



No. 56

January 15, 1987

DEALING WITH HANOI: A FOUR-POINT STRATEGY FOR WASHINGTON

INTRODUCTION

In the decade following the American defeat in Southeast Asia, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has swept virtually unopposed across Cambodia and Laos to fulfill its centuries old ambition of controlling a Greater Indochinese bloc. Neighboring Southeast Asian nations were quick to mobilize diplomatic opposition to Hanoi, but the United States remained for many years exceedingly cautious in responding to Vietnamese aggression. Washington's limited assistance to the noncommunist resistance in Cambodia and the U.S. economic embargo against Hanoi are weak responses. What is needed today is a more forceful policy to deal with Vietnam's threat to Southeast Asia.

The time may be right for a new U.S. policy, as faint whiffs of change drift over from Vietnam. The aging leaders of the ruling communist party have just been replaced by a slightly younger group of cadres. The economic system, which has transformed once lush Vietnam into one of the world's poorest lands, is coming under increasing public criticism. A few good words are being uttered about the more entrepreneurial and individualistic life-style in southern Vietnam. And there are even hints that Hanoi may be becoming uncomfortable with its close embrace with Moscow.

Yet these, so far, are just whiffs and well may waft away leaving no trace. The hard fact remains that the Socialist Republic of Vietnam continues to be the most dangerous threat to Southeast Asian peace and stability. Armed to the teeth by the Soviet Union, Vietnam is now the Cuba of Southeast Asia. The 1.5 million-strong Vietnamese Army is now the fourth largest in the world, outgunned only by the

USSR, the United States, and China. On the Thai-Cambodia border alone are camped 160,000 Vietnamese troops, menacing the Royal Thai government, while 50,000 others keep Laos a submissive vassal state.

Hanoi would be unable to sustain these forces without the massive Soviet assistance it receives. Moscow was the main source of military aid for the North Vietnamese throughout the Vietnam War. This aid has increased and now exceeds \$2 billion annually for economic and military purposes. In return, Hanoi allows the Soviet Union to use the very valuable former American base at Cam Ranh Bay. It is now the largest Soviet military facility outside the USSR, enabling Moscow to threaten the shipping lanes through which such strategic resources as oil, natural gas, and raw materials are transported to Northeast Asia and the U.S.

The U.S. needs to confront and contain the growing Vietnamese and Soviet threat to Southeast Asia. Especially endangered are America's close friends, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Brunei, who comprise the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN. At the same time, Washington must recognize that Moscow-Hanoi relations show strain. The Soviets seem to be tiring of Vietnamese corruption and inefficiency. There is also the cost to Moscow of poor relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) and ASEAN because of Soviet support of Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia and Laos.¹ For its part, Vietnam is concerned with the thaw of the Sino-Soviet chill. Hanoi may fear that Moscow will sell out Vietnamese interests to further ties with Beijing. As such, Hanoi now appears willing to lessen its economic dependence on the Soviet Union by seeking to expand trade links with the U.S. and other Western countries.

In view of this, the U.S. needs to weigh its policy options carefully. Since the U.S. retreat from Indochina in 1975, humanitarian concerns have dominated the meager dealings between Washington and Hanoi. To gain U.S. diplomatic recognition and an end to the U.S. economic embargo, the Vietnamese have manipulated such sensitive issues as U.S. servicemen still missing-in-action (MIAs), the plight of children in Vietnam born of American fathers (Amerasians), and the fate of Vietnamese political prisoners who formerly fought with the U.S. These negotiations have produced agony and frustration for the American and Vietnamese families involved.

Central to Washington's policy must be maintaining pressure on Vietnam as long as it occupies Cambodia and refuses to permit an independent, neutral, noncommunist government in Phnom Penh. The most effective way for the U.S. to apply pressure is to increase aid to the noncommunist Cambodian resistance beyond the \$3.35 million given in

1. See Asiaweek, September 21, 1986, pp. 17-25.

1986. Similarly, the U.S. should aid the widespread anti-communist resistance movement in Laos. In this policy of supporting noncommunist Khmer and Lao opposition to the Vietnamese, the U.S. will be backed by the ASEAN nations and, significantly, by Beijing. ASEAN, in particular, repeatedly has urged the U.S. to join a strong, united front against the Vietnamese threat to the region.

The U.S. also needs to use better its powerful leverage of trade, aid, and diplomatic recognition. In dangling these incentives--all greatly desired by Hanoi--Washington must link them specifically to a Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia and Laos and the restoration of free and popular governments in those two countries.

VIETNAMESE DOMINATION OF INDOCHINA'S FALLEN DOMINOES

Its 1978 invasion of Cambodia is the latest in Vietnamese drives across Indochina that began in the 11th century. Only the intervention of the French from the mid-19th century until 1954 held off Vietnamese occupation of the fertile lowlands of Cambodia and the cultural assimilation of the resident Khmer. Shortly after World War II, Vietnamese communist leader Ho Chi Minh called for a Greater Indochinese Socialist State in which Hanoi would lead a bloc of nations composed of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

During the 1945-1954 war against the French, the communist Viet Minh led by Ho Chi Minh supported smaller communist movements in Laos and Cambodia. These movements were known as the Pathet Lao and Khmer Rouge respectively. Following the French defeat in Indochina in 1954, contact between the Indochinese communist parties continued. In 1960, the North Vietnamese Army intervened in the Laotian civil war on the side of the Pathet Lao against the pro-Western Royal Laotian government. By 1968 the Vietnamese largely had taken over the war, remaining in Laos to push the Pathet Lao on to victory in 1975, only weeks after Hanoi's forces drove the U.S. out of South Vietnam.

As a result of its heavy involvement in the civil war, Vietnam dominated the successor Pathet Lao government and its armed forces. To consolidate its power, Hanoi sent "advisors" to Laos to organize a large secret police network to identify and eliminate anti-communist and anti-Vietnamese elements.²

Hanoi also sent large numbers of Vietnamese settlers into the Laotian panhandle. Vietnamese males were encouraged to marry Laotian

2. Martin Stuart-Fox, ed., Contemporary Laos (London: University of Queensland Press, 1982), p. 227.

women, but Lao men were forbidden to marry Vietnamese women. Hanoi's goal: eventually to Vietnamize Laotian society.

Vietnam suppressed all Laotian resistance to this cultural assimilation. In late 1976, for example, a combined Vietnamese-Pathet Lao campaign nearly eradicated the Hmong minority tribe³ concentrated in the northeastern quarter of Laos. The Hmong had been strong supporters of the U.S. during the Vietnam War because of their traditional hatred of the Vietnamese.

With Laos under control, Vietnam next turned to Thailand, which by 1976 was itself suffering from major internal upheavals. Late that year, Vietnam made overtures to attract the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) away from its close ties with the Chinese Communist Party. Suspicious of Vietnamese intentions, the Thai communists balked at the Vietnamese offer to send two Pathet Lao army divisions into Thailand to help fight the Bangkok government. Shortly thereafter, a successful counterinsurgency program by the Thai government consisting of rural development and guerrilla amnesty countered and defeated the CPT.⁴

Rebuffed in Thailand, Vietnam moved toward Cambodia, which since 1975 had been controlled by Pol Pot and the communist Khmer Rouge in a reign of terror that took at least one million Cambodian lives, wiping out nearly one-fifth of the Cambodian population. In contrast to Hanoi, which severed relations with Beijing and allied with the Soviet Union, the Khmer Rouge maintained close ties with the China. Perhaps reflecting the Sino-Soviet split and centuries of Cambodian animosity toward the Vietnamese, the Khmer Rouge actually staged a series of border skirmishes with Vietnam in 1978. Vietnam retaliated in December 1978 by launching a blitzkrieg invasion that toppled the Pol Pot government. Just fifteen days after the invasion Vietnam installed Heng Samrin as head of a puppet regime in Phnom Penh. Hanoi attempted to justify its invasion on the grounds of freeing the Cambodian people from the widely condemned brutality of the Pol Pot regime.

Since its invasion, Vietnam has based twelve army divisions in Cambodia, as well as numerous support units, totalling 150,000 men. Hanoi has also built up a small armed force for the pro-Vietnamese Heng Samrin government, but this army is low on equipment, demoralized, and routinely defects.

3. "Reports of the Use of Chemical Weapons in Afghanistan, Laos, and Kampuchea," U.S. Department of State, 1982, p. 34.

4. Asiaweek, June 14, 1985, pp. 43-45.

As in Laos, Hanoi has attempted to crush all dissenting elements through the widespread use of force, including torture.⁵ Large numbers of Vietnamese civilians have been sent into the fertile farming and fishing regions of the Cambodian heartland. Frequently, Cambodians in these areas are forcibly relocated to less secure areas along the Thai-Cambodian border.⁶ Vietnamese also control much of the economy, enjoy extraterritorial rights, and hold key administrative posts in Phnom Penh. Perhaps nothing more clearly reveals Vietnam's attempt to transform Cambodia into a vassal state than the fact that Vietnamese are now 60 percent of the population in the capital city. Hanoi's ultimate objective is the destruction of Cambodia's society and its full integration as a benign Vietnamese vassal state.

HANOI'S DEPENDENCE ON MOSCOW

Vietnam could not afford to occupy Laos and Cambodia without massive Soviet support. The Vietnamese economy is in shambles. Examples:

- o In 1985, per capita income in Vietnam was only \$189, compared with \$645 for Thailand, \$1,996 for Malaysia, and \$6,922 for Singapore.
- o Malnutrition and intestinal disease, eradicated in most of Asia, are still major health hazards in Vietnam.⁷
- o With extremely low levels of medical supplies, Hanoi has been forced to encourage the widespread use of medically ineffective and even dangerous "ancient healing arts."⁸
- o New machinery and spare parts are almost nonexistent.⁹

5. The Washington Post, August 2, 1985, p. A22.

6. The Washington Post, July 26, 1985, p. A9.

7. The New York Times, January 28, 1985, p. 2.

8. The New York Times, August 12, 1986, p. C7.

9. The New York Times, January 28, 1985, p. 2.

- o The average weight of the Vietnamese is dropping by one to two pounds a year.¹⁰
- o Inflation in 1986 ran at 700 percent.¹¹

An additional factor that has adversely affected the Vietnamese economy has been the exodus of many of former South Vietnam's educated elite and entrepreneurs. Over the last decade, one million such people have fled via foot and boat, sapping Hanoi of its most valuable human resources.¹²

To shore up Vietnam's economy, the Soviet Union gives Hanoi about \$1.25 billion annually in nonmilitary aid. In return, the Vietnamese have allowed Moscow to use Vietnam as the first Soviet strategic bastion ever on the Southeast Asian mainland. Today Moscow boasts:

- o 5,000 Soviet military advisors in Vietnam, 500 advisors in Laos, 200 in Cambodia, and direct control of the Laotian Air Force, which has been equipped with MiG-21 fighters.
- o Exclusive use of Cam Ranh Bay, which has been expanded to handle two dozen Soviet warships and which comprises six floating docks, fuel tanks, barracks, power plants,¹³ communications facilities, and intelligence gathering sites.
- o Long-range Soviet reconnaissance and anti-submarine aircraft, bombers, and MiG-23 fighters, which threaten shipping lanes throughout Southeast Asia and can easily strike U.S. bases in the Philippines.¹⁴

The Vietnam bases provide the USSR with important sites for intelligence gathering and serve as critical refueling and replenishment stations for the growing Soviet Pacific fleet.

10. The New York Times, January 12, 1986, p. E3.

11. Far Eastern Economic Review, December 11, 1986, p. 15.

12. Christian Science Monitor, April 30, 1985, p. 10.

13. Asiaweek, September 14, 1986, p. 18.

14. Ibid.

In addition to providing bases, Hanoi supports Moscow's overseas policies by selling weapons to communist guerrillas in the Philippines,¹⁵ training Grenadian radicals,¹⁶ and providing Salvadoran rebels with arms and ammunition.¹⁷

Despite these close ties with the Soviet Union, there have been signs of strain between Hanoi and Moscow. For its part, Moscow may not have the resources to continue sponsoring a client state that is so wrought with economic waste and mismanagement. Soviet officials repeatedly have expressed their concerns to Hanoi, notably at the Sixth Vietnamese Party Congress in December 1986, when Moscow observers played a highly visible role in calling for reforms.

Hanoi has had to respond to Soviet concerns with a surprisingly candid year of self-criticism. Top Vietnamese leaders, for instance, have admitted squandering their annual \$1.25 billion in Soviet nonmilitary aid in unfulfilled development programs and half-finished industrial projects. Hanoi has proceeded with this self-criticism rather than risk what it sees as a possible scaling down or cutoff of Soviet aid. This fear was underscored by former Communist Party chief Truong Chinh when he returned from a cool reception in Moscow in July 1986. Vietnamese leaders also have been concerned with a possible Soviet sellout to China, specifically the signals in late 1986 from Moscow to Beijing regarding the Cambodian problem. This was the first time that the two countries had discussed the problem together.

Moscow does, in fact, view a possible improvement in relations with Beijing as having far greater strategic implications than its ties with Hanoi and might be willing to sacrifice Cambodia in the near future if it saw strong movement on the part of the PRC to foster improved ties. However, the Soviet Union also will continue to play a balancing act with Vietnam so as not to risk losing its foothold at Cam Ranh Bay. In relegating bilateral interests with Vietnam to a secondary position, the Soviets may be underestimating Vietnamese desires for a continued hold over its Cambodian vassal state. But in any real test between Moscow and Hanoi, Soviet economic leverage and greater strategic concerns vis-a-vis China will undoubtedly win over Vietnamese regional interests.

15. The Washington Times, October 10, 1986, p. 6A.

16. Grenada Documents: An Overview and Selection, U.S. Department of State and Department of Defense, Document #18, September 1984.

17. The Washington Post, August 9, 1984, p. A31.

THE CAMBODIAN AND LAO RESISTANCE

Numerous anti-Vietnamese resistance groups have sprung up in Cambodia and Laos. In Cambodia a coalition of three such groups--the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), the Armee Nationale Sihanoukienne (ANS), and the Khmer Rouge--has scored surprising and mounting military successes over the Vietnamese.

The noncommunist KPNLF is headed by former Prime Minister Son Sann. It was formed in October 1979 from several smaller groups, which had resisted the Pol Pot regime since 1975. Starting with only 1,500 guerrillas, the KPNLF has grown to 19,000. Initially, KPNLF military commanders mainly defended their sanctuaries inside Cambodia along the border with Thailand. In December 1984, a massive Vietnamese offensive crushed these camps and drove the KPNLF into Thailand. As a result, the KPNLF adopted a strategy of guerrilla resistance inside Cambodia itself. Despite rifts in the past year between KPNLF military and civilian leaders, the movement now has several thousand soldiers fighting inside Cambodia. It has also attracted the support of South Vietnamese resistance groups still fighting Hanoi.¹⁸ Recent KPNLF guerrilla operations include the October 1986 ambushes of Vietnamese military convoys in Pursat province and west of the capital city of Phnom Pehn, and the November 1986 attack on the new Vietnamese airfield in Kompong Chhnang Province. All were carried out with at least some assistance from defectors or sympathizers within the ranks of the communist Heng Samrin army.

The ANS, the second noncommunist group, was founded in 1981 by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who ruled Cambodia from the mid-1950s until he was toppled in 1970. For years, the mercurial Sihanouk has lived in exile in France, China, and North Korea. The ANS now numbers 12,000 men. Its border camps also were hit hard by the Vietnamese in early 1985, but since then some 6,000 guerrillas have filtered back into Cambodia. Sihanouk is an important symbol of Cambodian unity and nationalism and is strongly supported by ASEAN and China.

The Khmer Rouge remains the largest resistance group. With a disciplined military structure and ample support from China, the Khmer Rouge boasts 52,000 soldiers, of whom 40,000 are inside Cambodia. Although Pol Pot reportedly retired as Khmer Rouge leader in 1981, the group is still viewed as dangerously extremist.¹⁹ It remains hostile to the KPNLF and ANS and occasionally attacks their patrols. Nonetheless, the Khmer Rouge are expert guerrillas and exert tremendous pressure on Hanoi to withdraw from Cambodia.

18. Jane's Defense Weekly, November 1, 1986, p. 1101.

19. Pol Pot currently is in the PRC in poor health. See The Washington Times, November 20, 1986, p. 9A.

Despite understandable mutual distrust, the KPNLF, ANS, and Khmer Rouge in June 1982 formed an anti-Vietnamese political coalition headed by Sihanouk. In 1985, the KPNLF and ANS established a joint military command and radio station. Occasionally these two groups cooperate militarily with the Khmer Rouge. These Cambodian resistance movements have fought the larger and much more powerful Vietnamese forces to a standstill. Hanoi has been forced to divert troops from sealing off the Thai-Cambodian border to conducting massive, but ineffective, sweeps of the Cambodian countryside.

To diffuse some international criticism, Vietnam has pledged since 1985 to remove all troops from Cambodia by 1990, unless the Heng Samrin regime requests an extension. Hanoi's sincerity is questionable. For one thing, it has continued Vietnamizing Cambodia by settling large numbers of Vietnamese there, which could affect any future election dealing with self-determination. For another, Hanoi easily can count on Heng Samrin to request Vietnam to remain if their mutual hold over Cambodia is still in question by 1990.

Hanoi's occupying forces in Laos, as in Cambodia, have come under increasingly heavy attack from the anti-communist resistance. The main Lao resistance is the United Lao National Liberation Front (ULNLF). Created in 1981, it is composed of a broad coalition of former leaders of the Royalist government, including a large guerrilla force headed by General Vang Pao, a legendary officer whose guerrilla forces kept three North Vietnamese Army divisions pinned down during the Vietnam War. The ULNLF has attracted support from several other Lao resistance groups known as Neutralists, who are operating in southern Laos. Led by General Kong Le, the Neutralists have been backed by China. The noncommunist Laotian resistance conducts military operations in over half the country, and is gaining increased support from the Lao civilian population. Vang Pao's ULNLF, in particular, has launched regular small-scale attacks against Vietnamese garrisons across Xieng Khouang province in the northeast and has also conducted reconnaissance operations in northern Laos to collect information on communist POW camps.

INTERNATIONAL OPPOSITION TO VIETNAM

Much of the world community opposes Vietnam's occupation of Indochina. At the United Nations last October, for example, a record 115 nations opposed seating Cambodia's Heng Samrin government in favor of continued representation by an anti-Vietnamese Cambodian coalition. Individually, many countries are active in opposing Vietnamese hegemony. China, for instance, gives the Khmer Rouge large numbers of small arms, ammunition, heavy machine guns, anti-tank weapons, long-range surface-to-surface rockets, and reportedly, surface-to-air missiles. Chinese assistance recently has been

extended to the noncommunist resistance movements. In October 1986, Beijing announced it would supply the KPRLF and ANS with anti-tank rockets.

China also has supplied Laotian resistance groups with arms and training. China maintains constant military pressure on Vietnam along their common border. In 1979, China briefly invaded northern Vietnam to demonstrate its displeasure over Hanoi's invasion of Cambodia. While China's military performance was far worse than expected, and some observers feel that China was defeated momentarily, Beijing continues to mount small-scale incursions and rocket attacks against Vietnamese border garrisons.

The ASEAN countries, meanwhile, have been calling for the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia, self-determination for the Cambodian people, and a neutral and nonaligned government in Phnom Penh. ASEAN's diplomatic effort receives widespread support at the U.N., and ASEAN has rebuffed Vietnamese attempts to gain acceptance for a single Indochina political entity. Several ASEAN nations, particularly Thailand and Singapore, give material support to the Cambodian resistance; and Malaysia and Indonesia offer training to resistance fighters.

The U.S. has been a reluctant supporter of the noncommunist resistance movement in Cambodia. Not until 1985 did the Reagan Administration finally heed ASEAN requests to assume a greater role in supporting resistance against the Vietnamese. While the initial \$3.35 million in humanitarian aid given in 1986 was far less than what ASEAN wanted, the U.S. move was appreciated as an important first step. A similar amount of aid is expected to be approved in 1987.

CHANGING THE GUARD IN HANOI

There has been considerable turmoil on Hanoi's political front. The changes incurred at the Sixth Party Congress in December 1986 were a fitting conclusion to a year of unprecedented self-criticism by Vietnam's ruling body. At year's end, Hanoi watchers were debating whether these changes were merely cosmetic or suggested some significant economic reforms in the making.

Initially, there were indications of real movement toward economic reform. Former Party Secretary-General Truong Chinh began the serious self-criticism in mid-1986, prompted in part by his cool reception in Moscow by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Chinh suddenly became the most vocal advocate of reform, harshly criticizing past mismanagement and strengthening the hand of those party members who had pressed for a "softer," decentralized approach to correcting Vietnam's economic woes. It was conveniently forgotten that Chinh

himself had made his career as an economic hardliner and was responsible for several failed collectivization campaigns.

Though Truong Chinh attempted to retain his ruling position, he stepped down with the two other top party members at the Sixth Party Congress. This surprise move, following serious factional infighting, resulted in the elevation of a "younger" generation of cadres. The average age of the new ruling trio under Nguyen Van Linh is 73 years old--only five years younger than its predecessor. Much has been said about the "reformist" nature of these new leaders. Linh and Pham Hung, the new number two man, have also been touted as southern sympathizers, and their elevation is seen as a concession toward the more economically successful southern Vietnam.

Despite indications of a reformist trend, there are equally strong signs that the reform is short on substance. While Linh leads the reformists, for example, he is a relative newcomer and has yet to build up a large political support network. Those without any record as reformists, such as Pham Hung, also have risen into the Politburo, as have such traditional economists as Do Moui. Furthermore, Pham Hung and others with purported southern sympathies are actually northerners, who controlled the southern-based Viet Cong during the war.

The three leading Politburo members who officially stepped down in December have retained positions as "advisors." This could allow them to maintain strong control and block reforms. Several retiring officials also have been able to elevate proteges into the Politburo, giving a further indication that change may be more elusive in Vietnam than originally speculated.

Hanoi, meanwhile, has been careful to protect its Cambodian policy from criticism. Significantly, a leading military proponent of the Cambodian occupation was promoted to a leading office in December, indicating that Hanoi is not dissatisfied with the course of events. Thus, while changes in Vietnam's ruling body may bring some small reforms, Washington should not expect any significant softening on the part of Hanoi in regard to their Cambodian policy and the state of their military relationship with Moscow.

U.S.-VIETNAM RELATIONS

Since 1975, relations between Washington and Hanoi have been shaped primarily by humanitarian concerns. The Vietnamese have skillfully manipulated American emotions over Americans still missing-in-action, the plight of the so-called Amerasian children born to U.S. servicemen, and the fate of Vietnamese political prisoners. What Hanoi has sought has been a deal: Vietnam would bow to

humanitarian concerns if the U.S. would grant diplomatic recognition and economic assistance.

Washington wisely has refused to play on these terms, insisting instead that the humanitarian concerns be settled before any normalization of relations is considered. In this deadlock, Hanoi has found it easy to slow the pace of negotiations by repeatedly dangling humanitarian concessions and then stymying hopes for real movement on the issues. U.S. officials have thus seen little significant progress over the past decade.

Now, however, as Hanoi is feeling the heavy burden of its economic and political dependence on the Soviet Union, the failure of its centrally planned economy, and the high costs of military occupation of Laos and Cambodia, the U.S. should realize an opportunity to change its strategy for dealing with Hanoi. A new four-point agenda should include:

- 1) Increased U.S. support for the noncommunist resistance in Cambodia. As Hanoi's Achilles' heel, Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia already has turned world opinion against Hanoi. Aid to the noncommunist resistance not only keeps military pressure on Hanoi, but also represents the only hope for a free Cambodia in the event of a Cambodian settlement. This is extremely important, given the pace at which Cambodia is being Vietnamized and the possibility that the Soviets may bargain away Cambodia in a deal with China. In either scenario, the noncommunists would be immediately thrust into opposition against both the communist Heng Samrin forces and the formidable Khmer Rouge. U.S. aid already is being delivered to the noncommunist resistance, but resistance leaders have expressed the need for more funds to equip their growing numbers, increase psychological and political warfare training for cadres, and expand their broadcasting capabilities. Part of an expanded aid package should include greater U.S. oversight to ensure that the aid reaches those for whom it is intended. With such increased assistance, the Cambodian noncommunist guerrillas will be able to increase their already impressive rate of success against their Vietnamese oppressors.

- 2) U.S. support for Laos' noncommunist guerrillas. Laos too has been suffering from the same foreign oppression as Cambodia. The Lao noncommunist resistance already is in place and fighting and thus can exert pressure on Vietnam. The Lao resistance is virtually all noncommunist, with no equivalent of the Khmer Rouge. After fighting for a decade with almost no foreign support, the Lao resistance has built a large network inside the country. Attempts by the Lao resistance to get U.S. assistance have been turned down in the past. They need an aid package, comparable to that of the Cambodians, with a minimum of \$3 million dollars to better equip the Lao guerrillas with small arms, clothing, and medicines.

3) Insistence that U.S. trade and economic assistance to Hanoi depends on a Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia and Laos. Eventually Hanoi may conclude that it has more to gain from working with Beijing, Washington, and the ASEAN nations than from remaining a Soviet-sponsored aggressor state.

4) Finally, the U.S. should continue to insist that full diplomatic recognition of Hanoi depends on Vietnam's settling the major humanitarian issues in U.S.-Vietnamese relations: the fate of U.S. missing-in-action, the plight of the Amerasians, and the future of Vietnamese political prisoners.

CONCLUSION

In Moscow's grand strategy, Hanoi is the key surrogate in Southeast Asia, as Cuba is in Latin America and Africa. The Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia and Laos is the critical security issue in Southeast Asia. But just as the Cambodian and Laotian people are suffering under foreign domination, the Vietnamese are coming up losers. They are a pariah state in the world community and are under constant military pressure from China and the resistance movements in the occupied nations. The Vietnamese also have an economy that is one of the worst in the world. This will not change as long as Vietnam plays the role of Moscow's primary aggressor in Southeast Asia.

If Hanoi ends its occupation of Cambodia and Laos and reduces its client-state relationship with the Soviet Union, Vietnam will benefit enormously. Such action would reduce tension with its Southeast Asian neighbors and immediately increase trade with ASEAN. It would remove the primary stumbling block for improved relations with China and allow Vietnam to play a constructive role in regional affairs. Trade with the West would follow, as would diplomatic recognition and economic assistance. In cutting down its own enormous military budget, Hanoi would be able to put its own economy in order and rebuild. The embarrassment of being a Soviet client-state also would end.

Although the benefits of withdrawing from Cambodia and Laos are great, they still are not enough to overcome the traditional Vietnamese desire for regional hegemony. Thus, Washington must also set in motion the four-point agenda of pressure and persuasion by increasing support for the Cambodian resistance, aiding the Lao resistance, and offering the incentives of trade, economic assistance, and diplomatic recognition.

In many ways, the Vietnam War will continue for as long as the U.S. and Vietnam remain enemies or at odds. The U.S. should be prepared to do what it can to end the enmity if Hanoi demonstrates a

sincere desire to play a constructive role in Southeast Asia. If this were to happen, almost everyone would be a winner. The only loser would be Soviet expansionism.

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