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Soviet Policy in the Asian-Pacific Region : Primary and Secondary Relationships

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I. Introduction

Soviet policy in the Asian-Pacific is based on Moscow's perception of relationships which occur on two different levels. On the 'primary' level, there is the USSR concern with general security, which stems from and reflects traditional notions of sovereignty, territorial right and armed superiority. Because of its security orientation, this level of interaction focuses on the Soviet political relationship with its longstanding superpower opponent, the United States, and the corresponding conventional and nuclear military relationship. The 'secondary' level encompasses USSR interaction in the economic, cultural and non-superpower political and security spheres. This sector of relations exists in regard to both communist and non-communist countries. In Asia, it is most usefully applied to USSR normal relations with regional allies — the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It is through these two levels of interaction that the Kremlin must shape and implement Soviet policy in order to maximize the probability of the achievement of USSR policy goals.

Indications of Soviet policy goals through both primary and secondary levels are largely open to interpretation. Traditional and conservative readings of Soviet policy maneuvers in Asia invoke the notion that Kremlin objectives revolve around increasing military and political confrontation. This assumption, however, may not be accurately conceived. Realization by both Moscow and Washington that regional superpower competition is both costly and tends towards political stagnation has been manifested in Soviet propaganda and proposals which seem to reflect a sincere Soviet desire to maintain superpower status through an improvement of Soviet-US relations complemented by increasing economic, political and cultural (secondary level) interaction with major powers. On the secondary level these relations can often proceed regardless of actual progress in USSR-US negotiations or relations. If one applies this to the Asian-Pacific it seems that Moscow is indeed cultivating a foundation of relations based on economic and cultural cooperation with both socialist and Western-affiliated nations with little emphasis placed on the respective nation's security status.¹ While it is most improbable that this framework of cooperation alone will resolve security problems in the region, it can be conceded that the experience gained by low-level interaction and the development of economic links will provide a unique base upon which to negotiate issues of security.

It is in light of these primary and secondary levels of conduct that contemporary Soviet policy in the Asian-Pacific is most fruitfully analyzed. The ensuing presentation on this subject will cover both the Soviet primary relationship with the United States, as well as the secondary level of Soviet interaction in the Asian-Pacific — a section divided more precisely by discussion of Soviet relations with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

(SRV), the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan. Finally, a concluding analysis of the effects of secondary relations on regional and superpower politics will help to project the future role of the Soviet Union in the Asian Pacific.

II. Primary Level: Superpower Relations in the Asian Pacific

The relationship of the Soviet Union with the United States has vast repercussions in the Asian-Pacific. The superpower arms race, cold war political tensions and visible prospects for arms control affect regional interaction and prospects for cooperation. The constant vying for political dominion over both major and minor Pacific powers since the conclusion of the Second World War has resulted in the formation of bi- and multilateral alliances which infer a solidifying bloc system like that of Eastern and Western Europe. In fact, the Soviet Union and the United States figure into the Pacific network in much the same manner as they do in the European one; the Soviet Union maintains Treaties of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance with North Korea (1961) and Vietnam (1978) which are characterized as a response to US mutual security treaties with Japan (1951, 1960) and the Republic of Korea (1954).² China alone emerges in this system as uncommitted in regard to superpower maneuvering; proclaiming an 'independent' foreign policy since the Sino-Soviet split and currently holding only a Friendship and Non-Aggression Treaty with North Korea (1961).³ Unlike the European situation, however, there is a tendency on behalf of the USSR and the US to deny the fact that relations among Pacific powers are on a primary level of importance: political proclamations and security or cooperative initiatives have rarely encompassed Asian-Pacific interests, thus relations develop haphazardly and without positive direction.

The Power Projection

The most direct evidence of the Soviet interest in the affairs of the Asian region is the projection of USSR military power into the water, land and air space of the Pacific basin. As is customary in superpower policy, this Soviet force projection is officially a counterweight to the deployment of United States military forces there. Because this military balance shifts in accord with political climate, an understanding of the relative strength of Soviet and American strategic forces in the Asian-Pacific is a necessary base for understanding Soviet policy there.

The importance of the Asian-Pacific to the Soviet Union is manifested in the buildup of the Soviet Fleet.⁴ In recent years, this fleet has undergone a dramatic change from an offshore power to a full-fledged "blue water navy."⁵ The number of Soviet naval personnel deployed in the Pacific, estimated at 134,000⁶, outnumbers that of any other region. Also present are an estimated 24 nuclear powered ballistic missile submarines, 50 additional attack submarines and 8 destroyers; a deployment which compares favorably to or exceeds USSR Northern Fleet forces.⁷ Some of this increased power has been gained at the expense of other regions, as evidenced by the transfer of both the advanced aircraft carrier MINSK and one amphibious IVAN ROGOV class vessel to duty with the Pacific Fleet in 1979.⁸ The successful buildup of the Soviet Pacific Fleet was initiated slightly prior to the US naval "fleet rehabilitation and modernization" (FRAM)

program and the advocacy of a 600-ship (total) navy by the Reagan Administration and the Secretary of the Navy John Lehman in 1981. Nonetheless, the two nations' Pacific fleets appear to be at a state of approximate parity — especially as far as maneuverability and doctrine are concerned. Both are required to operate out of assigned areas (e. g. “swing shift”) in the event of serious conflict elsewhere and numerical disadvantages in certain types of ships or armament is seemingly compensated for by strength in others.⁹

Table 1 : Soviet and US Pacific Navies

Ships	USSR	USA
Aircraft carriers	—	6
Battleships/large cruisers	3	1
Cruisers	10	17
Guided missile destroyers	10	14
Destroyers	10	15
Guided missile frigates	10	19
Frigates	10	28
Missile submarines	23	6
Attack submarines	124	43
Aircraft		
Strike	150	368
Support	80	60
Anti-submarine	150	255

Source : James Meacham, “The United States Navy : On the Crest of the Wave,”
The Economist (19 April 1986) : 61.

In an era of strategic nuclear doctrine, the logic of increasing naval power for the purposes of national security may seem somewhat dubious. However, the Soviet Union views naval power as a useful method of displaying military strength in order to achieve diplomatic goals without necessarily initiating conflict.¹⁰ Although it may be interpreted as a mere countermove to US policy, by increasing the strength of one of the most visible tools of diplomacy in the Asian-Pacific, Moscow relays its heightened interest and possibly an increased intention of actual participation or intervention in regional political events.

Although it may be a likely tool for diplomatic persuasion, the Soviet Pacific Fleet is by no means the sole projection of the USSR military in Asia. The Far Eastern Strategic Theatre boasts tactical aviation squadrons complete with MiG-21s and MiG-23s ; air defense forces which, when mobilized, could work with up to 1,000 surface to air missiles (SA-5, SA-10) ; both of which would operate in conjunction with the navy and the 53

ground forces divisions of the encompassed military districts.¹¹ A more forward deployment of these forces is secured through various means. The USSR collaborates extensively with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) partially in order to be able to utilize the naval and air base at Cam Ranh Bay, which substantially improves Soviet Fleet access to the waters of the Pacific.¹² Soviet manpower is said to number close to 75,000 in Mongolia and Ulan Bator is the site of a USSR army headquarters post.¹³ In addition, USSR naval and air forces are located on the disputed Northern Territories above Japan with personnel numbering above 14,000.¹⁴ Bargaining to gain further access to the proximate locations of the region's major powers is obvious. Last year, for example, it was reported that when Moscow agreed to supply North Korea with 40 MiG-23 fighters in order to balance the strength of US supplied F-16s to the South, part of the deal was DPRK agreement to Soviet utilization of their airspace for the purpose of Soviet flights to Vietnam and reconnaissance flights over China.¹⁵

On the level above this conventional deployment, Moscow has the command of a broad range of strategic nuclear forces. The Soviet Pacific Fleet submarines carry an estimated 385 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs); land-based intercontinental missiles (ICBMs) number in the range of 380,¹⁶ while theatrically useful intermediate range missiles (IRBMs) — the Soviet SS-20s — are said to number approximately 200.¹⁷ Should the USSR adhere to its decision to deploy the SS-25, claimed to be superior to the SS-20, it is most likely that it will be deployed in Asia as well as in Europe and it is possible that the result will be a slight shift of the perceived power balance in the region.

Indeed there does appear to be an acknowledged equality of Soviet and American security in the Asian-Pacific, for Moscow's previously described forces confront a corresponding projection on behalf of the United States. Including the well-matched naval forces discussed above,¹⁸ the American projection in the Pacific totals about 144,000. Japan hosts some 52,400 US servicemen as well as headquarters locations for the US Seventh Fleet and the Pacific Air Forces. The Republic of Korea also houses over 40,000 military personnel from all branches — with the Army continuing to station nearly 30,000 US troops directly in support of the often tense demilitarized zone.¹⁹ US strategic nuclear capabilities in the Pacific region are largely dependent upon submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and strategic bombers. Capabilities could be comparable to Soviet forces, although basing is complicated by the Japanese refusal to house nuclear weapons. Moscow also continues to forward an accusation concerning the presence of American land-based nuclear missiles in South Korea. While exact qualitative and quantitative parity is not easily evident, the mutual perception of parity in terms of security is supported by the fact that forces deployment and weapons transfers remain relatively stable, with the exception of increases which are deemed justifiable in reaction to a specific move by the opposing superpower.²⁰

Prospects

Situations of perceived parity reputedly enhance the possibilities for fruitful arms negotiations, but new Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev has followed the typical route in lacking arms control proposals which address the Asian-Pacific. Most illustrative of this

problem was the January proposal which revived the so-called "zero option" plan for Europe.²¹ Advocating less stringent measures for major arms reduction in the European zone, the Soviet proposal contained no mention of Soviet medium range missiles in Asia. The Soviets hold the position that they must maintain theater nuclear weapons to hold the balance against communist rival China ; the US replies that Moscow has no need to possess the number of nuclear weapons necessary to counter all of its potential enemies combined.²² However, an agreement for arms reduction in Europe without a corresponding agreement for the Asian region will most likely result in an increase of regional tension as cold war competition shifts to the areas of the world unencompassed by superpower arrangement. In regard to the Pacific region this could be extremely dangerous, especially owing to the volatility of such 'flashpoint' situations as the Korean peninsula and the Sino-Soviet border, as well as the possibility of the escalation of regional conflicts such as the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea. Much would be lost by both superpowers should a crisis occur. Thus, the American response put forward an offer which calls for a first round of cuts eliminating about half of both superpowers' missiles in Europe and half of the Soviet missiles in the Far East — where the US claims no land-based equivalents.²³ The point to be taken here is one which relays the growing importance of the primary level relationship in the Asian-Pacific and reflects a need for Moscow and Washington to bring discussion of Pacific arena security problems and disarmament prospects swiftly to the same level of importance as the European talks.

Certain factors can be used to argue for the success of such a dialogue on improved superpower relations throughout the world, although visible results have been lacking at the Geneva negotiations. General indications of a Soviet desire to focus more attention on the domestic economy and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's need and desire to prove himself as capable of constructively confronting superpower issues²⁴ help to make positions and proposals more flexible. It has also been inferred that American President Ronald Reagan would like to approach the negotiating table with the serious intention of solidifying an agreement, provided he can gain the advantages of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) as a bargaining chip. Unfortunately, mutual desire for an arms control agreement does not imply that the automatic reactions of cold war negotiations will give way to real results or an actual treaty. Already the positive post-summit atmosphere is fading and even the constructive possibilities of the stream of proposals emanating from Moscow are being dismissed in a traditional manner by the West as mere Soviet propaganda. Thus it can be concluded that the current superpower parity in the Pacific will not be utilized as a means of proceeding towards regional weapons reductions and that the political maneuvering necessary to maintain mutual security will continue despite the possibility of triggering a crisis or conflict in one of the less stable situations.

III. Secondary Level: Soviet Bilateral Relationships

The inability of Moscow and the United States to enter into an arms control or tension reduction agreement which includes the Asian-Pacific does not indicate a lack of Soviet desire to cultivate relations on the secondary level below the overriding concerns of security. On the contrary, there is a strong tendency for Moscow to work at expanding cooperation with both allies and opposition among the regional powers of the Soviet Far

East, for reasons which often go beyond cooperation for the purpose of creating a USSR counterweight to the increasing security cooperation of the United States with Japan and South Korea. The motivation on this level stems largely from the desire of the Soviets to secure an exchange of goods with a neighboring socialist economy or to procure the benefits of trade with Western economies in order to compensate for the scarcity of high quality technology and certain agricultural goods in the socialist bloc trading system. Increased trade with Asian nations is also a means of taking advantage of the recently completed Baikal Amur Mainline Railroad system.²⁵ Economic interaction further helps the Soviets to solicit foreign investment for development projects and to entice overseas corporations and government industries into joint ventures — both of which are especially needed for the continued growth and development of Siberia. Cultural and educational exchanges also fall under the category of secondary relationships. While not especially useful as a means of enhancing vital knowledge, this type of exchange helps to send diplomatic signals which could eventually translate into official meetings with more substantial results. The Soviet goal in this type of exchange with allies is thus simply one of firming of political relations and maintenance of linked economies. Overall, interaction on this secondary level with non-allies serves to create a framework for cooperation which, while providing mutual benefit in most cases, also lends potential leverage to the Soviet as they strive to alter the political climate in order to procure a more beneficial relationship with the West.²⁶

USSR relations on the secondary level with both allies and non-allies will be discussed in this section. In order to portray the level of cooperation in an appropriate light, a brief statement of security relationships will be included in each country's analysis.

A. Asian-Pacific Socialist Nations

1. *The Socialist Republic of Vietnam*

The support of the Soviet Union for the Socialist Republic of Vietnam stems from initial Soviet involvement in the Vietnamese wars of 'liberation.' The end of American involvement there in the 1970s has since allowed Moscow greater influence with Hanoi and the Soviets now have access to the two vital Vietnamese military installations. Soviet forces were stationed at Cam Ranh Bay beginning in 1978 and the base is utilized for surveillance missions which range far to the South. Recent upgrades there include the deployment of Soviet Tu-11 Badger bombers²⁷ and 14 MiG-23 fighter-interceptor planes,²⁸ as well as the construction of nuclear submarine shelters and an electric monitoring station. Da Nang, the second base used by Moscow, has been the launching point for joint USSR-SRV anti-submarine warfare exercises. Soviet troops currently stationed in Vietnam are said to total 7,000 — far more than those necessary for base and equipment maintenance.²⁹ Soviet support for Vietnam also extends into other political-strategic relationships. Moscow is a major supplier of the arms and aid necessary for the continued occupation of Kampuchea by Hanoi's armed forces and is also said to fully finance the 150,000 Vietnamese border troops who remain on alert in case of a Chinese invasion.³⁰ The political closeness³¹ of Moscow and Hanoi make it unlikely that this support will be terminated in the near future.

The close Soviet-Vietnamese association has also helped in the development of

economic links between the two nations, although the benefit from these links is clearly Hanoi's. Initial assistance included the cancellation of all Vietnamese debts owed to the USSR from their aid given during wartime. The SRV Second Five-Year Plan (1976–1980) received a vital boost of more than \$2.5 billion from its Soviet sponsors and economic collaboration expanded further with a 1981 agreement which provided for some forty joint development projects.³² The Soviets also made a concrete effort to integrate Vietnam with the east bloc economy; the SRV was initiated into COMECON in 1978 and the East European nations have supplied Vietnam with an annual average of \$500 million in non-military aid.³³ By 1983, as economic aid to the SRV became more institutionalized, some 100,000 Soviet development advisors were placed in Vietnam³⁴ with an exchange of Vietnamese workers in the Soviet bloc countries totaling 50,000 and projected to increase.³⁵ As the overall USSR-SRV economic relationship has solidified, Soviet non-military assistance has dramatically increased and a situation has arisen in which Vietnamese dependence upon the Soviet Union is extensive.³⁶ The Vietnamese newspaper of the Communist party, *Nhan Dan*, revealed that in 1983 the Soviet Union helped to meet nearly 100 percent of SRV oil needs, and to provide more than 90 percent of the required fertilizer and a further 80 percent of the needed metallurgy products.³⁷ The clear indication is that Soviet economic interaction has become an integral part of the Vietnamese economy.

2. *The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)*

The goals of the Soviet Union in regard to North Korea at the end of the Korean War would have envisaged a nation whose role in relationship to the USSR would resemble that of Vietnam's today. The relationship, however, did not develop quite as planned. With both Moscow and Beijing backing the North, the Sino-Soviet split provided Kim Il Sung with the opportunity to play one power off of the other. This factor, combined with his thriving personality cult and the strength of his Pyongyang regime have created an image of him as strong-headed and independent — a most unreliable ally from Moscow's perspective. Thus, the Soviets station no troops within the North and are forced to supply Kim with the sophisticated weapons he desires in order to gain access to DPRK military installations. While Soviet provision of weapons to cooperative countries is generally not an issue, Kim's balancing act between Beijing and Moscow has triggered fears that the PRC will gain access to Soviet equipment. The North's vocal advocacy of a war for the purposes of reunification also creates apprehension in Moscow, where reunification through any but peaceful means is adamantly opposed.

Nonetheless, the pattern of Soviet policy towards the DPRK which seeks to secure a Kremlin foothold along the peninsula has continued under Gorbachev. A strategically oriented mission led by Soviet First Deputy Geydar Aliyev to Pyongyang in late June 1985³⁸ resulted in substantial gains for both sides. After a long period of persuasion, Kim Il Sung finally secured DPRK acquisition of MiG-23 fighter planes designed to counter the stationing of F-16s in South Korea by the United States.³⁹ As noted, Kim's possession of the fighters will pose a certain liability for Moscow, but the payoff for the USSR reportedly includes the possibility of fleet access to the port of Najin⁴⁰ and the previously noted access to North Korean airspace.⁴¹ Because of Kim Il-Sung's drive to procure

high-tech weaponry and because it is projected that Moscow is willing to supply Pyongyang with those weapons in which the Chinese are deficient, it is likely that the Soviets will continue to be able to secure peninsula access with a certain type of direct trade-off bargaining.

The tenuous security relationship of the Soviet Union with North Korea has increased the value of secondary exchange — especially on an economic level. There was a distinct lull in the 1970s when Moscow worked to cultivate ties with South Korea, but this point has passed and the 1980s has witnessed increased economic interaction between the two nations. In 1983, it was noted that the construction or remodeling of sixty-two factories and power stations, an oil processing plant and a synthetic ammonia factory was proceeding well with the participation of the Soviet Union.⁴² Presently, the Soviet Union is aiding construction on eight major projects: plants designed to produce bearings, aluminum, and micro-electric motors; a heat and power plant in Chongjin; and coal mines in Anju; expansion is also being undertaken at the Kim Chak metallurgical works and the Puckchang thermal station.⁴³ Since the 1984 trip of Kim Il Sung to Moscow, a major event in the consolidation of Soviet-DPRK relations, bilateral trade has increased substantially. The Soviet Union is noted as the Republic's foremost trading partner and is the main supplier of industrial equipment and raw materials which include oil, petroleum products and coke. North Korea, in exchange, exports magnesite clinkers, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, rolled stock, as well as engineering output and consumer goods.⁴⁴ Soviet sources cite the total figure for USSR-DPRK trade in 1984 as nearly 713 million rubles, indicating a rise in trade from previous years at 17 to 21 percent.⁴⁵ Bilateral trade was also expected to have risen approximately 20 percent through 1985.

Whether or not the Soviet-North Korean economic relationship can be termed truly symbiotic, it is undeniable that a layer of economic cooperation functioning beneath an often troubled security relationship is a certain insurance against the sudden termination of political ties. This is a notable asset during periods of rapid internal change, such as the series of successions in the Kremlin prior to Gorbachev's assumption of the leadership; it will undoubtedly be a useful link during the power change forthcoming in North Korea as Kim Il Sung transfers the reins of state to his son, Kim Jong Il.

3. The People's Republic of China

Next to the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China is the largest and most powerful of the Asian-Pacific socialist nations and, since the initial Sino-Soviet split, it has undeniably posed the most profound problems for Kremlin policy makers. The overall relationship between the two communist powers is characterized by Chinese pragmatism in refusing to renew the Sino-Soviet treaty of alliance and Beijing's official pursuit of an 'independent foreign policy' after the twelfth party congress of 1982.⁴⁶ More specifically, the security relationship between the two is marked by what the PRC calls the "three obstacles": USSR intervention in Afghanistan; Soviet collaboration with Vietnam and SRV occupation of Kampuchea; and the ever-present issue of the large deployment of Soviet troops along the Sino-Soviet border. These factors when combined form a veritable Soviet strategic encirclement of China. Soviet and Chinese security interests

also conflict in North Korea, where mutual backing of Kim Il Sung has evolved into competition. According to Beijing, it is only the former three security issues which hamper a full normalization of Sino-Soviet relations; although other sources have indicated that Deng Xiaoping would be willing to forego political reservations and participate in summit talks if the Soviet Union would make progress on any one of these obstacles.⁴⁷

Although normalization talks, which were resumed in 1982, have produced no remarkable progress on the above issues of security, Sino-Soviet cooperation in the socioeconomic sphere has increased dramatically.⁴⁸ Bilateral trade has risen in volume from 170 million rubles in 1981 to 1.6 billion rubles in 1985.⁴⁹ In July 1985, an agreement concluded between Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Yao Yilin and Soviet First Deputy Prime Minister Ivan V. Arkhipov, projected Sino-Soviet bilateral trade over the next five years to total 12 billion rubles. Estimated trade for the year 1990 is 3 billion rubles — nearly twice the current volume.⁵⁰ This direct call for an increase in trade was preceded by numerous Sino-Soviet agreements for cooperation on specific projects and development in certain areas of collaboration. The first indication of a series of specific accords came in December 1984 during Arkhipov's first visit to Beijing, when the two sides agreed to establish a joint commission to monitor cooperation in economic matters, science and technology.⁵¹ A more concrete result of Arkhipov's diplomacy was the completion of an agreement through which the Soviets will aid in the modernizing of several Chinese industrial plants: including factories responsible for the production of cars and textiles, and others working in metallurgy and coal enrichment.⁵² Further agreements came in the spring of 1985, when documents on increased local border trade and educational and research exchanges were signed.⁵³

The fact that this increased interaction in the secondary sphere led to a simultaneous upgrade in political relations does not seem unusual, for it is precisely the role of a 'testing ground' which such second level relations are designed to serve. Thus, 1985 also bore witness to a Soviet delegation's arrival to Beijing for the purpose of discussing better consular relations,⁵⁴ as well as an exchange of visits between parliamentary delegations and a visit to Beijing by Georgi Arbatov, a senior Kremlin adviser on Soviet-US relations.⁵⁵ There are, however, limits to the expansion of the Sino-Soviet rapport prior to actual progress in the aforementioned three obstacles. A USSR proposal for a nonaggression pact between two countries was recently refused by the Chinese, just as efforts on behalf of the Soviets to reestablish a relationship between the nations' Communist parties have also been rebuffed.⁵⁶ More recently, when Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Qian Qichen was in Moscow during April 1986 for the eighth round of normalization talks, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard A. Shevardnadze raised the notion of "upgrading the level of political dialogue and holding meetings between the leaders of the two countries."⁵⁷ The Chinese, however, were firm in their refusal to proceed to the level of summit discussions, citing — as expected — the presence of the 'obstacles' which made the Soviet proposal 'unrealistic.'⁵⁸ While the increasing political interaction in Sino-Soviet affairs may be read as the outcome of successful social exchange and economic cooperation, it is clear that the scope of mutual interest has not yet expanded to the realm of national security. The notion of purely secondary cooperation leading to such an

overlapping of interests is debatable. What is likely, however, is that once a mutually acceptable accord is developed on the 'obstacles' in Moscow-Beijing relations, the experience and links cultivated under current secondary level agreements will make maintenance of the accord an easier process.

B. The West in the Far East

1. *The Republic of Korea*

When one examines the politics of the Korean peninsula, it can often be concluded that, owing to the alliance of the Soviet Union with North Korea, Moscow's security interests stand diametrically opposed to those of the Republic of Korea. It is an unrefutable fact that Moscow must attempt to reply through Pyongyang to the strategic presence of the United States in South Korea. However, because the Kremlin is both outright in its opposition to the launching of a war of reunification and aware that the difficulties of peaceful reunification are tremendous — owing to the now-existent cultural and economic disparity between North and South, it has often been inferred that Moscow's preferred solution on the peninsula is one which involves preservation of the two Koreas status quo.⁵⁹ This insinuation consequently identifies an important objective shared by Moscow and Seoul. Evidence of such a Soviet objective came briefly during detente, when the Soviets pressured Kim to relax his revolutionary posture and simultaneously worked to expand relations with the South. But Moscow must be wary of conducting diplomatic relations with Seoul which, by offending North Korean leader Kim, tend to drive him into closer cooperation with China. Additional factors, such as the reversal during the Carter Administration on the decision for troop withdrawal and the hardline strategic policies of the Reagan Administration, have forced the Soviets to stand firmly behind their DPRK alliance and have made the cultivation of USSR relations with South Korea both difficult and politically unprofitable.

Moscow is nonetheless fully cognizant of the benefits of an expanded relationship with South Korea. ROK growth rates have averaged 9 percent annually with a GNP which is approximately five times greater than that of the North. South Korean engineers and industrial workers are also gaining a reputation for their work abroad. If there indeed exists an effort on behalf of the Soviets to become a greater participant in Asian trade or to upgrade their domestic industry through joint ventures or foreign contracts; then the Soviets stand to gain immensely through greater economic cooperation with Seoul. Also, at this point in time, an increase in USSR-ROK economic interaction should not have the effect of agitating Kim Il Sung, as China is currently involved in an unofficial trade relationship with South Korea — one which was said to exceed US \$1 billion in 1985.⁶⁰

While there may exist strains in developing a more complete economic relationship with Seoul, Moscow is beginning to respond to the ROK's growing international reputation in cultural terms. Preparations are now underway in the South for the hosting of both the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Olympics. Seoul is also a possible site for the 1991 Boy Scout World Jamboree.⁶¹ Certain participation of the Soviet Union in the Seoul Olympics remains debatable⁶² at this point, but signs of a relaxing of tensions in the cultural sphere are numerous. In March 1985 a team of twelve Soviet ice skaters took part in an

exhibition in Seoul.⁶³ Moscow also sent a team to the World Judo Championships in September⁶⁴ and a group of archers to a championship competition there the following month.⁶⁵ These initial steps in establishing cultural interaction and exchange obviously will not resolve the far-reaching tensions existing in the Soviet relationship with South Korea, but it is clear that they can play the role of confidence building measures and probes for the possibility of cooperation in other spheres. If the current Soviet actions should lead to participation in the 1988 Olympics and the establishment of regular cultural interchange, then it is possible that Moscow will at least be able to initiate economic interaction with the Republic of Korea — where the benefits will be more concrete.

2. *Japan*

The Soviet relationship with Japan in terms of national security is extremely problematic. In the most specific sense, Soviet-Japanese disagreements in this area center around the disputed Northern Territories — islands to the north of Japan whose territorial right has been disputed since the end of the Second World War.⁶⁶ Currently, Soviet armed forces numbering 14,000⁶⁷ are stationed on these islands. Soviet air and naval installations are located on the islands of Kunashiri and Etorofu; additional port facilities are located on the island of Shikotan. These Soviet bases are used to monitor Japanese military installations and maritime activity around the Sea of Okhotsk.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the harbor on Etorofu is ice-free year round, a certain asset for the often ice-bound USSR Pacific Fleet. This territorial dispute figures most prominently among the other Japanese security issues with which the Soviets are concerned, namely US-Japanese security cooperation, Tokyo's collaboration in political and security matters with other Asian powers — especially China and South Korea, and issues of Japanese offensive capabilities and possible acquisition of nuclear weapons.

Interaction on the secondary level between the USSR and Japan has declined considerably since the 1970s when Japanese investment and joint venture operations spurred the largest volume of capital and trade flow between the two nations.⁶⁹ Trade, at its fullest, was an estimated 2 billion rubles but fell sharply in 1979 when Tokyo cancelled some \$1.4 billion in credit to Moscow. Trade and economic cooperation has continued a steady decline into the 1980s, with trade volume totaling \$5.58 billion in fiscal 1982, \$4.28 billion in fiscal 1983 and \$3.91 billion in fiscal 1984.⁷⁰ Moscow is nonetheless attempting to mend this seemingly irreversible shift away from the traditional Japanese conduct of separating economic policy from the foreign policy arena. In October 1985, Soviet Ambassador to Japan Peter Abrasimov related a Soviet message to MITI which stated a Soviet desire for increased bilateral trade. Specifically, Abrasimov noted the prospects for Soviet-Japanese cooperation in a natural gas project in Sakhalin, scientific production of polyester and three other scientific projects.⁷¹ In December of 1985, the Soviets were also inquiring about the acquisition of equipment necessary for the modernization of four major Soviet automobile factories and the production of fuel-efficient sub-compact cars. Komatsu Ltd., Hitachi Zosen Co. and Kobe Steel Ltd., all expected to begin negotiations on the required equipment early in 1986 and no barriers against successful completion of a purchase contract were noted.⁷²

While economic contact is increasing and it appears that Moscow may reap some

benefits from its efforts in this area, the same cannot be said of Moscow-Tokyo political interchange. A January 1986 visit by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze broke a ten year suspension of foreign minister-level contact,⁷³ but the results were clearly mixed. Shevardnadze acknowledged the existence of the Northern Territories dispute only indirectly by suggesting that certain 'problems' were involved in the successful negotiation of a peace treaty.⁷⁴ Consequently, Soviet desires for an agreement on economic cooperation are as yet unmet, and requests for Japanese loans and assistance to forward development are likely to be met only in part, if at all.⁷⁵ Perhaps the Soviets are hoping that the development of summit-level diplomacy, visible in the extension of an invitation to Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone to visit Moscow and their affirmative response to an invitation for Gorbachev to visit Tokyo, will create a situation more conducive to an actual agreement. Unless Gorbachev arrives in Tokyo with plans to make substantial concessions concerning the Kurile Islands,⁷⁶ a dramatic change in current Soviet-Japanese political relations seems unlikely. If Tokyo chooses to transfer this political stalemate into the sphere of economic interaction, Moscow's solicitation for Japanese cooperation in finance, trade and development may also be in vain.

IV. Conclusions

1. Regional Effects of Secondary Relationships

From the Kremlin viewpoint, Soviet efforts to cultivate secondary relations with both allies and non-allies play a dual role in the Asian-Pacific region. The first one concerns the domestic situation in the USSR and the ability of the Kremlin to maintain domestic growth and satisfaction while increasing military spending in order to counter the growth of Western forces. General Secretary Gorbachev's implications in public statements and his visible emphasis on economic reform is a clear indication that, without a substantial improvement in economic performance, the Soviet Union may be forced to cut military spending or, at the least, to maintain a less provocative stance in Asia and elsewhere.⁷⁷ The cultivation of secondary relations comes strongly into play here; for they have the ability to compensate for a lessened military projection by creating political interaction through other means, while simultaneously providing the opportunity for Soviet acquisition of much needed resources, technology and investment. The remaining purpose of secondary relations in Asia for Moscow becomes clear with an acknowledgement of Soviet security problems there. Even difficulties among generally cooperative socialist countries are numerous: the cost of Soviet support of Vietnam is extensive and this is combined with an apparent inability by the Kremlin to control SRV actions in Kampuchea; Kim Il Sung continues his precarious balance between Moscow and Beijing and is persistent in his disagreement with USSR policy in Kampuchea and Afghanistan. All of these problems could be well-served by the mechanisms of secondary relations. Links which mandate future cooperation in economic and in security may be a Kremlin key to unlocking the ability to more successfully control Hanoi's Asian incursions; more prudent actions in Kampuchea would appease both China and North Korea. Should the Soviets, by increasing economic activity in Asia, reap the benefits of a more stable, balanced economy, it is also possible that Kim Il Sung will be more attracted to Moscow politically — a healthy break for the Kremlin which has watched him follow Chinese

economic models since the inception of DPRK socialism. As Moscow develops a framework for cooperation with 'independent' China and with those nations affiliated with the West, bilateral disagreements such as those of the Sino-Soviet border and the Northern Territories, and converging multilateral interests, such as those on the Korean Peninsula, should be easier to either confront directly or to work around.

If secondary level interaction does in fact translate into more positive political cooperation, it should provide assistance in bringing the above problems out of their present stalemates. This is not to infer that secondary relations will resolve longstanding security problems, but they will be instrumental. Working Soviet relationships with all parties concerned is likely to be instrumental in deciding which negotiating tactics to pursue and how to more decisively arrive at an agreement. Mutual interest in retaining already established economic links which cross east-west security relationships may also be a factor in the tone and persistence of difficult negotiations. Only in the event that economic interaction proceeds unhindered over a long period of time is it possible that it — in and of itself — will warrant a revision of an existing security relationship. What is more likely is that the inverse relationship will prevail as secondary relationships develop slowly because of obstacles in political relations and expand in response to their improvement.

2. Secondary Relations and Superpower Confrontation

Overall, the development of secondary relations with Asian-Pacific powers also allows the Soviets to procure distinct benefits in terms of superpower status. (Economic benefits and increased political influence without the necessity of increased military spending is surely desirable from the Kremlin standpoint.) Most importantly, however, one must consider the manner in which increased Soviet influence owing to secondary contacts figures into superpower posturing and Soviet regional negotiating power as discussed above.

Soviet interests will also be served if the cultivation of secondary relationships aids in the acceptance of the Soviet proposal for Asian Collective Security. Originally put forth by Leonid Brezhnev in 1969, the proposal is in part designed to reduce the influence of the United States in Asia. Acceptance of the proposal would be more likely if the stated Soviet intention of Asian security autonomy were supplemented by evidence of positive Soviet influence in the region. This would serve to counter the more common perception that the agreement is designed largely to enhance Moscow's confrontational posture.

While secondary relationships may not directly translate into gains in terms of the Soviet military projection in the Asian-Pacific relative to that of the United States, it is most likely that these contacts will continue to be pursued by Kremlin policy makers. The contemporary perception of Soviet-US strategic parity in the region and the potential economic benefits indicate that, in doing so, Moscow has nothing to lose.

Notes

- 1 The motivation for such a policy may not be immediately recognizable. It must be commented, however, that the perception of the means of obtaining and maintaining superpower status is changing in accord with the absence of a 'victor' in the arms race

and the new — especially Asian — emphasis on economic relationships as more practical and lasting.

- 2 International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance : 1985–1986*. (London : IISS, 1968), p. 116.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 For a discussion of the buildup, see Joseph M. Ha and Laura Heard, “The Build-up of the Soviet Pacific Fleet : An Indication of Foreign Policy in Northeast Asia,” *Asian Perspective*, 7, No. 2 (Fall-Winter, 1983).
- 5 Brad Knickerbocker, “Why Soviets Are Sensitive About Northern Pacific Coast,” *Christian Science Monitor*, September 6, 1983, p. 3.
- 6 In *Jane’s Fighting Ships : 1984–85* (London : Jane’s Publishing Co., 1984), pp. 496–7.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Despite USSR attempts to deploy forces in a balanced manner, it should be noted that normal rotation includes approximately ten percent of assigned forces deployed “out of area” — in the areas of the Mediterranean or Indian Oceans, for example, or in passage. In *Jane’s Fighting Ships : 1984–85*, p. 496.
- 9 See Table 1 for a chart of approximate comparison.
- 10 This was evidenced for the US recently by the deployment of the battleship New Jersey off the coast of Lebanon. The comparable doctrine for the USSR was stated by Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Navy, Admiral Sergei Gorshkov, “demonstrative actions of the fleet in many cases make it possible to achieve political goals without resorting to armed conflict by just indicating pressure by their potential might and the threat of beginning military actions.” S. G. Gorshkov, *Morskaiia moshch gosudarstva*, quoted in Harriet Fast Scott and William F. Scott, *The Armed Forces of the Soviet Union* (Boulder, Colorado : Westview Press, 1979), p. 58.
- 11 *The Military Balance : 1985–1986*, p. 29.
- 12 The USSR is a major supplier of weapons and aid to the SRV and has been persistent in justifying its support for the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, a cooperation which Tass has deemed “an important factor of peace in Southeast Asia and on the Asian continent as a whole.” Soviet deployment of manpower in the SRV is said to number approximately 7,000. See Gary Thatcher, “US, USSR to Explore Views on Asia,” *Christian Science Monitor*, September 12, 1985, p. 9 ; and *The Military Balance : 1985–1986*, p. 29.
- 13 *The Military Balance : 1985–1986*, p. 29.
- 14 Soviet troops were first deployed in the Northern Territories in response to the signing of the Sino–Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship. Ground troops were introduced on Kunashiri and Etorofu in 1978 and on Shikotan in 1979.
- 15 See “The North-East Passage,” *The Economist*, 298, No. 7430 (January 25, 1986), p. 37; and Richard Nations, “China’s Korea Fiasco,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (September 26, 1985), p. 56.
- 16 This includes some 260 SS–11 and 120 SS–18 missiles. See *The Military Balance : 1985–1986*, p. 29.
- 17 The estimates on the actual number of SS–20s deployed in the Asian-Pacific ranges from a high 206 (Ibid.) to a low 160 (See “The North-East Passage,” p. 36).
- 18 See Table 1.
- 19 *The Military Balance : 1985–1986*, p. 14.
- 20 For example, the Soviet agreement to supply North Korean leader Kim Il Sung with

- MiG-23s in response to the US sale of F-16s to South Korea.
- 21 The proposal concerns the Russian agreement to remove all medium-range missiles in the European arena by 1990 in exchange for American removal of cruise and Pershing-2 missiles. French and British forces would not need to be matched by Soviet SS-20s, although their arsenals could not expand and must be decreased after the year 1990. See "Is Zero Still an Option?" *The Economist*, 298, No. 7430 (January 25, 1986), p. 43.
- 22 "Arms Control: So What's New?" *The Economist*, 298, No. 7435 (March 11, 1986), p. 45.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 For the purposes of increased domestic legitimacy and international prestige. From Peter M. Tarnoff, President, Council on Foreign Relations, "The Effects of the Reagan-Gorbachev Summit on NATO." An unpublished paper presented to the 24th Annual International Affairs Symposium at Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Oregon, USA; February 18, 1986.
- 25 Thatcher, p. 10.
- 26 These policies stem from two general principles of Soviet diplomacy: 1) the principle of aiding those nations struggling for freedom, against imperialism and colonialism, and for social progress; and 2) the principle of peaceful coexistence with states of different social systems.
- 27 See Lee Anh Tuan, "Who Actually Owns Cam Ranh Bay?" *Beijing Review* (April 23, 1984), p. 13; Nayan Chanda, "The Deep Freeze," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (June 14, 1984), p. 46.; and "Power Game: The Seas Around Us," *Far Eastern Economic Review Asia 1983 Yearbook* (Hongkong: FEER, Ltd., 1983), p. 22.
- 28 According to the *Bangkok Post* as published in "Soviet Said to Put MiG-23s in Vietnam," *New York Times*, January 2, 1985, p. A3 [Unless noted, all *New York Times* citations are from the National Edition.].
- 29 *The Military Balance: 1985-1986*, p. 30.
- 30 Steven Patten, "In Vietnam, Desperate Hopes for the Future," *US News and World Report* (February 8, 1982), p. 35.
- 31 This is well revealed in a statement resulting from talks between Vietnamese General Secretary Le Duan and Mikhail Gorbachev in June, 1985 which concluded that the talks "reaffirmed the complete unity of the two sides' positions on all matters discussed." From *Pravda*, June 30, 1985, as cited in M. Ukraintsev, "The Soviet Union's Growing Cooperation with Asian Socialist Nations and Kampuchea," *Far Eastern Affairs*, 1 (Moscow, 1986), pp. 55-56.
- 32 Paul Kalem, "Soviet Strategy in Southeast Asia," *Asian Survey* (March 1984), p. 345.
- 33 David Jenkins, "A Country Adrift," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (November 8, 1984), p. 26.
- 34 Harry H. Kendall, "Vietnamese Perceptions of the Soviet Presence," *Asian Survey* (September 1983), p. 1052.
- 35 Kalem, p. 346.
- 36 Paul Quinn-Judge, "Return to Moscow," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (August 2, 1984), p. 26.
- 37 Edmund F. McWilliams, Jr., "Hanoi's Course in Southeast Asia," *Asian Survey* (August 1984), p. 882.
- 38 Because Soviet-DPRK relations are often somewhat strained, a number of diplomatic

steps were involved prior to the actual visit of Aliyev. A statement was issued noting the Soviets as a "liberator, helper, and ally" during a rally to mark the 115th anniversary of Lenin's birthday; and a massive celebration took place commemorating the "Soviet People's Great Fatherland War" on May 9th. Moscow followed step by dispatching a mission of 10 MiG-23s to Pyongyang for a brief visit. See Richard Nations, "Militant Brotherhood-Kim Tilts to Moscow," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (June 20, 1985) pp. 32-34.

39 The United States Department of Defense confirms delivery to Pyongyang of 18 MiG-23s out of a total commitment of 40 aircraft. Other sources indicate only 14. See Richard Nations, "Love Boat to Wonsan," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (August 29, 1985), p. 22.

40 This has been long sought by Moscow and long denied by Pyngyang. See "Soviet Union Increasing Military Aid to North Korea," *Korea Newsreview*, 13, No. 22 (June 2, 1984), 8.

41 See note 15 above.

42 Completed projects include the Suphung hydro-electric power station, a metallurgical works in Chongjin, a non-ferrous metals plant in Namp'o, a heat and power plant in Pyongyang, a thermal power station in Puckchang, and oil refinery in Unggi. In Ukraintsev, p. 54.

43 Ibid.

44 The exchange is fairly well balanced; Soviet exports are totalled at 347.2 million rubles, imports at 365.6 million rubles. Ibid.

45 A growth of 17 percent is quoted from A. Muratov, "The Friendship Will Grow Stronger," *International Affairs*, 9 (Moscow: September 1985), p. 26. The 21 percent rise is cited in M. Ukraintsev, p. 54.

46 See James C. Hsiung, "Soviet-Chinese Detente," *Current History*, 84, No. 504 (October 1985), 330.

47 This notion of progress on one obstacle appears to have evolved from a Hong Kong Chinese — language daily, *Wen Wei*. See Richard Nations, "The Lure of the Summit," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (March 20, 1986), p. 49; and "Russia and China: Still Half-Empty," *The Economist*, 298, No. 7439 (March 29, 1986), pp. 34-35.

48 This may be interpreted as Beijing's final acceptance of Brezhnev's proposal of 1979 when he suggested that the two powers cultivate political, trade and technology contacts and put aside differences "involving third countries." See Richard Nations, "Peace, Pride and the Rise to World Power," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (March 20, 1985), p. 66.

49 Ukraintsev, p. 61. A figure of \$1.8 billion in 1985, compared to \$300 million in 1982, is cited as a dollar trade value. See Serge Schmemmann, "Soviet-China Trade to Double Under a New Five-Year Pact," *New York Times*, July 11, 1985, p. 5.

50 Ukraintsev, p. 62. Corresponding dollar figures are \$14 billion over the oncoming five years and \$3.5 billion for 1990 alone. In Schmemmann, p. 5.

51 See "China and Soviet Agree to Develop Trade and Science," *New York Times*, December 12, 1984, p. 1.

52 John F. Burns, "Soviet Agrees to Help Modernize Several Dozen Chinese Industries," *New York Times*, December 29, 1984, pp. 1, 3.

53 "Soviet-China Pact Provides For Educational Exchange," *New York Times*, April 5, 1985, p. 5.

54 Hsiung, p. 332.

- 55 Nations, "Peace, Pride and the Rise to World Power," p. 69.
- 56 John F. Burns, "Chinese Rebuffing Soviet on Parley," *New York Times*, April 16, 1986, p. 6.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 For an analysis of Soviet policy towards North Korea and the politics of unification see Joseph M. Ha and Linda Jensen, "Soviet Policy towards East Asia," in a forthcoming book edited by Tae-Hwan Kwak (Kyungnam University Press and Westview Press).
- 60 Nations, "Militant Brotherhood," p. 32. China has also accepted sports delegations from the South and the two nations negotiated successfully on the return of a defected Chinese airliner. See Bruce Cumings, "South Korea: Trouble Ahead?" *Current History* 85, No. 510 (April 1986), 181.
- 61 Derek Davies, "Divided They Stand," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (June 20, 1985), p. 28.
- 62 A pact was signed in September 1985 between the United States and the Soviet Union encouraging the participation of both sides in the 1988 Games. Another indication of probable Soviet participation comes with the statement by Klaus Eichler, the Vice Chairman of East German Sports Federation, that revealed East Germany's planned participation. China has also indicated plans to attend. See Malcolm Moran, "US and Soviets Sign Olympic Pact," *New York Times*, September 16, 1985, p. 40; and Therese Obrecht, "Breaking the Ice," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (April 11, 1985), p. 17.
- 63 Jae Hoon Shim, "Sporting Overtures," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (April 18, 1985), p. 7.
- 64 Moran, p. 40.
- 65 A letter was carried by the author from Ovid A. Gorchakov, Vice President of the International Archery Federation, to Sung-Ho Um, Secretary General of the 33rd Target World Championships, and a supportive reply was forwarded from Sung-Ho Um to Gorchakov. Participation of the Soviet archers took place as planned. Letters dated June 2 and June 20, 1985.
- 66 For a complete analysis of the history and contemporary importance of the Northern Territories, see Roy U. T. Kim, "Warming Up Soviet-Japanese Relations," *Washington Quarterly*, 9, No. 2 (Spring 1986), pp. 85-96.
- 67 Drew Middleton, "A Soviet Naval Buildup in the West Pacific Reported," *New York Times*, December 30, 1982, p. 4.
- 68 Japanese Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 1980*, p. 57.
- 69 Most Soviet-Japanese ventures were undertaken through a "product-sharing" system whereby Japan supplied the necessary financing and the Soviet utilized these funds for the purchase of Japanese equipment as it was needed for the project. The loans were typically repaid through Soviet exportation of specified raw materials to Japan. See Naotake Nobuhara and Nobutoshi Akao, "The Politics of Siberian Development," in Nobutoshi Akao ed., *Japan's Economic Security* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 198.
- 70 "Soviets Urge Japan To Expand Trade Ties," *Japan Times Weekly*, 25, No. 43 (October 26, 1985), p. 4.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 "Soviets Inquire About Auto Plant Equipment," *Japan Times Weekly*, 25, No. 49 (December 7, 1985), p. 5.

- 73 Bruce Roscoe, "Re-enter the Bear," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (October 17, 1985), pp. 30-31.
- 74 "The North-East Passage," p. 37.
- 75 See "Hopes High for Shevardnadze's Visit," *Japan Times Weekly*, 26, No. 3 (January 18, 1986), p. 2 ; and Mike Mochizuki, "Japan's Foreign Policy," *Current History*, 84, No. 506 (December 1985), p. 404.
- 76 A 1956 Russian compromise offered only the return of Shikotan and the Habomai group, allowing the Russians to maintain Kunashiri and Etorofu, their strategic strongholds. The Japanese rejected this proposal, consistently demanding return of all four islands prior to signing a peace treaty. See "The North-East Passage," p. 37.
- 77 See Donald S. Zagoria, "The Soviet-American Rivalry in Asia," in Marshall D. Shulman, ed., *East-West Tensions in the Third World* (New York : W. W. Norton & Co., 1986), pp. 83-86.