

politically hegemonic and that certain Malay goals are non-negotiable (p. 118), the authors persist in concluding that, in inter-communal relations, “the spirit of accommodation continues” (p. 119). There is also a marked failure to reconcile the apparent contradiction between “modernity” (as the concept is commonly understood in political science literature) with Islamization. Sooner or later the dominant Malay (Muslim) leadership must reach an impasse in attempting to Islamize a multi-ethnic nation state whose constitution is essentially secular and Western in concept and whose Muslim citizens form but a slender majority of the overall population. In this regard, the present reviewer cannot accept as accurate the authors’ claim that “by 1984, because UMNO was still responding to the basic concerns and fears of the non-Muslims, the alarm over Islamization had been smoothed” (p. 54).

On balance, the book provides a useful and readable introduction to Malaysia and its ethnic and political complexities for the general reader and undergraduate student. However, the view of Malaysia presented is perhaps more benign and in conformity with the official version of events than is actually the case.

Simon Barraclough
Lincoln Institute of Health Sciences
Australia

China and Vietnam: The Roots of Conflict. By William J. Duiker. Indochina Research Monograph Series No. 1. Berkeley, California: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1986, 136 pp.

This small volume is a most comprehensive and highly readable general account of Sino-Vietnamese relations from a historical perspective. Containing six chapters, the book begins with a survey of the legacy of history and then highlights the troubled relationship between the two countries during the 1945–75 period, before examining more recent developments. A separate chapter is devoted to each of the two Indochina wars, and one to the immediate aftermath of the Second Indochina War and the Cambodian conflict. The book ends with a general evaluation which places the Sino-Vietnamese conflict in the larger geopolitical context involving the superpowers, and also assesses its future prospects.

In his search for the roots of the conflict, Professor Duiker exhausts virtually the complete range of factors that have helped shape the relations between the two countries over the past forty years. Among the major factors that have been given special attention are conflicting security concerns, ideological differences, divergent perceptions of the Soviet Union, the issue of the overseas Chinese, and territorial disputes, all of which are blended into an essentially chronological and therefore straightforward survey of developments in Indochina. The end product is a most carefully balanced and succinct summary of important variables and events. As such, the book serves as an excellent introductory text on Sino-Vietnamese relations.

Perhaps precisely because of the extent of coverage and the limited space available, instead of examining in detail any major cause or aspect of the conflict or advancing any new theory, the book seeks only to construct a somewhat simplified picture of a highly complex story, which Duiker must be commended for having done successfully. By the same token, the book does not shed any new light in its analysis on the subject nor does

it present any new sources in its documentation. In fact, with the exception of the author's personal interviews with officials in Beijing and Hanoi during 1984–85, virtually all the material contained in the book is already available from existing literature on the subject. The book is, therefore, more useful for general readers than for specialists.

In his interpretation of the sources of the Sino-Vietnamese dispute, Duiker clearly emphasizes the relevance of past events and also discounts the conflict as a proxy war between the superpowers. The general thrust of his arguments indeed points to the centrality of the incompatibility of security interest between China and Vietnam, reinforced by ideological differences, which are believed to be inherent in their relations and therefore bound to generate a good amount of mutual distrust all the time. Consequently, all the contentious issues that erupted after 1975, including the ongoing conflict over Cambodia, are mere reflections of such distrust between the two countries, rather than the causes of the deterioration in relations. This being the case, Duiker contends that both Beijing and Hanoi have settled on long-range strategies, and that Vietnam possesses a number of significant advantages *vis-à-vis* China in the continuing war of nerves. Also, from his perspective, Cambodia is too critical to Vietnamese national security to be bargained away under pressure, and Vietnamese leaders are confident that the anti-Hanoi alliance is inherently vulnerable and will eventually collapse from its internal contradictions. Therefore, Hanoi is counting on its ability to outlast its adversary, as it did during the previous war against the United States. And the success of China's strategy depends, above all, on its ability to maintain the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea as "a credible force and an alternative to the Hanoi-dominated regime in Phnom Penh" (p.108).

Whereas all these are sound observations, Duiker gives the impression, perhaps inadvertently, that the Cambodian war is a conflict purely between China and Vietnam and that its outcome also can be determined exclusively by these two countries. This does not correspond to the actual situation. One may, for instance, have some reservations about whether ASEAN support is indeed "not essential to the success of China's strategy" and whether China has more or less single-handedly engineered and manipulated the anti-Vietnamese resistance movement in Cambodia, as Duiker contends. Here Duiker's own interviews with Chinese and Vietnamese officials, which are reported only in the footnotes, contain some interesting information, showing that China did not suspect Vietnam's ambitions before 1975, nor did it, in the view of the Vietnamese, mastermind Pol Pot's anti-Vietnam campaign (pp. 51, 55). In fact, a strong case can be built to the effect that the conflict over Cambodia is as much one between Thailand and Vietnam and still another between the Khmer people and their traditional enemy, the Vietnamese, as one between China and Vietnam. Hence, the protracted nature of the war and the remarkable stability of the united front maintained so far between China and ASEAN and among the ASEAN states themselves. Viewed in this light, the conflict over Cambodia is being waged on at least three different levels, over which China has only partial control. This also means that the Vietnamese do not find only one adversary in Cambodia, but several, and China need not be the most formidable nor the last one Vietnam has to defeat in that country.

Another minor shortcoming in analysis has to do with the way Duiker presents his arguments. Apparently out of his concern to give a balanced treatment of the subject, Duiker occasionally appears non-committal and even deliberately ambiguous in his discussion of the sources of the Sino-Vietnamese conflict and thereby unwittingly contradicts himself. This is particularly so in the second half of the book. Thus, Duiker comments on the overall situation on page 89: "It is clear that there were several factors involved in the breakdown in Sino-Vietnamese relations. It is more difficult to single out the underlying

factor most responsible for the outbreak of armed conflict.” But on the very next page, he writes: “The dispute over Cambodia was obviously a central factor in the gradual breakdown in mutual relations, and may have been the single most important immediate cause of Beijing’s decision to go to war” (p.90). Then on page 91, Duiker again reverts to his initial position and argues: “There were multiple causes of the deterioration of Sino-Vietnamese relations that took place at the end of the Vietnam War. Some involved practical concerns related to national security, territorial integrity, and national independence. Others related to questions of ideology or other factors connected with the Cold War. Still others appeared to be a product of mutual suspicion and perceptions rooted in the distant past”. Similarly, on China’s Vietnam policy, Duiker contends at one point that China’s major concern is its relations with the global powers. “For Beijing the ‘Vietnam problem’ was only part of its larger concern over how to deal with the Soviet threat. The Cambodian crisis was also affected by its rapidly evolving relationship with the United States” (p.82). A few pages later on, however, Duiker writes: “Great power interests, then, were clearly implicated in the crisis, but they were not critical either in bringing it about or leading it to its final military confrontation. The real roots of the conflict must be sought in the complicated relationship between China and Vietnam and between Vietnam and Cambodia. Phnom Penh, Hanoi, and Beijing all base their actions on the conviction that their larger adversary was determined to reassert its past dominance over its weaker neighbour” (p.92). While these assessments sound familiar to the well-informed, on the following page Duiker proceeds to play down the relevance of such mutual suspicions by arguing that “it is difficult to attempt a definite answer to this question” and that Phnom Penh, Hanoi and Beijing “may have exaggerated the threat to their own security” (p.93).

In a similar vein, Duiker refrains from making clear forecasts for the future. Having identified the Cambodian problem and “the geographical factors that surround it” as the “key issue” in the Sino-Vietnamese dispute, and affirming Vietnam’s determination to persist in its policy of occupation, Duiker declines to speculate on the likely outcome of the conflict or the kind of solution that may become acceptable to both China and Vietnam. In spite of the title of the final chapter, “The Road to Reconciliation”, the author remains noncommittal in his forecasts and presents the possibilities of both continuing conflict and reconciliation. Hence, on the one hand, Duiker writes: “The security objectives of the two sides remain mutually incompatible, while the legacy of bitterness surrounding the relationship remains too deep to permit the emergence of a spirit of compromise” (p.117). On the other hand, he argues that “the historical record of Sino-Vietnamese relations is marked by periods of cooperation as well as conflict, and the arguments for improved relations are persuasive on both sides. While an element of uneasiness and distrust is likely to remain, the demands of reality will militate against the perpetuation of hostility” (p.124). If indeed Cambodia does constitute the key issue in the Sino-Vietnamese dispute as the author asserts, then the way in which the problem is likely to be resolved, or rather the question of whether China is more likely to tolerate the demise of the Khmer resistance movement than Vietnam is to accept the permanent denial of its domination over Cambodia, perhaps could be and should be more clearly answered as a matter of logical consistency. Then, of course, to expect Duiker or any scholar to produce clear answers to all the questions about a very complicated issue is not fair. After all, by projecting all the likely developments without pronouncing judgements on them, Duiker concludes his survey in a manner typical of most historians, that is, to leave the assessment of the future prospects to the readers themselves.