

**COLLATERAL DAMAGE: Sino-Soviet Rivalry and the Termination of the Sino-Vietnamese Alliance.** By *Nicholas Khoo*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011. x, 267 pp. (Tables.) US\$50.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-231-15078-1.

Nicholas Khoo's book on the termination of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance is compact and clearly written, so that those of us who are not specialists in International Relations theory can absorb his arguments without too much strain. His argumentation is low-key and convincingly documented, at least until he reaches the post-1975 period. There is little to disagree with in his basic point, that "Vietnam, by aligning itself with China's principal enemy, the Soviet Union, became China's secondary enemy" (4).

The author's aim is to disentangle what he views as secondary causes of the breakdown in Sino-Vietnamese relations from a main cause. He takes issue with post-Cold War scholarship that de-emphasizes the centrality of the Soviet factor in China's policy towards Vietnam. Specifically, he believes that bilateral issues "such as disputes over ideology; land and maritime borders; the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam; and Vietnam's bid to establish a sphere of influence over Cambodia and Laos" (3) do not constitute the primary cause of the break. He reasons that the Soviet factor was "of paramount importance in influencing the course of Vietnamese policy toward Cambodia" in 1978-79 (140).

My reservations about this study stem from a lack of appreciation for IR's search for mono-causal and theoretical explanations, when the historical facts are still only partially clear and, as in this case, a large amount of documentation from the communist parties in question remains off-limits. Khoo's discussion of events during the beginning of the Vietnam War, when Khrushchev's fall and American involvement opened the way to Soviet-Vietnamese cooperation, is more compelling than his treatment of the evolution of the 1978 Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty of Friendship precisely because the sources become thinner for the latter period. To take one example, the much-cited *Seventy-Seven Conversations Between Chinese Leaders and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina, 1964-1977* (Westad et al.) does not extend that far. But there are other sources in his bibliography that should raise questions on Khoo's treatment of the Vietnam-Cambodia-China triangle and the deterioration of Chinese-Vietnamese relations post-1975. These include Nayan Chanda's *Brother Enemy* and Ben Kiernan's *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide in Cambodia Under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79*. Chanda's work, based on extensive interviews with a wide variety of participants in Southeast Asian events, documents Vietnam's efforts to maintain a relationship with China from 1975 to 1978. The Chinese demand that they replace the Soviet Union as Vietnam's chief aid donor was a price that the Vietnamese leadership deemed too high, however. Kiernan's work on the Pol Pot regime, based on interviews with survivors and refugees, as well as Khmer Rouge publications, now largely corroborated by the work of Cambodian researchers, depicts the aggressive, irredentist attitude of Pol Pot's inner circle towards Vietnam.

Khoo barely mentions this aspect of the downward spiral towards the signing of the Soviet-Vietnamese Friendship Treaty, which in his view was the main cause of the breakdown in Chinese-Vietnamese relations. Yet the proximate cause of Vietnam's decision to remove Pol Pot, and their need for a closer alliance with the USSR, was the brutal incursions of the Khmer Rouge into Vietnamese territory in 1977.

What is at issue here is Khoo's failure to distinguish between an outwardly normal relationship between Vietnam and China and the reality of deep distrust that existed between the two states as early as 1968. To talk about an alliance being terminated in 1978 is for this reason misleading. The relationship that Vietnam maintained with China had by then been hollowed out at its core, by a series of disagreements and events that neither side could cover up. The violent promotion of the Cultural Revolution by Chinese troops in North Vietnam, the efforts to dissuade the Vietnamese from opening negotiations with the US, the Vietnamese decision to support the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia—all of these signs of alliance breakdown occurred in 1968. In order to appreciate the complexity of these events, one needs to combine a study of the communist bloc's internal politics and foreign policy disagreements.

Interestingly, the Vietnamese support for the Soviet action in Czechoslovakia came at a moment when the Vietnamese CP had completed a purge of members considered to be too pro-Soviet and too ready to negotiate a peace settlement. What the Soviet invasion represented for the orthodox wing of the Workers' Party was the end of "revisionist" influences in the Soviet Union, as Brezhnev consolidated his power. This was a position that the Chinese leadership would have supported, as they had the invasion of Hungary in 1956, before the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations to the point of armed confrontation. The year 1968 could be seen as the turning point when the two parties' national interests diverged to such an extent that there could be no return to the "lips and teeth" relationship of the early 1960s. The Soviet factor was paramount at this moment, and if Khoo had focused more attention on this period, when clear realist motives began to dominate the triangular relationship, he could have constructed a stronger argument.

From 1968 on, through the 1972 breakthrough in US-Chinese relations until the return to violent clashes in Indochina in 1977-8, the appearance of friendly relations between China and Vietnam continued. But the 1974 Chinese takeover of islands in the Paracel chain held by the South Vietnamese was a sign of what was to come. Clearly, geopolitical shifts in Southeast Asia at the end of the Vietnam War cannot all be attributed to the Soviet factor. The US role in the deterioration of Sino-Vietnamese relations from 1972 onwards should not be ignored. A State Department memo released in 2004, of a November 1975 conversation between Henry Kissinger and the Thai Foreign Minister Chatchai Chunhawan, reveals the extent to which the US was encouraging Chinese policy. Kissinger tells Chatchai that "Our

strategy is to get the Chinese into Laos and Cambodia as a barrier to the Vietnamese.” He continues: “You should also tell the Cambodians that we will be friends with them. They are murderous thugs, but we won’t let that stand in our way” (National Security Archive, Department of State Memorandum of Conversation, Nov 26 1975, “Secretary’s Meeting with Foreign Minister Chatchai of Thailand,” p. 8). One might rephrase Khoo’s argument and state that the outbreak of hostilities between Vietnam and China was the result of new alliances, already in place by mid-1978.

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**GENDERING THE FIELD: Towards Sustainable Livelihoods for Mining Communities. *Asia-Pacific Environment Monograph 6.* By Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt. Acton, ACT: ANU E Press, 2011. xviii, 230 pp. (Tables, figures, maps.) US\$24.95, paper. ISBN 978-1-9218-6216-8.**

This collection of ten papers covers a wide range of gender issues in the mining industries of Papua New Guinea, the United States, Indonesia, Australia, Canada, Mongolia, Congo and the Asia region. The issues discussed include gender differences in social and livelihood impacts of mining, access to royalties and employment, indigenous rights, artisanal mining, industry supply chains, gender and corporate policy, and responses to gender by mining companies. Together, they demonstrate the diversity and complexity of gender considerations in what is usually regarded as a quintessentially masculine endeavour. While the common image of a miner might be male, women all over the world not only work directly as miners, but also in associated employment and businesses, and the social and economic impacts of mining projects affect women and men in very different ways.

Large mining companies are likely to be responsive to pressure to address environmental impacts and general employment conditions, because in many countries these are issues supported by influential interest groups. Social impacts, health and gender are relatively marginal considerations, as Sara Bice shows in her discussion of corporate reporting in Australia. As Lahiri-Dutt points out in her overview and in her paper on gender-based evaluation methodology, differences in issues and impacts for women and men are submerged in gender-blind approaches to “the community,” “the people,” “workers” and “the disadvantaged.” When mining corporations, and in some cases state agencies, do try to address gender issues they usually adopt the old “women in development” approach. Accordingly, special programs for women are added to the package of compensatory benefits provided to land-owning groups and mining-affected populations. Such provisions typically address symptoms of gender inequity and disparity rather than underlying causes.

Calls for gender equity and the application of a “gender mainstreaming”