

## Book Reviews

These theoretical propositions may be of interest to some but those who find such abstractions tiresome will do well to skip these pages. In any case the useful parts of the book are those which examine the complexity of the diplomatic relationships between the three great powers in relation to Vietnam. The author outlines the development of the strategic triangle through three phases (1964-69, 1970-75, 1976-80) during which the great power strategic triangle becomes a "compound" triangle with the addition of a regional power — Vietnam. The author's observations of the Sino-Vietnamese War, including his balanced assessment of Chinese policy (pages 150-60), are worth noting. For those who wish to gain an understanding of triangular great power relations over the period 1976-1980 the book is a concise and very informative introduction. In terms of the objective of the book, which was intended to be a study of the strategic triangle, a serious deficiency is the seemingly arbitrary cutoff date. To discover what happened to the strategic triangle and to assess the factors governing its duration in international relations the work should have included Gorbachev's efforts to normalize relations with China. The very notion of the strategic triangle was a product of the particular circumstances of the cold war and for that reason, the author's claim (p. 188) that the model he develops may be useful in examining other regional conflicts, is questionable.

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THE VIETNAMESE REVOLUTION OF 1945: Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh and de Gaulle in a World at War. *By Stein Tonnesson. Newbury Park (California): Sage Publications, Inc. 1991. xiv, 458 pp. US\$60.00, cloth. ISBN 0-8039-8521-5.*

STEIN Tonnesson opens *The Vietnamese Revolution* by discussing the term "revolution" and its suitability for the events of summer 1945 in the Vietnamese lands of the former French Indochina. By defining "revolution" in a restricted sense as "a general insurrection involving a reconstitution of the state and leading to radical social change," he eschews Trotsky's "dual sovereignty" and Skocpol's "successful social change" since tracing these phenomena forward and backward would necessitate a longer chronological framework, probably 1941 (formation of the Viet Minh) to 1975 (defeat of the Saigon regime). This conceptualization has the advantage of permitting a more in-depth study of a compressed chronological period — the events occurring between 13 August and 2 September 1945, usually known as the August Revolution. During this period, the author argues, the Indochinese Communist Party did lead a popular uprising, seize and reconstruct state power, and begin a process of profound social transformation — a revolution did occur.

To explain this revolution's origins, Tonnesson reconstructs two "causal chains": internal, the development and activities of the ICP/Viet Minh from 1930 to 1945; and external, the foreign policies of the warring powers, particularly the United States, *vis-à-vis* Indochina. Based on an extensive

researching of published and archival sources on the American, British, French sides, and on a cursory examination of Vietnamese sources (the author does not read Vietnamese but was aided by historians in Hanoi, whose biases he has managed to avoid), the work attempts to change our view of the August Days in two important ways. In his analysis of the external "chain," Tonnesson argues that, contrary to the consensus in the field of American foreign policy, Roosevelt, well known for his disapproval of the French Indochinese empire, most likely did not abandon or attenuate his anticolonialism in the last months of his life. Rather, Tonnesson maintains, Roosevelt apparently mounted a campaign of "deception and false expectations" intended to persuade the Japanese that an Allied landing in Indochina was imminent, hoping thereby to provoke them to overthrow the French colonial regime there, which would place Indochina in the category of occupied nations that would later be liberated from the Japanese and subject to the mandate system as decided at Yalta, rather than returned to French sovereignty. If such were the case, the American role would have been more actively if unconsciously pro-Viet Minh than has been previously recognized. The corollary to this is found in Tonnesson's elaboration of the internal "chain," i.e., the ICP's quest for power in the wake of the French collapse and Japanese surrender, which, he argues, was facilitated by the political vacuum supposedly created by Roosevelt's alleged campaign of deception.

This is unquestionably the most fully documented study of the Western-language sources for the international history of the August Revolution. And we are in the author's debt for his interesting theoretical and historiographical discussion of the August Days and their implications for our understanding of revolutions in general and the Vietnamese Revolution in particular. Unfortunately, most of this massive study is given over to expounding a hypotheses for which there is really very little solid evidence presented — Roosevelt's alleged attempts at deception and their possible impact on historical actors and events. The author thus devotes entire pages to speculating about what Roosevelt might have said or Japanese authorities must have thought, which is frustrating for the reader, especially after the high hopes for a breakthrough raised by the work's introduction. *The Vietnamese Revolution* is a superbly crafted and brilliantly organized structure that rests upon an inadequate empirical base; given the effort expended and the sources consulted, Tonnesson would have achieved more had he attempted less.

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VIETNAM: The Struggle for National Identity. By D.R. Sar Desai. Boulder (Colorado): Westview Press. 1992. x, 192 pp. (Maps.) US\$46.50, cloth, ISBN 0-8133-8196-7; US\$15.95, paper, ISBN 0-8133-8197-5.

IN THE EARLY DAYS OF UNITED STATES INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM, when the sense of foreboding had just begun, the most popular book among military