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BEIJING HANOI AND THE STRUGGLE FOR INDOCHINA(U)
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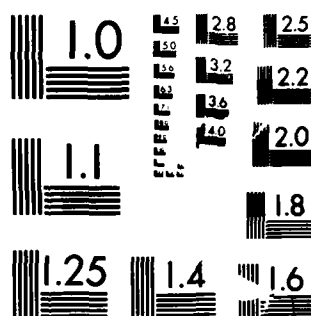
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BELJING, HANOI, AND THE

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Beijing, Hanoi, and the
Struggle for Indochina

During the Vietnam War, perceptions of Southeast Asia in the United States were shaped primarily through the prism of the Cold War. The conflict in Indochina was viewed essentially as a power struggle between the forces of international communism and the Free World, and a victory for the revolutionary forces in Vietnam could lead to the spread of the red tide throughout mainland Southeast Asia. The course of events since the end of the war has demonstrated the error of such assumptions. The faultlines of conflict in postwar Southeast Asia have appeared to reflect more primordial historical factors, as deepseated national rivalries between Cambodia and Vietnam, and between Vietnam and China, have led to violent clashes and a realignment of forces in the region.

The most visible source of conflict in contemporary Southeast Asia, of course, is the dispute over Cambodia, an issue which has divided the region into two hostile blocs representing the Indochinese states led by Vietnam and the China-ASEAN alliance. At the root of the conflict over Cambodia, however, is the bitter rivalry between China and Vietnam over influence in Cambodia and neighboring Laos, both of which are not locked in an intimate "special relationship" with Hanoi. The Sino-Vietnamese dispute involves a number of issues, including territorial and ideological differences as well as the respective role of the two states in global affairs. But most observers believe that it is the regional dispute over Indochina which has most embittered relations between the two communist states and that the ultimate solution to the Cambodian tangle lies in a broader resolution of issues currently dividing China and Vietnam.

The relationship between China and Vietnam is thus a key factor in the current regional conflict in Southeast Asia. What are the ultimate sources of the Sino-Vietnamese dispute? Is the conflict over Indochina primarily a local conflict involving deep historical rivalries or, as ex-U.S. national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski once contended, a "proxy war" with Vietnam and Cambodia acting as surrogates in the larger struggle between Moscow and Beijing for



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predominance in Southeast Asia? Such questions are not solely of scholarly interest, for the solution of the conflict, which now poisons interstate relations throughout the entire region, depends on the answers.

The Historical Dimension

The present-day dispute between China and Vietnam is rooted in history. During a relationship that stretches back in time more than two thousand years, Vietnam was for nearly half that time an integral part of the Chinese empire. After the restoration of Vietnamese independence in the tenth century A.D., China sought on various occasions to restore its former authority. For the most part, however, Chinese rulers were satisfied to maintain a tributary relationship similar to those existing with other nations along the periphery of the empire.²

For the two countries, such close ties bred complicated feelings. China tended to view Vietnam in the context of the Confucian system of hierarchial system of relationships that existed throughout human society. On the whole, Vietnam tended to respect that relationship, and indeed, many Vietnamese looked to their larger neighbor as a source of political institutions and moral values. At the same time, Chinese arrogance and condescension bred resentment in the minds of the Vietnamese, who harbored deep suspicions of Chinese intentions and developed a tenacious determination to maintain national independence against future Chinese conquest.

Laos and Cambodia, the two countries adjoining Vietnam which would later comprise the area called Indochina, played little role in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship during the traditional period. China maintained tributary relations with both states, and intermittently intervened to adjudicate conflicts among the states in the area. But Chinese cultural influence was limited, as both Laos and Cambodia (then known as the Angkor empire) reflected Indian rather than Chinese cultural origins. By contrast, Vietnam for much of its history was deeply involved with the Angkor empire. By the seventeenth century, the Vietnamese empire, expanding southward from its heartland in the Red River delta, had seized the lower

Mekong from the declining Angkor empire. By the nineteenth century, the Vietnamese were competing actively with Thailand for suzerainty over the collapsing rump of the Angkor state.³

The French conquest of Vietnam in the late nineteenth century brought an end to China's tributary relationship with all three states. To bring their conquered territories under one single administration, the French created an Indochinese Union, composed of the protectorates of Laos and Cambodia and the (Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina) three separate regions into which Vietnam had been divided. For Vietnamese patriots, preoccupied with the issue of liberating the nation from colonial rule, the concept of Indochinese had little meaning. That attitude was amply demonstrated by the events surrounding the foundation of the Vietnamese communist movement in February 1930. At a conference held in Hong Kong the founding members, led by the Comintern agent Ho Chi Minh, selected the name Vietnamese Communist Party (Dang Cong San Viet Nam). Only at the intervention of the Comintern was the organization renamed the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP, in Vietnamese Dang Cong San Dong Duong) at a meeting of the Central Committee held in October. That decision was evidently opposed by some members of the Party, who felt that it would detract from the organization's ability to appeal to patriotic elements in Vietnam.⁴

Recognition of the potential importance of the concept of an Indochina-wide revolutionary movement developed only gradually within the ICP, as many Party members questioned the revolutionary potential of the economically and socially more primitive protectorates of Laos and Cambodia. In fact, the ICP's local organization was virtually non-existent in both areas before World War II, and such cells as did exist consisted primarily of Vietnamese traders or plantation workers. The concept of Indochina began to take on significance for Party leaders after the war, however, under the impetus of two factors: a growing sense of national identity and political unrest among patriotic elements in Laos and Cambodia, and a rising awareness of the strategic importance of the entire Indochinese region among Vietnamese policymakers.⁵

But the rise of political and national awareness in Laos and Cambodia also presented problems for the Vietnamese and in 1951, responding to sensitivity of Khmer and Lao members to Vietnamese domination over the ICP, Party leaders split the ICP into three separate national organizations to struggle in concert against the common adversary of French colonialism. The Vietnamese did not relinquish their leading role over the revolutionary movement in Indochina, however, and apparently still thought in terms of the future formation of an Indochinese Federation among the three states after the eviction of the colonial regime.⁶

There is little evidence as to the reaction of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to these events. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, the CCP had provided training facilities and organizational support to the young Vietnamese revolutionary movement, but contacts between the two parties were ruptured when Chiang Kai-shek consolidated control over South China, and were not resumed until the onset of World War II, at a time when the CCP in Yen-an was struggling for its own survival against Japan. Relations remained tenuous until the end of the decade, when the new People's Republic of China (PRC) was established with its capital in Beijing.

China and the Indochinese Conflict

With the establishment of the PRC, China once again became a major factor in the destiny of the states of Indochina. For the new regime in Beijing, too, the area was one of extreme significance. China's new rulers undoubtedly had a number of key objectives in the area of foreign policy. Of foremost priority was the issue of national security, and the avoidance of conflict with the United States. Beijing's long-term objective was to rebuild the outer perimeter of client states that had characterized the Chinese view of foreign relations during the traditional period.

Southeast Asia was not an area of vital significance to China during the pre-colonial era. European conquests in mainland Southeast Asia during the nineteenth century, however, had graphically illustrated China's vulnerability in the south. After World War II, the spreading conflict in Indochina, coupled with the growing

U.S. involvement in the region, undoubtedly made the area one of considerable concern to Chinese leaders.

There were of course other dimensions to Chinese foreign policy than simply that of national survival. Another factor of importance was China's self-image as ~~in regional and global politics and a cultural and political model for a major actor and an influential force on the regional and global scene. This, of~~ smaller nations in the region. This, of course, had been a major component in the imperial policy of the traditional period. China's new rulers presumably had no intention of resurrecting the symbolism of the "imperial style". But China had now a new message to offer. Chinese leaders not only viewed Marxism-Leninist doctrine and the Maoist strategy of people's war as a concept for internal consumptions, but as a model for national liberation and development elsewhere in Asia. Even before victory on the mainland in 1949, the CCP had played a role in supporting communist parties elsewhere in the region. Now China might hope to serve as a dynamic stimulus and role model for the promotion of revolution in Asia.⁷

It seems likely that both of these factors played a role in the formulation of Chinese foreign policy toward Southeast Asia during the early 1950s. In early 1950, the PRC recognized Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) as the legitimate representative of the Vietnamese people and began providing training and military assistance in its struggle against the French. Chinese leaders undoubtedly saw Vietnam as an area of revolutionary promise and as a proving ground for their theories of national liberation. Such ideas may have been reciprocated by the Vietnamese, who not only adopted Mao Zedong's concept of People's War but also began to implement China's strategy of national development in areas under their control.

But Chinese policymakers were also alive to the danger of a direct confrontation with the United States in Indochina and, as U.S. aid to the French increased in the early 1950s, Chinese aid to the DRV was carefully calibrated to keep the struggle from getting out of hand and involving the PRC in an open conflict with Washington. When the possibility of negotiations surfaced in late 1953, Beijing appeared to

welcome a settlement and may even have pressured the Vietnamese to come to the conference table.

It was at the Geneva Conference, according to the Vietnamese, that potential differences between China and Vietnam over the future of Indochina first came to light. In an official White Paper issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hanoi in 1979, Vietnam claimed that China's negotiator at Geneva, Zhou Enlai, openly lobbied to prevent a total victory for the Vietnamese revolutionary forces in order to maintain a divided Vietnam and forestall a possible move by the United States to become actively involved militarily in Indochina.⁸ It was also at Geneva, Hanoi claims, that China for the first time demonstrated its objection to Vietnamese plans to unite the revolutionary movements in Indochina, colluding with Western delegates to prevent the seating of representatives of the Laotian and Cambodian revolutionary movements at the conference and accepting the credentials of the royal governments created by the French. China's aim, according to the White Paper, was to maintain the division of Indochina in order to create a buffer zone of neutral states in the area and facilitate the future expansion of Chinese power in the region.

Based on the evidence at hand, Hanoi's contention that China placed its own interests in a reduction of Cold War tensions in Southeast Asia over those of the Vietnamese revolution seem close to the mark. By 1954, Chinese foreign policy had begun the transition from its initial revolutionary phase toward an emphasis on moderation. To Chinese leaders, a settlement at Geneva that led to the creation of neutral regimes in Laos and Cambodia could provide the PRC with a stable situation on its southern frontier and a more secure international environment in which to pursue its plans for internal economic development.

Is Hanoi correct in charging that China's policy was also motivated by the desire to maintain a divided Indochina in order to facilitate Chinese domination over the area in the future? The Vietnamese have provided little proof to substantiate such assertions, but there is some circumstantial evidence that Beijing was determined to prevent the imposition of Vietnamese control over Laos and Cambodia. The

DRV, as noted above, had modified its plans for the creation of an Indochinese Federation in 1951, when the ICP was split into three national revolutionary organizations (the Vietnamese Workers' Party, and People's Revolutionary Parties in Laos and Cambodia). Internal Party documents suggest, however, that the concept of a future federation integrating all three states into political and economic entity had not been formally abandoned. The PRC had been reticent about Vietnamese plans for a federation of the Indochinese states, but could not have been delighted with it, since such an arrangement would rule out a meaningful role for China in the area. In early July 1954, Zhou Enlai met with DRV president Ho Chi Minh to coordinate final arrangements for the Geneva Agreement. In a communique issued at the close of the meeting, the two sides agreed to a statement that Vietnamese relations with Laos and Cambodia should be characterized by the five principles of peaceful coexistence. While such a statement does not rule out the creation of an Indochinese Federation, the context suggests that Zhou had exacted such a promise from Ho Chi Minh in return for continued Chinese support, and may have insisted in private that the federation concept be abandoned.⁹

The Geneva settlement awarded control over North Vietnam to the DRV, which placed its capital at Hanoi in October 1954. But the settlement left Vietnamese leaders embittered at what they considered Chinese betrayal of the Indochinese revolution. The need for the two countries to cooperate against the common threat of imperialism overrode such tensions, however, and during the next two decades Sino-Vietnamese relations were marked by public expressions of fraternal cordiality while China provided a significant amount of assistance to the Vietnamese in their struggle against the United States in the South. In public, too, Hanoi and Beijing cooperated on Laos and Cambodia, adopting parallel policies of maintaining friendly relations with the neutralist regimes of Souvanna Phouma and Prince Norodom Sihanouk in the two countries. Such a policy suited the interests of both countries, since it prevented the establishment of U.S. power in the region. For Hanoi, it provided the extra bonus of permitting Vietnamese use

of the border regions as a sanctuary for its troops and a communications link to infiltrate men and equipment into the South. In order to maintain such benefits, the Hanoi regime instructed the People's Revolutionary Parties in both countries to moderate their own revolutionary struggles until victory in South Vietnam had been secured.

This delicate balancing act began to come apart in the late 1960s. Inside Cambodia, a radical faction suspicious of Vietnamese intentions in Indochina and more inclined to promote armed struggle against the Sihanouk regime seized control over the Party and retitled it the Khmer Communist Party (KCP). In 1967, the KCP, under its leader Pol Pot, launched an insurrection in the western provinces. Although the revolt failed, it angered Prince Sihanouk who claimed that the unrest had been provoked by the DRV, and by China, now in the throes of the Cultural Revolution. In the meantime, Sino-Vietnamese relations had begun to deteriorate in mid-decade. China's failure to give full support to Hanoi during the U.S. escalation in 1965-1966 angered Vietnamese leaders, while Beijing was antagonized by Hanoi's growing intimacy with Moscow.

The coup d'etat which overthrew the regime of Prince Sihanouk in March 1970 was the final blow that ripped apart the tattered fabric of Cambodian neutrality, and set China and Vietnam on a collision course in Indochina. The coup threatened Vietnamese access to its sanctuaries in the eastern provinces of Cambodia, but also opened the possibility of promoting the eventual triumph of the revolutionary cause over the weak military regime of General Lon Nol. After a short period of hesitation, Vietnamese leaders decided to give full backing to an accelerated effort by revolutionary forces centered around the KCP.

For China, the problem was equally fraught with danger and opportunity. The new Lon Nol regime was closely tied to the United States and could lead to the extension of U.S. military power into Cambodia. By the same token, a victory for the revolutionary forces in Cambodia could work to Beijing's advantage. Pol Pot was a fervent admirer of the Cultural Revolution, and during a visit to China in 1966 had developed friendly relations with a number of Chinese leaders in Beijing.

A victory for the KCP could provide a base for increased Chinese influence in Phnom Penh. On the other hand, a victory by the revolutionary forces in Cambodia could open up the country to Vietnamese domination, since an active role by the DRV would obviously be required to improve the fortunes of the revolutionary cause.

The formulation of a new strategy to respond to the changing situation in Cambodia was undoubtedly complicated by the continuing power struggle in Beijing between radicals associated with the Cultural Revolution and modern elements around Zhou Enlai, who had divergent views on several issues, including the advisability of improving relations with the United States.¹⁰ It may be for that reason that Beijing at first seemed uncertain how to respond to the new situation in Indochina. In the end, China decided to support the revolutionary movement in Cambodia while preserving its own interests by giving its firm support to Sihanouk as the titular leader of the coalition of groups opposing the Lon Nol regime. Sihanouk himself undoubtedly welcomed Chinese participation as a means of preventing Vietnamese domination over the movement. At a conference held in Guangzhou in April, representatives of all the revolutionary regimes and parties in the area agreed to cooperate in the common cause. Under the surface, however, the tensions were growing, and Vietnamese sources would later charge that China attempted to use the conference to extend its own influence in Indochina.¹¹

For the remainder of the war, the revolutionary movement functioned on two levels. On the surface, Beijing, Hanoi, and the KCP leadership cooperated in the common struggle to overthrow the Lon Nol regime in Phnom Penh. Outside the public eye, the struggle was marked by a growing rivalry between forces loyal to Vietnam and to Pol Pot within the Cambodian revolutionary coalition. The Vietnamese undoubtedly hoped that the introduction of loyal Cambodian revolutionaries who had spend the years since 1954 in North Vietnam — the so-called "Hanoi Khmer" — would dilute Pol Pot's control over the Party and increase Hanoi's influence in Cambodia. But the Pol Pot leadership systematically purged the KCP of all elements suspected of harboring pro-Vietnamese feelings. At the moment of victory in April 1975, relations between the two parties were severely strained, despite heavy Vietnamese

support for the final takeover of power in Phnom Penh.¹²

Conflict in Camelot

The already tense relationship between Hanoi and the KCP deteriorated rapidly after Pol Pot's rise to power in the spring of 1975. While public attention focussed on disagreement over the mutual frontier, at the root of dispute was Hanoi's insistence on the formation of a "special relationship" between the three Indochinese states in the postwar era. The Vietnamese were able to reach agreement with the new revolutionary regime in Laos and a treaty of friendship and cooperation was signed in July 1977. But the Pol Pot regime -- now calling itself Democratic Kampuchea -- viewed Hanoi's concept of a "special relationship" as a new name for the old Indochinese Federation and a figleaf for Vietnamese domination over its smaller neighbors.

Vietnamese Party leaders had undoubtedly been aware of the anti-Hanoi animus within the KCP prior to the end of the war and may have considered an operation to replace Pol Pot with a new leadership more sympathetic to their own plans. If such a plan existed, it was not immediately adopted, and Hanoi decided to use patience in dealing with the new regime in Phnom Penh, alternating the carrot of negotiations with the stick of military intimidation. While there was probably some concern in Hanoi that Pol Pot was supported by the Chinese, according to sources in Hanoi Vietnamese leaders still believed at that time that Phnom Penh's aggressive behavior was caused primarily by Pol Pot's own "big ambitions" and hoped that China -- in the interests of maintaining a fraternal relationship with Vietnam -- could be used to bring him to reason.¹³ As late as the end of 1977, Hanoi attempted to persuade Beijing to moderate Phnom Penh's behavior. Only after those efforts failed did the Vietnamese conclude that China was deliberately using Pol Pot to further its own objectives to undermine Vietnamese influence in Indochina.

How accurate was Hanoi's perception of Chinese policy? In fact, evidence currently available does not support definitive conclusions on the level of Chinese commitment to the new regime in Phnom Penh. There is little doubt that Beijing saw the value of Pol Pot in furthering the Chinese policy of

effort to consolidate its own position in Indochina. As early as 1974, the PRC had begun to ship economic and military assistance to Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge forces in Cambodia. At the moment of victory in April 1975, foreign minister Ieng Sary visited Beijing and managed to extract a promise of substantial aid in the postwar period.¹⁴

Yet there are indications that emerging moderate elements within the Chinese leadership were somewhat uncomfortable with their new protégé in Phnom Penh. According to Norodom Sihanouk, who remained in exile in Beijing until Zhou Enlai, shortly before his death in January 1976, had vainly advised Khieu Samphan of the need to avoid the radical policies of the Great Leap Forward and adopt a policy of gradual advance to socialism. Chinese leaders also suggested that Sihanouk be allowed to return to Phnom Penh as a symbol of the new regime and evidently counselled Cambodian visitors to seek a negotiated settlement of the border dispute with Vietnam. The Pol Pot regime agreed to invite Sihanouk to return to his country, where he lived in virtual house arrest until the Vietnamese invasion at the end of 1978. On all other counts, Phnom Penh ignored Chinese advice, launching a program of radical change which emptied the cities and virtually eliminated the educational elite in the country, while at the same time deliberately provoking the Vietnamese with border attacks along the frontier with South Vietnam.¹⁵

In fact, China was caught in a serious dilemma in formulating a policy on Indochina. It could hardly acquiesce in Hanoi's attempt to establish a "special relationship" with both Indochinese states, an eventuality that would freeze out all Chinese influence in the area and open up Laos and Cambodia to Vietnamese domination at a time when the latter was increasingly turning to Moscow for support. But any strategy involving all-out support for Phnom Penh would tie Beijing to an unstable and uncontrollable regime and risk driving Hanoi into an alliance with Moscow. Beijing's actions throughout much of 1977 reflected that ambiguity, providing increased assistance to Democratic Kampuchea while refraining from actions that might provoke a break in relations with Hanoi. It is not unlikely that the

apparent ambivalence in Chinese policy reflected policy disagreements in Beijing, with elements around Hua Guofeng arguing for firm support to Phnom Penh and moderates tied to the rise of Deng Xiaoping calling for a more cautious approach.¹⁶

A glaring example of the contradictions in Chinese policy was displayed in a speech given by then foreign minister Huang Hua in July 1977. Huang called for a cease-fire and a negotiated settlement of the Vietnam-Kampuchea dispute based on the principles enunciated at the 1970 Guangzhou conference on Indochina. He offered Chinese mediation and promised that the PRC would not take sides in the dispute. But he also warned that China supported Cambodia against "Soviet revisionist social-imperialism" and would not watch with indifference any attack by social-imperialism on Cambodia's territorial integrity and national sovereignty. Huang had been careful not to name Vietnam as a direct threat to Cambodia, but the implication was clear.¹⁷

Despite the apparent efforts on both sides to forestall a crisis, the situation steadily worsened in late 1977. Throughout the year, clashes along the common border steadily intensified, leading to an almost total breakdown in relations between the two regimes. In November, Vietnamese Party leader Le Duan led a delegation to Beijing in an apparent last-ditch effort to persuade China to help avert an open conflict. Chinese leaders, however, reportedly refused the request to offer their good offices and demanded a full withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia.¹⁸ According to one source, Beijing had now despaired of a peaceful settlement of the Indochina dispute and, at a plenary session of the CCP Central Committee in December, decided to increase military assistance to the Pol Pot regime. In a secret speech given in early 1979 and later leaked to the West, CCP Politburo member Geng Biao remarked that by the time of the Le Duan visit in November 1977, "differences between Vietnam and Kampuchea were no longer concealable." Having failed to keep the contradictions between the two Indochinese states from public view, China now decided to "assist Kampuchea in force so as to equip them with a greater capability to cope with new situations that could occur because

a solution through talks proved impossible."¹⁹

Unfortunately, the available translation of Geng Biao's article is not a felicitous one, so a definitive reading of this section of the speech is impossible. By implication, however, Geng Biao's statement suggests that Le Duan's visit marked a decisive stage in China's evaluation of the Indochina situation, as Chinese leaders now realized that Hanoi could not be dissuaded from its determination to impose its "special relationship" on the Pol Pot regime. Too little is known about the substance of the November talks to permit informed speculation as to the truth of this statement. In any case, the signs from Indochina must have seemed ominous, viewed from Beijing. As a result of the latest round of border clashes, Vietnamese troops now occupied a substantial tract of territory in Cambodia's eastern provinces, and had begun negotiations with dissident elements within the Pol Pot regime. Such factors, combined with an intransigent attitude displayed by Vietnamese negotiators in November, may have been interpreted in Beijing as an indication that a non-violent resolution of the conflict was improbable if not impossible.²⁰

In mid-January of 1978, the PRC sent a delegation headed by Zhou Enlai's widow Deng Yingzhao to Phnom Penh. Press reports in the West interpreted the visit as a public indication of Beijing's support for the Pol Pot regime in its struggle with Vietnam. One reason for the trip may have indeed been the desire to induce caution in Hanoi, but Madame Deng may also have carried words of caution for the Pol Pot regime. According to Geng Biao's speech, there may have been vigorous debate within the CCP leadership over how far China should go to help the Phnom Penh regime, with a majority favoring a cautious policy short of all-out support. In any event, Teng Yingzhao reportedly advised her hosts to adopt a more flexible stance on the border issue, but was rebuffed.²¹ In the meantime, China attempted to keep open its lines of communication with Hanoi, agreeing to a renewal of the annual aid agreement to Vietnam.

Like their counterparts in Beijing, Vietnamese party leaders in Hanoi were grap-

pling with agonizing dilemmas in their attempt to resolve the dispute with Democratic Kampuchea. The bitter experience of the war had been convincing proof of the crucial importance of a secure relationship with the nations on Vietnam's western frontier. While the concept of the Indochinese Federation had been formally abandoned during the 1950s, the idea of a close alliance between the three countries after the triumph of the revolutionary cause had undoubtedly become an axiom of Vietnamese foreign policy.

-- Events after 1975 quickly confirmed the validity of such convictions, but showed that the primary threat to Vietnamese national security in the postwar era would come from unexpected directions -- from within Cambodia, and from the north. At first, Vietnamese leaders had adopted a relatively benign view of the problem, but by late 1977 had begun to take a more somber view. Whether or not key figures in Hanoi had already concluded before Le Duan's visit to Beijing that the Pol Pot regime had to be replaced is not clear from the evidence. In any event, the results of that visit may have been conclusive proof to sensitive minds in Hanoi that China was determined to humiliate Vietnam and bring it to heel.

Vietnamese leaders thus must have felt their options narrowing at the end of 1977, and the argument for a decisive move to overthrow the Phnom Penh increasingly persuasive. Postponement would provide the Pot Pot leadership with time to crush internal resistance to its authority, and China with the opportunity to strengthen the Khmer Rouge armed forces for a future confrontation with the Vietnamese. Yet it was increasingly clear that an overt effort to overthrow Pol Pot would risk a direct conflict with China. Such a conflict could have several unpalatable consequences, in internal as well as foreign affairs. It would pose a severe strain on a national economy already stretched to the limit with a postwar reconstruction crisis. It could divide a leadership already at odds over domestic policy. And it certainly ^{could} compel Hanoi to abandon its effort to adopt a flexible policy in foreign affairs in favor of a closer embrace with Moscow.

In February 1978 the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) Central Committee held its Fourth Plenum to consider policy proposals by the Politburo, which had met the previous month. It may have been a stormy session, for Party leaders were seriously divided over the decision to move rapidly toward socialist transformation in the South as well as the regime's increasing willingness to risk a confrontation with the PRC.²²

Both issues were apparently on the agenda. With respect to the problem of Cambodia, Party leaders may have considered two options: a general uprising, launched by Khmer forces opposed to Pol Pot inside Cambodia and supported discreetly by Vietnamese units, or an all-out invasion by Vietnamese armed forces with support from guerrilla units recruited among Khmer refugees in South Vietnam. Preparations for both contingencies were apparently underway inside Vietnam, but ultimately the Party selected the first option, for an internal uprising against the Pol Pot regime. Such a strategy lacked the decisiveness of a general offensive by Vietnamese forces, but would avoid international complications and reduce the risk of a direct Chinese response. Moreover, it could provide a firm basis for the formation of a new regime in Phnom Penh sympathetic to Hanoi and the formation of a "special relationship" with the other two Indochinese states.

The plenum also adopted a major decision on the domestic scene, approving a decision to nationalize all commerce and industry above the family level in Vietnam. Although the decision was made in part for domestic reasons, to strengthen state control over the faltering national economy, it had strong foreign policy implications, since the bulk of the trade and manufacturing sector in South Vietnam was controlled by Chinese nationals, many of whom were suspected of being loyal to Beijing.²³

The PRC did not immediately react to Hanoi's decisions, although Chinese leaders must have been aware of the massive preparations taking place at training camps in South Vietnam. Nor did China immediately respond to

the nationalization order which was announced on March 17, although the implementation of the new policy precipitated a panic among ethnic Chinese residents in Vietnam, many of whom attempted to flee across the border into China. On May 12, the PRC cancelled a number of aid projects in Vietnam. Then, two weeks later, it launched a major press campaign against alleged Vietnamese persecution of the overseas Chinese living in Vietnam. It was not until several days later that the Chinese press began to criticize Vietnam as an "Asian Cuba" and a tool of Moscow.²⁴

The timing of the press attacks, and the decision to focus on the issue of the overseas Chinese rather than on other problems in Sino-Vietnamese relations, has led to considerable speculation as to China's motives in provoking a "press war" with Vietnam. In fact, Beijing may have been outraged by Vietnamese attacks on Chinese nationals in Vietnam which Chinese leaders probably interpreted as a direct provocation at a time when the PRC had just launched a program to earn support from overseas Chinese for China's modernization effort.

But the issue of Vietnam's treatment of its ethnic Chinese residents could not have been the primary cause of Beijing's sudden outburst. China had often suffered mistreatment of overseas Chinese by other states in the region in silence (most recently, by the government of Democratic Kampuchea, China's closest ally in Southeast Asia). It is more likely that Chinese leaders selected the issue as a pretext to dramatize to Hanoi the extent of their outrage over Vietnamese behavior in other areas of greater importance to the PRC.

Why did China delay its response until late May, over two months after Hanoi's decision to nationalize industry and commerce and undercut the economic power of the Chinese community in Vietnam? There may, of course, have been disagreement within the PRC leadership over how to react. During the early months of 1978, the leadership struggle between elements loyal to Deng Xiaoping and Mao's appointee Hua Guofeng had not yet been resolved. And although it is possible that supporters of the latter were more inclined to provide direct

military assistance to the Phnom Penh regime, Deng Xiaoping, whose influence in Beijing was rising, was a forceful advocate of an activist approach in foreign policy to counter the "hegemonistic" efforts of the USSR and the "small hegemonist" in Hanoi.²⁵

Some observers, however, suspect a relationship between Beijing's Vietnam policy and the increasingly friendly relations between China and the United States, and point out the significance of the fact that Chinese attacks on Vietnam took place almost immediately following the visit of U.S. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski in mid-May. Chinese leaders may have wanted reassurance regarding the prospects of improved relations with Washington before embarking on a possible confrontation with Hanoi.²⁶ This is a persuasive argument. It was probably during the early spring that Chinese leaders concluded that Hanoi was bent on overthrowing the Pol Pot regime and that a Sino-Vietnamese confrontation over Cambodia was virtually inevitable. If such a confrontation were to take place, the Vietnamese would be compelled to turn for increased support from Moscow. In such conditions, Beijing would need the expectation of at least tacit approval and support from the United States, which had its own reasons for opposing Vietnamese (and, by extension, Soviet) gains in the region.²⁷

By May, then, both Hanoi and Beijing had become aware that a compromise solution to the Cambodian dispute was highly improbable, and began to make preparations for a head-on confrontation. Vietnamese leaders had hoped to avoid a direct confrontation by achieving the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime through an internal uprising, but in late May, at virtually the same time as China began its press campaign against the Vietnamese, armed units of the Pol Pot regime attacked rebel headquarters near the South Vietnamese border, leading the rebel commander, So Phim, to commit suicide.

The Pol Pot faction's success in rooting out dissident elements within the KCP forced the Hanoi regime to reconsider its options and reconsider the possibility of an invasion of Cambodia by regular units of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN). According to Nayan Chanda, a high Soviet military figure had suggested such an

operation earlier in the year, but the idea had been rejected in Hanoi in favor of the less risky option of an internal uprising. Now the idea was resurrected.²⁸

Any such decision, of course, had to be cleared with Moscow, for Soviet support would be required, not only in the form of military assistance, but also as a means of deterring China from a direct response. It was probably for this reason that the VCP's long-time military strategist, ^{Vo Nguyen Giap} went to Moscow in June. He may have carried with him the draft of a treaty of friendship and cooperation that the Vietnamese had originally rejected in 1975, at a time when Party leaders had still hoped to maintain an independent foreign policy. In the new circumstances, independence was a luxury that Hanoi could ill afford. In any event, Moscow was ready if not eager to agree to such a treaty, to be announced at a time useful to Vietnam. In return, the Soviet Union was granted access to military facilities in Vietnam, a concession that the Vietnamese had resisted for years.²⁹

Not long after Giap's return from Moscow, the VCP convened the Fifth Plenum of its Central Committee in late June. While the evidence is scanty, it was probably at this time that the Party approved the proposal to sign the treaty with the Soviet Union and begin preparations for an invasion of Democratic Kampuchea later in the year. The decision was certainly not unanimous. There were references in the official press to Party members who showed weakness in facing the crisis and warned that the Party "must leave behind and discard weak elements incapable of enduring trials or bent on giving up or betraying the cause."³⁰

Beijing was undoubtedly aware of Vietnamese war preparations through its own intelligence sources, and the issue was probably one of serious debate throughout the summer and early fall. There are indications that some elements within the Chinese leadership favored the introduction of Chinese armed forces into the area to provide assistance to the Pol Pot regime, whose ability to withstand a direct Vietnamese invasion was considered minimal. According to Geng Biao, whose secret

speech in February 1979 has been cited above, one proposal called for the dispatch of Chinese naval units to the Gulf of Thailand to assist Democratic Kampuchea in guarding its territorial waters. General Xu Shiyu apparently suggested the launching of military operations along the Sino-Vietnamese border.³¹

By now, the Pol Pot regime was aware of the peril, and at some point during the fall made a formal request for the dispatch of Chinese troops to Cambodia. In the end, however, the PRC decided to refrain from risking a direct involvement in the dispute, and limited itself to increasing military assistance to its beleaguered ally. Geng Biao offered a number of reasons for the decision. In the first place, he said, China is a "socialist state" which must avoid actions suggesting that it might seek to become a "hegemonist power" in Asia. Secondly, he said, direct Chinese military involvement in Cambodia could expose the PRC to criticism for its own actions and prevent it from taking the moral high ground in the conflict. Thirdly, China would have great difficulty in fighting a war of attrition in Indochina. Vietnam, he said, "has already stepped into this patch of mud." Cambodia should fight its own battle, in order to learn self-reliance. Finally, Geng Biao concluded, direct involvement in the Cambodian conflict would undercut China's effort to carry out the "four modernizations" and expose it to a possible Soviet attack from the North.³²

Some of Geng Biao's comments can be dismissed as self-serving or wish-fulfillment. But most of his comments carry the mark of plausibility. First and foremost, Chinese strategists certainly recognized the strategic disadvantages that China confronted in taking an active role in the conflict. It is interesting that Geng cited the lessons learned by the United States in fighting its own land wars in Asia. His reference to psychological factors and the impact of possible Chinese participation in the war also rings true, as Chinese leaders were undoubtedly aware of the sensitivity of many states in Southeast Asia to the potential threat of Chinese expansion into the region and anxious to preserve the moral high ground in the court of public opinion.

Lastly, but by no means least, Chinese leaders were probably determined not to allow foreign policy problems to undercut the regime's program of economic modernization. For the emerging leadership under Deng Xiaoping, economic modernization was the matter of first priority in national calculations for the foreseeable future. While Deng was anxious to carry out a foreign policy of high visibility, he appeared willing to put off long-term objectives in foreign affairs until such time as China possessed the economic and military -- muscle to play a major role in regional and global affairs. Geng's contention that Moscow was goading Beijing into military action in order to delay Chinese modernization is problematical, but the issue was a real one, and Moscow and Hanoi may well have calculated that it would deter Beijing from attempting a military response.

As Robert Sutter has pointed out, a final factor may have entered the deliberations in Beijing. Some argued that Vietnamese pressure on Cambodia represented a direct threat to China's security emanating ultimately from the Soviet Union and demanded a vigorous Chinese response. To others, possibly including Deng Xiaoping himself, the real threat to China came not from the south, but from the north, where several hundred thousands Soviet troops were stationed along the Chinese border. By implication, China should not be distracted by events in Southeast Asia from the strategical vital area along the Sino-Soviet frontier.³³

During the remainder of the year, both countries concentrated on strengthening their position for what must have seemed the inevitable conflict to come. Both Hanoi and Beijing recognized the importance of external support for their cause and were familiar with the classical Leninist concept of the united front. Both saw the importance of a powerful protector. Hanoi, of course, had won the support of the USSR, and attempted to improve relations with the United States in order to neutralize its role in the conflict. At a time when Soviet-American relations were deteriorating, however, China had more to offer, although

the issue caused considerable discord within the Carter administration.³⁴

A second component of the united front strategy of both regimes was to win the support of other Asian states, specifically those of the ASEAN alliance. During the autumn of 1978, both Deng Xiaoping and ^{Vietnamese} Prime Minister Pham Van Dong embarked on an extended tour of Southeast Asian capitals. ASEAN leaders tended to be suspicious of the ultimate objectives of both Hanoi and Beijing, and made no commitments. Hanoi's case was probably not helped by the formal announcement of the signing of the Soviet-Vietnamese treaty in early November.

Vietnamese forces invaded Democratic Kampuchea on Christmas Day, December 25, 1978. The invasion was as successful as the final campaign three years before which had put a quick end to the Saigon regime. Within a little over a week, PAVN units had seized the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh and forced Khmer Rouge units to seek refuge in the isolated forests of the northwest or in the rugged mountains near the Gulf of Thailand. On December 7, 1979, a new government, called the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) and led by an unknown Cambodian corps commander named Heng Samrin, was announced in Phnom Penh.

China's initial reaction to the Vietnamese invasion was limited to vaguely threatening statements in the press. Only in February, after the return of Deng Xiao-ing from his visit to the United States, did Beijing launch its limited attack across the Sino-Vietnamese frontier. The timing of the attack seemed deliberately contrived to take advantage of the successful normalization of relations with the United States and leave the impression of U.S. support or sympathy with China's objectives. The scope of the attack was also instructive. Because of its limited nature, it reduced the damage to China's economic modernization program that would have resulted had China actively intervened in the Cambodian conflict. Moreover, by clearly signalling its limited objectives, Beijing forestalled the possibility of a direct Soviet response and reduced the level of criticism on the world scene. Yet the attack was of sufficient magnitude to damage Vietnamese border defenses and demonstrate China's willing-

ness to respond to a provocation.

What the attack did not do, of course, was to provide concrete support to the beleaguered Khmer Rouge forces in Cambodia. Although there was some speculation at the time that one objective of the campaign had been to compel Hanoi to withdraw some of its frontline troops from Cambodia, in retrospect it seems clear that the invasion was too brief and limited in scope to have more than a passing impact on the strength and capabilities of the Vietnamese forces in the PRK. The Chinese attack also failed to achieve Beijing's major stated objective of teaching Vietnam a lesson. Although Vietnamese border units suffered heavy casualties, their performance against the regular forces of the Chinese People's Liberation Army must have been reassuring to Hanoi strategists. By contrast, the PLA showed serious weaknesses in equipment, leadership, and logistics. In that sense, the lesson had been administered by the Vietnamese.

The Struggle for Cambodia, 1979-1987

If the above analysis is correct, it can be concluded that the dispute over Cambodia was the issue most directly responsible for provoking the outbreak of the Sino-Vietnamese conflict of 1979. And it is clear from the strategies adopted in Hanoi and Beijing that Cambodia would also become the focus of rivalry between the two states in the next decade, as each probed for weaknesses in the other's defenses. For leaders in both capitals, Cambodia had become a test of will.

In that struggle, Hanoi appeared to operate with a number of advantages. By virtue of its military power and the geopolitical situation, it operated from a strong position against the Chinese, whose access to Cambodia was limited. Moreover, the presence of Vietnamese occupation troops inside the PRK provided Hanoi with the ability to mold the situation in the country to its advantage. That effort would be enhanced by the brutal reputation of the Khmer Rouge, whose bloody excesses had earned the hatred of most Cambodians and were now beginning to penetrate to a horrified world.

China had undoubtedly taken these factors into account in its decision not to become actively involved in a direct military confrontation with Vietnam in Cambodia.

Yet the fact that Beijing now deliberately elected to undertake a test of wills with Hanoi ~~over~~ ^{then} ~~Cambodia~~ suggests that Chinese leaders felt there were compensating factors which operated in their favor. While not all of these factors were directly related to Cambodia itself, ^{the} Vietnamese occupation of that country became a key factor in Chinese strategy.

In the first place, Hanoi's blatant invasion of Democratic Kampuchea had sharpened latent fears of Vietnamese expansionism among the ASEAN states and aroused widespread condemnation on the world scene. The effect was particularly strong in Thailand, whose rivalry with Vietnam over Indochina had deep historical roots. As Geng Biao had predicted, Vietnam's action and China's decision to refrain from direct involvement in the conflict provided the PRC with the moral high ground from which to construct a united front to force a Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia.

Secondly, Chinese leaders undoubtedly counted on the nascent force of Khmer nationalism as an element which could ultimately work in their favor. While most Cambodians undoubtedly welcomed the overthrow of the ferocious Khmer Rouge and may have initially viewed Vietnamese occupation troops as benefactors, Khmer historic distrust of the Vietnamese ran deep and could be only sharpened by an extended occupation of the country. If China could support a high level of resistance activity by the Khmer Rouge inside the country, it could exacerbate latent Khmer-Vietnamese tensions and lead to a breakdown of the "special relationship."

Finally, Chinese leaders undoubtedly calculated that the continuing costs of the occupation would prove damaging to Vietnam in terms of economic development and morale. In his report, Geng Biao had conceded that China lacked the resources to undertake a war of exhaustion and felt that Hanoi, too, would find it a costly venture. Beijing was prepared to intensify Hanoi's difficulties by maintaining pressure on the Sino-Vietnamese border ^{to} ~~for~~ force Vietnam to maintain a high level of defensive readiness, by promoting sabotage and resistance operations by dissident groups inside the country, and by encouraging the formation of an

economic blockade of Vietnam on the world scene. While none of these tactics were likely to achieve quick results, they imposed minimal cost on China while placing heavy pressure on the Vietnamese.

Ultimately, then, Beijing had adopted a long-range strategy based on the assumption that China's superior resources, combined with Vietnam's internal weakness and the instability of its position in Cambodia, would force a change of policy in Hanoi. China did not seem optimistic that the veteran Vietnamese leadership under Secretary General Le Duan would be amenable to change. But Chinese leaders were undoubtedly aware of the growing strains within the VCP over domestic and foreign policy and counted on the passage of time to bring a new leadership more amenable to compromise to power in Hanoi.

The centerpiece of Chinese strategy was the creation of a coalition of states sympathetic to the common goal of forcing the withdrawal of Vietnamese occupation forces from Cambodia. To achieve and maintain this coalition, Beijing had to compromise on a number of issues. From the outset, the key actors in the coalition, the ASEAN alliance and the United States, had refused to assign the ferocious Khmer Rouge a leading role in the anti-Vietnamese resistance movement in Cambodia. Chinese leaders, with a view of the world perhaps more imbued with realpolitik, have appeared to be somewhat puzzled by the depth of the dislike for Pol Pot and his henchmen, but have been willing to make a number of concessions in order to keep the united front intact. They have acquiesced in an arrangement that has subordinated the role of the Pol Pot faction to that of the non-communist factions in the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) and publicly stated their willingness to support free elections leading to the formation of a parliamentary form of government in Cambodia and declared that conditions in that country were not ripe for the imposition of a government based on Marxist-Leninist principles. They have also expressed their support for the creation of a neutralist, non-aligned Cambodia and disavowed any desire to dominate the country in the future. To alleviate ASEAN fears of Chinese intentions

in the region, the PRC has promised not to support revolutions in the ASEAN states, although it has refused to cut its ties to local communist parties.³⁴

Beijing's willingness to make such concessions has been a major factor in keeping the coalition intact. Yet there is a lingering suspicion in many ASEAN quarters as to the sincerity of Chinese pronouncements and the nature of China's long-term intentions in Southeast Asia. Some point to the fact that since the time of Lenin, communist parties and regimes have used the concept of the united front as a tactical weapon, to be abandoned once the immediate object of isolating and destroying the main adversary has been achieved. In that view, Beijing will abandon its policy of conciliating the interests of smaller states in Southeast Asia once Hanoi has been brought to heel. Although such attitudes have been submerged in the interests of maintaining the unity of the anti-Vietnamese alliance, they continue to surface periodically and raise serious doubts among observers as to the staying power of the coalition. In private, Chinese officials concede the commitment of some ASEAN states to the coalition strategy is weak and could lead to a breakdown of the alliance. In such a case, they insist, China would be forced to rely on its bilateral relationship with Thailand. Thailand, they point out, is the only nation in the ASEAN alliance vital to the success of China's strategy, and is firmly committed to the cause.³⁵

Vietnamese strategy, like that of China, was essentially long-range in its projections. While Party leaders were probably somewhat surprised at the international outcry that followed their overthrow of the Pot Pot regime, they had anticipated a long struggle with China and were prepared to settle in for the long haul.

The key to Hanoi's strategy lay inside Cambodia. If the internal situation could be stabilized and the PRK armed forces strengthened sufficiently to take over the problem of maintaining internal security, the Vietnamese occupation forces could be gradually withdrawn and the world-wide condemnation of Hanoi's action would quickly subside. As for the Sino-ASEAN alliance, there is some evi-

dence that Vietnamese leaders approached their Southeast Asian neighbors with a measure of strategic contempt, and calculated that the ASEAN states would soon tire of the struggle and agree to a negotiated settlement based on conditions favorable to the Vietnamese. Then Hanoi could settle down to outwait the Chinese.

Inside Cambodia, the Vietnamese concentrated on building up the PRK, its institutions, its armed forces, its revolutionary party -- now renamed the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party, or KPRP, and its legitimacy within the population. Vietnamese advisers were placed at all levels to instruct their Khmer counterparts on how to carry out nation-building, Leninist style: Under Hanoi's prodding, the Phnom Penh regime put into operation a moderate policy designed to win popular support and lay the foundations for a transition to socialism in the 1990s. In the meantime, the Vietnamese began to build up links between the PRK and its neighbors in order to integrate Cambodia into the "intimate alliance" of all three Indochinese states.

In the diplomatic arena, the Vietnamese adopted the familiar strategy of "fighting and negotiating", offering cosmetic concessions on inconsequential issues related to the modalities of a conference in order to divide their adversaries while holding firm on issues of vital importance to the maintenance of their authority in Cambodia, such as the legitimacy of the PRK, and the maintenance of the "special relationship" with Vietnam and Laos.

By 1984, certain patterns in the struggle were clear. Inside Cambodia, the PRK had managed to bring about a measure of political stability and economic recovery. According to reports by infrequent Western visitors, the Vietnamese presence was still accepted by the majority of the local population, few of whom appeared to wish the Pol Pot faction to return to power. On the other hand, the resistance forces had achieved more staying power than many observers had anticipated and, in the eyes of some, to pose a credible political and military threat to the Phnom Penh regime. To the Vietnamese, such a development could have several unfortunate consequences, not only shaking the legitimacy

of the PRK and delaying the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces, but also building up the confidence of the resistance movement and its external supporters.

It was undoubtedly in an effort to break that impending stalemate that Hanoi launched its heaviest offensive in years against resistance forces along the Thai border during the winter of 1984-1985. In a number of respects, the operation was a success. The destruction of rebel base areas along the Thai-Cambodian frontier severely reduced the military effectiveness of the non-communist resistance forces, who were dependent on links with refugee camps on the Thai side of the border, and forcing the leadership to adopt a new guerrilla strategy in the interior of the country.

The offensive also posed a severe challenge to China, which had always responded to major Vietnamese operations in Cambodia with attacks along the Sino-Vietnamese border. But such tactics apparently had little effect on Hanoi, which had made intensive efforts to build up its border defenses through the creation of so-called "combat districts" along the Sino-Vietnamese frontier. In launching its offensive on rebel camps along the Thai border, the Vietnamese appeared to be calling China's bluff, and the latter's failure to make a commensurate response inspired comment that Beijing may have become to rethink its strategy.

Chinese sources denied any change of approach toward the Cambodian issue, and there were no indications of a debate over Vietnam policy within the CCP leadership. But there were hints that Beijing was shifting the focus of its effort from the military arena to that of diplomacy. Since the opening of talks to seek an improvement in Sino-Soviet relations, China had insisted that the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia was one of the three primary obstacles to better ties with Moscow. In so doing, the Chinese were clearly testing the strength of the Soviet-Vietnamese relationship, for there were reports that Soviet leaders were unhappy at the lack of progress in resolving the Cambodian dispute. While the current situation did provide certain benefits to the USSR -- notably a military presence and the use of military facilities on the South China Sea -- it also represented a

financial drain on the Soviet Union and complicated Soviet relations with other countries in Southeast Asia, as well as with China itself. But Moscow would not take the bait, and Soviet negotiators refused to discuss the Cambodian issue at the Sino-Soviet talks on the grounds that questions relating to "third countries" could not be raised.

During the year 1986, there were ~~small signs of movement on the issue, but~~ ^{no major changes in the situation.} ~~no indications of an imminent breakthrough,~~ Inside Cambodia, the situation appeared to have stabilized. The non-communist factions had not yet fully recovered from the hammering they had incurred the previous year, and according to official sources in Phnom Penh, posed little threat to the security of the PRK.³⁶ But the Khmer Rouge remained a problem, despite vigorous efforts by the Vietnamese to seal off the border and prevent the infiltration of men and supplies from Thailand. According to the Heng Samrin regime, the Khmer Rouge were showing signs of decline, with rising rates of desertion and a serious problem in finding new recruits. But foreign residents in Phnom Penh reported that many provinces inside the country were considered unsafe, and occasional guerrilla attacks were launched even in the outskirts of the capital. In the meantime, there were scattered signs of growing restiveness among the local population at the continuing domination of the country by the Vietnamese. Hanoi has been sensitive about the possible rise of anti-Vietnamese sentiment among the local population, and has tried to reduce the visibility of the Vietnamese presence in the PRK. But the continuing weakness of the PRK armed forces, and Vietnamese determination to consolidate its position in the country prior to a full withdrawal of occupation forces, have hindered the effort, although regime spokesmen have been sufficiently confident to predict a total withdrawal by 1990.³⁷

On the negotiations front, there have been signs of flexibility on all sides, but no indications of an imminent breakthrough. China, while maintaining its official position that an improvement in relations with both Moscow and Hanoi is dependent upon the removal of Vietnamese occupation forces from Cambodia, has reportedly been privately offering inducements to shake Hanoi from its hardline

position. According to Prince Sihanouk, Chinese sources told him during the early summer of 1986 that Beijing was prepared to order a reduction in the size of the Khmer Rouge guerrilla forces after a Vietnamese withdrawal, and would offer "tremendous" economic assistance to Vietnam in such a contingency. In public, the PRC has maintained its uncompromising position on Cambodia. In talks with Thai foreign minister Savetsila in November, Chinese spokesmen said that a Vietnamese withdrawal and the restoration of Cambodia's national independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity are "non-negotiable."³⁸ Beijing did send a peace signal to Hanoi, however, in accepting an invitation from the government of Laos to send a vice foreign minister to visit Vientiane early in 1987.

During mid-1986, there were no major peace overtures from Hanoi, where Party leaders were preoccupied with the succession issue following the death of General Secretary Le Duan. But there were conciliatory gestures from Moscow, however, where the new leadership under Mikhail Gorbachev had launched a number of new initiatives to breakline the deadlocked Cold War faultlines in Asia. In his speech in Vladivostok in July, Gorbachev, while not specifically mentioning the Vietnamese presence in Cambodia, appeared to equate the interests of China and Vietnam in the area and called for Sino-Vietnamese peace talks to remove "unnecessary suspicion and distrust." China responded in September. In an interview filmed on television in the United States, Deng Xiaoping commented that Gorbachev's speech had contained "new and positive elements," although it had avoided the "big step" of promising to end the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. Deng also hinted that the Cambodian issue need not be a major hindrance to an improvement in Sino-Soviet relations, equating the "three obstacles" to the U.S. occupation of Taiwan.³⁹

In October, Moscow carried the dialogue another step forward, when the Soviet negotiator at the ninth round of the Sino-Soviet normalization talks, while not revealing any change in the Soviet position on Cambodia, declared that the problem could be raised in the next round of talks. Whether or not this was a signal to

Hanoi is not certain, but a few days later, Sihanouk reported that Vietnamese official sources had hinted that the Hanoi regime would no longer insist on the elimination of the "genocidal Pol Pot clique" as a basis for a settlement in Cambodia and might permit representatives of the Khmer Rouge to attend a peace conference. Shortly after, the new VCP general secretary Truong Chinh visited Moscow, where the two sides reported "total unanimity" on issues relating to domestic and foreign affairs.⁴⁰

At the Sixth National Congress of the VCP held in December, there were no major new initiatives on the Cambodian dispute in reports presented at the Congress. But the overall tone of official remarks on the issue and on the broader subject of Sino-Vietnamese relations as a whole was relatively conciliatory. The Political Report commented that "the time has come for the two sides to enter into negotiations to solve both immediate and long-term problems." At a press conference given during the Congress, vice foreign minister Vo Dong Giang called for improved relations with Beijing, but warned China that its hope to use the Sino-Soviet talks to force a change in the Vietnamese position was "a daydream". The Soviet Union, he said, "has never undermined the interests of any third nation."⁴¹

Unravelling the Knot

As the year 1986 came to an end, the Sino-Vietnamese conflict over Indochina appeared little nearer to a comprehensive solution than it had been at the moment when Chinese forces crossed the Vietnamese border in February 1979. Indeed, it is possible that the dispute will be more difficult to solve since it has now become tangled in the broader Great Power rivalry in Asia.

Ultimately, however, it is in the complex relationship between China and Vietnam that one must seek the crux of the dispute, and the key to its resolution. And here, it is clear that although it was the Cambodian issue that was most directly responsible for causing the 1979 war, the conflict between China and Vietnam is the consequences of a number of additional factors, some of them deeply rooted in history. To unravel the knot and evaluate the prospects for

a settlement, then, it is necessary to evaluate the political, psychological, and historical factors involved in the mutual perceptions of the two countries as well the role that Indochina plays in that relationship.

Vietnam and Indochina

In assessing the role of Indochina in the foreign policies of China and Vietnam, it is almost certainly easier to deal with the latter. For of all of the issues that have emerged in Vietnamese foreign policy since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, it is probable that the "special relationship" with Laos and Cambodia is viewed ^{in Hanoi} as the most important.⁴² As we have seen above, it was not always the case. During the early years of the ICP, Party leaders viewed the concept of Indochina in a somewhat abstract manner, and certainly subordinate in importance to the issues of achieving national independence and seizing power in Vietnam.

But the idea of an alliance among the Indochinese states quickly assumed importance in the context of the growing struggle against the French. And it is likely that the concept seemed even more crucial at the Geneva Conference, when China's opposition to an Indochina dominated by Vietnam came more clearly into focus. The significance of Laos and Cambodia to Vietnamese national security was graphically demonstrated during the Second Indochina War against the United States, and it was probably at this time that the concept assumed the importance of an article of faith in Vietnamese strategic thinking.

During the Vietnam War, the official spokesmen for the Hanoi regime said little about the future relations among the three states, but following the seizure of Saigon in April 1975, the regime quickly indicated that a "special relationship" with the new revolutionary regimes in Laos and Cambodia was one of the cornerstones of Vietnamese foreign policy in the postwar era. Vietnamese leaders were certainly aware that there was opposition to the idea in Beijing and Phnom Penh, but evidently did not view such opposition as a serious impediment to their plans, and initially took a relatively relaxed approach with the Pol Pot regime, while insisting that "naturally, we insist on special relations because we shared everything during the

war." 43

The events of the late 1970s, ~~which~~ transformed Hanoi's vague suspicions of Chinese intentions into the conviction that Beijing was determined to use Cambodia as a bludgeon to hammer the Vietnamese and force them to submit to Chinese authority. China's behavior undoubtedly revived the deepseated Vietnamese historical distrust of its great neighbor and convinced the veteran leadership in Hanoi that the integration of the three Indochinese states into an intimate alliance was absolutely essential to Vietnamese survival. This uncompromising attitude has been reflected in Hanoi's behavior and negotiating stance since the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime in early 1979. The veteran Party leadership has indicated a willingness to sacrifice virtually every other foreign policy and domestic goal in order to maintain intact what was now described as the "intimate alliance" of the three Indochinese states.

If the above analysis is correct, concern for national security is probably the most important factor in determining the Hanoi regime's attitude toward its neighbors in Indochina. But there is more involved in the formulation of foreign policy in modern states than the ~~mere~~ question of national survival. Vietnamese leaders, like their counterparts elsewhere, are also motivated by questions of history, national destiny, prestige, and (certainly in the case of Marxist-Leninist regimes) ideology. In Vietnam, foreign policy is not conceptualized and implemented in a vacuum, but in the context of a series of self-images shaped by history and ideology.

How important is history in the formulation of foreign policy in Hanoi? Vietnamese leaders today certainly do not view themselves simply as the linear successors of imperial rulers of the past. But the Vietnamese struggle for national liberation against the French and the United States led Party leaders to seek and proclaim a direct relationship with the heroic figures of the past, from the Trung sisters to Tran Hung Dao and the Confucian strategist Nguyen Trai. This historical image was undoubtedly sharpened when Vietnam began to focus its attention on the challenge from the North, since most of the great patriotic figures in Vietnamese

history were identified with the struggle against Chinese domination.

This historical image, moreover, extends into Vietnamese relations with Laos and Cambodia. As a dynamic force on the mainland since the restoration of independence from the Tang dynasty in the tenth century, the Vietnamese empire asserted its suzerainty over its neighbors to the west and constructed a tributary system in mainland Southeast Asia similar in form (if smaller in scope) to that asserted by the Celestial Emperor with his palace in Beijing. Vietnamese leaders today do not assert their right to hegemony in Indochina because of such historical relationships, of course. But Hanoi sees itself in historical context as a bastion of defense for the smaller nations of Southeast Asia against the prevailing danger of Chinese expansionism, a message they have frequently voiced in private talks with political figures in the ASEAN alliance.

Such historical images are supplemented, and in some cases qualified, by ideology. It has often been asserted that Vietnamese party leaders were motivated during the Vietnam War more by nationalism than by a commitment to global revolution. Whether or not that is the case, it would be a mistake to underestimate the influence of ^{the} Marxist-Leninist world view on the mindset of Party leaders in Hanoi. ⁴⁴ Vietnam's veteran leadership is deeply imbued with the Leninist vision of a world divided between progressive socialist forces and the reactionary forces of world imperialism, led by the United States. In that vision, the victory of the Vietnamese revolution marked a watershed in the struggle of the oppressed peoples of Southeast Asia for peace, democracy, and socialism, and Vietnam today is the vanguard for the coming social revolution in the region.

^{then,} In Indochina, ^A ideology supplements the imperatives of history and national survival. Where Party leaders in the 1930s doubted the revolutionary potential of the more primitive societies in Laos and Cambodia, their counterparts today adopt the social Darwinist view that the Vietnamese, more advanced in the struggle to build a communist society, can assist Phnom Penh and Vientiane in passing from feudal backwardness into the complex transitional process of socialist transformation. And the integration of Laos and Cambodia into the more advanced Vietnamese

society will be beneficial to all three, not only in terms of national defense, but in terms of the struggle to build an advanced socialist society.

For the Vietnamese, then, Indochina lies at the point where the demands of history, of ideology, and of national security intersect. Historical image and ideology are put to use to buttress the national interest. The result can be seen in interpretations given by Vietnamese spokesmen such as General Le Duc Anh who contend that history, geography, and the Marxist "iron law" of history have created a "revolutionary law" that knits the states of Indochina into a militant alliance, and a common struggle to build the communist utopia.⁴⁵

China and Indochina One of the key factors in Hanoi's insistence on the importance of the militant alliance of the Indochinese states is the alleged threat of Chinese expansion into the area. The Vietnamese see China's drive to the South as an almost primordial urge inherited by Beijing's "new emperors" from the imperial past and contend that in struggling against it, they are fighting a battle for all of Southeast Asia. In this view, the two prongs of China's strategy are the attempt to take over Indonesia (an attempt which failed at the time of the Gestapu revolt in 1965) and the current effort to subjugate Vietnam and impose Chinese influence on the Indochinese states.⁴⁶

How justified is this image? Is Hanoi correct in asserting that behind Beijing's alleged concern for the sovereignty and national independence of Laos and Cambodia lies a long-term plan held by Chinese leaders to turn the South China Sea into a Chinese lake? Apocalyptic Vietnamese predictions notwithstanding, it is more difficult to evaluate China's motives in Southeast Asia than those of the Vietnamese. In the first place, Chinese foreign policy is arguably more complex than that of the Vietnamese. Where Vietnamese foreign policy operates primarily within a regional framework, Chinese leaders formulate their options within the global arena. In fact, some observers of contemporary Chinese politics contend that although China today does not view itself as a Great Power, the relationship between China and the United States and the Soviet Union is the primary determinant in Chinese foreign policymaking.⁴⁷ If such is the case, while Southeast Asia is

a vital security area for Hanoi, it is only one of many areas of concern to Beijing.

Another reason for the difficulty in analyzing Chinese foreign policy toward Indochina lies in the fact that the PRC is in a position of attempting to change the status quo rather than to maintain it. Where Vietnamese policy in Indochina can be evaluated -- at least to a reasonable degree-- on the basis of Hanoi's current behavior there, Chinese policy toward the region is focussed on the desire to mobilize support to achieve a change in the situation. As Hanoi would be the first to point out, under such circumstances Chinese leaders will obviously state their objectives in such a way as to reassure other states in the region.

For these reasons, any effort to assess China's Indochina policy must take into account a number of issues. First, what is the relative importance of national security, national destiny, and ideology in the formulation of Chinese foreign policy toward Southeast Asia? Secondly, what is the relative importance of Indochina in Chinese foreign policy compared to other areas, and notably to China's policy toward the Great Powers? Finally, to what degree do Chinese statements on Indochina today relate to her probable behavior under various possible contingencies in the future?

It can probably be said without fear of contradiction that, for China as for Vietnam, national security is the primary determinant in foreign policy. Both countries were victimized and humiliated by Western powers during the imperialist era, and both regimes have dedicated themselves to wiping out the imperialist legacy and reconstructing a solid defensive perimeter to guarantee national survival. This was certainly the driving force of Chinese policy following the rise of the CCP to power in 1949, and although the immediate danger to China has receded somewhat in recent years, the "trauma of imperialism," as Robert Sutter has put it, is still fresh.⁴⁸

As in the case of Vietnam, however, it is difficult to compare the relative

importance of national security, history and ideology in Chinese foreign policy, because they have been inextricably intertwined in China's policy statements, and quite probably in the minds of policymakers themselves. In China, "history" has been a more dubious ally and model to Party leaders than in Vietnam. The radical faction in China attempted to eradicate Chinese history during the Cultural Revolution, something that Vietnamese Party leaders never attempted to do, and considered ridiculous. But Chinese Party leaders of all factions have appeared to accept -- albeit unconsciously -- many of the classical objectives of Chinese foreign policy during the traditional period, including the idea of the secure "outer frontier" of border states, the concept of China as an influential actor in regional politics, and the vision of China as a model for other states in the region.⁴⁹

To what degree does ideology fit into this equation? It is accepted wisdom that revolutionary ideology plays little role in Chinese foreign policy under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. Policy in Beijing is formulated on the basis of national concerns, not the promotion of world revolution. That, of course, was less true in the past, when the Marxist-Leninist -- and Maoist -- concept of the rise of the oppressed peoples of the world against the forces of global imperialism was a major component of Chinese foreign policy. In the eyes of some (including, apparently, China watchers in Hanoi), even the Maoists simply used ideology as a tool to achieve national objectives. But the fact that ideological beliefs converged all too conveniently with the demands of national security and ideology did not make the holders of such convictions any less sincere (China and Vietnam are hardly unique in this respect). Whether Beijing will return to a more ideological view of the world depends on external factors that cannot be evaluated in this paper.

Where does Indochina -- and beyond Indochina, Southeast Asia -- fit in this framework? It seems generally agreed among contemporary observers that Southeast Asia is an area of vital, but not cardinal importance in Chinese foreign policy.⁵⁰ During the imperial period it was rarely a source of serious threat to the empire.

Since the rise of the CCP to power it has assumed a higher level of importance because of the instability of the area and the presence of Great Power interests. It is highly doubtful that Chinese strategists see the area today as crucial as Northeast Asia, or the Sino-Soviet frontier. Insofar as Chinese leaders today are determined to restore control over the traditional "outer frontier", ^{however,} mainland Southeast Asia -- and specifically the states of Indochina, traditionally the most important part of Southeast Asia in Chinese calculations -- will be viewed as an essential component in China's national defense.

Yet Chinese behavior suggests strongly that the Deng Xiaoping leadership does not view control over, or influence in the area to be of sufficient importance to justify military action. Where Hanoi has subordinated all other concerns to the maintenance of the "special relationship," China has placed its concerns in the area beneath those of economic modernization, and a non-threatening situation in foreign affairs. Rather, Chinese leaders appear satisfied to place Indochina on the agenda for future action (as in the case of Taiwan), when conditions permit. For the moment, Beijing appears willing to tolerate the Vietnamese presence in Laos and Cambodia (indeed, some observers feel that the PRC welcomes the current situation, which drains Vietnam of resources needed for internal economic development). And it has significantly not made the Soviet military presence in Vietnam a major obstacle to normalization, stating publicly on several occasions that China views the Soviet bases at Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay as established primarily for the purpose of countering U.S. military power in the region.

What, then, are China's ultimate intentions in Indochina? Are its protestations that it has no national aspirations in the area to be taken seriously or, as Hanoi appears to believe, only a temporary tactic to beguile credulous allies? No answer to this question can be more than speculative, since it relates to future circumstances, and future leaders on China. Yet a cautious estimate may be in order, based on currently available evidence. China today appears to have no desire (much less, possess the capability) to absorb the states of Indochina into a resurrected Chinese empire, or even into an intimate "special relationship" such

as has recently been established by Hanoi. ~~Rather~~^{Ideally}, Chinese leaders may envision the future creation of a stable alliance system of independent states such as the Soviet Union possesses in Eastern Europe, or the United States in the Western hemisphere. At a minimum, Chinese strategists undoubtedly hope to neutralize the area and remove it from the arena of Great Power rivalry, thus permitting a revived China to play the role of a benign protector of the smaller states in the region. Cold War tensions, ideological rivalries, and China's own weakness make such a vision chimerical for the foreseeable future. But in foreign policy terms, as in the sphere of economic development, the current regime in Beijing is planning for the distant future.

What, then, are the short-range prospects for Indochina? It has been eight years since the outbreak of the Sino-Vietnamese war. During that time there has been little change in the negotiating situation as both Hanoi and Beijing have held essentially to the long-range strategy each adopted at the outset of the conflict. Recently, however, there have been scattered indications of a desire on both sides to seek a solution to the crisis, or at least to reduce the level of mutual hostility.

There are, in fact, good reasons for both Hanoi and Beijing to seek an end to the dispute. For the Vietnamese, perhaps, the costs are more severe. The dispute over Cambodia has had an enormous effect on Hanoi's effort to promote internal economic development, not only because of the costs of occupation and national defense, but because of the blockade which Western nations have imposed on trade with Vietnam. The Party's veteran leadership under Le Duan, imbued with a "siege mentality" as a result of the experience of the Vietnam War, was willing to pay that price to achieve its security objectives in Indochina. A new generation of leaders emerging in the 1990s may find the cost of total security excessive and seek a compromise settlement. They will probably be encouraged to do so by the Soviet Union, which finds the Cambodian dispute an obstacle to the realization of many of its own objectives in Asia.

China is under less pressure to settle the dispute, since its own efforts are relatively cost-free. Still, the current situation has had some unfortunate side effects in the area of ^{Chinese} foreign policy, notably in encouraging Hanoi's virtual total dependence upon the Soviet Union, and in posing a severe obstacle to China's effort to improve ^{its own} relations with Moscow. Chinese leaders may be tempted to make minor concessions on the issue to induce an inexperienced leadership in Hanoi to trade the "special relationship" for an end to the conflict.

An overall settlement of the dispute, however, appears unlikely for the foreseeable future. Indochina today lies at the intersection of the resurgent force of two competing nationalist movements. Both China and Vietnam are anxious to secure the fruits of their own social revolution and to achieve their own vision of national destiny. Each has passed through a period of national humiliation and is determined to achieve self-determination and its natural frontiers. So far, it is the Vietnamese who have had their way, primarily because of their willingness to assign absolute priority to the issue. China, however, has the patience, the determination, and the resources to play a long-term game, and is undoubtedly counting on the passage of time to reassert its own interests in the region. Chinese leaders also calculate that the rising force of nationalist sentiment inside Laos and Cambodia itself will compel the Vietnamese to relinquish their grasp on the two countries. While some observers dismiss the idea of Lao or Khmer nationalism as chimerical, there are nascent signs of such an awareness inside Cambodia, even within the PRK leadership.

In sum, it is not a problem susceptible to easy solution. Perhaps in the long run, all of the protagonists should attempt to learn from history. Chinese leaders should ^{recall} that the Celestial Empire never exercised control over all of Indochina, even during the period when the Red River delta was under Chinese rule. ^{yet} ~~nor has~~ Southeast Asia ^{has rarely} posed a serious security problem to the Chinese. As for the Vietnamese,

they could learn as well from their great statesmen-patriots of the past such as Nguyen Trai, who learned that in the long run, Vietnam must always come to an accommodation with China. And both could profit from the lesson of our own century, where even Great Powers are beginning to discover that the effort to dominate smaller neighbors can be a costly and even fruitless enterprise.

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Footnotes

1. The most competent brief analysis of this issue is Jeffrey Race and William S. Turley's "The Third Indochina War," in Foreign Policy, no. 38 (Spring 1980).
2. For a broad-based series of essays on the tributary system, see John K. Fairbank, The Chinese World Order (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).
3. There is no definitive treatment of this issue. For a discussion of nineteenth century Vietnam and its perspective on world affairs, see Alexander B. Woodside, Vietnam and the Chinese Model (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).
4. For a discussion and reference, see my China and Vietnam: The Roots of Conflict (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 28-30 and Huynh Kim Khanh, Vietnamese Communism, 1925-1945 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 128-129.
5. Two recent studies on the rise of revolutionary movements in Laos and Cambodia are MacAlister Brown and Joseph J. Zasloff, Apprentice Revolutionaries: The Communist Movement in Laos, 1930-1985 (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), and Ben Kiernan, How Pol Pot Came To Power (London: Verso, 1985). For references to the split in the ICP, see Zasloff, pp. 46-47 and Kiernan, pp. 82-83.
6. Ibid.
7. The best example of this attitude is found in Liu Shaoqi's famous speech before the Trade Union Congress in Beijing in November 1949. For a discussion, cf. Melvin Gurtov, The First Vietnam Crisis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp. 7-8, and King C. Chen, Vietnam and China, 1938-1954 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 214-220.
8. "The Truth About Vietnam-Chinese Relations over the Past Thirty Years," Hanoi: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1979. Hereafter White Paper. For an extended discussion of the issue, see Francois Joyaux, La Chine et le Reglement du Premier Conflit d'Indochine (Geneve 1954) (Paris: Sorbonne, 1979).
9. Chinese officials insist that the PRC at that time had no suspicion of Vietnamese plans to dominate Indochina. One Chinese diplomat told me privately, however, that in his view Beijing was indeed concerned at Vietnamese plans to form a federation in Indochina. See my China and Vietnam, p. 31.

10. See John W. Carver, China's Decision for a Rapprochement with the United States, 1968-1971 (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982).
11. White Paper, p. 52.
12. Official sources in Hanoi today contend that Pol Pot forces could not have seized Phnom Penh without Vietnamese assistance. One source told me last year that Khmer Rouge soldiers could not even fire their own mortars.
13. Interview with Vice Foreign Minister VO Dong Giang, Hanoi, December 14, 1985.
14. Nayan Chanda, Brother Enemy: The War After the War (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), p. 12.
15. For a discussion of Sihanouk's return to Phnom Penh, see Chanda, pp. 70-72 and 103-107.
16. Ibid., pp. 99-101.
17. Huang Hua's speech is translated in King C. Chen, China and the Three Worlds: A Foreign Policy Reader (White Plains: M.E. Sharpe, 1979).
18. Chanda, pp. 201-202, has a discussion of the visit.
19. See Geng Biao, "Report on the Situation on the Indochinese Peninsula," in Chung-kung wen-chiu (Studies on Chinese Communism), Vol. 14, no. 10 (October 15, 1980), trans. in Joint Publications Research Service 77,074.
20. Ibid. Unfortunately the translated version of Geng Biao's speech in JPRS is not a good one, and leaves many of his statements ambiguous. I have not been able to locate a copy of the original version.
21. Stephen P. Heder, "The Kampuchean-Vietnamese Conflict," in David W.P. Elliott, (ed.), The Third Indochina Conflict (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981), pp. 454-6.
22. For that issue, see my Vietnam Since the Fall of Saigon, chapter 2.
23. Far Eastern Economic Review, February 23, 1979. William J. Duiker, Vietnam Since the Fall of Saigon (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p. 227, fn16.
24. For a discussion of the issue of the overseas Chinese in the context of the overall Sino-Vietnamese dispute, see Robert G. Sutter, Chinese Foreign Policy: Developments After Mao (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986), pp. 73-75.
25. Ibid., pp. 60-61.
26. Chanda, pp. 241-242; Grant Evans and Kelvin Rowley, Red Brotherhood at War

(London: Verso, 1984), p. 159.

27. According to Geng Biao, the Chinese did have some expectation that the United States would provide some low-level support for Chinese military operations in Southeast Asia.

28. Chanda, p. 216.

29. There was some speculation as to whether Hanoi asked for the treaty or Moscow demanded it as a price for assistance. According to Vo Dong Giang, Hanoi wanted the treaty for its own protection. Interview with Vo Dong Giang, Hanoi, December 14, 1985.

30. Nhan Dan, August 4, 1978.

31. Geng Biao's report is not specific on when these discussions took place. From the context, it appears they may have occurred after Wang Dongxing's visit to Phnom Penh in the fall.

32. Ibid.

33. Robert G. Sutter, "China's Strategy Toward Vietnam and its Implications for the United States," in Elliott, pp. 181-182.

34. For a discussion of their advice to the Pol Pot leadership, see my China and Vietnam, p. 98.

35. Interview with Chinese official, Washington, D.C., March 8, 1985.

36. Interview with PRK vice foreign minister Kong Korn, Phnom Penh, December 18, 1985.

37. This is usually qualified by the condition that the withdrawal will only take place if the Khmer Rouge no longer pose a threat to the security of the PRK.

38. The report on Sihanouk's statement appeared in the New York Times, August 6, 1986. The talks between China and Thailand were reported by Beijing Review, December 8, 1986.

39. Far Eastern Economic Review, July 18, 1986.

40. Ibid., December 25, 1986. Recently Vietnamese sources have denied the report that they are willing to support a conference attended by the Khmer Rouge and have reiterated their original position.

41. Report of the Sixth Congress of the VCP, Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), Vol. IV, December 18, 1986.

42. For a listing of Vietnamese foreign policy goals, see the speech by Le Duan in FBIS, Vol. IV, June 29, 1976.

43. R. P. Faringaux, "The Conflict between Vietnam and Cambodia," in Le Monde, March 30, 1978, in JPRS, 71,017.

44. For a discussion of the role of ideology in Vietnamese foreign policy, see my Vietnam Since the Fall of Saigon, chapter 5.

45. For a discussion, see Chanda, p. 374.

46. In interview with Vietnamese researcher at the Institute of International Relations, Hanoi, December 9, 1985.

47. For an analysis of the global focus of Chinese foreign policy, see Steven Levine, "China in Asia: the PRC as a Regional Power," in Harry Harding (ed.), China's Foreign Relations in the 1980s (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

48. Robert G. Sutter, Chinese Foreign Policy, p. 4.

49. An interesting analysis of the historical factors in Chinese foreign policy appears in Michael H. Hunt, "Chinese Foreign Relations in Historical Perspective," in Harding, chapter 1.

50. Steven Levine estimates the following priorities: 1) Northeast Asia, 2) Southeast Asia, 3) South Asia, and 4) Southwest Asia. Ibid., p. 120.

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