Across Southeast Asia, from the Philippines to Burma, national liberation movements have been fighting for years to free themselves from the yoke of oppression and foreign domination. The Vietnamese government came to power in just such a struggle.

Today the rulers of Vietnam and their massive army—fourth in the world—are fighting the peoples of Asia in the back. In Kampuchea (Cambodia), Cambodia, overthrown the government and installed its own puppet in Laos.

Sentiment for self-determination runs deep in the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, and Indonesia. People are fighting the yokes of oppression and foreign domination. The Vietnamese government came to power in just such a struggle.

Since the independence of its neighbors, the Vietnamese government has fought wars in Cambodia, Laos, and Indonesia. The fighting in Cambodia is providing for the suppression of the Thai guerrillas who have waged a 15-year war for liberation.

In the Philippines, the New People's Army and the People's Army of the Philippines continue to score advances on the military front. Guerrilla struggles are developing in Burma and have a long history in Vietnam. The former Portuguese colony of East Timor is fighting hard against an invasion from Indonesia, and people's forces are active in Indonesia.

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There isn't a single liberation movement in Southeast Asia that the Vietnamese or their Soviet masters support. It would run counter to their aim of hegemony in the region. And it would clash with Vietnam's strategy of reliance on the Soviet Union and Southeast Asia for military and political foothold in the most powerful country in the region.

In Asia, the Soviet Union has become a natural ally for the Vietnamese, as their ideological affinity and armed struggle as the only means of securing power.

China's role and the Soviets

In contrast to Vietnam, China continues to provide support for liberation movements in Southeast Asia. Despite the requirements of a foreign policy that involves avoiding wars, China has continued its longstanding support for the movements for liberation.

The Soviet thesis of "peaceful co-existence" with imperialism and refusals to support national liberation struggles emerged in the 1950's and 60's. Since then they have taken this role from the offensive to the defensive.

In Asia, the Soviets use Vietnam's Cahn Task Bay as a temporary naval base, and are constructing yet another Pacific naval base, enlarging a super airstrip in the southernmost of the four Hawaiian islands they occupy, dispatching Cuban advisors to a diplomatic swing around the region, and offering arms to both the Thai and Phillipines governments to use against the revolutionary struggles in those areas.

Today national liberation struggles have entered a new stage, facing Soviet, Vietnamese or Cuban intervention as well as that of the U.S.

Afghanistan rebels target Soviets

In April, Aleksandr Vesyolik, political commissar of the Soviet Army, flew into Afghanistan. Vesyolik was not vacating the mountains, Timur Shah's nation. He was there to prop up the pro-Moscow government of Nur Mohammad Taraki, who is loosing a rapidly escalating civil war with Islamic guerrillas.

The Khajti Party, which Taraki heads, seized control of the country in a military coup, which they have dubbed a "socialist revolution," early in 1978. Opposition at first was limited— the dictatorship of Mohammad Iqbal, also pro-Soviet, had done nothing for the desperately poor Afghani masses.

But Taraki instituted a series of ill-considered social reforms and backed them with repressive laws. The government did not take into account local custom and tradition or the fact that the small Khajti Party had little firm support among the common people, ignoring or attacking resistance. At a time of a nationalist resurgence of Islam throughout the Middle East was a fatal error.

Taraki also sold out the national interests of the Afghan people. Soviet advisors were everywhere, running things closely and behind the scenes. Alienation from the government grew, and even strong patriotic intellectuals and leftists, as a result of stops like the dumping of Afghanistan's traditional flag in favor of a new, red banner. By late last fall, the traditionalist

refusal to support any of the Southeast Asian liberation movements, because they now believe the Vietnamese are pursuing this line.

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