

## THE SOVIET UNION AND VIETNAM: A REALISTIC RELATIONSHIP

While the main antagonism, that between China and Vietnam, is intensified by their geographical proximity and the long history of conflict; relations between Vietnam and the Soviet Union are comparatively recent, dating only from the advent of socialism, and have been favourably affected by the two countries' converging interests. It is inevitable that a Hanoi-Moscow alliance would run counter to one between Hanoi and Beijing, even if the Vietnamese government has sometimes wished to treat both relationships as similar and equally harmonious. From 1975, and particularly since 1978, the Vietnamese leaders have been forced to bring their country into the Socialist Bloc. This choice affects their relations both with China and the West, and it enables the Soviet Union to play a strategic role in Southeast Asia. This new factor not only forces each of the countries in the area to rethink its strategy and reformulate its foreign policy, it also makes any negotiated settlement to the conflict in Indochina that much more difficult to achieve. This brief chapter is not intended to be a survey of all the factors which have led the Vietnamese leaders to make the decisions they did. Instead it raises some questions about the advantages and disadvantages each of the two countries involved, particularly the Soviet Union, has reaped from this strategic alliance. In view of the possibility of a rapprochement between the Soviet Union and China and improved prospects for a settlement in Kampuchea, it is worth asking just how long this "alliance" can carry on without running counter to the interests which gave rise to it in the first place.

### ISOLATION AND NECESSITY

- The progressive deterioration in Sino-Vietnamese relations and the