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## **Special Analysis**

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### **USSR-VIETNAM: Impact of Sino-Soviet Dialogue**

*The renewed Sino-Soviet dialogue is a source of continued underlying friction in Soviet-Vietnamese relations. The Politburo-level Soviet delegation that visited Hanoi last week was sent partly to reassure Vietnam about Soviet intentions toward China. Moscow has shown no sign of acceding to Chinese pressures for a reduction in support for Hanoi and is unlikely to do so unless there is real progress in Sino-Soviet relations.*

Collaboration against China is the binding force in the Soviet-Vietnamese alliance. Hanoi has shown it can withstand Chinese military pressures without the help of Soviet military intervention and represents a potential second front on China's border. Vietnamese efforts against Chinese and US influence in Southeast Asia, along with the Soviet military access to Vietnamese air and naval facilities, are important assets for the USSR.

First Deputy Premier Aliyev, promoted to full Politburo membership last November, recently headed the first Soviet leadership delegation to Hanoi since the Sino-Soviet talks resumed last fall. The two sides signed a new long-term economic cooperation accord that seems aimed both at improving Hanoi's handling of Soviet aid and developing those parts of the Vietnamese economy that will eventually enable Vietnam to begin repaying its large debt to the USSR. Party secretary Ryzhkov, who was also in the delegation, probably advised the Vietnamese on how to improve domestic economic performance.

### **Soviet Military Access**

Aliyev may have pressed for some expansion of the access to Vietnamese military facilities Moscow gained as a direct consequence of its aid to Vietnam after the Chinese attack in 1979. Although still limited, Soviet access enables the USSR to monitor US and Chinese military activity and give better support to its naval ships and aircraft in peacetime. In wartime, however, the Soviets probably would withdraw their naval units from the Indian Ocean and South China Sea to defend the USSR.

Construction under way and Soviet equipment deliveries in recent months suggest that Hanoi is allowing some expansion of Soviet naval air deployments at Cam Ranh. Currently, only two TU-142 antisubmarine warfare patrol aircraft and two TU-95 maritime reconnaissance aircraft are deployed there.

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Ship repair facilities at Cam Ranh are rudimentary, and there is no fuel storage facility. The Soviets may also want to improve these facilities to support their naval forces in the South China Sea as well as ships transiting to and from the USSR's Indian Ocean Squadron. They normally have about six surface combatants, four submarines, and 18 auxiliaries in the South China Sea; the auxiliaries are repaired at a Soviet-installed drydock in Ho Chi Minh City. [redacted]

### **Soviet Aid**

The Soviets seem pleased by the way Hanoi has utilized the estimated \$2.9 billion in military aid it has received since the Chinese attack in 1979. This assistance, aimed primarily at building Vietnamese defenses against China, also helped ensure Chinese exclusion from Laos and Kampuchea. [redacted]

The Soviets are less satisfied with Hanoi's use of the estimated \$5 billion they have provided in economic aid since 1978. Several times over the last five years Moscow has used its economic leverage with Hanoi to push for changes in Vietnam's domestic economic policies. For example, according to a Vietnamese official, the Soviets cut back food exports in 1980 despite critical shortages in Vietnam to force Hanoi to revise its agricultural policies. [redacted]

Vietnam did adopt more liberal agricultural policies that have nearly eliminated the need for costly Soviet grain imports. Other Soviet efforts to improve Vietnamese economic performance, however, have had only mixed results. Aliyev, during the recent visit, hinted at Moscow's continuing dissatisfaction when he pointedly reminded Hanoi that the USSR was giving Vietnam aid the USSR needed itself. [redacted]

### **Concern About China**

The Vietnamese clearly were worried about the reopening of the Sino-Soviet talks last year. Vietnam's second-ranking Politburo member hastily arranged a visit to Moscow, and Hanoi said publicly that Beijing intended to use the talks to isolate Vietnam. [redacted]

The Soviets, hoping to ease Vietnamese concerns, now consult Hanoi after each round of talks with China. When Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach made his annual visit to Moscow last month, he saw Deputy Foreign Minister Kapitsa, presumably to discuss Kapitsa's talks in Beijing in September. [redacted]

Moscow also seeks to reassure Hanoi by publicizing most of the authoritative Vietnamese attacks on the Chinese, despite its own ban on media criticism of China. General Secretary Andropov, in his

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meetings with Vietnamese leaders and in public statements, has said there will be no Sino-Soviet rapprochement at Hanoi's expense. Aliyev reiterated the message during his visit. [redacted]

### **Prospects**

Both Moscow and Hanoi probably see incentives to strengthen bilateral ties in the near term. The Soviets recognize the continuing need to reassure Vietnam over the expansion of Sino-Soviet contacts. Hanoi has no alternative source for the political, economic, and military support it gets from the USSR. [redacted]

China so far has agreed to a limited expansion of contacts with Moscow without Soviet concessions on key issues, including Soviet-Vietnamese collaboration in the subjugation of Indochina. If, over the longer term, Moscow and Beijing were to begin making significant progress on bilateral security issues, the Soviets might search more actively for a solution to Sino-Vietnamese differences. Prospects for this sort of progress are sufficiently remote, however, that Soviet-Vietnamese relations are likely to continue on their present track for the foreseeable future. [redacted]

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