

Proposals for a Lasting Peace in Indochina

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1. *The Vicious Circle of War*

The French and US wars in Indochina each lasted for roughly ten years. The First Indochina War broke out with the French return to revolutionary Vietnam in 1945 and ended at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The Second Indochina War developed from the South Vietnamese insurgency of 1959-60 to the deployment of US ground troops in 1965, and ended in 1975 with national reunification under Hanoi's leadership. The Third Indochina War began in 1978-79 with Vietnam's conquest of Cambodia, and has been going on for ten years now. The intermittent periods of relative peace have been short, so short that the Geneva Accord of 1954 and the Paris Agreement of 1973 must be regarded as failures. Although the third war is different, it should be possible to learn from these failures of the past.

For 80 million people in Indochina it is imperative that the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops be accompanied by or followed up with a negotiated settlement. It is also imperative that this settlement does not carry the potential for another war. It must aim at a lasting peace, not a half-baked solution. Much of this article will be dedicated to history, because interpretations of the past are a necessary part of the future. My main purpose is to suggest a course for tomorrow, one that can break the vicious circle of resurging wars.

Negotiations before peace settlements vary in length. In 1954, French Premier Pierre Mendes-France set a short time limit

and managed, by playing on Soviet and Chinese strings, to get a quick deal. The result satisfied the great powers, but not the Vietnamese, neither south nor north. Hanoi, having learned from the experience, never allowed Henry Kissinger to set time limits or interpose Beijing and Moscow in his attempts to withdraw 'with honour'. The frail Paris settlement broke down after a year. If it is not to break down similarly, any settlement of the Third Indochina War must satisfy two imperatives: end Vietnamese domination, and prevent the Khmer Rouge from resuming power.¹

This will not just be a Cambodian affair, although the tragedy of that people has few equals. The war is also a burden on the Vietnamese, as well as the Lao and Thai. Moreover, the Indochina wars have seriously disturbed inter-state relations in the world at large: the first by bringing the Cold War to Asia; the second by cementing it when it might have been overcome; the third by delaying Sino-Soviet normalization. Building peace in Indochina is truly a global concern.

2. *Why Did Vietnam Invade?*

In July 1975, three months after the conquests of Phnom Penh and Saigon, quarrels arose between Vietnam and the new regime in Cambodia about some offshore islands. In 1976-77, Cambodian units raided villages in Vietnam, and there were retaliations. Towards the end of 1977, large-scale clashes followed.

At a meeting at the beginning of 1978, the Hanoi politburo decided on a full-scale invasion. The Khmer Rouge had just

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CHRONOLOGY OF THE THIRD INDOCHINA WAR

- 1975** April: Phnom Penh and Saigon conquered by Khmer Rouge and North Vietnamese forces. Population evacuated from Cambodian cities. *May-June*: Cambodian attack on Vietnamese islands; Vietnam temporarily occupies Cambodian island.
- 1976** February: China and Democratic Kampuchea sign secret agreement on military aid.
- 1977** Cambodian attacks on Vietnamese villages; Vietnamese retaliation.
- 1978** February: Khmer rebel brigade formed in Vietnam. *April*: Exodus of 'boat people' starts from Vietnam. *May*: Khmer Rouge launch purge of Eastern Zone. *June*: Vietnam joins COMECON. *November*: Soviet-Vietnamese friendship treaty. *December*: Vietnam invades Cambodia.
- 1979** *January*: Vietnam conquers Phnom Penh. People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) proclaimed. Secret Thai-Chinese meeting to support guerrilla war. *February-March*: Chinese invasion of North Vietnam. Soviet naval units arrive at Cam Ranh Bay. *Spring/Summer*: Repopulation of Cambodian cities. Food shortage. Influx of refugees into Thailand. *November*: UN General Assembly demands withdrawal of foreign troops from Cambodia. First refugee camps erected at the Thai-Cambodian border.
- 1980** *July*: India recognizes PRK.
- 1981** *March*: Prince Sihanouk forms resistance front. *July*: UN Conference calls for withdrawal and elections.
- 1982** *June*: Sihanouk president of exile tripartite coalition government which is recognized by the U.N.
- 1984-85** Major Vietnamese offensive.
- 1986** *December*: 6th Party Congress in Hanoi adopts the 'Doi Moi' slogan. Nguyen Van Linh Secretary General.
- 1987** *May*: Sihanouk announces 'a year's leave of absence' from the coalition government. *December*: First Hun Sen-Sihanouk meeting in Paris.
- 1988** *January*: Sihanouk resigns from the coalition government. Second round of Hun Sen-Sihanouk talks. *May*: Thai Prime Minister visits Moscow. *June*: Vietnamese Foreign Minister visits Bangkok. *July*: Serious pull-out of Vietnamese troops. Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM) of ASEAN. Vietnam, Laos and the four Cambodian factions. *August*: Talks on Cambodia between the Soviet and Chinese Vice Foreign Ministers. *November*: Third round of Hun Sen-Sihanouk talks.
- 1989** *January*: Hun Sen received in Bangkok. *February*: USSR withdrawal from Afghanistan. Soviet Foreign Minister visits Beijing. Second Jakarta meeting makes little progress. *April*: Hanoi pledges full withdrawal by the end of September. People's Republic of Kampuchea changes its name to the State of Cambodia. *May*: Hun Sen meets with Sihanouk and Son Sann in Jakarta. International conference announced to take place in Paris in August. Sino-Soviet summit in Beijing. *June*: Vietnam refrains from criticizing Beijing's repression of student revolt.

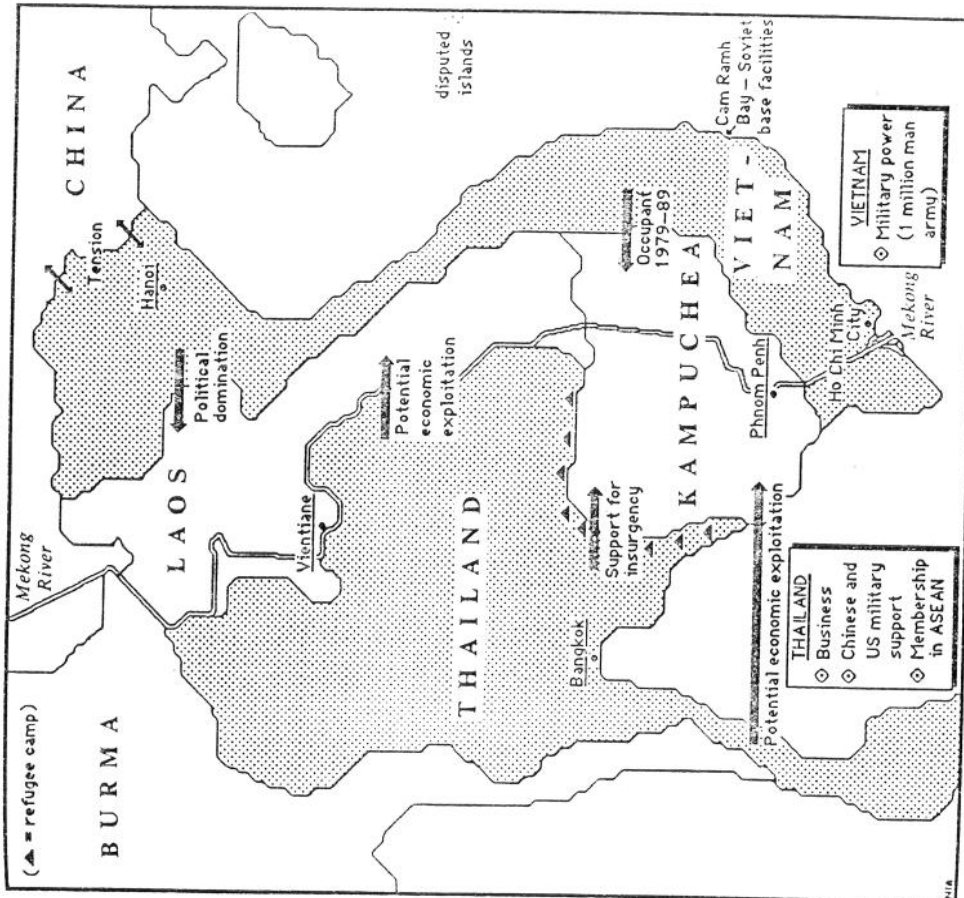
effected bloody purges against possible pro-Vietnamese cadres, some of whom had escaped to Vietnam. In early December, a Kampuchean National Salvation Front was founded, and on 25 December, the Vietnamese invaded, rapidly defeating the Khmer Rouge army and forcing the leaders to flee towards the Thai border. In the wake of the invasion, cadres who had fled the purges of 1977-78 established a new regime: the

People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) (Fig. 1).

2.1 *Cambodian Causes of the Invasion*

The 'Pol Pot regime' (1975-78) is surely one of the worst regimes in history. Upon assuming power in April 1975, the Khmer Rouge embarked on a policy of destroying city-based culture and integrating the entire population in a moneyless economy of rice-

Fig. 1. Cambodia (Kampuchea) and Laos Between the Regional Powers.



Historically, the Khmer and Lao populations have been under pressure from the numerically stronger Thai and Vietnamese. For some decades, French colonialism placed a lid on regional differences, but from 1941 to 1946, Thailand occupied the western parts of Kampuchea and Laos, and between 1945 and 1975 the Indochinese states shook off external dominance. With the end of the Second Indochina War, pre-colonialist power relations resurfaced between the four nation-states bordering on the Mekong River.

cultivating collectives. More than three million people from the cities were moved out to the fields, where work was organized along military lines. Ethnic minorities were decimated, organized religion prohibited, and officials of the previous regime, as well

as educated people who refused to obey, were murdered. Purges of the regime's own cadres were intense, leading everyone, from ministers to village peasants, to fear continuously for their lives. As with most murderous regimes, their

enemies have inflated the numbers actually killed. Figures such as two or three million are not compatible with the fact that there were seven million people in Cambodia by 1984. Michael Vickery, a cautious scholar, estimated in 1984 that the overall population had decreased by some 400,000 during the Khmer Rouge years, meaning there had been more than 700,000 deaths in excess of the normal. In a 1986 publication, Vickery said the death toll over the normal was 'well under one million'.² That in itself is horrendous. Vickery estimates that between two and three hundred thousand were executed, while most of the remaining excessive deaths were caused indirectly by the government's policies.

Despite the terror, the Khmer Rouge found support among a substantial segment of the population. Elizabeth Becker assesses that 15-25% were behind the regime in 1977.³ With such a following, primarily rural young people uprooted from their native villages and socialized into Khmer Rouge culture, it was possible for Pol Pot to transform society drastically, but only through terror. That of course alienated some supporters; but, since 1979, the Khmer Rouge have controlled several refugee camps in Thailand and maintained a force of some 30,000 men. Thus, even today, the Khmer Rouge are more than a paper tiger. It will not be an easy task to break their power and integrate their followers in a peaceful Cambodia.

While in power, Pol Pot did not meet serious resistance from within. Terror made opposition impossible, leaving escape the only way out. The arrival of Khmer Rouge cadres in Vietnam, telling about the fate of their countrymen, must have contributed to 'pull' the Vietnamese invasion. Pol Pot also pursued a provocative policy toward Vietnam, relying on Chinese support and resisting Vietnamese attempts to settle outstanding matters. Phnom Penh instigated the clashes in 1976-77; David P. Chandler states the war between the two countries in 1977-78 was 'more or less inevitable', given Democratic Kampuchea's policy.⁴

world into 'a capitalist and a socialist camp' or, in the US discourse, 'a free and a totalitarian world'. From 1975, all of Indochina fell in the second category. The border between Thailand and Cambodia thus separated two incompatible systems, while the border between Cambodia and Vietnam was seen as 'intra-system'. This image was not altered by the abdication of the USA, the capitalist ringleader, from a role in the region. For the United States, Indochina had now become an 'internal communist problem', the Cambodian genocide being allowed to go on with few reactions from the West. The feeling that Pol Pot was 'their problem' also prevented journalists from socialist countries and Western Marxists from crying out in alarm.

Paradoxically, the perception of a two-camp world made it tempting, in the logic of Cambodian chauvinism, to assert itself in relation to Vietnam rather than to Thailand. The few clashes between Democratic Kampuchea and Thailand were seen as a continuation of the Second Indochina War, while conflict with Vietnam permitted the Khmer Rouge to manifest the unique character of their own revolution.

Within the system of Asian socialist states, a dangerous alliance pattern emerged, well known from all hierarchies: An actor on one level engages in a conflict with the next level and, in order to strengthen his position, allies himself with the level two steps above. Phnom Penh allied with Beijing in order to resist Hanoi; Hanoi allied with Moscow in order to resist Beijing. This pattern is dangerous because the intermediate levels are exposed to threats from both above and below. Double threats enhance nervousness, which again may lead to drastic action.

No valid conclusions can be reached on the motives for the 1978 invasion before top-secret Hanoi files are opened, but my guess is that the perception of a double threat was more important than Pol Pot policies in themselves. Also, I do not think the decision arose from long-term expansionist designs. Rather, the invasion

resulted from a specific historical situation in which the Hanoi leadership felt threats building up from above and below, while realizing that internal power struggles in Beijing would leave time for it to crush the threat from below before being exposed to a full-scale attack from above.

3. *Effects of the Vietnamese Occupation*

The main effect has been ten years of warfare between a Vietnamese occupation army, numbering 100,000-180,000 men,⁷ assisted by a collaborating regime; and three guerrilla armies, recruiting from a number of refugee camps, and sustained by China, Thailand and the United States.

3.1 *Effects in Cambodia*

The invasion's first effect in Cambodia was the revival of traditional town and village life. Families were reunited. Atrocities were disclosed. International relief agencies provided aid for famine-stricken Cambodians, through both Bangkok and Phnom Penh. On the negative side, the presence of the Vietnamese soldiers aggravated the food situation, and a new complex refugee problem emerged. In 1975-78 many had fled from the Khmer Rouge to be resettled in various countries. In 1979 the Khmer Rouge cadres regrouped along the Thai border, and many peasants from dissolved collectives went to Thailand rather than to occupied Phnom Penh. These new refugees — partly politically, partly economically motivated — were joined by many newcomers when the Thais started to build camps that made refugee life more tolerable and held out the possibility of resettlement in rich countries. The construction of the camps was no doubt politically motivated: a recruitment base was created for three evolving guerrilla armies. To date, about half a million Cambodians have fled altogether. In 1987, from 200,000 to 300,000 people were still living in the refugee camps.⁸

Another Cambodian effect was the People's Republic of Kampuchea, complete with party, constitution and army. Although there existed groups of Cambodian exiles

2.2 *Vietnamese Causes of the Invasion*
Even although the Cambodian 'pull' was strong, 'pushing' forces in Vietnam cannot be ignored. Cambodia could have been handled differently, e.g. by arousing public attention to Pol Pot's policies. This was only really done after the invasion. Elizabeth Becker says: 'While it is clear Cambodia started the border war with Vietnam, it is less obvious why Vietnam interpreted that challenge as an invitation to invade and occupy Cambodia.' She traces the decision to an alleged expansionist character of the austere Vietnamese, especially the northerners, as opposed to more easy-going Khmers and southerners: The policy to 'take over the south and force it to become part of a northern-style system led directly to the boat people and the Third Indochina War'.⁵ Becker may overrate the determination of North Vietnamese expansionism, but she certainly has a point. In 1975, the army of North Vietnam was able to crush its South Vietnamese counterpart in an astonishingly short time. The strength of the Vietnamese state after 1975 lay in its army, not in its ideology, political organization or economic management. It was a warrior state with little dynamism in other fields. The army was even allowed to grow to a force of one million men. Such might can easily lead powerful generals to propose its use.

When Hanoi observed Khmer Rouge terror and the provocations at the border, there was no ideological response. Indeed, the events were not even revealed.⁶ Instead, Hanoi quietly prepared to use its most efficient tool, the army. The invasion was a success; a few weeks afterwards, the Vietnamese followed up by inflicting heavy losses on Chinese forces invading North Vietnam, turning the expedition into a failure. But since 1979 no more victories have remained to be won. Hanoi's army has remained bogged down in the unrewarding tasks of anti-insurgency warfare.

2.3 *Interstate Causes of the Invasion*

In the 1970s it was still normal to divide the

who had sided with Vietnam in past quarrels with Pol Pot, Hanoi chose to base the new regime on recent defectors from the Khmer Rouge. President Heng Samrin had been commander of the 'Eastern Zone' until the summer of 1978, when his units were attacked by the 'Centre'. He then fled with 2,000-3,000 men to Vietnam. Hun Sen, who rose quickly in the Phnom Penh hierarchy after 1979, had fled one year earlier.⁹ The fact that the new regime was set up by former Khmer Rouge meant that it was composed of fairly young men whose collaboration was based more on the circumstances than on ideological conviction. The Khmer officials were at first under strict control by Vietnamese advisors, but supervision slackened from 1985 when Vietnam promised to make a phased withdrawal and to leave its responsibilities to the regime's own army.

A third effect of the occupation was the return to Cambodia of ethnic Vietnamese. Some 200,000-300,000 Vietnamese settlers have replaced the traditional 7% Vietnamese minority which disappeared in the period 1975-78.¹⁰

A fourth effect was the formation of three liberation armies operating, from 1982, in a common front with a coalition government under Prince Norodom Sihanouk. Of these, the Khmer Rouge army was, and still is, the strongest and best organized, but Son Sann and Sihanouk's forces have compensated for their weakness by greater acceptability in domestic and foreign public opinion.

Has the Vietnamese occupation aggravated ethnic conflict? Not really, as such conflicts had been stirred up before by Lon Nol and Pol Pot. Ethnically, Cambodia was quite homogeneous even before Pol Pot (85% Khmer) and was even more so after the killings.¹¹ The Vietnamese occupation has of course contributed to preserve ethnic animosity between Vietnamese and Khmer, but it has probably not increased it. Many Khmers have cooperated with the Vietnamese, and many others with the Thais. Thus the Vietnamese occupation has aggravated the political division *within* the Khmer nation

more than conflict between ethnic groups.

3.2 Effects on Vietnam

The occupation has strained Vietnamese economy, both by the direct costs and by obliging the army to be constantly prepared to resist another attack from China. Vietnam has been isolated in relation to China, the ASEAN countries, Europe, the USA and Japan. This has deprived the country of investments needed for reconstruction. The state has come to depend on Soviet aid and has had to grant naval base facilities to the USSR.

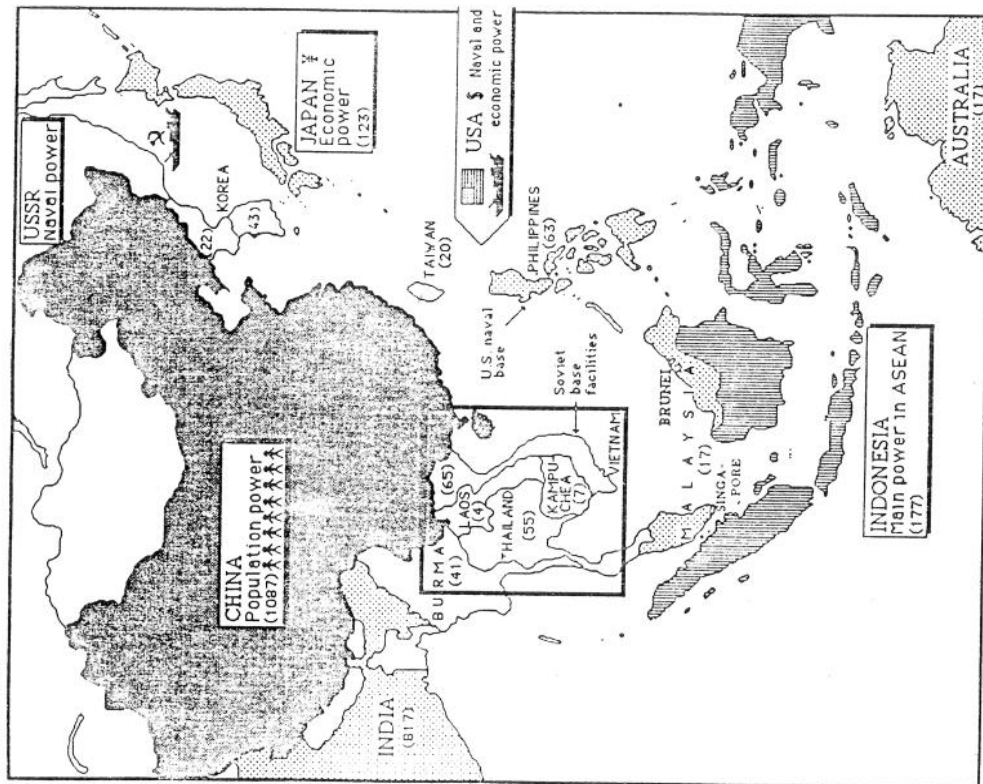
3.3 Effects on the State System

The occupation of Cambodia has been a major obstacle to Sino-Soviet rapprochement, thus allowing the USA to leave much of its former role in containing Soviet communism in Southeast Asia to communist China (Fig. 2). The ASEAN countries (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand) have been brought closer together and have played an important role in mobilizing pressure on Vietnam for military withdrawal. The perception of a world divided between two conflicting social systems has been destroyed. Marxists have once more been forced to acknowledge the supremacy of national interest over proletarian internationalism, and capitalist countries have joined China in supporting an ultra-communist force against a communist regime.

4. Why is Vietnam Willing to Withdraw?

From 1985, Vietnam regularly convened journalists to witness troop withdrawals; but each time, Thai intelligence established that prior to the withdrawal a corresponding number of fresh troops had been sent in.¹² However, the July 1988 pull-out was widely accepted as genuine, thereby increasing the credibility of Vietnamese pledges to withdraw.¹³ During 1987 and 1988, Prime Minister Hun Sen made several diplomatic moves indicating a new moderation. There seem to be four main reasons for this change (see sections 4.1 to 4.4 below).

Fig. 2. Indochina Between the Great Powers (with approximate population figures in millions).



With the establishment of the British SEAC Command in 1943, 'Southeast Asia' became a dominant term for a region situated between India, China and Australia. The foundation, in 1967, of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) contributed to the triumph of the term. But geographically, it makes as much sense to see the Thai- and Vietnamese-dominated Indochinese peninsula as a separate entity with five states, surrounded by the land powers of China and India, and the island powers of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines. Since the late 1970s, Thailand has enjoyed the advantage of being allied with all the surrounding powers except India, while Vietnam has had to rely on the distant USSR.

4.1 *Externally Sustained Guerrillas Cannot be Defeated*
 of 'Third World' nations from imperialism to an instrument for undermining socialist regimes. At the same time, the communist In the 1980s the guerrilla strategy changed from being a tool in the left-wing liberation from being a tool in the left-wing liberation guerrilla morale of avoiding blind terror was

largely forgotten. On the other hand, left-wing regimes have become far more careful in stimulating guerrilla warfare abroad. Perhaps this tendency may lead intellectuals to rediscover and highlight the essentially non-humane nature of the guerrilla principle: the very core of guerrilla strategy is to disguise soldiers as civilians and thus provoke regime forces to inflict as much suffering as possible on the civilian population. The guerrilla strategy can be effective indeed in undermining the authority of regimes, but it has now become a threat to all sorts of frail regimes, not just right-wing ones.

When insurgent activities resumed after the Vietnamese 1984-85 offensive (if not earlier), Vietnamese strategists must have realized that their old methods had been turned successfully against them. The promise to withdraw by 1990 was no doubt an attempt to open up for a negotiated deal. Hanoi is unlikely to have believed that the People's Republic would manage on its own by 1990, if the liberation front remained intact. The Vietnamese knew how difficult it is, even for a powerful army, to subdue a guerrilla force enjoying enough popular support to recruit soldiers, sanctuaries in a neighbour country, and a steady flow of arms, money and equipment from abroad.¹⁴ An essential part of the Vietnamese effort has been the constructing of a new administration. This has not been a success in the countryside due to a classic dilemma: If foreign troops make their presence felt in the villages, they will alienate the population; if they stay away, guerrillas may infiltrate the villages and deter local leaders from collaborating with the regime. This is a lose-lose situation.

It has been difficult to build up a reliable Khmer armed force. Estimates of the numerical strength in 1987-88 varied between 30,000 and 70,000.¹⁵ Most observers agreed that this army was undisciplined and often fraternized with the 'enemy'.

4.2 *War Weariness and 'Doi Moi'*

The second reason for Hanoi's moderation

is the changes following the 6th Party Congress of 1986. The slogan 'Doi Moi' (Renewal or Death) reflects a need to get rid of war, isolation and bad economic management.¹⁶ In June 1988, army headquarters admitted that 55,000 Vietnamese soldiers had been killed in Cambodia: 30,000 in 1977-79, 25,000 in the following years.¹⁷ Such losses cannot but have impressed the domestic public. During the war in Cambodia, inflation in Vietnam has been preposterous. Rice outputs have not increased enough to satisfy the needs of a rapidly growing population, which in 1988 was reported to have come closer to famine than ever since 1945.

As a result of the 1978 invasion, Vietnam was deprived of economic assistance from a number of countries. Massive aid from the Soviet bloc has been partly wasted on unsuccessful experiments with heavy industry and 'over-modern' hospitals, while infrastructure quality has remained so bad as to deter those foreign investors not already deterred by the blockade from China and the United States.

4.3 *Soviet Pressure*

There is little doubt that since the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev, the Kremlin has devaluated its alliance with Vietnam and instead striven to improve relations with China. As Beijing has made rapprochement contingent upon Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia, Gorbachev has no doubt pressured Hanoi.¹⁸ When, on 15 February 1989, General Gromov turned his back on Afghanistan, leaving Najib to his fate, Hanoi must have feared that it might be forced to abandon Hun Sen likewise. It was probably in anticipation of such expectations that, in 1987, Hun Sen was allowed to take the initiative himself. Vietnam also set two different time limits for withdrawal: September 1989 if a political settlement was reached; the end of 1990 if not.¹⁹ Najib's ability to survive the first months after the Soviet pull-out may have contributed to Hanoi's announcement, in April 1989, that the withdrawal from Cambodia

would at any rate take place before the end of September. But the main motivation for that announcement was probably the need to prevent the Sino-Soviet summit in May from launching a major initiative over the head of the Hanoi politburo.

4.4 *The Role of Prince Sihanouk*

In Cambodia, Prince Sihanouk still commands authority as a symbol of historical tradition and national coherence. In the overconfident early days of the Vietnamese occupation, Hanoi disregarded the prince. For some years Sihanouk was described as an unpredictable pirouette, but as Gareth Porter observes: 'A shrewd diplomatic mind is at work behind Sihanouk's seemingly erratic behavior.'²⁰

In 1982, observing how China continued to supply the Pol Pot guerrilla while the United States did little to support his own, Sihanouk allied himself with the Khmer Rouge, assumed the presidency of the new Coalition Government and secured its recognition by the United Nations. This disparate alliance of Sihanouk, Son Sann and Khieu Samphan was to last as long as international configurations gave no room for manoeuvre. In that phase, what counted was to keep up the facade of a united national front. The conflict seemed deadlocked, but in May 1987 Sihanouk sensed that Vietnam needed something to happen. He announced 'a year's leave of absence' from the coalition government, and criticized Khmer Rouge violations of human rights.²¹ In December 1987, Hun Sen met Sihanouk in Paris, thereby triggering the peace process that has been going on ever since.

The most significant later events have been: the Jakarta 'cocktail party' of July 1988; Hun Sen's visit to Thailand in January 1989; USSR Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze's visit to Beijing 2-4 February; the unsuccessful second Jakarta conference 19-21 February; Hanoi's pledge of 5 April to withdraw all troops by the end of September; and the hectic negotiations in Jakarta.

Bangkok and elsewhere up to the Sino-Soviet summit of May 1989.

This process can be seen as a competition between governments on four levels: (1) the two Cambodian governments; (2) Vietnam, Laos and Thailand; (3) the rest of ASEAN; (4) China and the Soviet Union (with India, Japan, Europe and the USA at a safe distance). Also involved in the rivalry is the question of whether the members of a control commission and/or peacekeeping force should be supplied by the United Nations or by specific countries such as Indonesia or France. Vietnam long resisted any idea of forming a peacekeeping force and, in April 1989, tried to revive the procedures following the 1954 and 1962 Geneva conferences by inviting Poland, India and Canada to form yet another control commission. In response, Sihanouk called on France to organize an international conference. In early May, the foreign minister of Thailand announced that this conference was scheduled to take place in Paris by August 1989, just prior to the Vietnamese pull-out.²²

Interplay between the various levels in 1988 and early 1989 has opened many possible scenarios: A solution may still transpire from common Sino-Soviet initiatives, from direct talks between the two Cambodian governments, or from the Paris conference. It is of course also possible that the Afghanistan model will be applied; that the Vietnamese army will simply abandon Cambodia, leaving the four factions to fight out their struggle on their own. That would mean yet another failure of international diplomacy in taking an opportunity to implement peace.

If there is to be a negotiated solution to the Third Indochina war, Sihanouk is bound to have a pivotal role; both because he has contacts in all camps and because he is the obvious candidate for the position as Cambodia's next head of state.

In early 1989, the main obstacle to further progress was the immobility of China. Although it played a major role as sponsor of the Khmer Rouge, China was not present

at the Jakarta meetings. It refrained from engaging in serious talks with the Vietnamese, waiting instead for a chance to raise the problem to the superpower level and draw Vietnamese concessions from Moscow. After Shevardnadze's visit to Beijing, in February 1989, disagreement remained on the status of the transitional organs to be set up in Phnom Penh: China wanted a four-party government to rule the country once the settlement had been established, while the Soviet Union preferred 'a provisional organ under the charge of Sihanouk and with quadripartite representation'.²³ In late February the second Jakarta conference also failed. Vietnam then felt compelled to promise the withdrawal of all troops by the end of September, even without a negotiated settlement. This of course made Sihanouk very anxious. With nothing to gain from a civil war which would only enhance the position of the Khmer Rouge, he thus remained the main protagonist for a negotiated solution.

5. *Six Points for a Lasting Peace*

At the time when these lines are being written, it is still uncertain whether there will be a peace settlement, or whether Vietnam will just withdraw their troops from a continuing war. Whatever happens, it seems pertinent to insist that any settlement must aim at a lasting peace, not just a temporary one. In 1980, Marek Thee applied the distinction between dissociative and associative peace strategies to Indochina. He recognized the importance of dissociation, such as military withdrawals, in the transitory period, but emphasized the need to 'set as a goal a high level of association and cooperation so as to stabilize peace...'.²⁴ Earlier settlements in Indochina have not surpassed the dissociative stage. In the settlement of the third Indochina war, provisions for making peace durable must be integrated at an early stage. Peace processes are — and must be — a short-sighted game of give and take, but decisions made on unsound bases may have far-reaching consequences. Negotiators

should therefore be subjected to continuous criticism and the influence of people who base their judgments on an evaluation of the long-term viability of the agreement. On this point, media and non-governmental organizations have an important role to play.

This sort of third-party intervention might use the following six-point proposal as a checklist:²⁵

1. The formation of an effective, legitimate national leadership.
2. The adoption of a democratic constitution built on regular free elections and guarantees for basic liberties.
3. The disarming of all existing armies and the organization of national armed forces with clear lines of authority and under full government control, strong enough to deter Vietnamese and Thai interference as well as armed revolt from dissatisfied political minorities.
4. The channelling of the energy of the country's politicians towards the application of a programme for economic and social development.
5. The pursuit of a neutral foreign policy, combined with a strategy to achieve ASEAN membership for all three Indochinese countries.
6. The setting up of a transitory coalition government, preparing the implementation of the first five points in close cooperation with a small and effective control commission in which the countries most directly concerned — Vietnam and Thailand — should be directly represented by high-ranking officials.

5.1 *Leadership*

Since 1953, Cambodia has had four regimes. That of Sihanouk (1953–70) was authoritarian and conservative, with the head of state concentrating power in his own hands and refusing to part with his image of subjects living in a happy paradise. Still, the regime was the best of the four. Sihanouk pursued an independent foreign policy, steering clear of the Second Indochina War.

The Lon Nol regime (1970–75) was a disaster. It depended on the United States, accepted and supported a bombing campaign that devastated the countryside and paved the way for the Khmer Rouge. Lon Nol pursued a reactionary internal policy and vigorously anti-Vietnamese policies calling for annexation of parts of Vietnam, called 'Kampuchea Krom'.

The Khmer Rouge regime (1975–78) was insane in its combination of chauvinism and revolutionary terror. Those who, for various reasons, advocate a strong position for the Khmer Rouge in a future Cambodian government should be asked to read aloud some of the heart-breaking reports from the killing fields, and silently the more detached studies of scholars and journalists like Ben Kiernan and Elizabeth Becker, and then to ponder the moral implications of welcoming back such people.²⁶

The 'People's Republic of Kampuchea' is too much of a collaborator regime to survive, as such, the end of the Third Indochina War. This was indeed recognized by Phnom Penh, in late April 1989, when it suddenly announced that the name, anthem and flag of the republic had been changed and that Buddhism was being recognized as the national religion. Against the background of its two predecessors, however, it is hardly surprising that the People's Republic did achieve substantial popular support from 1975 to 1989; many of its leaders and officials will play a significant role in the future. If the constitution of the People's Republic had little to commend itself, the regime did adopt a legal code and programme for social and economic development that may serve as underpinnings for the next regime: Cambodia's Fifth Republic.²⁷

The four political parties operating today have their roots in the previous regimes: Born in 1922, Norodom Sihanouk was 18 in 1941, when the French asked him to succeed his grandfather as king of Cambodia. As 'Samdech Euv' he is the only leader with a potential for uniting the nation. In addition he has demonstrated diplomatic skills. Sihanouk must be the first President of Cambo-

dia's Fifth Republic and should, as such, direct the country's foreign policy. In social and economic matters, however, his capacities are more questionable. He might be well advised to refrain from trying to dominate Cambodia's internal policy; as a King and Prince, having spent much of his life abroad, he lacks the necessary background for understanding the people's needs. As President, Sihanouk should leave room for progressive social and economic reforms. He should also beware of promoting too eagerly the career of his son, Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

The roots of Son Sann's Khmer People's National Liberation Front cannot easily be traced to any one of the previous regimes. As a right-wing nationalist with strong US sympathies, Son Sann's movement is the heir to the Lon Nol regime, but in 1970–75, Son Sann did not support Lon Nol. If Son Sann's tiny group is given, and accepts, a place in the government of the fifth Cambodian republic, it will be as a minor partner.

The Khmer Rouge leaders are: Khieu Samphan, who over the last years has been the formal top leader; Pol Pot, who is rumoured to be ill; and Ieng Sary, who may now be the real leader. Included on a Vietnamese list from 1988 of undesirable characters in a future Cambodian settlement are Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Son Sen, Ta Mok and Ke Pauk, but not Khieu Samphan. Hanoi and Phnom Penh have kept the door open for him, although it was almost closed again after the first Jakarta conference.²⁸

The Khmer Rouge probably must be allowed representation in the future Cambodian government, but not by those leaders most responsible for the 1975–78 atrocities. In fact, the elimination of their power must be a general concern. Little would be lost if, from the very outset, they were sent into forced exile. Remaining Khmer Rouge cadres, however, should be offered full amnesty and be allowed to form a party taking part in elections.

The fourth leadership group is the actual Phnom Penh government, and its party, the KPRP. Since 1985, Hun Sen has been both

Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and has shown tact and skills when meeting Sihanouk and the Thai leaders. Next to the Prince, Hun Sen is the best candidate for a leading role in Cambodian peace-building. He has been able to work together with the Vietnamese and yet stand as an independent actor. He seems to have direct access to the Soviet leadership and may be the sort of young, dynamic personality that Gorbachev would like to see lead progressive Asian nations. While President Heng Samrin should see his political role as terminated when the People's Republic is dissolved, Hun Sen should not. He needs, however, to improve his position further, by moving closer to Sihanouk and demonstrating his independence in relation to Hanoi. Vietnam could not now afford to oust Hun Sen, even if he should become disturbingly independent-minded.

The most fruitful political combination is a Sihanouk-Hun Sen partnership. With the former as President and given a dominant role in foreign affairs, and the latter as Prime Minister with predominance in internal affairs, the first government of the Fifth Republic would stand a chance of uniting the nation and eliminating the danger of the Khmer Rouge. Were Sihanouk and Hun Sen to form a political alliance before the elections, they would probably win a safe majority.

5.2 Constitution and Elections
The first Cambodian Constitution of 1947 was modelled on the French Fourth Republic with a strong National Assembly and a weak executive branch.²⁹ This constitution led to controversies, and from 1953 to 1955 Sihanouk ruled ex-constitutionally. Thereafter, the Sangkum won a safe majority in all elections, allowing Sihanouk to rule without resorting to constitutional changes. When Sihanouk was deposed in 1970, a 'Gaullist' constitution was adopted with a strong executive, but this was only a disguise for Lon Nol's shortlived dictatorship. The constitution of the Fourth Cambodian Republic (Democratic Kampuchea) was

Cambodia, all four political factions acknowledge that some kind of democracy must form a necessary part of a compromise, but they tend to see elections as a tool in a power struggle essentially being fought by other means. Why not make a virtue of necessity and realize that electoral democracy is in the long run the best way to avoid violent conflict? It gives each citizen a chance to participate in the political process; it provides opposition groups with a road to power other than armed revolt; it prevents parties from assuming power without the necessary level of support to carry out their programme without resorting to illegitimate coercion; it forces the government to pursue a policy that can be successfully defended in the next campaign.

The last point is important. Every government should at any time know that its actions will be put to the test by the people. Democratization constitutes one of the political trends in the world today — the other main ones being religious fundamentalism and ethnic conflict. The value of electoral democracy is about to be recognized by such traditionally authoritarian cultures as the Russian, Hungarian, Algerian, Tunisian and Korean, and has been practised for 45 years in Japan and India, with a reasonable degree of success. Why should not Cambodia, with its electoral traditions from the 1940s and 1960s, take the lead in democratizing Southeast Asia? In relation to many other countries, Cambodia has a unique advantage in its ethnically homogeneous culture. There is little risk that democratic liberties will give rise to separatism, as in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. All four Cambodian factions recognize Cambodia as their nation.

5.3 *The Army*

A peace settlement must include disarming of all existing armies and their integration into a new national army. This will be a delicate task which must be undertaken by a force that is strong enough to deter armed resistance. One possible solution might be for the new government of Cambodia to ask

for temporary assistance from a combined Thai and Vietnamese force. The Thai and Vietnamese have a common interest in securing genuine Cambodian neutrality. If they could be compelled to cooperate, their joint forces would be most effective. After the completion of the Vietnamese withdrawal, however, it may be politically difficult for the Cambodian government to invite Vietnamese officers back, and the solution could of course lead to confrontation instead of cooperation between the Thai and Vietnamese forces.

If the task of assisting in the disarming of non-governmental forces is assigned to some neutral supervising force — be it the UN, Indonesian or French — it is essential that the commanders of that force are given access to Thai and Vietnamese intelligence. Not only Vietnam and Thailand but China as well must be committed to assist in disarming the Khmer Rouge, who have amassed huge stocks of weapons and provisions in secret depots throughout Cambodia.³⁰

For some years the troops of Sihanouk and the Phnom Penh regime have been reported as fraternizing: this is positive for the construction of a united national force. Khmer Rouge soldiers should be invited to join that new army, but as individuals, not units. It is crucial that the new army be fully integrated under a single command. An army cannot be a multi-party affair. One solution would be to exclude from future command all high-ranking commanders who have fought each other in the past. A group of younger, politically unaffiliated officers should be trained in purely military skills, by officers from the United Nations peace-keeping forces or by experts from Indonesia or France.

5.4 *Economic, Social and Cultural Development*

After 1975, Hanoi imposed the centralized economical system of the North on an unwilling South. When this failed, Vietnam retreated to a more liberal economic policy, while invading Cambodia. Further steps

have now been taken towards an open economy, both in Vietnam and Laos, and dissident opinions can be publicly voiced. Unlike its predecessors, the Third Indochina War will probably not end in adventurous collectivization or white terror.

Liberalism does not solve social problems. It is imperative to remember the necessity of reforms. A Cambodian settlement should include a comprehensive plan for economic and social development, with a strong emphasis on agriculture.

5.5 Neutrality and Regional Cooperation

All parties have agreed that Cambodia should be non-aligned. This builds on the best traditions from Sihanouk's foreign policy in the 1960s. It is necessary for Cambodia not to provoke her neighbours by too close a 'friendship' with Thailand, Vietnam or China. Economic and ecological cooperation should include all the countries bordering on the Mekong River.

Cambodia would certainly need to attract investments from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Europe and the United States. In a 1988 interview, Hun Sen directed an appeal to Europeans, warning that if they did not 'hasten to establish ties', Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand would 'steal a march' on them.³¹

Throughout the war, ASEAN diplomacy has aimed at both Vietnamese withdrawal and prevention of another Pol Pot regime. In 1988-89, the ASEAN played a major role in the peace process, with Indonesia hosting the two Jakarta conferences, and other member states contributing valuable proposals for compromise. It might be preferable if ASEAN, rather than the superpowers, were allowed to have a significant role in the further process too. A regionally sponsored settlement could pave the way for durable detente between Indochina and ASEAN, and revive a Thai proposal from 1978 of announcing a zone of peace for all of Southeast Asia. The possibility of the Indochinese states joining ASEAN has been aired. Perhaps even Laos could be allowed to free itself from Hanoi's dominance, but

that would probably require a Sino-Vietnamese non-aggression pact.

5.6 Transition to Peace

A transition phase is needed, with a coalition government and a control commission to monitor the process. This phase should not last long, however, and many of the necessary elements in a lasting peace should be included at once. It is dangerous to let democracy wait, to postpone disarming independent groups, or to delay the elaboration of a reform programme. A control commission with one high-ranking Vietnamese and one equally high-ranking Thai member, chaired by a neutral personality, e.g. from Indonesia or France, would probably be more effective than a commission set up purely by the United Nations, or with members from Poland, India and Canada, such as proposed by Vietnam.

As of this moment (May 1989), even if the parties involved are actively displaying their willingness to find a compromise solution, and even if officially most states agree on the importance of preventing a return to power of the Khmer Rouge, there seems ample ground for pessimism. Only a few issues have yet been solved; mutual suspicion and hatred are strong among rival leaders. Three decade-long wars have ravaged Indochina in a matter of 45 years. The historical record of contemporary Indochina is second only to that of the Middle East in terms of continuous and resurgent conflicts. Still, there have been decisive moments in history, when war-weary, dedicated, far-sighted or just lucky negotiators have reached settlements leading to lasting peace. Why should not 1989 provide Indochina with such a moment?

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Afghanistan: Perspectives on the Soviet War*

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1. Preliminary Remarks

The Soviet war in Afghanistan is now in its closing phase, nine years after Moscow decided to intervene directly in the civil conflict there. It is still early to come up with an historical interpretation of the war: its origins, effects, and conclusion are still contemporary as much as historical concerns. The significance of the war in late 20th-century international history is of course even harder to come to grips with. Still, this reflective process needs to begin, even if the record is sketchy and we have to build on fragile ground in constructing our answers.¹

The purpose of this article is to review interpretations of the Soviet decision to intervene, and to explain why Mikhail Gorbachev and the new Soviet leadership found it necessary in the late 1980s to withdraw their troops and cut loose from the beleaguered communist regime in Kabul. Finally, the article will suggest a framework for further studies of the Afghan conflict, a framework that emphasizes the need for research not only into Soviet policy, but also into the policies of the Afghan parties and the international environment in which these actors operate.

2. 1979-80: *The Intervention*

Most analyses of the Soviet decision to intervene have underlined one of three

basic explanations. The first one, which we might term the regional interpretation, emphasizes the political and military developments in Afghanistan and the surrounding region as the most important element for understanding the events of December 1979, when 5,000 Soviet airborne troops from the 105th Division took control in Kabul.² Seeing the disintegration of the pro-Soviet Afghan government in the hands of the radical Hafizullah Amin, who with his extremist rhetoric and brutal methods had alienated the great majority of Afghans, the Soviet Union felt compelled to intervene directly. The alternative would have been to stand aside while the Islamic and conservative guerrilla forces, who had been fighting the Marxist regime successfully for two years, took power in Kabul. To allow this to happen would have completely destroyed the Soviet strategic potential in the area, which was moreover faced with the emergence of a strongly pro-US dictatorship in Pakistan and an increasingly anti-communist Islamic government in Iran.³

Some researchers who emphasize the regional interpretation see the Soviet actions as the result of an aggressive strategy for the whole area: the real Soviet aim was Iran and, ultimately, the control of the Persian Gulf region.⁴ Others stress the accidental way the Soviet Union became militarily involved: Moscow had not encouraged the coup d'état which brought the communist-led People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) to power in early 1978, particularly since it had enjoyed a relatively good and stable relationship with the previous government.⁵ As a result of the coup, the Soviet leadership became steadily

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