

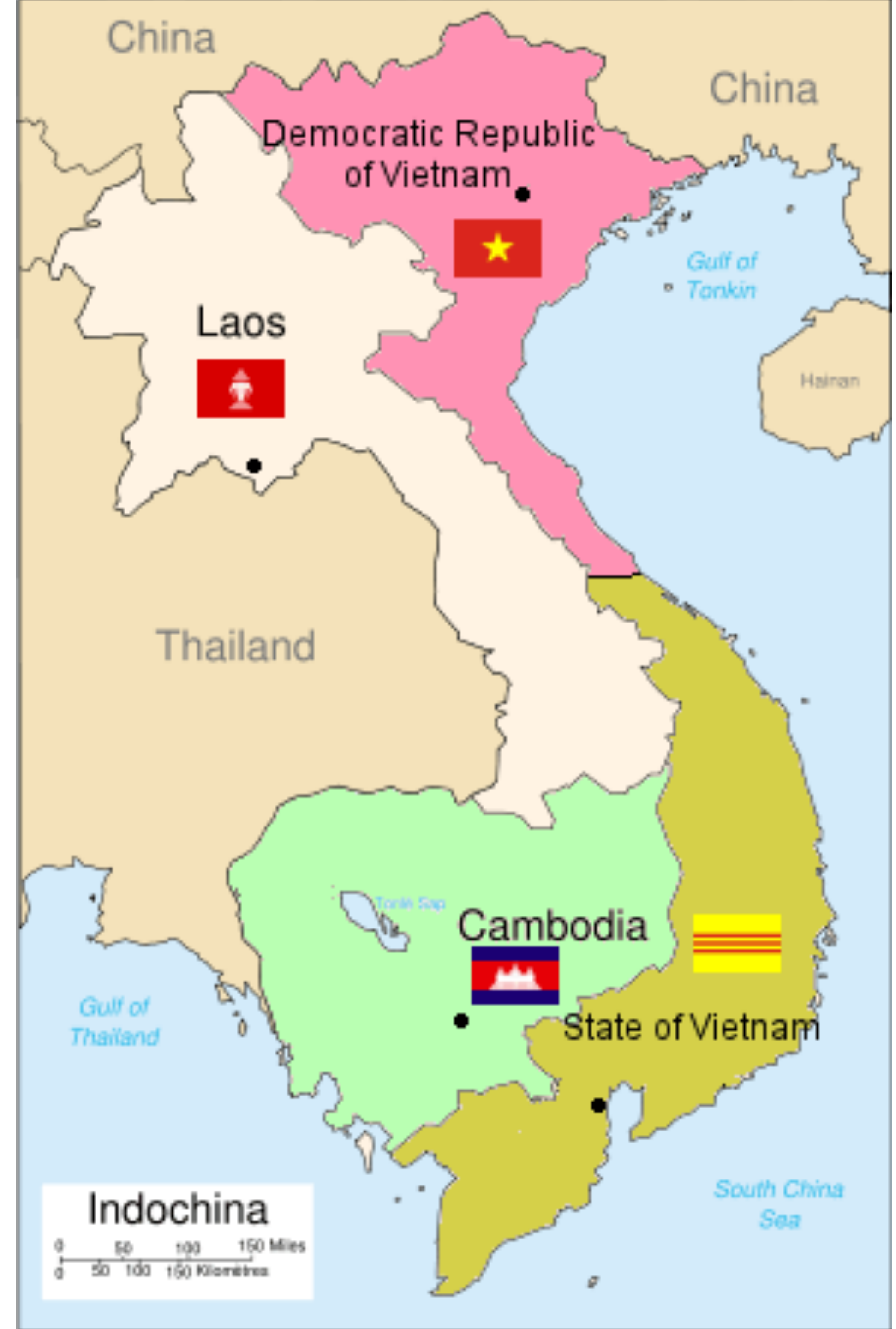
# Section #9

**“Bumbling into Vietnam”**

November 10, 2023

## Where we left off...

1954: French defeated at  
Dien Bien Phu —> Geneva  
Accords —> Instead of  
uniting Korea, partitioned  
Vietnam at 17th parallel



**Why did US policymakers care about the fate  
of South Vietnam?**

# A brief history of the U.S. relationship with Ngo Dinh Diem

1954-1955: Diem consolidates power & eliminates potential rivals

1955-1961: US sends \$2B in aid to South Vietnam (RVN)

1961: Mounting communist insurgency (NLF)

1963: Buddhist uprising —> US-backed coup



# What explains the arc of the U.S. relationship with Diem?

## Interests

Concerns about Soviet expansionism  
—> Diem as anti-communist leader

Desire to establish trade links in South-east Asia to revitalize Britain & Japan

## Ideas

Racial judgments  
—> Diem as fulfilling a “need” for an authoritarian leader

Religious solidarity  
—> Diem’s Catholic identity

## Individuals

Diem as strategic yet fallible figure  
informed by unique personal experiences

Disposition of particular, influential bureaucratic actors (e.g., Gen. J. Lawton Collins)

**What is contingency?**

# Where we're going...

*How do Ho Chi Minh's aspirations for independence and for his people accord with or differ from those of other cases of leaders of other people under occupations that we have studied?*

- Declaration of Independence, Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945)
- The Manifesto of The Laodong Party (1951)
- Program of the People's Revolutionary Party of Vietnam (1962)

