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The Multilateralization of Regional Security in Southeast and Northeast Asia: The Role of the Soviet Union

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The Multilateralization of Regional Security in Southeast and Northeast Asia: The Role of the Soviet Union

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Introduction: Assumptions and Organization

This paper attempts to sketch the architectural structure of the regional security systems of Northeast and Southeast Asia and to define the roles currently played by the Soviet Union within them. These regions will be viewed from two contrasting perspectives. On the one hand, each will be treated as a separate system, with its own particular security problems, rivalries, and dynamics. The overall conclusion to be drawn from this level of analysis is that no one or even two states, through collision or collusion, is capable of defining the overall security regimes of these regions. Regional powers, great or small (including insurgents like the Khmer Rouge), have the resources and will to veto unilateral coercive attempts, characteristic of Cold War politics, to dictate how these security systems should be organized or whose strategic, political, or economic preferences should prevail. In brief, these regional security regimes are multipolar, and their stability, defined by the willingness of the actors to resolve differences more through peaceful than through coercive means, depends on multilateral accord and consensus.

On the other hand, these regions will also be viewed as special cases of an overall Soviet effort

begun in the mid-1980s with the coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev to define a new global policy for the Soviet Union. The shift responded to the failures of Soviet Cold War strategies abroad and of the socialist experiment at home. Moscow's post-Cold War strategy, called "New Thinking,"^{*} seeks to ensure the long term Big Power status of the Soviet Union and affect a fundamental reform of the nation's socioeconomic institutions and political regime. Both aims serve the Soviet Union's regional geopolitical and economic objectives and underwrite its claim to be a principal actor in the major regions of the world. Soviet regional aims, including those addressed to Asia, serve, therefore, both as the object and as the instrument of Soviet global policy.¹

The Soviet reform movement, initiated at the top of the Soviet political hierarchy but now increasingly impelled from below by its own inner logic and momentum, drives Soviet regional security policy. Whereas high politics dictated low politics throughout most of the Cold War, the reverse is true now. Moscow's "New Political Thinking" rejected the Cold War basis for Soviet policy in Europe and for its expansion into the Third World. But, if "New Thinking" supplied the rationale for Soviet regional withdrawal or a lowered profile where its influence had once been dominant, internal upheaval occasioned by reform urges a concessionary negotiating posture with rivals and partners in regional security bargaining. Moscow must now focus on rising economic and domestic problems. Whether by design or default,

* The terms "New Thinking" and "New Political Thinking" are used interchangeably throughout this essay.

Moscow's global role and influence on regional security has diminished and will very likely continue to erode in the immediate future. On the other hand, it still enjoys access to many regions of the world and important strategic assets. Not the least among these is its capacity to block or hamper, if not dictate, regional security accords, and to supply arms and military assistance to regional opponents.

Part I of this paper briefly reviews the Cold War principles on which Soviet power and purpose were extended to the Third World and assesses the costs, risks, and gains of Soviet policy. However much Soviet elites may differ about the course of internal reforms, there is a widely shared opinion within Soviet policy circles that the nation's Cold War rivalry with the United States and, specifically, its approach toward Europe and the Third World, bankrupted the country, multiplied commitments beyond its measure to sustain, and yielded few, if any, lasting strategic, much less economic, advantages. Moreover, the socioeconomic gap between the West and the socialist camp actually widened in the course of the Cold War, and, ironically, this divergence threatened to erode the Soviet Union's military power, the one dimension along which it could truly claim to be a superpower. This shared opinion in policy circles of the dismal experience of the Soviet Union's imperial policies is likely to inhibit any movement, by whoever is in power, to return to Cold War practices. Indeed, even if Moscow should revert to Cold War ways, the limits of Soviet power which occasioned the search for a radical solution to the current crisis would still constrain any government in power. There will, of course, be efforts to assert Russian national interests and drive hard bargains in regional security negotiations (witness the Persian Gulf War), but these postures do not imply that Moscow will, even if it wished, be able to return to a Cold War orientation.

Part II of this analysis briefly reviews the principal elements of Soviet "New Political Thinking" as a solution to the multiple problems raised by Moscow's failures at home and abroad. It also summarizes how these new principles and aims of Soviet policy have played out in Europe and the Third World as tests of an abandonment of Soviet Cold War aims and interventionist strategies.

The discussion of Parts I and II sets the stage for

Part III, which is a closer examination of how "New Political Thinking" has shaped Soviet policy and behavior in Asia. This section also sketches the architectural structure of the security regimes in Northeast and Southeast Asia and assesses the roles the Soviet Union is attempting to play within each. "New Thinking" plays differently in Asia than in Europe or other regions of the world, particularly with respect to Soviet arms control proposals. Conversely, Soviet behavior in Asia does not appear to be at odds with its efforts elsewhere to move from coercive unilateralism in defining regional security regimes to cooperative multilateralism to influence their evolution in preferred ways.

A final section, extrapolating from the Soviet experience in the post-Cold War era, identifies several new characteristics of regional security in Asia today that contrast with the Cold War period. These concern the structure or architecture of the two regional systems under examination and the mixed and conflicting strategies pursued by the principal regional and extraregional actors within and across these regions. These regional alignment structures and the policies pursued by the relevant actors will also be viewed, no less than the Soviet Union itself, as more or less coherent elements of their overall global security, diplomatic objectives, and interests, as well as and what appears to be of increasing importance to their internal economic aims and regime needs.

I. The Failures of the Soviet Revolution at Home and Abroad: The Limits of Soviet Power

If the October Revolution of 1917 and the victory of the Stalinist regime in the Great Patriotic War are taken as starting points, the expansion of the Soviet Union can be viewed as one of the most remarkable developments of the twentieth century. At the death of Leonid Brezhnev in 1982, the Soviet empire extended to Central Europe, including a third of Germany, most of the countries of Eastern Europe, and the Baltic Republics. In the Third World, Soviet clients could be counted in all of the major regions of the world: Cuba and Nicaragua in Central America; Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, and Congo (Brazzaville) in Africa; Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos in Southeast Asia; North Korea in Northeast Asia; and Afghanistan in Southwest Asia. The Soviet Union was also a principal arms supplier to key non-aligned states: India in South Asia; Iraq,

Syria, and Egypt (until the 1970s) in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East; and Algeria and Libya in North Africa. Not only was it able to contest US and Western influence around the globe, but it also achieved strategic nuclear parity with Washington by the end of the 1960s and, to many observers, conventional and even nuclear superiority in Europe.

These hard won successes have proven illusory. The expansion of Soviet military power and political influence generated countervailing opposition from the Great Powers. US containment policy, sustained throughout the Cold War period, checked or impeded the extension of Soviet power to all of the major regions of the globe. By the end of the 1950s, the split between Beijing and Moscow was irreversible (though not perceived in Washington until much later). Communist China contested the Soviet Union in the Third World and jealously guarded against any attempts by Moscow to intervene in Chinese internal affairs.

The West European states and Japan also joined the grand coalition against Soviet expansionism. NATO and the US-Japanese security alliance withstood repeated internal buffetings and held firm against Soviet pressures. Meanwhile, the economic and technological development of these states dwarfed the economic and technological capabilities of Moscow and its clients. By the early 1980s, the market-oriented states of the West and Japan, associated in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), accounted for \$7.73 trillion of the world's productive wealth against \$2.46 trillion by the Warsaw Pact, a three to one ratio that was widening with each passing year.²

In addition, many Third World states resisted Soviet power. Since the 1960s, the Suharto regime in Indonesia abandoned the Sukarno government's flirtation with Moscow and opposed the expansion of Chinese or Soviet influence in the region. Hanoi's victory in Indochina galvanized the ASEAN states of Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Brunei to block Vietnamese and Soviet influence and align essentially on US power in the region. Egypt's Anwar Sadat ordered Soviet advisors out of the country in 1972, shortly before launching the Yom Kippur War. By the end of the 1970s, Egypt had switched sides in the East-West struggle. After Israel, it became the largest recipient of US military assistance. Meanwhile, the moderate

Arab states remained steadfastly anti-Soviet and anti-Communist. Pakistan enlisted on the side of the Mujahedin in the struggle against Soviet power in Afghanistan, and many Third World states insisted on the Soviet Union's military withdrawal. Insurgents also fought Soviet-backed governments in Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, and Nicaragua.³

Soviet clients, moreover, were both an economic burden and, increasingly, an impediment to economic growth and technological development. At its height, annual Soviet military and economic assistance to Cuba and Vietnam, Moscow's two largest aid recipients, was conservatively estimated to have been in excess of \$5 billion.⁴ Soviet military expenditures also burdened the economy, variously estimated from 15 percent of GNP to twice that figure.⁵ This level of military spending to support the Soviet Union's imperial interests was widely understood in Kremlin policy circles as a serious drag on the economy that had to be lifted if the country was to resolve its mounting economic problems. The experience of direct aid to Soviet clients to combat insurgencies was viewed in a similarly dim light. However successful Soviet arms aid to Vietnam may have weighed in Hanoi's victory in 1975, they proved incapable of tipping regional conflicts in Afghanistan, southern Africa (Mozambique, Angola, and Namibia), or the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia) in favor of Moscow-backed forces.

Economic assistance to Soviet clients, in turn, did not lead to economic development. Rather, it weakened the Soviet Union even further with no tangible economic growth registered abroad. Even before Gorbachev's rise to power, his mentor and predecessor, Yuri Andropov, was already signaling that Soviet assistance would be reduced to socialist states. Their economic development would depend more on their efforts than on Soviet assistance.⁶ Soviet analysts also raised doubts about the efficacy of foreign aid or the obligation of the Soviet Union to provide it at the expense of its own development. "The Soviet Union fundamentally rejects the demands [of the developing countries]," argued Boris Monomarev, head of the International Department of the Central Committee in 1985, "that, on a par with the imperialist countries, it allocate for aid to the developing countries a fixed part of its gross national product.... One cannot agree with the point of view that it is only an influx of resources

from without that can guarantee the resolution of the burning problems of the developing countries."⁷

In addition, Soviet clients were, as often as not, neither a strategic asset nor always susceptible to Soviet direction. Unreserved Soviet support for Vietnam precluded detente with China and the United States and blocked the normalization of Soviet relations with the ASEAN states. The invasion of Afghanistan reinforced these barriers and further isolated the Soviet Union in the Third World. Not without embarrassment, a Communist government in Ethiopia was beset by Marxist-inspired insurgencies which held the Mengistu government at bay for over a decade, even with the help of thousands of Cuban troops, leading to the toppling of the Mengistu regime from power in May 1991. Despite billions of dollars in military equipment and arms, the Angola Communist government in Luanda similarly failed to defeat the rebel forces.

Meanwhile, Cuba freelanced in Central America and in the Caribbean extending Moscow's obligations beyond its interests and resources without providing corresponding control over events in the region. Instead, US power and regional opponents were galvanized to check Soviet and Cuban influence. Castro's revolutionary agenda had on more than one occasion proved far more ambitious than Moscow's. Cuban intervention in Nicaragua and in Grenada and its extensive military operations in Angola may well have forced Moscow's hand. Moscow has attempted to curb Havana's expansionist tendencies, increasingly by reducing economic and military assistance to the Castro regime.⁸

Like Cuba, Vietnam has not always hewed to a Moscow line. Ethnic rivalry in Indochina precedes Hanoi's victory by several centuries. Vietnamese expansion, fueled by anti-Chinese sentiment, is as much driven by these historical imperatives as by Communist ideology. Despite Soviet pressures, Hanoi has also dragged its feet in reaching a compromise with Cambodian rebel forces for a transition to a coalition government in Phnom Penh. Similarly, Moscow has had little control over the subversive activities and terrorism of North Korea aimed at weakening its South Korean rival.

In sum, Soviet power in the developing world was checked by the countervailing military and economic power of the United States and its

Western allies, by serious divisions within the socialist camp, and by the necessarily limited economic and technological resources commanded by Moscow to project its power and purpose in regions around the globe. Moreover, Cold War thinking, which interpreted any expansion of Soviet power as a strategic gain at the expense of the United States and the West in what was viewed as a zero-sum ideological struggle, had the unexpected result of weakening Soviet influence abroad and sapping its socioeconomic and political vitality at home. Even Cold War warriors within the military came to the realization that the Soviet Union risked losing its stature as a military superpower unless its economy and technological base was fundamentally reformed to compete with the West.⁹ These crises forced the Soviet elite to rethink its predicament. This ferment produced a sprawling and confusing debate within the Soviet Union that can be discussed, if not fully rationalized, under the heading of "New Political Thinking."¹⁰

II. New Political Thinking: Principles, Practice, and Regional Implications

The Operational Code of New Thinking. What is "New Political Thinking" and how has it played out in Soviet global and regional policy and behavior? First, there was acknowledgement by Soviet leaders that the Soviet Union's regional expansionism, conventional and nuclear arms build up, and offensive strategic doctrine were partially responsible for the militant response and military build up of the United States, particularly notable during the early Reagan administration, for the stiffening of European and Japanese resistance to Soviet threats and blandishments calculated to split the Western alliance, and for widespread opposition to Soviet presence and influence in the Third World. Affirmed was the principle that Soviet security could be achieved only by assuring rivals of peaceful Soviet intentions and by developing security regimes through cooperative, not conflictual, strategies. Soviet aims could successfully be pursued only by eliciting the support of other states, including former opponents, and not at their expense.

Soviet military and foreign policy analysts and policymakers devised a new set of concepts on which to fundamentally revise Soviet doctrine.¹¹ The notion of "reasonable sufficiency" was

advanced as a principle in lieu of superiority as the operational objective of Soviet military planning. Applied to the US-Soviet nuclear balance, "reasonable sufficiency" implied that neither superpower could win a nuclear arms race nor a nuclear war. Since each held the other hostage, only a political solution to their rivalry was possible.

The experience of the Cold War arms race, according to Soviet critics of the Brezhnev era, proved that unilateral technological and military efforts to impose a solution were costly and self-defeating for both parties. "Reasonable sufficiency," moreover, did not require parity or symmetrical cuts in armaments. The Soviet Union signaled a willingness to make greater cuts in conventional and nuclear armaments than the West if its security interests could be assured and the credibility of its peaceful intentions demonstrated. Some analysts pushed this thinking to the point of advocating a posture of "defensive defense" on the part of the two blocs. Neither side would be able to launch an offensive attack nor mount a counteroffensive if attacked.¹²

Second, since the security and economic interests of states were now asserted by "New Thinking" to be inherently interdependent, the ability of the Soviet Union to meet its needs depended on the cooperative behavior of other states, which could not be dictated or commanded. Only a multilateral approach to regional and global bargaining and negotiations in which states mutually responded and adapted to each other's needs would likely succeed. While priority was still assigned in the early forms of "New Thinking" to strengthening the socialist camp,¹³ Soviet policy gradually shifted from party-to-party relations to state-to-state co-existence and cooperation to advance Soviet interests. Differences in internal socioeconomic institutions and political regimes would not stand between Moscow and the pursuit of new partners. Pragmatism and national needs took precedence over ideological commitments and preferences.

Third, and driving the reorientation of Soviet security and diplomatic practices, was the conviction that Soviet economic growth and technological development required the Soviet Union's integration into the West's capitalist market system. This formula was applied both to Soviet Union and to its socialist allies and clients. Soviet academic writers and, progressively, a widening

circle of policymakers agreed that neither Third World nor Soviet Union development could be advanced solely within a socialist international economic order. What was required was the incorporation of these economies into the capitalist global market system. The gross inefficiencies of centralized planning and pricing inherently blocked sustained growth and development. As Elizabeth Valkenier explains:

What has emerged since 1975 is an implicit admission in government circles and the academic community that the establishment of an alternate, worldwide economic order, patterned on integration arrangements set up in the CMEA, is both an impossible and impractical proposition. To one extent or another, Soviet officials and scholars now admit that the Socialist countries have to act in a world that resists bifurcation.¹⁴

Extending the political logic of this re-orientation, the Gorbachev regime is now on record requesting massive Western aid to reform the Soviet Union along Western models and permission for Moscow to join the G7, the summit of the major industrial powers.

New Political Thinking in Practice. Since 1985, Soviet security policy has dramatically departed from previous Cold War positions. The 27th Soviet Communist Party conference renounced nuclear deterrence as the basis for Soviet security and, not without apparent propagandistic motivation, called for the elimination of all nuclear weapons. The subsequent US-Soviet treaty to eliminate long and shorter range nuclear weapons, signed in Washington in December 1987, lent credibility to Soviet interest in nuclear arms reductions. For the first time in the postwar era, an entire class of nuclear weapons, with ranges between 500 and 5,000 kilometers, were to be dismantled. In pursuing a double option policy and acceding to US demands to eliminate all missiles in the proscribed categories in both Europe and Asia, the Soviet Union agreed to demobilize approximately twice as many ground based systems and three times as many warheads as the United States, and to accept highly intrusive inspection to verify compliance.¹⁵

President Reagan and Party Secretary Gorbachev also agreed at Reykjavik in October 1986 to a framework for the START talks. Limits of 6,000

were set on strategic nuclear warheads, and of 1,600 deployed land based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and heavy bombers. As the talks have progressed, the Soviet Union has demonstrated a willingness to accept asymmetrical cuts. In December 1987, additional sublimits of 1,100 were established for mobile ICBM warheads, where the Soviet Union currently has an edge. Significantly, Moscow agreed to reduce its sizeable throw weight advantage by cutting its heavy SS-18 ICBMs in half from 308 to 154. Discounting rules for penetrating bombers, where the US has a decided advantage, and for B-52s carrying air launched cruise missiles, also favors the US in the emerging START balance. Current estimates suggest the US will reduce its strategic warhead and bomb arsenal from 12,081 to 10,395, while the Soviet Union's capabilities in these categories will drop more steeply from 11,841 to 8,040.¹⁶

Soviet willingness to strengthen confidence building measures with the West and neutral states and to accept greater cuts in conventional armaments than its rivals gives additional weight to Soviet claims of a fundamental change in its security policies. Within the framework of the Stockholm Conference on Confidence and Security Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe, the Soviets agreed in September 1986 to strict reporting requirements for military exercises and major troop movements as well as to provisions for on demand inspection of Soviet military installations.¹⁷ In the midst of the Vienna negotiations on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) between NATO and Warsaw pact states, Party Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev announced unilateral troops reductions in Europe and Asia of 500,000 military personnel and 5,000 tanks as well as corresponding redeployments of some forward based forces to rear areas.

The CFE accord signed in Paris in November 1990 is perhaps the best touchstone of Soviet non-aggressive intentions. The Soviets have long enjoyed a marked superiority in the number of offensive attack forces in the ATTU (Atlantic to the Urals) region covered by the treaty. NATO reliance on short-range nuclear systems and the rejection of "no first use" pledges were calculated to offset perceived Soviet conventional superiority. Implicitly breaking with the offensive doctrine

underlying their Cold War posture in Europe, Moscow accepted the strategic aims of the negotiations, which was to prevent either side from launching a surprise attack and a successful offensive against its opponent in Europe. On this score, Soviet concessions have been impressive. The nations of the Warsaw pact are obliged to cut their forces, especially tanks, artillery, and armored personnel carriers, in greater measure than NATO. To the advantage of the West, moreover, naval forces have been kept out of the treaty.

Implementation of the treaty has not proceeded as smoothly as one might have expected. The Soviets have strained the spirit, if not the strict letter, of the treaty in redeploying some of its most advanced armored systems beyond the Urals while offering older systems for destruction under the accord. Moscow is also insisting on redesignating armored forces located in the Baltic region as naval units to exempt them from the treaty. The conservative and nationalist backlash in the Soviet Union to glasnost, perestroika, and democratization, while serious, does not appear to be sufficiently powerful at this juncture in the reform process to derail CFE or to block a START agreement, as evidenced by the May visit of the head of Soviet military forces to Washington to resolve differences over treaty interpretation. This assessment could change quickly, however, if economic conditions worsen (already deteriorating as GNP falls within the Soviet Union) and resulting political upheaval weakens the reform movement.

These disquieting developments are tempered by several constraints facing Soviet decisionmakers, whoever is in power, that are reassuring to Western security. These include the recent dissolution of the Warsaw Pact as a military alliance, reductions in Soviet military spending, and the degradation of morale and capability of Soviet forces for offensive operations. (One might also cite the questionable performance of Soviet equipment during the Persian Gulf War, although final judgment will have to be withheld on this dimension of assessing Soviet-Western military armaments, pending an evaluation of captured Soviet equipment from Iraq.) The NATO alliance remains intact, including a united Germany at its core. Beset by deep and seemingly intractable socioeconomic and political problems, whatever government may eventually rule in Moscow will continue to lack the necessary

military resources, public support, or motivation to contemplate attacking a West on which the economic and technological development of the Soviet Union depends.

Soviet regional policies toward Europe and the Third World reinforce the conclusion that Moscow is desperately searching for a relaxation of foreign policy tensions and preoccupations to focus on domestic economic and political reform, a kind of Brest-Litovsk of global proportions. Moscow has reluctantly acceded to the *de facto* neutralization of the East European states. Most now have installed pluralist, non-communist governments in power. Germany is united on terms essentially dictated by Bonn and the West. All of these states look to the West for economic assistance and debt relief. Some, like Hungary and Czechoslovakia, are seeking eventual entry into the European Community. Indeed, the economic revitalization of Eastern Europe is viewed by Moscow as a potential fillip to the Soviet economy. Eastern Europe is viewed more as a bridge to the West than as a barrier to Western penetration.

The policy of Third World expansion pushed by the Brezhnev regime has been abandoned. Moscow is in retreat on all fronts. Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was completed in February 1989. Agreements reached with warring parties in southern Africa and with the United States, Cuba, and South Africa led to the complete withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola in the spring of 1991. Soviet military assistance to the Sandinista regime essentially ceased before the holding of free elections. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union and Israel have opened consular offices and increased cultural exchanges between the two states. The lifting of immigration restrictions on Soviet Jews and the recent mass Jewish migration to Israel have further improved relations, setting the stage for the resumption of full diplomatic recognition. The Soviet tilt toward the moderate Arab states is also evidenced in the Kuwaiti ship-flagging episode and in Moscow's preference, tacitly shared by Washington, for an Iraqi check on Iranian fundamentalism. Superpower realignment has continued in the region with Soviet support of the multilateral force, UN resolutions condemning Iraq for its invasion, and a UN-imposed peace treaty on Baghdad.

It would be misleading to suggest that the

reorientation of Soviet policy in these regions has been easy or accomplished without some backlash or backsliding, as well as serious second thoughts being raised throughout the process of readjustment. The Soviet Union continues to provide military assistance to its client in Kabul. Major arms shipments were also sent to Angola by Moscow to reinforce Communist forces in the negotiations with rebel forces. How successful this supply effort was is arguable. On the positive side, and viewed from Soviet announced objectives, Namibia gained independence with the withdrawal of South African troops. On the other hand, UN-sponsored elections produced a SWAPO-dominated government that unexpectedly preached racial conciliation and political pluralism, stances that bore little resemblance to SWAPO's purported Marxist orientation. Moreover, the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and Moscow's cooperation with the United States to end the civil war forced the Luanda government to accept a ceasefire and an interim accord that, if implemented, will lead to a power sharing solution as the price of peace. Nor is it completely surprising that Moscow attempted at the eleventh hour to save the Saddam Hussein regime against itself and to preserve as much of its former client's military power and Soviet influence in the region as possible. But in all of these cases, Soviet geopolitical interests have been subordinated to the overriding objective of improving relations with the United States and with the other Western states and Japan.

The reasons for the rapprochement are obvious and have been tirelessly repeated by Soviet leaders since the internal reform movement within the Soviet Union was launched. The Western states and Japan are expected to provide the markets, capital, and know-how to assist Soviet economic and technological development. Integration of the Soviet Union's economy into a Western dominated capitalist market system is also supposed to provide the stimulus to restructure the Soviet Union's socialist system along market principles and to force the socialist elements of the system to compete on a world scale. So far, little tangible has been achieved in reforming the Soviet economy, stimulating production, and attracting Western capital. Rather, unemployment has increased, GNP is actually declining, the nation's distribution system is in chaos, and inflation is rising. The transition to a new

economic and political system, as more than one analyst has observed, exposes the Soviet Union to the worst of both the socialist and capitalist systems with no clear end in sight to resolve the economic and political impasse.¹⁸ On the other hand, the impasse and the constraints underlying the parlous state of Soviet domestic affairs constrains any a government in Moscow in aggressively pursuing expansionist policies abroad. This disconcerting background highlights, and partially explains, the Soviet Union's delicate position in Asia.

III. The Post-Cold War Architecture of Asian Security Regimes: The Roles of the Soviet Union

Overall Posture and Prospects. The Soviet Union faces Asia from a position of weakness. China's ideological affinity has never fully offset deep Sino-Soviet geopolitical and strategic differences that have sharply limited the possibilities of cooperation between these socialist giants. But even along this ideological dimension, their clashing interpretations and strategies for the pursuit of collective principles have generally served more to divide than unite them. In addition, ASEAN was formed in part to counterbalance Soviet power and its support for Vietnamese expansionism in Indochina. All of the states of the association are ruled by non-communist governments. Indeed, most of the states of the region are non-communist, if authoritarian, and harbor a deep distrust of Soviet power. Pakistan, a Muslim state, remains critical to the success of the Mujahedin's opposition in Afghanistan to Moscow's client in Kabul. Moscow and Tokyo remain at odds over the Northern islands occupied by the Soviet Union, and the US-Japanese security treaty is primarily aimed at Moscow.

Soviet footholds in Vietnam and Afghanistan have been costly to Soviet blood and treasure. Military and economic assistance to Hanoi has had the ironic effect of weakening Soviet influence. It prompted countervailing alliances against the Soviet Union throughout the region. Nor did the Indo-Soviet security relation compensate for the costs of the Afghan and Vietnamese interventions. It rested on mutual distrust of China and shared antipathy, variously registered in both nations, to the United States. Cooperation between Moscow and Delhi, particularly in arms production and sales, did not

translate, however, into greater political influence for the Soviet Union in Asia. Even less did it result in enlarged economic ties with the most dynamic economies of the region. In the Soviet experience, pursuing economic and military power through imperial expansion worked at crosspurposes with Soviet Big Power aspirations and internal economic development.

The Soviet Union is essentially a non-economic player in Asia. Its trade with the Pacific constitutes only eight percent of its overall trade. If the socialist states are excluded (China, North Korea, Mongolia, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos), the figure drops to three percent. The Soviet Union accounts for approximately one to two percent of Japan's foreign trade and less than one percent of ASEAN's foreign exchange, which is decidedly in ASEAN's favor. Most of the Soviet Union's Far East trade is in raw materials (timber, fish, coal, and non-ferrous metals). Until recently, Soviet economic developmental policy toward the Soviet Far East focused on reserve creation. Increasing exports of raw materials was given a higher priority than long-term economic exchange. Trade in Soviet processed goods is low because of their poor quality and limited availability. Investment by the Pacific states in the Soviet Union is negligible.¹⁹

Moscow's military strategic position is similarly tenuous. Chinese military forces are largely concentrated against the Soviet Union. Moscow may be able to destroy China as a viable society with its nuclear might, but progressively enlarging Chinese nuclear capabilities hold Moscow's cities and industrial centers hostage. China's massive land expanse and population also preclude any thought of engaging in a protracted conventional conflict with Beijing.²⁰ US naval forces and airpower discourage Soviet force projections in the region. Ninety percent of the Soviet Pacific fleet is deployed within 200 miles of Vladivostok. The Soviet Union's receding naval and air elements in Cam Ranh Bay are more a target than a deterrent for US naval forces in the Pacific where the Seventh Fleet regularly patrols Southeast Asia. Japan's defense forces, built on advanced naval and air capabilities, reinforce the military alignment of power against Moscow. With only one percent of its GNP devoted to military expenditures, Japan spends more for defense than most nations; its naval and air forces compare favorably with US forces in its immediate

area of defense responsibility; and its modernization program moves progressively forward.²¹

Against this sobering strategic background, it is not surprising that Soviet security and arms control proposals have favored constraints on its rivals to its advantage. While the Soviet Union has accepted asymmetrical cuts in the European theatre and in negotiations on nuclear weapons with the United States, it has advanced arms control proposals for Asia that would limit the military power of the United States and that of the states in the region. Reasonable sufficiency is viewed as more applicable to the United States and Japan than to the Soviet Union. Proposals cover the creation of nuclear free zones or so-called zones of peace, the end to foreign bases and the deployment of nonregional forces, the reduction of conventional and nuclear forces and constrictions on their activity (such as, lowered anti-submarine tracking), the dissolution of military blocs (i.e., the Washington-Tokyo-Seoul axis), and the multiplication of confidence building measures among the states of the region.²²

The creation of zones of peace in Indian Ocean and in Southeast Asia have appeal for some regional states, whether to check Big Power ambitions or to advance national aspirations. Such zones parallel ASEAN's proposal for a Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). The plan envisions the immunization from, or at least containment of, great power rivalry in Southeast Asia and a gradually enlarging security role for Indonesia in the region.²³ The Soviet offer to relinquish its base in Cam Ranh Bay and withdraw its naval and air units in return for the US withdrawal from the Philippines carries ZOPFAN a step farther. A similar zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, favored by Moscow, would undermine the US base at Diego Garcia and presumably call into question critical dimensions of US-Japanese security cooperation.

If Asian zones of peace were created, the US would have difficulty in projecting its naval forces and political influence into the region where it has maintained a dominating presence since World War II. The Soviet Union would lose little since it has only modest naval and air assets based in Asia. In 1989, the Soviet Union returned its Migs and most of its Badgers from Vietnam to home bases. On the other hand, it would be precluded presumably from deploying a modern carrier, like the new *Tiblisi*, in

the region.

Soviet proposals have received a cool response from regional powers, including Vietnam, which relies on the Soviet Union to sustain its control over Indochina.²⁴ In practice, the ASEAN states are reluctant to see the withdrawal of US military power. Singapore's proposal of August 1989 to host US facilities, currently being pursued by Washington, has been tacitly accepted by the other ASEAN states with varying degrees of enthusiasm, ranging from approval by Brunei and Thailand to acquiescence by Indonesia and Malaysia, which still officially insist on an end to permanent extraregional basing. Singapore's offer also bolstered the US negotiating position with the Philippines over bases at Clark and Subic Bay. Preoccupied with its own efforts to increase its economic ties to the West and with domestic strife at home, India also does not appear disposed to press its objection to US presence at Diego Garcia.

The Soviet Union's proposals for the creation of nuclear free zones or for the reduction of naval and air forces in the region have similarly been met with reservation. Again, the creation of nuclear free zones would hamper the projection of US military power. Moscow's 15 December 1986 signature of Protocols two and three of the Rarotonga Treaty and its restrictive interpretation of the treaty appear designed to hinder US naval maneuvers and to prohibit the transit of nuclear capable vessels. On the other hand, its call for a freeze on naval construction would halt Japan's planned modernization and expansion of its forces as well as China's gradual build up of its naval capabilities. Curbs on naval movement, particularly anti-submarine operations, would serve Soviet aims of lowering the US-Japanese threat to its strategic nuclear submarine forces in the Sea of Okhotsk, and of circumventing US Pacific Fleet efforts to prevent Soviet naval forces from reaching open seas in a crisis.²⁵

Gorbachev's proposal for an all-Asian security conference, patterned on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), has met an equally qualified response. That disinterest might have been anticipated, stems from the profound differences between Europe and Asia. Whereas the European states have found the CSCE framework a useful, if limited, device to orchestrate their shared security concerns to surmount the bloc-to-bloc

politics of the Cold War era, no such sense of a common European continental-wide identity, despite national and ethnic diversity and division, pervades Asia. Moscow's emphasis on a "Common European Home" resonates over two millennia of European history. No similar historical experience characterizes the meeting of races, civilizations, religions, and peoples of Asia. Notions of "reasonable sufficiency" and "defensive defense" can more readily be applied to the NATO-Warsaw pact balance and to US and Soviet forces in Europe than to the multiple and conflicting security relations of the peoples and states comprising the Asian continent and its oceanic approaches.

On the other hand, the position of weakness of the Soviet Union in the region, only recently recognized and appreciated by Moscow, prompts a geopolitical stance that stresses diplomacy and political negotiations rather coercion in asserting Soviet interests. The weak are strengthened when the strong are bound by rules and multilateral regimes. Better, too, to accent state-to-state relations over ideology when collectivist principles have found root, and then only with widely varying depth, in China, North Korea, Mongolia, and Vietnam, among the most economically backward states of the region.

However important these strategic and geopolitical considerations may be, they need to be placed in proper proportion to their subordination today to the priority given by most of the states of the region, including the Soviet Union, to economic growth, technological development, and political modernization as well as to the heightened role assigned to the market as the key propellant of economic development. The Soviet model is bankrupt in Asia and repudiated by the Soviets themselves. Gorbachev's Vladivostok and Krasnoyarsk speeches were primarily keyed to opening the Soviet Far East to economic development and to integrating this segment of the Soviet economy with the entire Pacific Basin.²⁶ Despite its authoritarian system, Beijing is still committed to assigning an increasing role to the market in the 1990s.²⁷

Its so-called four modernizations list the military establishment last in priority. The ASEAN states are ostensibly an economic association first and a strategic grouping only second. India is bent on addressing its economic problems by improving its

ties with the West. And Japan has, indeed, relied on rapid and continuous economic growth and technological progress as a global strategy to advance its geopolitical interests within the framework of the US security guarantee. Its brilliant success so far, limits of which are far from clear as it continues to press its major competitors the United States and the West European states, has served to progressively substitute a techno-economic struggle for global hegemony for the ongoing, but receding, geopolitical conflicts of the past.

The Architecture of the Northeast Asian System. The Northeast Asian security system rests on a two-tier system, composed, respectively, of the United States, Japan, China, and the Soviet Union as the Great Powers of the region as one tier and the two Koreas as the other. The most durable axis has been the US-Japanese security alliance. Out of the crucible of World War II, the regime interests of these two states alternately converged and complemented each other throughout the Cold War era. The North Korean attack sealed the US decision to assume Japan's security burden. A defeated and occupied Japan could not respond to the North Korean aggression, nor was the United States, as the occupier power, prepared to prod a reluctant Japanese people to assume an active role in their own defense.

Contrast these decisions on the part of both parties with Germany's integration in NATO and its rearmament in the aftermath of the North Korean invasion. Behind the glacis erected by US military power, a protected Japan recovered from the devastation and humiliation of its defeat. Adapting rapidly to the liberal international market system created and sustained by US military and economic power, Japan became the leading Asian economic power by the 1960s and eventually the principal challenge to US global economic hegemony in the 1990s. Today Japan is the world's largest creditor nation; the United States, the largest debtor. Japan's technological prowess across a wide range of industrial and consumer markets includes automobiles, electronics, machine tools and underwrites its long-term economic strength and competitiveness.

Until now, the US-Japanese bargain and its implementation suited both countries. Unlike the Germans, the Japanese were exempted from shouldering heavy defense expenditures just as their

economic resurgence was getting under way. (Germany, of course, enjoyed Marshall Plan aid; Japan did not.) The American and Japanese economies stimulated each other. Japan gained access to American markets whose continental size and efficient operations were ready made for the mass production of quality Japanese products sold at fetching prices.

In compensation for a gradual loss of markets and competitiveness, Washington progressively prodded Tokyo to assume more of the cost of its own defense as the burdens of US military expenditures grew heavier. By mutual consent, Japan's defense posture was essentially defensive and confined to the defense of its island chain. This stance was also reassuring to Japan's neighbors, who still remember the lash of Japanese imperialism. Continued Japanese purchase of US governmental securities and support for an overvalued dollar in the 1960s and 1970s to finance US intervention abroad complemented the bargain. In counterpoint, successive administrations in Washington, while pressing for trade concessions and greater Japanese investment in the United States, contained domestic protectionist pressures and Japanese-bashing in Congress. When Tokyo balked at the price of these complex arrangements, Washington administered periodic shocks of reality, like those of the Nixon administration, which cut the tie between gold and the dollar and imposed an import surcharge on Japanese goods (devaluing the dollar to circumvent Japan's refusal to appreciate the yen).

The US-Japanese alliance faces four closely connected challenges. First, the end of the Cold War and the decline of the Soviet threat in Asia and elsewhere undermines a central determinant of the security bargain. No threat means no need or at least less need except for long term insurance for the US security guarantee. China currently furnishes no substitute for the Soviet Union as a threat. The priority assigned by Beijing to internal development plays to the Japanese strong suit while mutual concentration on economic growth and development by the two sides deflects attention from underlying ethnic misunderstanding and prejudice, historical grievances, ideological and cultural differences, or growing Chinese nuclear power and naval forces.

Second, as the recent experience of the second Persian Gulf War exemplifies, Washington and

Tokyo have different views, rooted deeply in the public opinion of each society, about the proper balance that should be struck between burden and power sharing. Washington almost automatically expects that the Japanese will contribute to the financing of US interventions, formerly to contain Communist expansion and more recently, exemplified by Desert Storm, to build a new world order within an American mold. Washington's expectation rests on its assumption that Japan has a political and moral obligation to economically underwrite the security guarantee supplied by the United States, whether in Southeast or Southwest Asia or in the Persian Gulf.

Third, the Japanese are generally more skeptical than American leaders that the burden need be assumed at all. Other ways, primarily diplomacy and close economic ties, are viewed as feasible alternatives to military power to protect Western interests. From Tokyo's narrow but compelling perspective, they are sufficient enough to meet Japanese security concerns. Japanese leaders are also more reluctant than their American partners to adopt an expanded military role for Japan in regional security outside of its immediate defense perimeter. They also face the daunting task of convincing Japanese public opinion that Japan should abandon its non-intervention policy that has served its interests so well, especially when contrasted with the disaster of the imperial period.

The fourth challenge is likely to be the most formidable and potentially the most threatening to alliance cohesion: defining the terms of US-Japanese techno-economic competition in global and domestic markets; deciding upon an equitable division of labor and of responsibility for supporting the liberal economic system that is now so beset everywhere; and accommodating the competing economic interests and internal political needs of both countries (and societies). Profound differences have surfaced along all of these dimensions. They are too complex to explore within the context of this analysis, but their resolution will essentially determine the limits of the US-Japanese security alliance in the future. Nothing less is at stake than the choice between a global free market or a reversion to neo-mercantilist and national protectionism with all its attendant dangers, which might again turn economic competition into geopolitical conflict. Since ASEAN and most of the

socialist states (Cuba a rare exception) look to the US, Japan, and the European Community to motor their economic development, the resolution of the Japanese-American techno-economic struggle, partly a surrogate for previous geopolitical conflict, has serious implications for all of Asia and the world.

Whether Japan will gradually disengage from the security bargain with the United States as the need for such an arrangement declines, or whether new tensions between these former rivals will lead to lasting rifts, is difficult to predict. The benefits of continued cooperation or at least the avoidance and containment of conflict is widely understood by elites in both countries. They both have powerful incentives to check their mutual suspicions as well as the temptation to lash back when they believe the other has acted in a way damaging to their interests. The Tokyo-Washington connection has withstood powerful strains before. Witness the Vietnam War and the unannounced opening to China by the Nixon administration. The two countries are also likely to sort out their differences in the short-run over how much each will pay for the Persian Gulf War. Coordination of economic policies by shocks and stealth appears to be almost institutionalized between the two countries, yet they have survived each crisis. The security bargain between the US and Japan may be something like pulling taffy. The material can be pulled quite far before it breaks.

The newly emerging post-Cold War security system in Northeast Asia puts new strains on the US-Japanese alliance, but these do not appear to be of sufficient force to occasion a clear break in the near term. Japan is not keen on enlarging its military security responsibilities although absolute spending for the military will grow as a function of an expanding GNP. Tokyo's current reserve assures its nervous neighbors who suffered from its previous imperial policies. As long as Japan's power and influence can be exercised through its techno-economic superiority, there is little apparent reason for a rapid surge in Japanese military capabilities or for an expansion of its perceived zone of security responsibilities in Asia. Neither would serve its interests, those of its neighbors, or those of the United States and the Soviet Union.

Continued doubts within ruling circles in Tokyo about the prospects for improving and strengthening Japanese and Soviet diplomatic and economic

relations may set limits to the degree to which rising techno-economic differences with the United States will be pressed by Japan. Since World War II, the Northern islands issue remains a key stumbling block to the normalization of Japanese and Soviet relations.²⁸ At stake are important strategic interests, national pride, and historical and legal claims of sovereign right. Soviet control of the islands is critical for the protection of its nuclear submarine fleet that operates in the Sea of Okhotsk and for monitoring US and Japanese naval and air patrols of these waters. Neither side shows much disposition to compromise on the islands issue. Soviet signaling that it might consider relenting control of two of the islands has been rebuffed by the Japanese, who appear to have become increasingly intransigent and uncompromising with time, a posture reinforced by Soviet weakness, given point by repeated overtures for Japanese investments in the Soviet Far East and for increased trade and economic exchange between the two countries. These were central themes of Gorbachev's Vladivostok and Krasnoyarsk speeches. President Gorbachev's April visit to Japan produced no breakthrough.²⁹ It would appear that Moscow will attempt to lower Japanese resistance to normalization by ignoring or downplaying the Northern islands problem, trusting to the general relaxation of post-Cold War tensions to heal differences. Time and normalization may perhaps create the conditions, not the least of which is the resistance of Soviet leaders or public opinion to part with the islands, to gradually resolve differences between the two. The Falkland Islands War gives one pause, however, that so peaceful and smooth a resolution will eventually settle so emotional a matter to the satisfaction of both parties.

The US-China-USSR triangle comprises three other crucial axes determining the Northeast Asian security regime. Talk about playing the Chinese, Soviet, or American card does not appear to fit the present aims and strategies of these states. Those images appear more appropriate to the Cold War era and its conflict patterns. Over the last decade, they have come to tolerate, if not unconditionally accept, the presence of one or the other in the region. The Soviet Union, as in Europe, appears to have yielded the most. Since 1982, Moscow has worked tirelessly toward the goal of normalizing relations with Beijing.³⁰ China insisted on three principal

conditions for better relations: Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan; resolution of the Cambodian civil war based on the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops and Hanoi's diminished support (dependent on continued Soviet military and economic aid) for its client in Phnom Penh; and the settlement of border differences between the two countries, linked to a reduction of Soviet forces along their common border.

The Soviet Union has met the first condition, while China tolerates Moscow's continued support for the Kabul government. China has its own problems of legitimacy in Tibet, and both regimes have potential problems at home with large Muslim populations. The religious fundamentalism of opponents to the Najibullah regime and their military activism are not negligible sources of concern. The border dispute is, moreover, under active negotiation. Gorbachev announced Soviet willingness to accept the Thalweg or the middle channel principle as a way of reducing differences over borders.³¹ These negotiations resulted in a partial accord on borders between Moscow and Beijing in May 1991.

Perhaps more significantly from the perspective of Chinese security interests, and paving the way for progress in settling border disputes, the Soviet Union announced a reduction of its forces in Mongolia and a troop withdrawal of some 200,000 troops along the Chinese border. These include 12 army divisions and 11 air force regiments.³² As the discussion below suggests, and thanks partly to Soviet cooperation, progress has been made towards reaching a solution to the Cambodian crisis. On a cautionary note, it is well to remember that a great deal more remains to be done and a rapid unravelling of the tissue of understandings so painstakingly reached on Cambodia cannot be counted out. The Sino-Soviet summit of May 1989 consolidated the intention of both parties to reach an agreement on these key issues through peaceful engagement, a process that neither side shows any sign of wishing to abandon.

On a broader front, the Chinese government has apparently overcome its skepticism of "New Political Thinking" and remains convinced of the genuine desire of Moscow to normalize relations. Both are bent on domestic economic development and share the view that this priority, short of a challenge to the regime rule of either government, must not be mortgaged to foreign policy conflicts

abroad either with each other or, especially, with the United States, Japan, and the West European states. Beijing appears to have accepted Moscow's "New Political Thinking" as a basis for its rationalization of post-Cold War relations among the great powers. The implications of this turnabout in Sino-Soviet relations and the convergence of their domestic needs and foreign policy postures toward the West are potentially revolutionary when compared to the Cold War period. As Samuel S. Kim suggests:

*If the Sino-American rapprochement of 1971-2 can be called a first revolution in Chinese foreign policy with its restructuring impact of the Asian geopolitical landscape, the Sino-Soviet renormalization process of 1982-9 is even more revolutionary in its unprecedented "dual cooperative policy" vis-à-vis both superpowers. . . . This means that for the first time in modern history, China is redefining itself as part of the solution in superpower relations, offering a clear and continuing possibility of a ménage à trois.*³³

One indicator of the break from Cold War thinking and from the strategies of subversion pursued by the United States and the Communist giants toward each other is the implicit interest each of the Asian Big Four regimes has in the survival of its rival-partner. Despite Tiananmen Square, the Big Four have carefully refrained from open criticism of each other. None has challenged the legitimacy of the other; all share an interest in the survival of each and in the ability of each government to make commitments and to deliver on them.

Collective prudence (if not collective security) is particularly marked in the Bush administration's approach to the governmental crises in Beijing and Moscow. It has attempted to contain Congressional and public criticism of its restraint in condemning the Tiananmen Square tragedy. It also insists on insuring Beijing has Most Favored Nation trade status. But what appears to be the fundamental instability of the Chinese political regime poses the prospect of yet some future crisis in confidence and legitimacy, whose eruption would again pose the problem of choosing between rival factions engaged in the ongoing struggle for power in China. The problem of stability and legitimacy are not likely to go away for either communist power. Both communist governments confront serious domestic

challenges to their legitimacy and their ability to govern as they are presently composed.

On the surface, the ruling clique in China would appear to have surmounted student protests and provisionally bridged the deep gaps within the civilian and military leadership, occasioned and reflected in the demonstrations against the government. The latter has also weathered foreign criticism and penalties, including lowered investment and trade, reduced diplomatic exchanges, and the suspension of military sales. It remains to be seen, however, whether the splits within the party and the army have been vaulted and whether a sullen population, particularly those segments which live in the large cities, will be indefinitely reconciled to authoritarian rule.

The problems of instability and legitimacy are particularly acute today in the Soviet Union. Washington has an interest in preserving a central authority in Moscow. The network of accords and understandings reached between the two governments, not the least of which are the INF treaty and the emerging START agreement, imply the engagement of a government in Moscow that can commit the nation and keep its word. After almost 40 years of seeking to undermine the Kremlin (and almost as long a time with respect to the Chinese Communist regime), the United States now has an overriding interest in maintaining an effective government in Moscow to bolster the political stability of the Soviet Union and ensure responsible civilian control of the Soviet Union's military and police forces, most especially its enormous nuclear weapons stockpiles.

The leaders of the two Communist giants also empathize and sympathize with each other's precarious domestic situations at home. President Gorbachev was conspicuously circumspect during his visit to Beijing in the midst of the Tiananmen Square crisis.³⁴ Beijing has also tempered its criticism of what it believes to be Moscow's mischievous management of reform that began first with political and cultural glasnost rather than with market reform under tight central political control. Moscow and Beijing implicitly support each other, whatever reservations each may have of their efforts to reform their respective economies and to master the domestic upheavals occasioned by lags in socioeconomic development and political modernization. Recent talks on a possible Chinese

purchase of advanced Soviet military aircraft suggest an alignment of both states as they pass through their current turmoils.

If movement in Big Four relations has been slow and even regressive in the wake of unrest in China and the Soviet Union, change now appears to be the rule between the Small Two of the Northeast Asian security system. The opening of unity talks between Pyongyang and Seoul in the fall of 1990 seems to have been prompted by the revolutionary changes sweeping East Europe and the Soviet Union. Seoul moved quickly to exploit the dissolution of the Warsaw pact. Embassies were exchanged between Seoul and all members of the former Communist bloc in Eastern Europe. Pushed by the imperatives of trade and investment, Moscow soon followed the lead of its former East European satellites. Presidents Roh Tae Woo and Gorbachev met in San Francisco in June 1990, and the Korean President subsequently visited Moscow in the fall.

Soviet-South Korean economic ties are expanding. Trade doubled in 1989 to \$600 million and is estimated to rise to over \$1 billion in 1991. Several large South Korean companies, including Hyundai, Samsung, and Lucky Goldstar, are enlarging their activities in the Soviet Union. South Korean investment remains modest, confined to primary resources of furs and forestry products, but the groundwork for broader economic exchange is being laid.³⁵

The success of Seoul's *Nordpolitik* left Pyongyang far behind in the detente sweepstakes. The latter's willingness to engage in negotiations with its rival appears calculated to reduce its isolation and also reduce the damaging impact of what is tantamount to a reversal of alliances in which Seoul replaces Pyongyang as Moscow's partner. North Korea's principal allies are now Beijing and Hanoi, with Moscow fading fast into the background. The economic and political concerns of these three Communist regimes have little to do with Korean unification. Any intensification of North and South Korean conflict runs counter to their current needs. All are jockeying for position in the competition for Western favor, and their efforts would be frustrated if they were drawn into a crisis on the Korean peninsula.

North Korea's dismal economic performance would also appear to have played a role in its adoption of a more flexible diplomatic posture,

including its reluctant acceptance of the principle of dual Korean membership in the United Nations. By any measure, North Korea falls increasingly behind South Korea's economic development. In 1989, North Korea's GNP (\$21 billion) was one-tenth that of South Korea (\$210 billion); per capita income was one-fifth (\$987 vs. \$4,968); and commodity trade was approximately one-twenty fifth (\$4.8 billion vs. \$118 billion). Meanwhile, North Korea's foreign debt climbed to \$6.8 billion in 1989.

Until now, the two Koreas appear willing to agree on little more than on meeting.³⁶ Each harbors the expectation that it will prevail and will absorb the other through the ballot box or through intimidation. If the focused aims of these implacable rivals have not appreciably changed, the political framework and fluid alignments now animating the post-Cold War international environment are profoundly changing the choices and strategies available to each opponent in pressing its advantage. At this juncture, Pyongyang is on the defensive. However, despite this drawback, it has not lost the power to veto any intolerable change in its security environment. Neither South Korea nor its allies, including its newly found trading partners in Beijing and Moscow, form a solid enough, politically coherent, and determined coalition to impose a solution to the Korean question on Seoul's terms.

The Architecture of the Southeast Asian Security System. The security system of Southeast Asia is far more complex and difficult to describe than its Northeast counterpart. It is organized on what might be characterized as four closely interacting tiers: a *three by six by one by four* system. The Beijing-Washington-Moscow triangle forms the Great Power tier. The six represents the ASEAN states, agreed on containing Vietnamese and Soviet expansion over Cambodia and committed to non-Communist regimes and market economic principles, but divided by their different orientations to the principal actors in the region and their own national ambitions and domestic political needs. Hanoi also currently represents the third tier. Its domination of the Indochina peninsula is at the expense of its isolation from the West and most of ASEAN. (Indonesia a tacit and qualified ally against a possibly resurgent China.) It is also exposed to a determined China bent on limiting its influence in Indochina and ending its control over the government in Phnom Penh. The final tier is

composed of the Hun Sen government in Phnom Penh, whose power depends on Hanoi's support and the three opposition groups seeking to share or seize power in Cambodia. Of these, the Khmer Rouge is easily the strongest militarily in men and arms.

These four tiers are locked in a struggle to define which faction or coalition will control Cambodia and, by that token, the structure of the security sub-system of Indochina. But even if an accord could be reached on this issue, particularly with respect to the regime that will rule Cambodia, the inner-tensions at each tier, horizontally, and between each, vertically, promise continued conflict and intermittent armed hostilities cannot be ruled out for some time to come.

Soviet policy toward Southeast Asia, particularly toward the Cambodian civil war and its support of Vietnam's control over the Hun Sen regime, is a litmus test of Soviet New Thinking in Asia. Since 1985, the Soviet Union has been able to convince a skeptical China, ASEAN, and United States that it is more a help than a hindrance to a solution to the Cambodian and Indochina questions. In pursuit of credibility, it has gradually lowered its military presence in the region, decreased its military and economic assistance to Hanoi (consistent with the reduction of commitments elsewhere), while successfully prodding Vietnam to withdraw its forces from Cambodia and inducing Phnom Penh to enter negotiations with its rivals to establish a coalitional government in Cambodia under UN auspices.

The road to reconciliation has not been straight or easy. Soviet military assistance to Hanoi actually increased between 1984-1987 in the early phases of the Sino-Vietnamese restructuring process.³⁷ Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech signaled more a contemplated or proposed shift in Soviet thinking and priorities than a change in behavior. The continued presence of Vietnamese forces in Cambodia blocked any real progress in Soviet attempts to improve relations with China or ASEAN or Washington.³⁸ Some time in the first half of 1986, Moscow apparently reached the conclusion that its position in Asia and its global position more generally could be improved only by supporting a government of national reconciliation in Cambodia, by persuading Vietnam to withdraw its troops from the country, and by encouraging multiple talks between Hanoi and Beijing and ASEAN capitals to

create the necessary diplomatic conditions, framework, and atmosphere within which a solution to the Cambodian debacle might be found.³⁹

As these conditions materialized, Soviet diplomacy shifted its focus from a policy of multiple contacts, designed to promote mutual confidence and lower the suspicions of the opposing parties, to multilateral negotiations. These efforts led to the International Conference on Cambodia which met in August 1989, a month before Vietnam's withdrawal from the country. This meeting set the stage for the permanent members of the Security Council to address the problem. As Big Power accord crystallized, Soviet pressures were exerted on the warring parties, most especially Hanoi and Phnom Penh, to accept in principle a Supreme National Council to rule Cambodia and an expanded role for the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) to organize elections and to assure the security, welfare, and civil rights of the Cambodian people.

On the one hand, Moscow evidently has neither the power nor the interest to impose a solution to the security dilemmas of Indochina acceptable to all relevant rivals. On the other hand, Hanoi and Phnom Penh very likely have the capability of frustrating the designs of their opponents, especially China, even without substantial outside support. Active US entry into the negotiations of late has also complicated the realization of Chinese aims. As US-Soviet relations have grown more mutually confident, especially notable in the personal rapport between Secretary of State James Baker and former Foreign Minister Edward Schevardnadze, Washington's opposition to the Hun Sen regime has become less salient in defining US-Soviet relations. The withdrawal of Vietnamese troops (coupled with earlier withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan) renewed another formidable barrier to a reorientation to US policy. A role for the Phnom Penh regime has become increasingly attractive to block the forceful assumption of power by the Khmer Rouge. The latter's military superiority relative to its prospective coalition partners and its access to Chinese arms and political support ensure a role for itself in any compromise Cambodian government and a veto over the ability of any government in Phnom Penh to rule without its consent or acquiescence.

As the Cambodian question become more

susceptible to solution or containment, the alignments of rivals and allies in Southeast Asia become more blurred, fluid, and uncertain. A US-Chinese (Khmer Rouge)-ASEAN axis is no longer clearly pitted against a Soviet-Vietnamese (Phnom Penh) combination. China and the Khmer Rouge appear to be at odds with gradually converging US-Soviet preferences on the creation of a power sharing solution within a Supreme National Council. At the same time, Hanoi, Moscow's receding client, resists along with its protegee in Phnom Penh, Khmer Rouge insistence on a equal voice in the government and the transition process in proportion to its military weight.

China, meanwhile, has no interest in sacrificing gains made in normalizing its relations with the United States, the Soviet Union, and the ASEAN states in pressing for Pol Pot's return to power as head of the Khmer Rouge. Its willingness to work toward a coalitional solution, acceptable to the opposing factions and their backers, suggests that, while the Cambodian problem may not be resolved in the near future (since none of the major states is able or willing to attempt a final military solution), there is a strong likelihood that the very inner tensions of the contesting parties to the Indochinese conflict, which provisionally define the security regime of the peninsula, may prove sufficiently resilient and adaptable to contain the geographical scope of the struggle. Big Power relations may be insulated from the perpetuation of local armed conflict that may be permitted simply to fester. Cambodia may well become Asia's Lebanon; indeed the reverse may be closer to the truth in light of Cambodia's lamentable history over the past quarter century. None of the Great Powers is capable of solving the problem without the assistance of its rival-partners, nor do they have a collective will and marshalled resources to conclude the civil war and install a stable government under multilateral or UN supervision.

The Soviet Union's conciliatory posture in restructuring its support of Vietnam and Phnom Penh to the liking of China, the United States, and the ASEAN states has earned goodwill for Moscow in the region, but little else so far in tangible or strategic advantage, political influence, or trade and investment. Its principal gain, which should not be underestimated, is simply that it has cut its considerable losses. As Sheldon Simon suggests,⁴⁰

the largest potential gainer of Southeast Asian detente has been China. In the short run, the Tiananmen Square tragedy was costly to Beijing. These costs were purportedly weighed by the hardliners as less than the risks to their own power that would have run by liberalization at home. Political upheaval in the Soviet Union, without the compensation of economic growth that China has enjoyed, seems only to have confirmed Beijing to stay the course of economic reform guided by strong, central rule.

Additional support for resistance to the implementation of a Chinese version of glasnost is the recent success that Beijing has had in breaking out of its diplomatic isolation. The reopening of diplomatic relations in July 1990 between China and Indonesia, the first and fifth most populous states of the world, suggests the emergence of a convergence of interests between these Asian powers sufficiently strong to overcome Jakarta's deep suspicions of Chinese interventionist aims in Indonesia. These lay at the heart of the break in relations in the aftermath of the aborted Indonesian Communist coup of 1965. Although these concerns may still persist, they have been subordinated to more urgent reasons of state. Jakarta expects to nurture Beijing's currently firm but not uncompromising foreign policy stance, which is largely dictated by the overriding priority that it has assigned to economic development. Jakarta also appears interested in encouraging Beijing, as implicit compensation for Jakarta's extension of legitimacy, to refrain from interfering in Indonesia's internal affairs either through the manipulation of the small but commercially significant Indonesian Chinese community or through support for what remains of the Indonesian Communist party. In the bargain for breakout, China counts on increased trade and economic exchange with Indonesia to grow beyond the \$800 million reached in 1989.

Chinese ties with other ASEAN states are also improving. Diplomatic relations are expected to be resumed between Singapore and Beijing in the near future. Trade is already at an annual level in excess of \$3 billion. This increase has been attained without Chinese objections to continued trade between Taiwan and Singapore or other ASEAN states. Thailand's security cooperation with China, determined as much by choice as necessity, is closest among ASEAN states. Thailand serves as a

conduit for Chinese arms to the Khmer Rouge, and it also purchases Chinese weapons and equipment. Six Chinese missile frigates are scheduled for delivery to Thailand between 1992-1995.⁴¹

China's recent gains in the region do not imply a diminished role for the United States or exclusion of the Soviet Union from the region. Disputes between China and other Southeast claimants to parts of the Spratlys (Vietnam, Indonesian, Malaysia, and the Philippines) calls attention again to the security issues and competing national aspirations of the states and peoples of the region. To the Cambodian question and Vietnamese containment can be added China's gradual build up of naval forces in the South Pacific. It is an open question how they will be integrated into the maritime security system of the island powers and riparian states whose interests overlap with those China. If China and the other states of the region have decided to focus on low over high politics, it appears this conjunctural priority is driven, as viewed from some quarters, as a strategy in the service of long term Chinese aims of increasing its power, status, and influence in the region and beyond. Under these circumstances, it does not appear that the ASEAN states have an interest in excluding either the United States or the Soviet Union from the region as long as these concerns are at play. Each will remain European and Asian powers as much as a consequence of geopolitical and techno-economic imperatives as a response to the wishes of the states and peoples of the region.

Conclusions

Soviet power and influence have receded in Northeast and Southeast Asia, but, arguably, not at the expense of Soviet aims and interests. As Soviet military presence and power in Asia expanded, with its intervention in Afghanistan and with Hanoi's victory, the regional states aligned against Moscow and Hanoi. US power, which appeared to be in secular decline in the region after the Vietnam defeat, has now rebounded with the tacit approval and encouragement of ASEAN, China, and Japan. If Soviet "New Thinking" has not gained Moscow the kind of tangible strategic and diplomatic victories that were the stock and trade of the Cold War, its application to Asia has cut Moscow's losses, assisted the normalization of relations with all of the states of the region, and opened the way to

increased economic exchange, trade, and investment in the Soviet Far East and the integration of this neglected region into the process of economic expansion of the greater Pacific Basin. The breakthrough in Soviet-South Korean relations suggests that mutual gains without zero-sum losses are possible for all parties.

The relative decline of Soviet power does not suggest that any other state or coalition has gained an upper hand. Nor is anyone likely in the near future. A close look at the architecture of the Northeast and Southeast Asian security systems reveals several complex tiers of crosspressure supports for the two regimes. They have become multilateralized by necessity and increasingly by choice of the relevant actors in the region. No one state or coalition seems determined today to assert dominion or hegemony over an entire region. None has the resources nor will to engage in such an ambitious enterprise. There is ample countervailing power to check such a grab.

More importantly, the motivation and incentives bearing on governments in the region have turned increasingly toward economic growth, technological development, and, to a lesser extent, political modernization as their highest priority. The costs of imperial or hegemonic strategies to achieve these national objectives appear to be acutely understood by the leadership of the major states. The Japanese were the first to learn that lesson in suffering a crushing defeat in World War II. The experience of the postwar period suggests that empire is not a necessary condition of economic growth, political influence, or global status. The United States' turn came in Vietnam. An accumulation of foreign setbacks and domestic techno-economic stagnation and political oppression has now driven home the lesson in the Soviet Union.

There is a disposition on the part of the relevant actors to negotiate rather than coerce their rival-partners to accept their preferences for the structure and processes of decision currently defining the security regimes of Northeast and Southeast Asia. No one seeks to eliminate a rival nor to undermine its legitimate presence in the region. Witness the present restraint exercised of late by the states of the two regions in pressing their preferences. The Soviet Union can be credited with having given impulse to the multilateralization of

the Northeast and, particularly, the Southeast security systems. Increasingly, the regional actors working within these systems are giving institutional profile to their efforts by agreeing to an increased role of the United Nations and the Security Council in dampening conflict and creating a framework for the warring parties in Cambodia to negotiate a solution to their differences. Even if no solution is found to the Cambodian dilemma, the regional states, including the Big Powers, appear agreed that a festering civil war in Cambodia, even if aided and abetted by outside powers, should not be an obstacle to their continued normalization of relations and detente.

These multilateral understandings and delicately balanced crosspressured regional alignments can, of course, be shattered very rapidly. In the short run, regional techno-economic growth, if it can be achieved and sustained, may dampen national, ethnic, racial, and ideological strife. In the long run, differential growth may actually stir latent or temporarily suspended rivalries and result once again in the kind of titanic struggles of peoples and states that marked these regions through most of the twentieth century. Whether these regions will evolve toward mature security systems that balance the competing interests of regional actors or slowly degenerate once more into intericine balance of power struggles is still a very open question. Diplomacy will continue to be strained in adjusting for power differences, for competing ambitions and needs, and for assigning roles to nations and international bodies to encourage the peaceful settlement of differences.

Challenges to peaceful change can arise from several sources. From within, regime instability and, conceivably, abrupt and even violent change could rend the tissue of agreements that have evolved through the workings of the security processes of Northeast and Southeast Asia. China and the Soviet Union confront formidable internal problems. The states of ASEAN are not exempt. The governments of Thailand and the Philippines work under the persistent threat (and reality) of military coups. Nor is the future of post-Suharto Indonesia particularly reassuring. The two Koreas remain irreconciled on union. Seoul is beset by continued internal political upheaval; Pyongyang, while on the surface stable, may well turn out to be as brittle an authoritarian system as the Communist regimes in Eastern

Europe, once Kim Il Sung passes from the scene and the succession problem must be squarely faced within the context of an economically backward and increasingly politically isolated North Korea.

Challenges from without are also possible. The US-Japanese alliance is under strain. Whether it holds will depend critically on mutual adjustment of the competing techno-economic interests and roles of these two competitors in a global capitalist market system. The growth of Chinese military capabilities, especially in long range nuclear systems or movement toward a blue water navy, or Beijing's aggressive pursuit of its claims in the Spratlys, may upset the peaceful processes of negotiation and bargaining currently in train. The Cambodian question, now temporarily quarantined from infecting Big Power relations, may again become inflamed, if Vietnam abandons its present posture of restraint or if China is alternately pushed or pulled by the Khmer Rouge in staking a claim to hegemony in the country.

The security architectures of Northeast and Southeast Asia have shown a remarkable ability to carry heavy political loads and to withstand major shocks. Their continued viability, however, will depend on the cooperation of all of the states of the region, since none can count either on its own ability and resources, solely, or on anyone of their rival-partners, alone, to keep these structures standing or to reinforce their political and economic foundations.

Endnotes

¹Strengthening a state's regional geopolitical and economic position are ends in themselves, but these *points d'appui* also sustain global claims to great power status. This same synergism between Soviet global aspirations to be a great power in the Cold War and post-Cold War periods and specific, tailored regional policies to fit the limits and exploit the opportunities of regional security regimes may be viewed in the realist approach to the superpowers of French President Charles de Gaulle under the Fifth Republic. See Edward A. Kolodziej, *French International Policy under De Gaulle and Pompidou: The Politics of Grandeur* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974).

²US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1985* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1985), 50-51.

³Soviet difficulties are traced extensively in the chapters on regional security in Edward A. Kolodziej and Roger E. Kanet, *The Limits of Soviet Power in the Developing World: Themidor in the Revolutionary Struggle* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). See also S. Neil MacFarlane, *Superpower Rivalry and Third World Radicalism: The Idea of National Liberation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press,

1985); Mark N. Katz, *Gorbachev's Military Policy in the Third World* (New York: Praeger, 1989); Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Moscow's Third World Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), especially for its emphasis on Soviet denial strategies vis-à-vis U.S. intervention in the developing world; Rajan Menon, *Soviet Power and the Third World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); and Robert Litwak and Samuel F. Wells, Jr., eds., *Superpower Competition and Security in the Third World* (Cambridge: Ballinger, 1987).

⁴US State Department and Department of Defense, *The Soviet-Cuban Connection in Central America and the Caribbean* (Washington, DC: 1986), 3-10; and Robert S. Litwak, "Soviet Policies in the Third World: Objectives, Instruments, and Constraints," in *Superpower Competition and Crisis Prevention in the Third World*, eds., Roy Allison and Phil Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 37.

⁵US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1989* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1990), 65.

⁶See the discussion of this point in Roger E. Kanet, "Reassessing Soviet Doctrine: New Priorities and Perspectives," in *The Limits of Soviet Power in the Developing World*, 399ff.

⁷Quoted in Kanet, 400-401.

⁸W. Raymond Duncan traces the gap and tensions between Cuban and Soviet policy in the Third World in his "Cuban-Soviet Relations: Directions of Influence," in *The Limits of Soviet Power in the Developing World*, 65-93.

⁹Paul Dobb, *The Soviet Union: The Incomplete Superpower* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

¹⁰See Kanet, 397-425, especially 418-425, for a discussion and sources cited there.

¹¹For a recent review of the strategic implications of "New Political Thinking" based on an extensive examination of original documents, consult Raymond L. Garthoff, *Deterrence and the Revolution in Soviet Military Doctrine* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1990).

¹²See, for example, Andrei Kokoshin and others, *Problems of Ensuring Stability with Radical Cuts in Armed Forces and Conventional Armaments in Europe* (Moscow: Novosti Press, 1989).

¹³Two especially important documents, outlining Soviet aims and strategy toward Asia are Gorbachev's addresses at Vladivostok in 1986 and his more conciliatory statement at Krasnoyarsk in 1988. See *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, XXXVIII, no. 30 (27 August 1986): 1-8 and 32; and XL, no. 38 (19 October 1988): 1-7.

¹⁴Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier, *The Soviet Union and the Third World: An Economic Bind* (New York: Praeger, 1983), 26.

¹⁵Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate Range and Shorter Range Missiles (Washington, DC, December 1987), 10.

¹⁶Arms Control Association, "Potential Strategic Forces under START," (Washington, DC, November 1990). See also Kolodziej, "Arms Control, Disarmament, and Budgetary Implications of START," in *Disarmament Agreements and Negotiations: The Economic Dimension* (London: Dartmouth, forthcoming). This volume is published under the auspices of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (Geneva).

¹⁷James E. Goodby, "The Stockholm Conference: Negotiating a Cooperative Security System for Europe," in *US-Soviet Security Cooperation*, eds. Alexander L. George, Philip J. Farley, and

Alexander Dallin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 144-172.

¹⁸See, for example, the analysis of "Z", "To the Stalin Mausoleum," *Daedalus*, CXIX, no. 1 (Winter 1990), 295-344.

¹⁹The Soviet economic position in Asia is summarized in R. Sean Randolph, "The Soviet Economic Role in Asia and the Pacific," *Asian Survey*, XXX, no. 12 (December 1990), 1169-1185.

²⁰Chong-Pin Lin reviews Chinese nuclear and conventional deterrent strategies vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in *China's Nuclear Weapons Strategy: Tradition within Evolution* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1988).

²¹Sheldon Simon, "An American Perspective on Security and Tension Reduction in the North Pacific," *Asia-Pacific Review*, Fall, 1990.

²²See Gorbachev's Vladivostok and Krasnoyarsk statements, note 13. General treatments of Asia security problems and of the Soviet Union's roles within them may be found in the following: Richard Smoke and Andrei Kortunov, eds., *Mutual Security: A New Approach to Soviet-American Relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), especially the joint statement and the five articles by the working group on the North Pacific, 193-246; Young Whan Kihl and Lawrence E. Grinter, eds., *Security, Strategy, and Policy Responses in the Pacific Rim* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1989); and Dora Alves, *Change, Interdependence, and Security in the Pacific Basin: The 1990 Pacific Symposium* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1991).

²³Sheldon Simon, "Superpower Cooperation in Southeast Asia," in *The Cold War as Cooperation*, 348-49.

²⁴Muthiah Alagappa, "Soviet Policy in Southeast Asia: Towards Constructive Engagement," *Pacific Affairs*, LXIII, no. 3 (Fall 1990), 346.

²⁵See Simon, note 21.

²⁶See note 22.

²⁷*New York Times*, 26 March 1991, A7.

²⁸A brief, revealing review of the islands issue may be found in Andrew Mack and Martin O'Hare, "Moscow-Tokyo and the

Northern Territories Dispute," *Asian Survey*, XXX, no. 4 (April 1991), 280-394.

²⁹Journalist reports issuing from Tokyo suggest that very little movement can be expected on the Northern islands issue during Gorbachev's April visit. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 21 February 1991, 11-13. The failure of the visit to move this issue to solution confirmed this pessimistic assessment.

³⁰Steven M. Goldstein traces the evolution of the Sino-Soviet rapprochement in, "Diplomacy Amid Protest: The Sino-Soviet Summit," *Problems of Communism* (September-October 1989), 49-71.

³¹Goldstein, 53.

³²Simon, "An American Perspective on Security and Tensions Reduction in the North Pacific."

³³Samuel S. Kim, "Superpower Cooperation in Northeast Asia," in *The Cold War as Cooperation*, 384.

³⁴Goldstein, 69.

³⁵Randolph, 1170-1175.

³⁶For a current reading of the fever chart on relations between the two Koreas, see Young Whan Kihl, "South Korea in 1990: Diplomatic Activism and a Partisan Quagmire," *Asian Survey*, XXXL, no. 1 (January 1991), 65-70; and Rhee Sang-Woo, "North Korea in 1990: Lonesome Struggle to Keep Chuch'e," *Asian Survey*, XXXL, no. 1 (January 1991), 71-78.

³⁷Alagappa, 325-335, provides an excellent review of this restructuring process.

³⁸As late as 1988, US policy showed little interest in Moscow's signaling for change. See the US response to Gorbachev's Krasnoyarsk speech by Gaston J. Sigur, Assistant Secretary for East Asian Pacific Affairs, and Richard L. Armitage, Assistant Secretary for International Security, *New York Times*, 2 October 1988.

³⁹Alagappa, 326.

⁴⁰For a recent evaluation of Chinese policy in Southeast Asia, see Sheldon Simon's perceptive review, "China and Southeast Asia: Suspicion and Hope," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* (forthcoming).

⁴¹See note 40.

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