achieve the division of India (into India and Pakistan) by midnight of 15 August 1947.

Millions died as Muslims headed for the new state of Pakistan and Hindus journeyed to the newly independent India. The withdrawal of British troops from the British administered mandate of Palestine was equally unalterable and set for the 14th May 1948. The conversion from colony to independence and the declaration of the state of Israel were immovable dates. Most of the British colonial police in Palestine were transferred to Malaya in 1948 and most joined the thousands who died in the 1948 to 1960 conflict.

A more philosophical point is whether you see history as dictated by determinist factors (events inevitably lead to other events) or whether luck and chance are equally good explanations for history. Marxists, of course, see ideology as all- important and are strict determinists. For the “free will” believers you might imagine that in the 1700s the industrial revolution should have happened in China (with its rich deposits of coal and inventive people) but population growth there after 1750 fed political crises and discouraged innovation in the East. It was Britain who got lucky. This was postulated by Ian Morris in his book, “Why the West rules for Now “ (Morris, 2011, ref 3). Freed from the chains of old ideologies (absolute monarchy, no more monopolistic catholic influence but a plurality of christian faiths and tolerance of non-christian religions and an enlightenment of philosophy etc), British entrepreneurs surrounded by the good fortune of abundant coal, encouraged by the Royal Society in 1660 (the first public sponsor of empirical science as we know it today) put this black material to work as steam and increased productivity a thousand fold or more. Britain became the workshop of the world and dominated the nineteenth century. Luck or bound to happen ? You decide.

One thing is for sure, British colonists in the 13 colonies on the Eastern seaboard of what is now the USA studied the British philosopher, John Locke (1632 to 1734) who asserted that the natural rights of people were “life, liberty and property”. It was the last of these 3 tenets which brought settlers to Virginia in their thousands and to other colonies in that group. The fact that they were separate colonies lead to the notion of a federal states with specific “states’ rights’. The opening words of the American Constitution : “We the people ...” follow the ideas of Thomas Hobbes (an English philosopher 1588 to 1679) who wrote about the social contract, equality, the duties of government and the inalienable rights of citizens).

THE DETAILS OF THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY

The fall of Singapore in 1942 and the occupation of Malaya and Singapore by the Japanese was the catalyst for Chin Peng to set up the ‘Malayan People’s Anti Japanese Army’. He claimed success in defeating the Japanese (which, of course, had nothing to do with him but rather more to do with two atomic bombs being dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki). He changed the name of his organisation in 1945 to the ‘Malayan People’s Anti British Army’ with the goal of achieving an independent communist republic. They believed in Lenin’s concept of the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ which was shorthand for the ruthless imposition of terror by a well organised minority. The only difference from Lenin was the switch from an urban revolution to more agrarian one (the Maoist model).

The fall of France and the Vichy government’s rule of Cambodia (until a brief period of Japanese rule before the liberated French reappeared as colonial rulers) did shake the Khmers’ faith in France’s ability to protect Cambodia from its two strong neighbours (Thailand and Vietnam). Saloth Sar and other communists were influenced by the Viet Minh – but after 1949 much more influenced directly by Chinese agrarian communism. They also followed Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia and Saloth Sar (Pol Pot) followed the Stalin

purges with great interest. The fall of Singapore to the Japanese had the effect of shaking the Malaysian and Singaporean belief in Britain's invincibility.

The Maoist insurgency in Malaya met with a completely different response from the new Labour Government than it would have from its predecessors. The new Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, sent in civil servants and policemen rather than the military. In September 1948 he appointed Sir Henry Gurney as British High Commissioner (governor). He came straight from the termination of the Mandate in Palestine and had seen first hand how Jewish guerillas and informants had wreaked havoc with the British administration. He rightly judged that an army cannot win a persistent 'hit and run' guerilla campaign – especially the one in Malaya where the communists terrorised locals who either didn't pay enough or were deemed to have collaborated with the British. This war would only be won with good intelligence and creative solutions.

Gurney came up with a colossal idea – to uproot and re-settle 600,000 Chinese squatters living on the edge of jungle land which didn't belong to them and which left them vulnerable to nocturnal attacks by communists (taking their food and killing or mutilating people they selected for their reign of terror). Many of the squatters were first generation Chinese immigrants escaping the war in China. New model villages were set up in which each local was given a land title and identification cards (with photographs and fingerprints). The villages were protected by barbed wire and sentries and there was only one way in or out. The nocturnal attacks (on which the communists relied for food) were repelled.

The police force was headed by Nicol Gray (former Inspector General of police in British administered Palestine). He improved the police communications network. He made some mistakes – such as not using armour on police vehicles – but his system of rewarding information leading to the capture or killing of communists was very successful. The capture of Chin Peng (the top communist) would merit a reward of \$80,000. More remarkable was the creation of a network of reliable spies throughout the peninsula. Irene Lee is one who was particularly effective. She was a cheerful Chinese girl in her late twenties who worked for the British Secret Services. Amongst her courageous engagements, the most outstanding success was to intercept Chin Peng's courier services that were the vital conduit of information from north to south keeping the Maoists coordinated. With this intelligence coup it was possible to target and destroy communist bases in the mountains.

THE POLITICAL APPROACH

The lure of the Chinese communists was their claim to be liberating the Malaysians from British colonial rule. Sir Winston Churchill (prime minister in peacetime from 1951 to 1955) found the ideal visionary to take over the fight in Malaya: General Templer. He was a believer in winning the hearts and minds of Malaysians. He gave citizenship rights to thousands of Chinese, persuaded the Sultans to open up a portion of the civil service to competitive examination from any race and the introduction of free and compulsory primary education for all. This was the first seed to develop into one of Malaysia's current problems. A school was built in every village but Templer's hopes for multi racial integration were not achieved. Soon Malays wanted their children to be educated separately from Chinese and Indians (on racial and religious grounds). The Chinese were 38% of the population and giving them citizenship was a colonial decision.

A Legislative Council was set up and the British announced 1957 as being the date of independence. It was earlier than expected and undermined the Maoists claim to be liberators. Furthermore a trial election was successfully held in 1955. When the Tunku (Malay for 'prince') won the election in 1957 he asked a number of British civil servants to stay on as ministers until 1960. His full name was Tunku Abdul Rahman but was usually referred to as "the Tunku".

A constitution for Cambodia was proposed by Sihanouk on 13 April 1941. It was to "be a bold departure from the autocratic past" (Tully, 2002, p418). This led to an initial election of a Consultative Assembly to advise on the writing of the final version of Cambodia's constitution in 1946 with the Democrats holding 50 seats, 14 for the liberals and 3 independents. The constitution laid down a framework for Cambodia as a constitutional monarchy within the French Union (similar idea to the British Commonwealth but with more emphasis on the French language).

French forces in the 1945 to 1953 period were never able to provide a controlled environment in which a real democracy could grow. The Viet Minh (Vietnamese communists) numbered over 90,000 in 1953. Sihanouk was afraid that the Viet Minh would threaten the existence of Cambodia. As Tully says (2002, p 413, ref 12) : "The French were...under US pressure and the demands of the United Nations Charter to play the game of democracy (and) this involved the creation of an elected parliament". However the French had only built one high school in their years in Cambodia (Sisowath High School) and no universities - so the existence of a "political class" was very small indeed. The French, even with American aid and armaments could not stop the rising tide of communism and independence in Vietnam led by Ho Chi Minh. They feared the rise of communism in Cambodia after the formation of a Cambodian Communist party : the Khmer People's Revolutionary party (KPRP). They abolished the Protectorate of Cambodia in 1949 giving the National Assembly powers over local affairs (but not defence or foreign affairs). With the promise of a free and fair election (with French supervisors) set for 1955, the French gave independence to Cambodia in 1953.

The election was held in 1955 and Sihanouk's party, the Sangkum Reastr Niyum party (a coalition of left-of-centre parties) , won 82.7% of the popular vote. 15 years of rule by one dominant prime minister, Prince Sihanouk followed.

INDEPENDENCE AND THE ONE PARTY STATE IN MALAYSIA

The United Malay's National Organisation (UMNO) was founded in 1946. It initially supported British rule and cooperated fully in the Malayan Emergency against the Maoist insurgents. It was also initially inclusive of Chinese Malaysians and formed an Alliance with them. This expanded further to include the Malayan Indian Congress and together they fought the 1955 elections and won 51 out of the 52 seats available (the remaining 48 members were appointed by the High Commissioner for the British administration). Having proved that a free and fair election could be held, a constitution was drafted by Lord Reid for the independence date of 1957. The legacy of imperialism was enshrined in this constitution and the points which affect Malaysia today are :

1. Malaysian should be a federal state and a constitutional monarchy. The residual powers of the monarch (similar to the British Monarch) were swept away later by the Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohammed. However the bicameral parliamentary model based on the Westminster system has remained intact.

2. Islam was declared the national religion (this has affected the judicial process) and has been interfered with by politicians to the extent that judges feel cowed to the will of politicians (eg the case against Anwar Ibrahim)

3. Malay would be the official language (this is still the case but English has unofficially become the second language). Indian (Tamil) and Chinese (Mandarin) were allowed in schools for those communities.

4. Most controversially, special quotas for Malays in higher education and the Civil Service were set. This 'affirmative action' was intended to be temporary and to be eventually phased out. This never happened. In fact it was extended to companies and other employers in the independent Malaysia. This has been a blight on Malaysian politics ever since. Voting takes place on an ethnic basis and UMNO has been in power since independence. The policy of reserving quotas for Malays is called Bumiputra (in Malay : 'sons of the soil').

5. The legal system is based on English common law (the use of precedent) and statute law. Aspects of English practice which have disappeared in England (corporal and capital punishment) remain in Malaysia.

THE GROWTH OF OPPOSITION PARTIES AND THE SPLITTING OF UMNO

The Tunku continued as prime minister until 1970 when he was replaced by Tun Razak. The latter was less respectful of the Chinese and Indian members of the Alliance and UNMO became the sole basis of government. Dr Mahathir had been expelled for publishing his book *The Malay Dilemma* in which he stated that the Malays are the definitive people of Malasia and that they needed permanent affirmative action to overcome deficiencies in their genetic stock. He observed how the Indians and Chinese were so hard working and entrepreneurial compared to the Malays. But this was highly controversial to put into writing. Tun Razak invited Dr Mahathir back into UNMO.

Anwar Ibrahim founded the opposition party called Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (the Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia or ABIM). The Malaysian Government used a colonial remnant called 'the Internal Security Act' to detain Ibrahim and his supporters for 20 months. The problem was of the government's own making. It had created many more universities and the 1970s worldwide saw huge demonstrations on campuses about a variety of topics (eg apartheid, the Vietnam war, anti nuclear movements). Mass demonstrations in 1976 were held at the MARA Institute of Technology.

The Sarawak National Party (SNAP) campaigned for increased autonomy for Sarawak in 1974. Its leader, James Wong, was detained by the government under another remnant of colonial times : "the sedition act".

By 1987 UNMO had reformed itself and Dr Mahathir was prime minister facing his first internal party election as leader. He was challenged by the popular former finance minister : Tengku Razaleigh (supported by the deputy prime minister : Tun Musa Hitam). Mahathir survived but at the general election secured a smaller majority. He set a new party called Baro and turned his back on UNMO.

In the 1999 election UMNO secured just 54% of the vote and 102 out 144 seats. This highlighted another colonial legacy ; the "first past the post system". The country was divided up into 144 constituencies and each sent its member to parliament. All a party needed to do was to win a majority of the votes in a constituency and the area would be

represented by them. In the UK the constituencies are subject to a 'Boundaries Commission' which tries to take account of the shifting population changes so that, in theory, each constituency has the same number of electors. In Malaysia this was gerrymandered to ensure that the government could never be voted out.

Dr Mahathir stepped down in 2003 as prime minister and was succeeded by Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. He was later replaced by Najib Razak – who has distinguished himself by being the most corrupt leader of Malaysia since independence. Dr Mahathir formed a new opposition party called Beratsu (which means 'united') on September 8th 2016. He is even reaching out to his old enemy Anwar Ibrahim who was jailed on trumped up charges. This is the biggest challenge to UMNO that it has yet faced and the stakes are high. Najib Razak is accused of siphoning off billions of dollars into Swiss bank accounts and elsewhere. Beratsu has a lot of work to do – eg allying with other opposition parties to mount a significant challenge to UMNO. The pact with Anwar Ibrahim is the most hopeful step so far but he is currently in jail and therefore not able to help Beratsu.

All previous splinter groups from UMNO have reconciled themselves to the mother party. Dr Mahathir promises that Beratsu is different and will usher in an era of multi party democracy. This looks likely given his personal popularity (although he was by no means corruption free in his premiership) and the extent of Najib Razak's wrong doings are well publicised (outside Malaysia but heavily censored within the country) and despised (even the Governor of the Bank Of Switzerland questioned why \$4 billion was transferred into his account as a single payment). The game may be over for UMNO and Malaysia will develop into a multi party state – though the special rights for Malays will continue for some time.

The Malayan emergency was informed by the de-colonisation of India. The haste of withdrawing from the sub-continent and from Palestine in 1948 was in stark contrast to the lengthy and painstaking plans to leave the Federation of Malaysia with functioning democratic institutions.

India was made independent on the 18 July 1947. This was the first and biggest de-colonisation for Britain (if you take out Ireland's independence in 1922). It was the catalyst for decolonisation. Prime Minister Nehru's Congress party remained unchallenged until 1977 when the Janata party won overall control of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. The 1977 defeat was due to Mrs Gandhi's increasingly unpopular policies (eg sterilisation programme in the villages) and the state of emergency she declared in 1975. The 2014 election was the worst for the Congress party with only 19.3% of the vote and 44 seats in the Lok Sabha. The decline of the Congress party of independence has been matched by the rise of the BJP – once the extreme Hindu party now moderated by the realities of office. India remains the world's largest democracy which, despite corruption, has developed and enhanced the inherited institutions of a free press, a strong and efficient civil service, an independent judiciary and provincial self government.

India's road to freedom pre-dated that in Malaysia. In the 1920s and 1930s the Indian Civil Service (a model of government administrative competence) was completely "Indianised" (a term used at the time to mean that all positions were filled by Indians). The judiciary also had a high number of Indian Judges. Indian reporters who were employed by the 'Times of India' were initially amazed that this newspaper criticised the Colonial authorities sometimes quite fiercely. It was a training that served them well and "The Times of India" continues to be a respected newspaper.

COMPARISONS OF CAMBODIAN AND MALAYSIAN INDEPENDENCE WITH OTHER DE-COLONISATIONS

How do the British and French experiences of de-colonisations compare with the other European countries' imperial changes? The differences depend to a large extent as to whether the European country was a democracy at the time of colonial disengagement and whether there had been any significant interruptions in rule.

Portugal's military government of Salazar collapsed in 1974 and its main colonies (of Angola and Mozambique) were thrown into a quarter century of civil war. The absence of democratic or independent institutions stemmed directly from Lisbon's turbulence and sporadic attempts at democracy. East Timor was invaded by Indonesia as it was clear that the new socialist government in Lisbon had no intention of defending it.

The Spanish Empire in the Americas had mostly ended by the beginning of the 19th century but some fragments remained. The 1898 Spanish American war resulted in the USA assuming control of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Guam and Cuba for differing periods of time. The Philippines was given independence in 1945. Guam and Puerto Rico are still USA territories.

THE COMPARISON WITH THE INDEPENDENCE OF CAMBODIA

French power and investment in Indochina was more focussed on Vietnam than in the Protectorates of Cambodia and Laos – which were seen as comparative backwaters. However, Cambodia was different in that it was left as a constitutional monarchy with a National Assembly. The French appointed King Sihanouk, who declared independence in 1945 at the end of World War Two – but without the same effect as Ho Chi Minh's declaration on the steps of the Hanoi Opera house.

In 1946 Cambodians were allowed to form political parties. They were led by princes taking advantage of their status and education. David Chandler reports that "the liberals were clandestinely funded by the French ...who sought to maintain the status quo" (D. Chandler, 2008, p213). If this is correct then the French were trying to slow down the departure of Cambodia as a functioning democracy (one of only three former French territories which are considered "democratic" in any sense today). However they still viewed Cambodia as part of the Francophone union.

Elections in 1946 to set up a consultative body to draw up a constitution were a huge success – with a high turn out. The huge support for the Democrat party was clear although there were many parties contesting the poll. It was not certain by 1949 that the French would withdraw and impatience was at its highest. Suspicion by the French that Cambodian communists were fraternising with the Viet Minh (their sworn enemy in Vietnam) led to tension. The Democrats were in the majority in the National Assembly but powers were ceded to them slowly. The victory of the Communists in China had a huge effect on both Cambodia and Malaysia – it bolstered the Viet Minh and the Cambodian Communist parties' confidence.

1949 was a crucial year for both Cambodia and Malaya. It was a high point for communist insurgency – which frightened both the British and French governments in equal measure. It was also the year the USSR had developed its own nuclear weapons. The Khmer People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP) was formed in 1951. In 1953 as the British were beginning to see successes from their offer of early independence (1957 rather than 1960)

so the French decided to hand over to Sihanouk. The French departed and elections in the National Assembly in 1955 were freely contested (exactly as they had in Malaya – although the Malayan elections were a successful trial run for full independence in 1957).

Demonstrating parallels doesn't prove linkages. However the British and French foreign ministries were in close contact, as the release of ministerial papers show. Since the set up of the principle of self determination in the League of Nations charter of 1919 the path from empire to independent countries was inevitable (even if the politicians of the 1920s and 1930s didn't acknowledge the fact). The rise of Nazism in Germany in the 1930s was sufficiently distracting for anything else to compare with it).

CONCLUSION

The Malayan emergency followed the independence of India also immediately in 1948. The way in which the British government handled the Malayan emergency was unique and was informed by the partition of India. Prime Minister Attlee could see that his rigorous and unmovable dates for India and Pakistan's independence had led to colossal bloodshed as millions of Hindus met millions of Islamic people travelling the other way to their respective countries. There were inevitable clashes and huge casualties which were beyond the abilities of the authorities to control. Attlee knew he had only a 5 year term as prime minister and that if Winston Churchill had been returned as Prime Minister in 1951 without the independence of India and Pakistan complete he would reverse or change the measures (Churchill was very much a British Empire supporter). Attlee felt, therefore, that he could not let border discussions in the sub-continent drag on.

The Malaysian Federation also had an ejection when Singapore was required to leave the Federation by a vote in Kuala Lumpur in 1965. British ideas of federations didn't always work. The separation of Sudan into two states happened half a century after the independence of Khartoum in 1956.

Comparing generalities about French and British attitudes towards the end of empire is quite difficult. The politicians spoke much the same imperial rhetoric but the civil servants who recruited administrators for colonial posts were very different between London and Paris. In London, for Jan Morris (2002, ref 4) it was clear from 1919 onwards that selection was controlled by a few people who knew that the administrators they were sending out to the colonies would be the last – so they had to have the right political attitudes of involving locals more in every fabric of life (local judges, local civil servants, a free press with locals as reporters). Just one person in charge of recruitment in the 1920s and 1930s, Major Ralph Furse, recruited thousands of private school boys and Oxbridge graduates who had a completely new attitude to colonial service. The change in attitude is reported by Jan Morris in the last of his trilogy about the British Empire. On page 310 of Morris' book he quotes a letter from the Governor General of the Gold Coast (now called Ghana) : "We are in this country to help the African and serve him.....those people who consider themselves superior to the Africans ...are quite unfitted for responsible positions in the colony" (Jan Morris, 1978 pages 310 and 311). Before 1939, for example, 100% of the Indian Civil Service had been "Indianised".

The French had no such idea of transferring the reins of power at local level. Their legacy

roads and paved cities (introduced some town planning). However the French left only one High School (Sisowath High School) and no universities. Cambodia had no educated classes of sufficient size to ensure a successful transition to democracy. The Second World War and the fall of France left a vacuum in colonial policy making. From 1945 it was clear that there was little time to make good the deficiencies of pre-war policies. The British, on the other hand, had, in Malaysia, the luxury of having 12 years (1948 to 1960) to exit a colony with systems of government, law, free press and a good infrastructure.

In 1953 no one could see how fragile the Cambodian administration would prove to be when the Vietnam war started in the next decade. Perhaps even a strong, well prepared democracy would have buckled under the proxy wars of the new superpowers. Again, you decide.

REFERENCES

1. Raffles and the golden opportunity, Victoria Glendinning, 2012
2. The war of the running dogs, Noel Barber, 1971
3. Why the West rules for now, Ian Morris , 2011
4. Farewell the trumpets, an imperial retreat, Jan Morris, 2002
5. Indochina, an ambiguous colonisation 1858 to 1954, Pierre Brocheaux, 2001
6. The Merchant Kings – when companies ruled the world, Stephen R. brown , 2010
7. History of Cambodia, David Chandler, 2008
8. The eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon, Karl Marx, 1852
9. The Economist Magazine Sept 17 to 23rd 2016 pages 25 and 26
10. Dr Constance Wilson paper on de-colonisation, North Illinois University
11. The Malay Dilemma, Mahathir Bin Mohamad, 1970
12. France on the Mekong, John Tully, 2002
13. A History of South East Asia, Anthony Reid, 2015
14. The French presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia, Milton Osborne

roads and paved cities (introduced some town planning). However the French left only one High School (Sisowath High School) and no universities. Cambodia had no educated classes of sufficient size to ensure a successful transition to democracy. The Second World War and the fall of France left a vacuum in colonial policy making. From 1945 it was clear that there was little time to make good the deficiencies of pre-war policies. The British, on the other hand, had, in Malaysia, the luxury of having 12 years (1948 to 1960) to exit a colony with systems of government, law, free press and a good infrastructure.

In 1953 no one could see how fragile the Cambodian administration would prove to be when the Vietnam war started in the next decade. Perhaps even a strong, well prepared democracy would have buckled under the proxy wars of the new superpowers. Again, you decide.

To what extent did the decolonisation of Malaysia inform or parallel the French withdrawal from Cambodia?
