

CONFLICTS AMONG SOCIALIST STATES

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Definition

Considerably more than half of the continent's territory and population belongs today to socialist states in Asia. They are directly involved in most ongoing conflicts in East Asia. Their importance in Asian politics could thus be hardly overestimated. For the purpose of this paper I use the term "socialist state" in an consciously restricted and specific sense. This is a state in which a government led by a communist party has exercised effective control over its entire state territory for at least one year and in which deep social and political changes were implemented on the basis of a Marxist ideology. In most cases these states also call themselves socialist.

The "Socialist Commonwealth"

According to this definition there are sixteen socialist states in the entire world, of which six are Asian (i.e. PR of China, PR of Mongolia, PDR of Korea, SR of Vietnam, PR of Laos, PR/DR of Kampuchea) and one is Euroasian, the USSR. The totality of sixteen socialist states (wishfully called by the Soviets "the Socialist Commonwealth"¹) can be analytically treated as a subsystem of world politics, in some respect similar to such subsystems as Western (capitalist) developed countries, Arab countries, African countries etc. The socialist subsystem can be further divided into four groups of states:

1. Three powers having or aspiring after leadership and hegemonic roles: USSR (in the entire Socialist subsystem); PR of China (in its Asian Part); SR of Vietnam (in the former Indochina).
2. Seven obedient minor members of the two military-political blocks (Warsaw Pact and the tripartite pact Vietnam-Kampuchea-Laos), and the PR of Mongolia.
3. Two states with semi-formal or delicate ties with the Warsaw Pact: Cuba and Rumania.
4. Three independent states (two of these belong to the movement of non-aligned): Yugoslavia, Albania and PDR of Korea.

Sixteen socialist states are engaged in a great variety of mutual relations ranging from extremely close cooperation, tight alliance links and almost complete economic, communication, security, etc. integration (e.g. USSR-PR of Mongolia), to open and unabridged hostility reaching at times the levels of armed violence and war.

There are also various combinations of cooperation, competition and tensions, e.g. "uneasy alliances". This has been the case in Soviet-Chinese, Chinese-North Korean, Vietnamese-Kampuchean, Soviet-North Korean and more recently, in Soviet-Vietnamese relations (in Kampuchea) for quite a while.

In this paper the attention will focus on the aspects of conflictionary interactions. Here one notices various patterns of these relations. Among them there have been many diadic pairs, but also several full or incomplete triads (e.g. USSR-PRC-SRV). In some cases one socialist state experienced or even investigated tensions with a group of other socialist states. During initial phases of the Vietnamese-Kampuchean conflict (1977-1978) there arose an interesting configuration of three states (Vietnam, Laos and USSR) posed against another two (Kampuchea, PR of China) This occurrence heralds the possibility of future military confrontations between two (or more) blocks of socialist states.

The so-called "Socialist Commonwealth" is not a closed subsystem of world politics. On various levels it partly overlaps with other subsystems (e.g. non-alignment). Important economic, cultural and other fissures in today's world run through it as well (e.g. the "North-South" division). Parties in the socialist subsystem have varying relations with actors belonging to other subsystems. This affects the entire range of relations between socialist states, both on its cooperative and conflict sides. The USA is the most important of all outside actors who influences relations between socialist states. The degree or even possibility (suspicion) of extended cooperation with this leading Western power figured prominently in conflict relations USSR-PRC and PRC-SRV. Less salient in this respect were friction or conflict inputs related to France, Great Britain, FR of Germany, Japan and India.

History of Conflicts

Conflicts among socialist states in Asia have attracted public attention, sometime puzzlement and disbelief about twenty years ago. The first such clash to gain a world-wide

notoreity was the Soviet-Chinese feud in 1963. However the history of conflicts among socialist states in Asia is much longer than generally believed.

During the period from November 1917 till 1922 about two dozen theoretically or in fact independent Soviet republics were proclaimed on the territories of former Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires, Germany, China and Persia. Closest to the subject matter of this paper came the conflict between two legally independent states - the Russian Soviet Republic and the Georgian Soviet Republic between March 18, 1921 and January 31, 1922. Prior to it, between February 16 and March 1921, the Georgian Republic, headed by right-wing social-democrats, was invaded and conquered by the Red (Russian) Army inspite of an official recognition by Moscow of Georgia's independence and sovereignty (Russian-Georgian treaty of May, 1920). The conflict between the leaderships of the Russian Soviet Republic and of the Georgian Soviet Republic was resolved by dismissal of Georgian Communist leaders and by absorption of the Georgian Soviet Republic into the Transcaucasian Federation and then into the USSR.

After 1922 only three legally separate socialist entities survived - the USSR, (the former Outer) Mongolia and Tannu-Tuwa. The two latter sparcely populated and extremely underdeveloped Asian countries were previously under Chinese sovereignty (suzereignty) and secured independence from China with outright Soviet (Russian) military interventions and support. The first clear case of a conflict between legally separate socialist states occurred in 1924 when a Red Army (Russian) cavalry regiment from Minussinsk invaded Tannu-Tuwa and secured a change of its leadership. A publicly expressed desire (without a prior permission from Moscow) to unite all Mongols and closely related peoples in one (socialist) state as well as social unrest in Tannu-Tuwa seem to have been the main causes of this operation. Similar leanings toward a pan-Mongolian state as well as desires for untutored self-assertion and for a greater degree of independence from the "big brother" have long persisted also among Mongolian leaders. Due to tight Soviet control this interstate conflict potential has only occasionally surged to the surface of public knowledge in the form of outwardly internal Mongolian purges. Apart from these barely hidden expressions of Soviet-Mongolian tensions there were also reports of several serious disturbances and riots between 1929 and 1937 related to the conspicuous Soviet presence in Mongolia.

With the absorption of Tannu-Tuwa into the USSR in 1944, as an autonomous republic in the Russian Federation,

the total number of socialist states has temporarily fallen from three to two. Since 1945 the number started to climb up dramatically. This quantitative leap between 1945 and 1949 did not in itself make the subject under consideration a worthwhile topic for research. The unquestioned Soviet dominance within the evolving block temporarily suppressed dissonant voices and presented the outside world with the officially sponsored illusion of complete comradely harmony and love (at least one way).

The movement away from a bipolar world structure to a multipolar one has been accompanied by ever larger cracks in the Eastern block. The two largest "local wars" since 1945 - the wars in Korea and in Vietnam - put into violent opposition three young socialist states with Western powers, primarily the USA. Soviet military, material and political support helped very much North Korea, China and Vietnam and brought them into close alliance relations with the USSR. Yet the two large and costly wars with extra-Asian powers contained also the seeds of discord.

Present Conflicts in Asia

First difficulties between the USSR and the newly-founded Chinese state occurred during the Moscow negotiations between Stalin and Mao in winter 1950 while the two armies were in an effective military alliance. During the Korean war Soviet air divisions were stationed in Manchuria and near Shanghai. According to Soviet authors the relations between two socialist giants started to deteriorate in the late fifties "through no fault of the Soviet Union".² Anti-Soviet incidents occurred in Sian in February 1957 and two provincial newspapers published first (after 1949) territorial claims against the USSR. From 1958 on the Chinese started attacking violently the "Yugoslav revisionism" and "the policy of peaceful coexistence" as contrary to revolutionary Marxism. These were in fact oblique but sharp criticisms of the Soviet leadership under N. Khrushchev. In the summer 1960 most Soviet experts were abruptly recalled from China. The conflict came into the open in 1963 and during the "Cultural revolution" reached its peak expressed by border clashes, attacks by mobs on Soviet diplomats, rail traffic incidents, drastic reduction of all forms of cooperation including trade etc. The worst single military encounter took place in March 1969 near Damansky Island on the river Ussuri in which, according to the Soviets, 31 Soviet border guards were killed and 14 wounded. No complete official accounts of extensive border clashes were ever published

either by the Soviets or by the Chinese. Foreign observers estimated about 40,000 border guards participating and several hundred killed and wounded. Since 1969 the level of overt tensions has considerably subsided but all attempts to reach normal relations proved so far to be futile. The Chinese made the treaty of friendship and mutual assistance signed in 1950 lapse. The chance in the leadership in both states and a semi-permanent assignment of a Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister (L. Ilychev) for several years to Peking did not remove the obviously deep-seated roots of mutual distrust and suspicion.

The Soviet-Chinese political and ideological rivalry in Asia and elsewhere rests on objective differences of political, economic and security interests. In spite of recent modest increases in the volume of trade, as well as some sports and scientific contacts the two great socialist powers in Asia continue their military build-ups. The Soviets made a number of proposals seeking normalization on the basis of the status quo, without preconditions attached. The Chinese, on the other hand ask for several steps as a sure sign of Soviet good-will before substantive negotiations could be seriously started. Some Chinese preconditions are viewed by the Soviets as unacceptable: removal of Soviet troops from Mongolia, discontinuing military alliance with the Vietnamese etc. Moreover the first point on the Chinese agenda for serious substantive discussions - the former Russian-Chinese "unequal treaties" and border readjustments - is utterly unbearable for the Soviets for many reasons, not only for the sake of the Chinese.

The Soviet-Chinese conflict has become intertwined with the second most important area of political and military tensions in Asia: China and Vietnam. Formerly political and de facto military allies, these two socialist states started quarreling behind the facade of unity already during the Vietnam war. The victory of the DR of Vietnam in 1975 has sped up new political polarization in and around Indochina. The decision of the North Vietnamese leadership to revive the idea of "Indochinese federation", i.e. to reestablish a new form of Vietnamese hegemony in Indochina, led to a clash with the PR of China. The inevitable collision derived from PR of China's own political interests in Indochina, her ties with Kampuchea's new leadership, from the weight of the Chinese minority in Vietnam, and from the Soviet support to Vietnamese designs. The net of conflicts involving five socialist states in Asia resulted in 1978-1979 in two first full-fledged wars between socialist states. Between December 25, 1978 and January 7, 1979 around 120,000 Vietnamese soldiers, armed with Soviet and American weap-

ons, invaded and overrun Kampuchea. From February 17 till March 19, 1979 around 150,000 Chinese soldiers crossed the poorly delineated borders to "teach the Vietnamese a lesson". The total number of casualties in these two wars was estimated somewhat below one hundred thousand. Inconclusive results of the Chinese-Vietnamese war (in itself a failure for the Chinese) have been followed by continuous tensions along the borders.

According to official Vietnamese sources there have been since 1978 till summer 1982 6,500 Chinese military provocations along the land border, 14,700 Chinese intrusions into Vietnamese territorial waters and 1,500 violations of the Vietnamese air space. In addition official Vietnamese sources accuse the Chinese of waging intense psychological warfare, of offensively using a string of radio transmitters built along the border, mobile loud-speakers, of dropping hostile leaflets and starting seditious rumors, of luring the local Vietnamese population across the border to buy numerous necessities and items absent in Vietnamese stores, of supplying and encouraging black markets in Vietnam etc. But if one is to believe the Chinese then the Vietnamese are really guilty for the still tense and unsettled situation.

Both powers continue to strengthen military installations and fortifications and keep over half a million soldiers stationed along the borders. Since 1979 there have been fifteen official exchanges of military and paramilitary prisoners, totalling between three and four thousand. The Vietnamese government strives to neutralize as much as possible the overt Chinese military and political pressure. Diplomatically it has a standing offer for negotiations on a peace and non-aggression treaty with China, without preconditions. It thus demands from the Chinese to recognize the fait accompli in Kampuchea and Laos, as well as the Vietnamese right for complete dominance in Indochina. More significantly the Vietnamese have made the Soviets use the former American-built or expanded military air and naval bases in Vietnam. In addition to their own considerable military potential they indirectly manipulate the Soviet military power in Asia to check the Chinese and to further their goals of regional hegemony. Similarly as in talks with the Soviets, the Chinese have consistently rebuffed Vietnamese demands to recognize the status quo and instead asked for the status quo ante and for a fundamental change in Vietnamese policies as a starting point for peaceful co-existence between China and Vietnam. Apart from competition in Indochina, about a quarter of a million Chinese refugees from Vietnam, and unsettled land border issues the two powers dispute also about territorial waters and about two groups of islands in the South China Sea.

The immediate aim of the Chinese military pressure on Vietnam is to relieve as much as possible the hard-pressed Kampuchean guerrillas. Chased by the Vietnamese from the most Eastern and Central Kampuchea, guerrillas operate today in the less-populated Western part of Kampuchea and along the Kampuchea-Thailand border. The total strength of the three Khmer resistance formations is estimated at about 40,000 fighters. The militarily strongest group among them are the so-called "Red Khmers" (Kampuchean Communists who officially disbanded the party "for the sake of national reconciliation"), still led by the hated fanatic Pol Pot. All three groups use Thailand as a refuge and as a transit station for foreign (mostly Chinese) military assistance, as well as refugee camps in Thailand and Kampuchea as a source of new recruits, food, money, medicines etc. Against superior armed 180,000-odd soldiers in crack Vietnamese occupation divisions and about 40,000 militia-men of the Heng Samrin puppet regime the Khmer guerrillas stand no military chance of winning a protracted war. Due to the utter political discreditation of the "Red Khmers" and to the disunity in the tripartite anti-Vietnamese coalition there are also no necessary preconditions for a popular war against Vietnamese occupation. The new overlords in the meantime hastily change the demography of the country having settled estimated 400,000 ethnic Vietnamese peasants in Eastern Kampuchea. Unable to totally crush or chase away Khmer guerrillas and thus to reach "the final solution" they, according to reports, intend to build a "Berlin wall" - Asian style along the Thai border. Due to irreconcilable geopolitical interests of the three socialist powers involved (Vietnam, China, USSR) and the weakness and internal divisions in Kampuchea itself there seems to be no viable peaceful solution for the Indochinese conflict in years to come.³

In all three major conflicts among socialist states in Asia we observe deep and sharp collisions of state interests deemed vital and non-negotiable by their leaders. In all three cases the cleavages are related to long-standing cultural differences and animosities between the Russians and Chinese, Chinese and Vietnamese, Vietnamese and Kampucheans (and Laotians as well). There have been several other pairs of socialist states in real or potential conflict, involving the above-mentioned states as well as Mongolia and North Korea. Of these the sharpest is the Mongolian-Chinese cleavage which recently resulted in expulsion of Chinese nationals from the PR of Mongolia. North Koreans, on their side, are indirectly involved in the Kampuchean conflict: by offering hospitality to the titular head of "Democratic Kampuchea" Norodom Sihanuk, by providing some assistance to Khmer guerrillas etc.

Lack of a Peaceful Resolution

My review of all known political conflicts among socialist states, Asian and non-Asian, since 1945 (over fifty diadic pairs) has shown a number of regularities. The most important one is a very poor record of peaceful conflict resolution in the socialist subsystem of world politics as compared with other subsystems. The comparison is unfavorable also with developed Western powers since 1945 - quite contrary to ideological claims by orthodox Marxists.

How can one explain this record of socialist states, particularly in view of their very recent close alliance, (block or quasi-block) relationship and of the common bonds of Marxist ideology? Are we not dealing with a historical paradox? Given or attempted explanations in the literature put stress on societal idiosyncracies (particularly of Russia, China and Vietnam), on the heritage of the past, on the underdevelopment and developmental deformations of socialism, on some particular structural features of socialist states, on the influence of international (world) environment etc.⁴

Let me point out here peculiarities of the socialist subsystem that have probably contributed to the over-all record. Unlike several other subsystems socialist states do not possess even an imperfect machinery for conflict resolution (like the organization of African Unity, the Arab League etc.). Communist parties in the twenties and thirties used to have this tool in the form of the Comintern (officially dissolved in 1943). All Soviet attempts to resuscitate its spirit on the interstate level, first in the form of the Cominform and later as regular Communist eccumenical councils (world conferences), failed. The basic reason for this failure laid in the previous clear record that showed the Soviets having grossly abused these instruments (for a long time at their financial cost) to further their particular state (national) goals.

Having lost an instrument of their own, socialist states by and large refuse to avail themselves to the existing international machinery for conflict mediation and resolution. The ideological heritage of Leninism-Stalinism plays here a clearly negative role. Such mechanisms as the United Nations and the International Court of Justice are still viewed as predominantly bourgeois institutions. It is still unbecoming to a Communist to air his differences with another Communist in front of a bourgeois audience. Actions like these have been very rare and were usually carried out by already ousted Communist governments (i.e. too late - DR Kampuchea for example). The newly imposed successor

regimes in all cases protested against international treatment of aggression claiming that it in itself constitutes an interference into internal affairs of sovereign states.

In view of numerous historic border problems between them it is telling that no socialist state so far tried to turn to the International Court of Justice or to independent international arbitration (similarly, for example, to the resolution of the Indo-Pakistani conflict over the Run of Catch). Even where some UN peace-making machinery was previously in place socialist states refused to reactivate it in order to avoid a war (e.g. UN peace observers, among them the Poles, along the Vietnamese-Kampuchean border).

Asia does not possess a continental security and cooperation organization. Soviet proposals to this effect have been viewed with deep suspicion and were rebuffed by the largest Asian state (PR of China), and ignored by several other important states, such as Japan. Parts of the Asian continent are covered by regional organizations and security arrangements (Arab League, ASEAN) but socialist states do not belong to them. The USSR has concluded bilateral "friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance" treaties with PDR of Korea, PR of Mongolia, and similar treaties for friendship and cooperation with India, Vietnam and Afghanistan. In 1977 and 1979 SR of Vietnam signed a series of agreements with Laos and Kampuchea that legalized stationing of Vietnamese troops in these two countries.

Most socialist states and their ruling parties share some important historical features that bear on the subject of this article. Contrary to K. Marx's expectations and predictions all indigenous socialist revolutions have occurred in relatively or outrightly underdeveloped, unindustrialized, predominantly peasant countries. All successful indigenous socialist revolutions were born amidst violence, were carried out and/or accompanied by violence and utilization of military force. All other successful socialist revolutions were exported with the actual use or a clear threat to use military force. This important historical trait was compounded with a set of ideological features of Leninism-Stalinism that frown upon, doctrinally and strategically reject conciliation, mediation, compromise and long-term non-submissive coexistence with opposing political forces. "Rotten compromises" are viewed as features of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois politics, while "proletarian" politics are presumably straightforward and principled. This strategically uncompromising posture coupled with military and organizational skills helped the Communists to gain an upper hand in a number of societies with strong authoritarian traditions. But after revolutions the very same ideological trait

makes it very difficult to resolve conflicts between Communist parties and socialist states.

The strong utopian streak in Marxism has led many Communists to believe that socialist revolutions will usher the era of eternal brotherly harmony within and between newly-born societies, societies which were presumed to be radically different from the rest - without crime, corruption, prostitution, dishonesty, conflicts and wars. This semi-religious conviction has evolved into a strong ideological fallacy which in turn conditioned two typical reactions on the part of Communist leaders when confronted with real conflicts. The first was simply to ignore, overlook or dismiss early signs of trouble as something accidental ("atypical") or passing. The second reaction was to interpret conflicts as devil's work, as counter-revolutionary and/or imperialist intrigues, as something utterly unacceptable and negative if not a result of outright treason. Both extreme reactions have led away from facing realistically, dealing squarely and in time with underlying roots of social (inter-state and intra-state) conflicts. Utopian ideological predisposition thus prevented preemptive conflict management and conflict diffusion. The utopian element and inability of most Marxists to apply scientific elements of Marxism to analyze their own (Marxists') practice have helped to produce state and inter-state political systems with very poor safety valves. Hence so many times repeated abrupt changes in inter-state relations from deafening laudatory rhetoric, the leaders' public hugging and cheek-kissing one day to resounding breakdowns in cooperation, wildest recriminations and name-calling only several weeks later.

The ideological ill-disposition for conflict resolution by bargaining and compromise has been further strengthened by structural features of most socialist states, such as: the very high degree of centralization of power; very considerable insulation of top decision makers from overt pressures of public opinion; the absence of meaningful public debates on foreign, military and security policies; high statism in economy, culture, sports etc.; policies of political, cultural and economic autarchy even when accompanied by very substantial barter commodity trade; low level of inter-state economic, technological and cultural integration; low level of across-the-border and inter-state travel and traffic of people, mail, mass media and ideas; largely parochial and self-isolated life styles of political elites etc.

Like ideologies, similarities in political systems have had varying and often contradictory effects on conflicts between socialist states. They tend to suppress minor divergencies

and shovel potential conflicts under the carpet. But at later stages the similarities magnify and sharpen antagonisms and make conflict management very difficult.

There are many, both in the East and in the West, who believe that conflicts I have been talking about are harmful to socialism and communism and have thus to be prevented or instigated. This is an extremely simple view that often does not correspond to reality. In fact inter-state conflicts affect negatively mostly hegemonists among socialist powers, although under certain conditions conflicts could be and have been manipulated and used to their advantage. Weaker and smaller socialist states have mostly benefited from clashes between two socialist giants. North Korean and Albanian leaders have directly exploited them. The former junior Soviet officer of Korean origin Kim Il Sung has adroitly maximized military, economic and technical assistance from both the USSR and PR of China. In time he disentangled himself and his fief from the tight control of his former Soviet mentors and superiors, but skillfully managed to keep Soviet assistance and to maintain equidistance between the two socialist great powers. Albanian leaders behaved differently and switched from one protector to another. Finally they quarreled with both. The Mongolians, who could have profited (or suffered) most from the same rivalry, did not even try it. The Vietnamese, like the Koreans, maximized for a time competitive support from the Soviets and the Chinese, but later opted for the more developed and distant (hence less dangerous) USSR. But games like this are tricky as was demonstrated by the "Red Khmers". Their leaders Pol Pot and Yeng Sary attempted to play the Chinese against the Vietnamese but lacked necessary intelligence and skills. They lost the game and were mercilessly crushed by the Vietnamese. I conclude that in most cases conflicts between "big guys" helped "small guys" to gain a measure of independence and to adopt internationally and domestically a more indigenous line (Kampuchea is a good example that this is not always beneficial for the population concerned).

Future Prospects

Our attention to the conflictual side of interrelations between socialist states only might have somewhat distorted the picture of reality. The overall importance of conflicts between socialist states should not be overestimated. The sum total of cooperative relations between them certainly exceeds the opposite total (although a number of co-

operative and alliance relations is not entirely voluntary, to say the least). Even when engaged in profound and sharp political conflicts socialist states often do not go to the extreme estrangement and hostility (exemplified, for instance, by relations between Israel and most of her Arab neighbours). Diplomatic relations are mostly maintained (even in war, e.g. PRC and SRV), some trade goes on (PRC and USSR), occasional cultural and sports contacts take place etc. The socialist subsystem of world politics is not inherently conflict-ridden.

One has also to recognize and to take into account the very important time dimension. The importance of conflicts between socialist states has been growing in the last thirty years. So has the magnitude of hostilities at their peaks. Are we to expect this visible trend to continue? In order to answer this question one has to consider factors that tend to promote and those that tend to suppress conflicts.

In the past thirty six years the total number of socialist states in the world has been growing. This is likely to continue, although probably without dramatic leaps as before. We know from the historic experience that after the initial period of internal consolidation and dependency on militarily and economically stronger socialist states usually comes re-assertion of particular national and state interests. This change tends to increase the complexity of relations within the socialist subsystem. The geographic expansion and growing complexity of relations boost the conflict potential.

The geographic expansion, if it happens, is likely to take place in economically underdeveloped and poor Asian, African and Latin American countries. There are already several candidates for this category, mostly militarily and economically supported by the Soviets. Such expansion would certainly further increase cultural and political diversity, as well as discrepancies in the levels of economic development and wealth among socialist states. This would magnify pressures for wealth-sharing on the more developed socialist states and would in fact infuse new and additional conflicts (along the North-South lines) into the socialist subsystem. The price for successful geographic expansion might become too high for the already heavily overcommitted socialist superpower.

On the other hand we are witnessing strong underlying processes of economic, technological and communicational integration not only on the world scale but also within the socialist subsystem. Particularly obvious is the concentration of military power based on the most advanced and extremely expensive scientific-technological-industrial developments.

We have also to consider the fact that the present elites' experience in conflict management, although not negligible, is still very modest when compared with the conflict management experience of Western elites. There are indications that through experience and learning "on the job" political leaders in socialist states do acquire additional skills relevant for successful conflict management.

The interactions of contradictory pulls will determine in the future the frequency and violence of conflicts between socialist powers. Their relevance for the rest of the world is likely to increase.

Today socialist states cover a considerable part of the planet's surface and have within their borders more than a third of world population and a third of industrial capacity. Their share in energy resources is above 40%. The current military potential of these states is still higher. Two largest standing armies in the world (Soviet and Chinese) belong to them and of the five largest permanent military establishments (above 1 million soldiers each) three wear red stars. The total shares of 16 socialist states in the world total of soldiers in standing armies and in world defense and military efforts come close to a half and their share in some categories of heavy weapons exceeds a half.

Moreover foreign military bases of two socialist powers exist on the territory of eight other socialist states, ostensibly for defending these weaker states (of these eight three are in Asia). In reality at least in four of eight "protected" states foreign military units were used or threatened to be used against wishes of legal governments. In three cases these governments were subsequently overthrown by an external force. This potential still exists. At least eight socialist states actively prepare themselves for possible or conceivable military confrontation with other socialist states. The three largest states - USSR, PR of China and SR of Vietnam - do not hide these preparations one against another and are engaged in competitive arms races. A military conflict between the two socialist giants - more than a remote theoretical possibility - could bring in its wings a major nuclear war that would affect the rest of the world. Hence conflicts between socialist states have long ceased to be an affair of practical interest for them only.

The Yugoslav Marxist ideologist Edvard Kardelj has stated in his study "Socialism and War" (1960, 1973) that the history of the world becomes more and more the history of socialism. If so, the opposite is true as well - with tensions, upheavals and conflicts that have made such an important and costly part of mankind's experience throughout long centuries. The last six decades have indicated that the

new variety of social and political order does not and cannot eliminate them. At best it substitutes older forms of conflicts for newer ones. In Asia the removal of West European, Japanese and North American colonial shackles, often coinciding in time and interrelated with socialist revolutions, has considerably increased the number and violence of conflicts between the states of the region - socialist and non-socialist more or less alike. Marx's expectation and forecast of peace between communist societies of the future did not materialize, more obviously in Asia than in Europe. It remains to be seen whether the upsurge of conflicts among socialist states in Asia is a temporary phenomenon of post-colonial readjustment or a longer-term fixture in Asian politics.

Summary

More than half of Asia's territory and populations belong to socialist states, and as such are directly involved in most ongoing conflicts in East Asia. The term "socialist state" is used in the paper in a restricted and specific sense. The totality of 16 states, by the Soviets wishfully called "the Socialist Commonwealth", can be treated as a subsystem of world politics. The socialist subsystem can be further subdivided in powers having or aspiring after leadership and hegemonic roles, obedient minor members of the two military-political blocks, states with semi-formal or delicate ties with the Warsaw Pact and independent states. They are engaged in a great variety of mutual relations ranging from extremely close cooperation, tight alliances and almost complete integration to open and unabridged hostility. Beside this there are various combinations of cooperation, competition and tension. The attention of this paper is focussed on the aspects of conflictary interactions and the various patterns of these relations. The so-called "Socialist Commonwealth" is not a closed subsystem, but on various levels partly overlaps with other subsystems.

As compared to other subsystems, the political conflicts among socialist states, Asian or non-Asian, show a poor record of peaceful conflict resolution. This results in the lack of a conflict solving organisation for themselves, and the refusal to avail their problems to the existing international organisations for inter-state conflict resolutions. The ideological ill-disposition for conflict resolution has been further strengthened by structural features in most socialist states: centralisation of power, overt pressures of public opinion, absence of public debates on policies, high statism

in economy, policies of autarchy, low level of inter-state integration, low level of across-the-border and inter-state information.

Anmerkungen

- ¹ The exact meaning of this term is uncertain and varies with political tactics (e.g. in relations with PRC). According to the last public pronouncement by President Breshnev in Tashkent the PR of China is considered again by the Soviets as a socialist country.
- ² O.B. Borisov, B.T. Koloskov, Sino-Soviet relations, 1945-1973, Moscow (Progress Publishers), 1975, S.11.
- ³ See: Peter Schier, (K)eine Lösung für Kambodscha?, in: Jahrbuch Dritte Welt, München 1983, pp.185-203; and in: Werner Draguhn, Peter Schier (eds.), Indochina. Der Permanente Konflikt? Hamburg (Institut für Asienkunde) 1981.
- ⁴ I have surveyed the existing and available literature on the subject in the article "Marxism and the problem of wars waged by socialist states" (in Serbo-Croat), in: Kulturni Radnik, Zagreb, no.5, 1981.