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Vietnam and the Soviet Union: Anatomy of an Alliance

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Gallicchio, Marc S. *The Cold War Begins in Asia: American East Asian Policy and the Fall of the Japanese Empire*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1988. 181pp. \$20

Two sentences encapsulate the problem with this book. In discussing the difficulties the United States faced in Korea, China and Indochina in the days after V-J Day, Professor Gallicchio allows, "Nevertheless, the picture was not totally dark. Japan had been defeated and occupied, and American power in the Pacific was at its zenith." Small mercies, indeed.

The proposition advanced is that the Pacific war ended too soon, not for the participants, but for the planners. This is true; Japan's surrender was not expected until 1946. The author starts from this undisputed position to describe a "network of mid-level staff officers in Washington and Chungking" who spearheaded the Joint Chiefs' effort to put 60,000 marines in North China, to transport Chinese Nationalist troops to North China, and to establish a military assistance group to help Chiang Kai-shek. In so doing, the Chiefs clearly had the support of civilians in the War and Navy departments (the Secretary of War said the Marines "could march from one end of China to the other.") The upshot of these moves was that the State Department was unable to match policy with the JCS *fait accompli* in involving substantial U.S. military forces in China's

affairs. This story is told largely from the Pentagon's position, but the author does conclude that the eventual withdrawal of U.S. troops from the mainland in 1947 was a "more circumspect defense strategy" that was "a closer correspondence between ends and means in American East Asian policy."

This problem of ends-means does not appear until the penultimate page. Instead, we are given the military bureaucrats' view that Chiang Kai-shek was the "benevolent dictator that China needed" and therefore the JCS could commit 60,000 Marines more as an "after-thought than any clearly defined national policy." It all seems in retrospect "a helluva way to run a railroad" until one remembers that all the actors from President Truman down to those mid-level staffers were grappling with a series of decisions for whose study there just was not any time. Professor Gallicchio shows little sympathy for this human predicament.

J.K. HOLLOWAY, JR.
Naval War College

Pike, Douglas. *Vietnam and the Soviet Union: Anatomy of an Alliance*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987. 274pp. \$29.85

Douglas Pike, Director of the Indochina Studies Project at Berkeley, is best known for his important work on the Vietcong. In this book he shows himself to be a substantial Kremlinologist as well.

There is solid historical development here covering the formative years in the relationship between the Soviet Union and Vietnam (the 1920s to 1964), and the years of the Second Indochina war. Of particular interest in the former is the decade of Nikita Khrushchev's leadership of the Soviet Union. The interaction between the two countries during that time left a residue of distrust which still survives.

The war period, according to Professor Pike, was "the seminal event in the history of Soviet-Vietnamese relations, imprisoning the two countries in an association that future historians may judge not in the interest of either." As a vehicle for examining the war, the author sets forth seven provocative hypotheses which students of the subject will find fascinating. For example, the war "made complete and enduring the dispute between China and the USSR, which, had there been no Vietnam War, would have healed long ago."

Whatever the ramifications, Pike makes it quite clear that the Great Spring Victory by the North was a victory for the U.S.S.R. as well. The real question was how they would capitalize on it. To answer this, Pike dedicates a pair of substantial chapters.

The first of these, on postwar relations, portrays a far more intimate interaction between the two countries than had previously existed, based upon the twin pillars of Soviet opportunism and Vietnamese dependence. What are the strategic advantages of this relationship to the Soviet

Union now? Among those highlighted by Pike are two of operational interest: the ability to position naval forces at Cam Ranh Bay, Da Nang, and Haiphong, and the stationing of aircraft at the first two in order to provide intelligence on China, Japan, the Philippines, and Thailand, as well as on U.S. submarines at sea.

Central to postwar relations is the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the U.S.S.R. and Vietnam signed in November 1978. It is also central to the China question. The People's Republic considers the treaty "a knife that the USSR holds to China's throat." Complementary to this aspect of Professor Pike's book is Charles McGregor's excellently documented *The Sino-Vietnamese Relationship and the Soviet Union*, published in autumn 1988 by the International Institute for Strategic Studies as Adelphi Paper no. 232.

The author's final chapter, "The Evolving Relationship," flows neatly from his earlier analysis. His conclusions should be read in their entirety. One provocative example: "There is a fundamental incompatibility in Vietnamese-Soviet relations that will sharply delimit the association in ultimate or long-range terms."

This is an important book for student and policymaker alike. It is one of those rare works that one wishes were longer and even more detailed. If you believe, as this reviewer does, that a shift in American strategic priorities from the Atlantic to the Pacific is inevitable, then an understanding of the Vietnam war experience and what

flowed from it is vital in thinking about the future. In that context this book provides unique and valuable insight.

DOUGLAS KINNARD
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Davidson, Phillip B. *Vietnam at War; the History: 1946-1975*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1988. 838pp. \$27.50

Lieutenant General Davidson's 838-page tome should become an essential reference on the conflict that raged in Indochina from 1946 to 1975. It answers the long-standing need for a military history of the war that encompasses its grand strategic, diplomatic, political and, of course, operational aspects. As in any good military history, *Vietnam at War* discusses the special features of the combat arena: Vietnam's geography, climate, and demographic makeup and the composition of the opposing forces. The book's other strengths are its clear, straightforward prose and general readability and simple but informative maps.

What sets this work apart, however, are Davidson's intellectually stimulating, forcefully stated, and above all, provocative analyses of many aspects of the war; no shrinking violet here. Characterizing the Vietnamization program as a "cut and run" and "peace at any price" strategy and labeling Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford a "Judas" for his actions to decrease the U.S. presence in Southeast Asia are only

a few examples of his approach to the subject. The author, a military officer of many years service, several of them spent in key positions in Vietnam, clearly comes out on the "Hawk" side of the debate in his often used "Hawk"- "Dove" construct. Indeed, Davidson's work provides a forum for views that are often voiced in military circles: that the American news media, the antiwar movement, and the Congress bear much of the blame for the Vietnam defeat; that overwhelming military force applied against the enemy would have produced allied victory, especially after the enemy's militarily disastrous Tet offensive; and that civilian theorists and policymakers forced a flawed "limited-war" strategy on the resistant warriors.

At the same time, however, Davidson is no captive to the conventional wisdom. He does not aver that the United States would have won the war in 1965 if it had executed a 1972-strength bombing campaign against North Vietnam. Further, the General doubts that the use of nuclear weapons would have produced an outcome favorable to America and its allies.

Similarly, Davidson does not ascribe the communists' victory in the Vietnam War to the overwhelming use of conventional arms, an interpretation of growing popularity since publication of Harry Summers' *On Strategy*. Instead, he credits the enemy's superior revolutionary war strategy. With an obvious debt to strategist Karl von Clausewitz and