DEPARTMENTAL SEMINAR

The Cold War as a historical period: an interpretive essay*

Professor Prasenjit Duara

CHAIRMAN
Dr Lee Seung-Joon

Day, Date, Time, Venue
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Abstract:
As a historical period, the Cold War may be seen as a rivalry between two nuclear superpowers that threatened global destruction. The rivalry took place within a common frame of reference, in which a new historical relationship between imperialism and nationalism worked in remarkably parallel ways across the superpower divide. The new imperial-national relationship between superpowers and the client states also accommodated developments such as decolonization, multiculturalism and new ideologies, thus producing a hegemonic configuration characterizing the period. The models of development, structures of clientage, unprecedented militarization of societies, designs of imperial enlightenment, and even many gender and racial-cultural relationships followed similar tracks within and often between the two camps. Finally, I identify the counter-hegemonic forces that emerged in regions of the non-Western world, namely China and some Islamic societies. Did this portend the beginning of the end of a long period of Western hegemony?

About the Speaker
Prasenjit Duara is a historian of China and more broadly of Asia in the twentieth century. He also writes on historical thought and historiography. Duara was professor and chairman of the History department at the University of Chicago. Since 2008 he has been at NUS where he is Raffles Professor of Humanities and Director of ARI and of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences. He is the author of several books and essays most of which have been translated into the East Asian languages.

* Attached is the article, from which this seminar is based. The author requests everyone to read it before the talk.