

Recent Changes in Vietnam's Politico-Military Relations with the USSR and PRC

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In terms of the theme of our conference—continuity and change in socialist international relations—the initial basic point to be made with respect to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV), as compared to the USSR and China is that there is far more continuity than change. Much of the rest of the socialist world at the moment clearly is caught up in a ferment of change—*renovation*, *openness* and *democratization* are the currently fashionable buzz words used to describe this process. Equally clear (I say as one who has recently examined this process up close in the USSR and China) is that it is a genuine phenomenon with real meaning. Whether it is destined to have a future can be debated, but the fact of its existence cannot.

In Vietnam this phenomenon is in a far more incipient state. Equivalent terms do exist, although usage is more imprecise (the general concept is “liberalization”, not further defined, but expressed with the terms *coi mo*, roughly *openness* and akin to *glasnost*, and *doi moi* or *renovation*, akin to *perestroika*; the Soviet “democratization” concept is rarely encountered in Vietnamese literature). There is much official rhetoric about the phenomenon, and many statements of intent concerning it come out of Hanoi these days. However to date, there has been virtually no demonstrable, visible change either in Vietnam's foreign or domestic policies. Nor is there even much by way of policy promulgation aimed at eventual change. Rather what exists at the moment is the semblance of change or, at the best, indicators suggesting that profound change is about to begin, which does seem to be genuine and real. Therefore it is also a thesis of this paper that history is pushing Vietnam in the direction of marked change with which many existing continuities will dissipate. However since this is not to be in the immediate future, and given the fact that no experienced student of Vietnam ever risks long range prediction, we must be more guarded about the matter than with analysis of the USSR and China.

Any full and proper assessment of Vietnam's relations with the USSR and China requires establishing a base of cultural understanding, which in turn requires a description of the history of the two relationships. Since space does

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not permit this, suffice to make a brief observation on the singular, cultural-historical influences at work in Vietnamese external relationships. Vietnam is a highly disciplined Spartan type society ruled by a praetorian leadership. Because of this, and because of its recent historical experience, its external behavior is characterized by a rigid fundamentalist political outlook, a penchant for regarding foreign relations in terms of *dau tranh* or *struggle*; and only limited influence by economics in determining foreign policy. These constants to some extent are personalized, that is a reflection of the personalities of the present Hanoi leadership. Changes in Hanoi policy, more than elsewhere, turns on changes in the leadership structure.

The paper is divided into three major parts following this brief introduction. First there is an examination of the continuities and changes in the Vietnamese-USSR relationship, then a discussion of the Vietnamese-Chinese relationship. In both cases the consideration is cast in terms of major issues. One of these is so important that it is singled out for special consideration in the third section—that is Kampuchea. The paper concludes with a summary/conclusion.

1. Vietnam and the USSR

The continuities of the Moscow-Hanoi association, which as noted above, far outweigh the changes, and it is to these we now turn. First, a few general observations by way of overview to set the stage for our examination.

For a number of years the outside world has witnessed the growth of an intimate, steadily deepening relation, one based on Hanoi dependency and, on Moscow's part, perceived national interest including service to the international socialist movement. For Vietnam it is a dominant, even overpowering, association. While close and generally workable, it is constantly punctuated by indications of Moscow restiveness over the continuing malaise in the Vietnamese economic sector and the price this is extracting from the USSR.

The recent past, say 1987-88, has been marked by great activity along the Hanoi-Moscow axis, with many missions, some important, some chiefly ceremonial. An important Soviet-Vietnamese conference at the central committee level was held in Moscow (January 1987), chaired by Yegor Ligachev of the USSR with SRV Deputy Foreign Minister Vo Dong Giang as the ranking Vietnamese, to discuss ways to "strengthen and heighten the efficiency of Soviet-Vietnamese cooperation." Out of it came a defined "common task" of raising Vietnamese consumer goods production during the current Five Year Plan (1986-90) by 15 percent and exports by 70 percent, over the previous plan, with Soviet assistance. In May (1987) came the visit to Moscow by CPV Gen. Sec. Nguyen Van Linh and entourage. It was marked by a whirlwind

round of talks, banquets, document signing ceremonies, and visits to symbolic Moscow tour stops. Host was Politburo member Yegor Ligachev.

Lin met privately with Gen. Sec. Mikhail Gorbachev, who also hosted a banquet. There were seven Vietnamese in the delegation, including economic aid specialists. The bulk of the working sessions apparently was devoted to discussions of bilateral relations, especially economic—spending the US\$ 2 billion that Moscow sends annually to Vietnam. Also discussed was Kampuchea, the two sides agreeing that a political solution is the only answer providing it is “within prevailing realities.” In this the Soviet position was somewhat guarded, but the joint statement said a settlement must include Democratic Kampuchea followers although “not the Pol Pot clique.” Four economic agreements were signed, involving increased production of light industry goods in Vietnam; production of electronic and technical electrical equipment in Vietnam; coconut oil production and processing; and tea production, the latter two commodities for export to the USSR. Prior to the visit (May 7) the Politburo in a pointedly well publicized meeting in Hanoi discussed the problem of “renovating and improving the efficiency” of Vietnamese-Soviet economic relations, and “profoundly reviewing mistakes and shortcomings by various echelons and sectors as regards awareness and guidance in effecting cooperation.”

Soviet Foreign Minister Rogachev in January (1988) was asked in a Moscow interview about Soviet-Vietnamese relations and described them as “capacious and intense.. and made complex by the Kampuchean problem..” (Radio Moscow Jan. 14, FBIS-SOV 88-11). Rogachev also said the USSR now has under-way in Vietnam some 250 economic aid projects; and that the annual “trade turnover” is 1.3 billion rubles. Moscow press, for example *Pravda* Jan. 14, 1988, speaks approvingly of Hanoi’s renovation efforts to “purge party organs and state apparatus.. (which) is proceeding in an exacting and businesslike manner.” *Pravda* (Feb. 4, FBIS-SOV 84-78) reported that Vietnam’s trade imbalance with the USSR continues to worsen; during 1987 Vietnamese exports to the USSR were eight percent over the plan-target (chiefly coffee, peanuts, cinnamon, pepper, rubber, tin, carpets and clothing) but imports from the USSR rose by 14 percent, meaning an even larger trade deficit for Vietnam. Joint oil exploration and exploitation by the two countries continues apace; during 1988 the Soviet engineers are to drill 19 additional wells in Vietnam; extraction from operating wells is expected to total about 670,000 tons of crude most of which is sold to Japan. A high level CPSU delegation, headed by Politburo candidate/member CPSU CC Secretary Georgiy Razumovkiy, spent five days in Hanoi (April 23-28) to discuss “strategies for economic development; techniques for overcoming negative phenomena; and methods of improving internal party organization and cadre performance.” (*Tass* April 24,

pravda April 29, FBIS-SOV 88-79, 88-86; VNA April 24, 25, FBIS-EAS 88-79, 88-80). Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach stopped in Moscow (May 23) to hear of the results of the U.S.-USSR Summit from his counterpart, For. Min. Eduard Shevardnadze. Soviet-Vietnamese unity was reaffirmed. In Hanoi (June 9) Gen. Sec. Nguyen Van Linh received visiting Soviet Dep. For. Min. Boris Chaplain also to hear a report on the summit. Linh said the summit meeting contributed to "purifying the international political atmosphere." A *Nhan Dan* editorial (June 3) termed the summit "an important contribution to global peace and security." It also linked the summit to the PAVN draw-down in Kampuchea, as Vietnam's contribution to "the common cause of peace in the world" (VNA June 3, FBIS-EAS 88-126; *Pravda* May 24, June 9; FBIS-SOV 88-110/113.). In the face of the ever worsening Vietnamese food shortage, in June of this year, Soviet purchasing agents were buying rice in Thailand and Burma for shipment to Haiphong.

All of these recent events can be put down as continuities, since they do not differ from interchanges throughout the past decade. There have been however, at the same time, certain changes, some so imperceptible as to make them difficult to track. To the extent that there has been change in the association, it is the result of Moscow initiative. The USSR under Gorbachev clearly is embarked on an effort to alter both its foreign policy and its geo-political position in Asia. He appears determined to reduce the ideological thrust and increase the strategic thrust in the entire Pacific basin, that is with its Asian policies resembling Soviet policies in West Europe. This remains a Gorbachev intent, more than actuality.

Since his advent there have been reports from Hanoi suggesting that the Vietnamese leaders' encounters with the new Soviet leader left them uncertain of what to make of him. Anything new and different tends to arouse concern among Hanoi officials and Gorbachev appears to be both of these. Some in Hanoi reportedly are wondering whether Vietnam may have another Nikita Khrushchev on its hands, that is a Soviet leader with no particular sense of empathy for Vietnam's past troubles or present problems, and determined to serve his own priorities.

However, it is probable that the present Soviet-Vietnamese relationship will last as long as the present condition of dependency-opportunism lasts (that is, Vietnamese dependency for economic and military aid; and Soviet opportunism represented by Cam Ranh Bay). Since it is a marriage of convenience as far as the USSR is concerned and one of necessity for the Vietnamese, probably it is neither as durable nor as close as it seems.

Issue, or potential issues, in addition to Kampuchea, include Sino-Soviet relations as they affect Vietnam; the continued economic drain on Moscow's

economic resources represented by Hanoi's inability to solve its basic economic problems; and the enduring problem of "bad chemistry" in Soviet-Vietnamese relations. However, it is unlikely that such disputation can be counted on in the future to effect significant change. Each side has a number of reasonably justified grievances about the policies and behavior of the other, but there are continual mutual efforts underway to deal with these and make the relationship more equitable.

The major question to be answered is whether this Soviet-Vietnamese relationship threatens the geo-political equilibrium in the region. We are not sure what actually is the meaning of a Soviet military and naval presence in Vietnam, that is the full dimension of its meaning. In any event it seems likely that the USSR is going to be more directly involved in regional affairs. Also that its increased presence will continue to generate counter force responses by China, ASEAN, the U.S., and perhaps others in the Pacific.

2. Vietnam and China

Outsider analysis of Sino-Vietnamese relations through the years generally has tended toward the simplistic. Either the central issue was China's effort to turn Vietnam into a satellite, willing to use naked force to serve Chinese interests if required; or there was a centripetal force pressing Vietnam inward to become, with the proper encouragement, China's Albania. They were oil and water, or were forever bound together. Some held the only important consideration was the Vietnamese' historic fear and hatred of China. Others drew a parallel with the USSR-Finnish relationship. None of these is accurate enough to be useful.

The Vietnamese-Chinese relationship is complex and ancient—it dates back a thousand years—and deeply rooted in the Confucian *pupil-sensei* ethic. On the surface are contentious issues and finite problems. Beneath, is a subliminal level which is more important and of greater "reality" than any specific issue.

Hanoi officials in 1975, flushed by their victory in the Vietnam War, were convinced the time had come to end the centuries old pattern of deference to China and to redefine the relation. They felt the old tutelary association must give way to one based on equality, with Vietnam "independent" from China. The Chinese view was that nothing had changed, that Vietnam's "victory" was merely a stroke of good luck, i.e., U.S. lack of determination, hence the original association based on deference and mutual obligation still obtained. What was chiefly involved here was attitude. The Vietnamese expected China to modify the past attitudes; the Chinese expected Vietnam to continue the historical attitudinal obligation of deference based on the Confucian principle of harmony of relations.

While this may strike the outsider, especially the westerner, as an obscure exercise in Oriental metaphysics, it has a deep reality which already has had grave meaning for millions. Much of Vietnam's behavior in Kampuchea is traceable to this subliminal struggle with China. The 1979 Chinese "lesson" was part of the redefinition effort. Soviet presence in Vietnam most certainly is involved. Objective conditions change relationships. What enters is the *act* of delineation, in this case redefining the relationship to exist in the future between Vietnam and China. Hence, it is no metaphysical exercise but a very real struggle with profound meaning for the future.

Focus of the Sino-Vietnamese struggle to define future relations is the quiet, almost secret war, fought along their mountainous frontier. It is also a peculiar war, what the Vietnamese term a "multi-faceted war of sabotage." It is more than a cold war of nerves, but is not what could be called continual limited war. Nor is it confined to the border region. It consists of sporadic harassment by each side, chiefly with artillery and mortars, and by patrols that probe across the border. On the Chinese part this activity has been closely coordinated with events in Kampuchea.

Exacerbating the relationship are other surface level issues; Vietnam's intimacy with the USSR; PAVN's intrusiveness into Kampuchea; and Hanoi mistreatment of ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, all Chinese grievances. The cold-war, and "bleeding" Vietnam in Kampuchea are Hanoi's chief grievances.

The truly transcendental issue here is USSR presence in Vietnam. Beijing sees Soviet presence in Vietnam as designed primarily to serve Moscow's anti-Chinese purposes, that is militarily flanking China; mobilizing Vietnamese resources and strength against China; and creating an anti-Chinese axis which, it is hoped, will eventually run from Hanoi to Jakarta to New Delhi.

Beijing here faces a genuine problem in strategy: how to force distance between the Vietnamese and the Soviets. It has tried several approaches, none of which has been successful. Presently it pursues what might be called a campaign of protracted intimidation. Its calculation is that sustained pressure of various sorts—military, diplomatic, psychological—will eventually force the Vietnamese to seek a *modus vivendi* with China. To influence this process, China has sought to raise the price Moscow pays for the association—particularly in Kampuchea—and to drive the USSR and Vietnam even closer together in the belief this will eventually cause the relation to self-destruct.

Hanoi in turn has allied itself with the USSR, finding both status and security in the alliance. It has sought to eliminate vestiges of Chinese cultural influence in Vietnam and to end or at least to reduce Chinese influence in Laos and Kampuchea. It tries to outmaneuver China in ASEAN capitals and throughout the world and conducts a tireless campaign of vilification at the United Nations

and elsewhere, using the themes that China's various policies undermine peace and stability in the region by fomenting confrontation between Vietnam and others.

Since China's 1979 punitive expedition against Vietnam, relations between the two countries have essentially been a cold war. During 1987 and 1988 there were periodic indications that improved relations could be expected, but each time the associations would take a new ugly turn—usually in the form of military clashes along the long common mountainous frontier, or on the high seas.

The current major "hot" issue between the two (besides the all-important Kampuchea issue) has to do with the sovereignty of some 51 islands of an archipelago east of Cam Ranh Bay and south of China's Hainan island known as the Spratley Islands (*Truong Sa* in Vietnamese, *nansha* in Chinese). In the pre-colonial days local sailors referred to them as "the isles of dangerous places." Their ownership has long been disputed, and most claims are of dubious legality. Salience of the dispute increased in recent years with the growing belief that the Spratleys are probably sprawled over rich beds of petroleum.

A new round of disputation began the night of January 31 (1988) in the vicinity of the ten islands in the chain garrisoned by the Vietnamese when (Hanoi's version) four Chinese war ships provocatively engaged in maneuvers with two Vietnamese freighters, then sunk them, along with a third later or (Beijing version) Vietnamese vessels challenged a routine Chinese navy operation in its own waters. It was an unequal meeting and while events are not entirely clear, it appears that Chinese sunk three Vietnamese vessels with some 74 sailors aboard.

The following months were given over to verbal exchanges marked by moral indignation and assertions that all action taken would be defensive and justified. Both sides guardedly threaten to land troops on some of the 200-odd now unoccupied reefs, outcroppings and islets, accompanied by appropriate naval protection—invitations to confrontation. Warnings were exchanged. The Chinese produced a 1956 letter from DRV PM Pham Van Dong to Chao En-Lai acknowledging Chinese sovereignty over the Spratleys. The Vietnamese replied with a 1776 geography book containing a conch and turtle shell collector map clearly indicating the islands are Vietnamese.

During this summer, the quarrel has continued to simmer. At least a half dozen aide memoirs and other diplomatic notes were exchanged in May and June; there were press conferences in both capitals; and legalistic evidence rolled off both Chinese and Vietnamese presses. China announced it was going to build an ocean observation post for the U.N. on one of the islands. SRV

Minister of Defense Le Duc Anh visited one of the Vietnamese-held islands (May 11) and later told journalists that his men were "impatient" to retake those reefs and islands held by the Chinese. Vietnam repeatedly called on the Chinese to negotiate the dispute and the Chinese repeatedly replied there was nothing to negotiate. Moscow spokesmen on several occasions, when asked, said the USSR is concerned over the dispute and wants the claimants to settle their differences peacefully. To complicate matters the Malaysian Foreign Ministry (June 28) acknowledged that Malaysian troops now occupy three atolls in the Spratleys.

The quarrel is not simply one over real estate. It has strategic meaning which calls attention to the changed and changing three-way balance of power in the region involving China, the USSR and Vietnam. The Japanese had a submarine base on one of the islands during World War II.

In broader terms, the Sino-Vietnamese relationship appears too be locked into—and be a product of—the Sino-Soviet relationship. Probably only a change of the latter can bring significant change in the former.

3. Kampuchea

In terms of our interests here, Kampuchea represents a conjunction—one might even say a collision—of the interests of Vietnam, China and the USSR. Here also the continuities are most visible and changes the most discernible.

As an issue, or at least as a problem, Kampuchea has existed in a serious way for the three since December 1979, when Hanoi sent in troops determined to "solve the Pol Pot problem," as it was explained at the time. A stalemate developed which has become the scenes chief characteristic, its intractableness.

As this is being written new efforts are underway in the Kampuchea "peace process", in ASEAN-sponsored discussions at Bogor, Indonesia. There are also reports of separate initiatives to be taken by India and Japan. While nothing definitive can be expected quickly, it does seem clear that a different diplomatic atmosphere is developing, one that is marked by changing perception of what is possible by way of settlement in Kampuchea—particularly in Moscow, probably in Beijing and possibly in Hanoi.

It now seems well established that Hanoi genuinely does wish to withdraw its military forces from Kampuchea, hence this form of Vietnamese "imperialism" is no longer an issue, as the Chinese have long claimed. However, Hanoi indicates it can withdraw its troops only under certain conditions, the most important being that it continues to enjoy major influence on decision making in Phnom Penh in whatever governing arrangement emerges. Vietnam insists it must be assured that a hostile government does not come into power in Kam-

puchea because Vietnamese geography makes the country extraordinarily vulnerable to threat on its western flank.

A case can be made that all outsiders (i.e. non-Khmer) perceive advantage both that the war end, and that it does not end, a perception that applies equally to Vietnam, China, the ASEAN states, the USSR and the United States. While the pro-peace vs. pro-war balance may not be exactly equal in any one country, it is sufficiently balanced that stalemate continues. Hence the war goes on because of sets of respective offsetting national interests. The only ones actually suffering in this are the Khmer people who, it appears, do not count for much in the scheme of things.

The reaction to the current "peace process" in the region and beyond has been varied and somewhat predictable.

For many there is in the unfolding events a depressingly familiar sense of *deja vu*—a look back down the corridor of history to Paris, 1973; Laos, 1962; Geneva, 1954. Once more Indochina contenders are moving toward a half-baked arrangement that will sweep reality under the rug and cosign crucial decisions to the future by stamping them "to be taken care of later," hence, as in the past, virtually ensuring another eventual war. Desperate actors in this drama display pitiful faith that the "dialogue process" somehow would break the stalemate and create an environment that will overwhelm the issues, the necessities, and the heritages. But in actuality this only a comingling of the well-intentioned, the schemers, the desperate that dooms the long suffering people of Indochina to more suffering. This is a common, but by no means universal perception of the process held in the United States.

The Chinese and hardliners in the Khmer emigre community in the United States and Europe see the peace moves chiefly as a Hanoi tactic. Kampuchea is still regarded by them as a struggle between patriotism and aggression, and, since the resistance has not lost during its nine year war, it has won. Time has about run out for the Vietnamese. A combination of external Soviet pressure and internal economic need is inexorably pushing Hanoi toward disengagement in Kampuchea and will continue to do so regardless of any dialogue process. Such is the Chinese view.

There is constant speculation in Asian diplomatic circles that China is about to alter its basic policy on Kampuchea and may strike a deal either with the USSR or, conversely, with Hanoi, that would amount to abandonment of support for the Khmer resistance. Beijing consistently insists it is not changing its policy.

Hanoi has given limited but ambiguous endorsement of the general settlement effort. It has backed the basic proposal of the Heng Samrin government in Phnom Penh (the PRK) has offered participation in the future government to

elements of the CGDK, but in vague terms with few guarantees. Hanoi consistently has refused to negotiate with Prince Sihanouk (or even meet with him, until Bogor) for fear of undercutting the PRK position. It is clear from the logic of the situation that Vietnam recognizes the Kampuchea peace effort as highly complex, one in which there is great difficulty predicting the direction events will eventually take. Since Vietnam has more at stake in this than any other "outside" actor, it is more concerned than others about taking risks with a settlement.

Moscow's position on Kampuchea today probably is marked by far more change than continuity. As late as a year ago its frequently enunciated public position was that the U.S. had replaced China as the chief instigator for the continuance of the war, and that the U.S. policy on Kampuchea was part of its renewed effort to "roll back communism" world wide, hence an integral part of a vaster U.S. scheme. U.S. behavior with respect to Kampuchea frequently was linked with Nicaragua. Throughout, like a litany, was Moscow's insistence that the situation in Kampuchea was "irreversible".

Most of this rhetoric has now been abandoned by Moscow. The U.S. position is no longer severely criticized. Condemnation of Beijing is muted. Moscow now endorses virtually all peace seeking activity for Kampuchea, and proclaims Afghanistan as a model for Hanoi to follow. It offers assurances of support and facilitation, although admittedly in a highly cautious manner.

Broadly stated the USSR position with respect to Kampuchea at the present is what might be called the *fait accompli* posture, namely that the Pol Pot "regime of genocide" was overthrown in 1979 and "people's power" established. While the PRK continues to be feebly challenged by remnant elements, their claims of prowess and legitimacy are sheer invention. Kampuchea as an issue of sovereignty has been "solved thoroughly and irreversibly." Sovereignty aside, it is acknowledged however, that Kampuchea does exist as a "problem". What is necessary to solve this problem is to induce "serious dialogue" among the contending Khmer factions and by using the mechanism of "national reconciliation" in which the resistance members (but not their top leaders) will "return" to Phnom Penh. In short a position that raises as many questions as it answers about final settlement. The USSR position is more or less the same as the set down by Hanoi, much as the U.S. position on Kampuchea equates that of the ASEAN states and China.

The USSR of course is in a more delicate position here than are other outsiders. It must always carefully consider the effects in Hanoi of any policy pronouncement it makes on Kampuchea. Further Moscow can not be entirely certain of Hanoi's exact position on peace proposals, nor its assessment of how events are going to unfold for Hanoi since Hanoi itself is not certain.

Some divergence has appeared between Hanoi and Moscow over diplomatic tactics and strategy. Also, and more seriously, over the general wisdom of a policy approach that puts emphasis on negotiations, reminiscent of Vietnam War differences between Moscow and Hanoi on the Paris talks. The divergence is papered over with a verbal compromise that avoids the term *negotiated settlement* in Kampuchea in favor of the broader, vaguer term, *constructive dialogue*, which presumably, still applies after Bogor.

Moscow's overriding consideration, it would seem, is not to get entrapped in the machinations of a Kampuchean settlement, a principle that will remain the overriding guideline.

4. Summary and Conclusion

1) The Hanoi-Moscow relationship is a product of Vietnamese dependence since Hanoi is on the socialist world dole; and of perceived Soviet strategic opportunity, symbolized by Cam Ranh Bay as a Soviet naval facility. Historically, the relationship is not well grounded. The Vietnamese do not have much confidence in the USSR and Soviet national interests may turn it away from Vietnam. The subliminal level particularly lacks harmony, an all important factor in Asia, and which has great long range meaning. What fixes the relationship for both, in different ways, is China. We should bear in mind that since things have never gone particularly well for the USSR in Asia, Vietnam is additionally important to it, representing a test of policy success.

2) The Sino-Vietnamese association, unlike the stark and elemental Soviet-Vietnamese relationship, is highly complex, with roots that extend far back into history. Vietnam, unlike the USSR, cannot afford a condition of permanent cold war with China; nor is there any reason to believe China regards one in its interest. What is underway between the two is an effort to redefine their ancient relationship in the light of recent change in both countries. This requires addressing various finite issues, such as Hanoi's close association with the USSR; the future posture of Hanoi in Kampuchea and Laos; conflicting claims to sea territories and land border demarcations; and mistreatment of ethnic Chinese in Vietnam. In the long run it seems inevitable that better relations between the two will eventually be achieved because, from Hanoi's view, they must. It also seems inevitable that Vietnam and China will always be locked in a struggle for power and influence within the region, particularly with regard to the ASEAN states. This need not necessarily be bad or destructive. Competitiveness kept within bounds is healthy, normal and generally beneficial since it tends to keep excesses in check, and its preferable to Southeast Asia being dominated by any single power, China, Vietnam or some other.

3) Kampuchea, whose destiny seems to be as the region's chief intractable problem, not important in itself so much as for the Vietnam-USSR-China triangle. As this is being written, new initiatives are underway to try to bring peace to that troubled land. What is involved in substantive terms are (a) to arrive at some arrangement that Hanoi, Beijing and Bangkok will consider adequate for their respective national security interests; and (b) once the Vietnamese are gone to prevent anarchy and bloodbath from descending on Kampuchea—as Khmer Rouge elements seek to return to power; as other Khmer seek to institutional governance threatens to turn into politics with guns. Withdrawal of PAVN troops is not actually the problem—rather it is a development that can, and probably will, follow, if the two substantive matters are resolved. The USSR appears to be cast in a distinctly lesser role in contributing to this peace process, in part by choice. Its policies appear to be to encourage a settlement; to do what can be done to facilitate one; not to make specific commitments; and above all not to be trapped by the process.

4) The major figures in the Kampuchea equation are Vietnam and China, plus of course their respective surrogate forces in Kampuchea. The Hanoi and Beijing positions on the “peace process” is highly ambiguous at this writing, nor is there any evidence to suggest that optimism is warranted that peace and security can soon be brought to the Khmer people.