Weak Power-Great Power Relationships: Sino-Khmer Rouge
Relations 1975-1989

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Acronyms used in this sub-thesis

ANS- National Sihanoukist Army (french acronym)
ASEAN - Association of South East Asian Nations
CCP - Chinese Communist Party
CGDK - Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea
COMECON- Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CPK - Communist Party of Kampuchea
CPT - Communist Party of Thailand
DK - Democratic Kampuchea
DRVN - Democratic Republic of Vietnam
FEER - Far Eastern Economic Review
FUNCINPEC - United National Front for an Independent, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (French acronym)
FUNK - National United Front for Kampuchea
ICC - International Control Commission
ICK - International Conference on Kampuchea
ICP - Indochinese Communist Party
IPKF - International Peace Keeping Force
JIM - Jakarta Informal Meeting
KNUFNS - Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation
KPNLF - Khmer People's National Liberation Front
KSA - Khmer Students' Association
KSU - Khmer Students' Union
NADK - National Army of Democratic Kampuchea
NEZ- New Economic Zone
NLF - National Liberation Front
PLA - People's Liberation Army
PRC - People's Republic of China
PRK - People's Republic of Kampuchea
PRKAF - People's Republic of Kampuchea Armed Forces
SOC - State of Cambodia
SNC- Supreme National Council
UN - United Nations
UNCTFC - United Nations Cambodia Task Force
VOPC - Voice of the People of Thailand
VPA - Vietnamese People's Army
ZOPFAN - Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality
CHAPTER 1: The Beginning of a Relationship

With the Khmer Rouge gaining control of Cambodia in 1975, the further development of a relationship between a weak and a strong power was to be seen. The People's Republic of China (PRC) would become associated with a regime which would prove to be one of the most brutal and inhumane of the modern age.

In the 1975-1989 period, the Sino-Khmer Rouge relationship would essentially remain an enigma to observers of international affairs. While it would appear that relations between the Khmer Rouge and the Chinese were in flux, neither partner would go so far as to, or perhaps have the option of, leaving the other by the wayside; a form of dependency would develop. What remains to be seen is whether the great power, China, would cast aside the weaker ally, Cambodia, in light of great power politics and negotiations for a political settlement in Cambodia. To the present day the friendship remains cloaked in secrecy, leaving politicians and academics alike in the dark as to the intimacy of the two partners. Speculation, supposition and hypothesis have become part and parcel of any study related to Sino-Khmer relations. Unfortunately, even today while openness operates in other corners of the globe, this researcher is unable to break into the black box of foreign policy making, casting all shadows aside.

1. The place names Cambodia and Kampuchea will be used interchangeably throughout this work.
Within a framework of weak state-great power relations this paper will analyse the Chinese-Khmer Rouge relationship through the years 1975-1989. Our first chapter will provide a theoretical framework as well as a brief background history to Sino-Khmer relations preceding the reign of the Khmer Rouge. From there we will examine the Sino-Khmer Rouge amity in three distinct periods: 1975-1978, 1978-1982, and 1982-1989 respectively.

I. Theories of small states

Putting aside the semantics of defining small and great powers to those who desire to delve into such contentious and perhaps overwhelmingly pedantic areas, I will adopt David Vital's definition of a small state as my own. In his book *The Survival of Small States* Vital proclaims that the small power:

... is that state which, in the long term, in itself and as a satellite and client or close ally - can constitute no more than a dispensable and non-decisive increment to a primary state's total array of political and military resources, regardless of whatever short-term, contingent weight as an auxiliary

2. I use the terms small and weak state, as well as great and strong state, synonymously. As well, while recognizing that the Khmer Rouge explicitly ruled Cambodia for only three years, I shall use the terms power and state in the same vein, thereby providing a line of consistency in our theoretical underpinnings. Recognizing the usage of typology and comparatives regarding small states, for our purposes we shall accept that Cambodia unmistakably is weaker and smaller than the People's Republic of China.
(or obstacle) to the primary power it may have in certain circumstances.3

The great power would therefore be one whose actions had a definite impact on the international system. If it were to shift alliances not only would the regional balance of power be jolted but as well the global balance would be affected.

It should not be assumed that because a state is weaker than another that it will lack the ability to direct policies of its own choosing or become a mere appendage of the greater power. Remaining independent, small states can choose different paths to ensure their self-preservation. If we look at what independence can mean, using Singer's definition, we can essentially exclude any state from being wholly independent. Singer writes that a country is independent "insofar as it has the power to enforce its freedom of decision making, regardless of which other countries want to influence it."4 There is no need to adhere to such exclusive definitions. A state may be independent in its actions, at the same time cognizant that it is a part of an international whole composed of subjective beliefs which are constantly entering into the decision making process. Of course it must be remembered that choice is often relative to the environment in which a state finds itself.


If a state's position is placed on a continuum, there occurs a decrease in autonomy as the state moves from maintaining an independent position to nothing more than becoming a satellite (See chart 1).

The second phase of the continuum finds the state acting as a buffer between two or more actors who are generally rival states or blocs of power. Trygve Mathisen adds that a state may also become a larger part of a buffer rim which serves to insulate a power from external threat. For our purposes, only the first type of buffer is relevant.

As an optional complement to a buffer type policy is a position of neutrality. A posture of neutralization, as Imogen Pilch suggests, is an "arrangement devised to satisfy the functional requirements of the balance of power system." While a state would necessarily have to relinquish political and military ties it could maintain a degree of autonomy as long as this was not disruptive to the balance of the regional or global systems. The status quo is preserved, or a new one is created, allowing for the continued existence of the buffer state.

Vital terms a buffer state, an "isolated state". He writes:

\[\text{it is unlike the 'pawn' because its policy is one predominantly determined}\]


CHART 1

THE DECLINE OF A STATE'S AUTONOMY

- Absolute independence
- Buffer state
- Patron-client
- Absolute dependence

(neutrality)
(reward-recipient)
(satellite)
by others for purposes extrinsic to it, nor a protege or client or satellite, in the sense that it is not materially free to enter into definable relationships with one or more of the primary powers. 7

David Frei accurately indicates the difficulty in establishing and maintaining a neutral stance. According to him a state must look at the external conditions of neutrality, recognize the credibility of neutrality, and determine whether the other aims of the state are compatible with neutral behaviour. 8

In accordance with Frei's assertions, the isolated or neutral state is free to reverse any political liaisons when it feels its national interest is being undermined - providing it has not moved further down the continuum thereby losing much of its autonomy.

If a buffer state concludes that neutrality is not desirable, then the option of the buffer state leaning to one side is available. In doing so the buffer risks attack, a punitive measure, from the opposing side. Presumably however, the buffer chooses an associate which is powerful enough to dissuade such encroachments on one's sovereignty. This is a dangerous position to be in as it can lead to further dependency on the ally, decreasing the sovereign state's decision making ability. Even though a state may


desire to remain autarkic it can very easily become the 'pawn' which Vital referred to.

The third option for the buffer state is to involve a third party which, while being remote from the buffer's borders, maintains the buffer's independence in the system. The third power may not wish to dominate the buffer but rather prevent the buffer's neighbours from expanding, thereby maintaining the status quo.9

A fourth, and final choice for the buffer state is a fusion of the second and third options, whereby the buffer relies both on one neighbour and a third power. The developing dependency relationship which existed when there was sole reliance on the third actor, does not disappear but rather is dispersed between the two external helpers which are often acting in concert.

As the buffer state relies more on external assistance, a dependency relationship solidifies. The weaker power now becomes enmeshed in what can lead to a patron-client relationship.

According to Michael Handel there are four characteristics to a patron-client relationship. First, relations exist between unequal powers. Second, the relationship is mutually valued and both voluntarism and coercion are balanced. Third, the patron has greater bargaining power than the client. Finally, the client's position is affected

by the availability of other patrons of equal help as well as the extent to which the patron needs the client.10

Chong Li Choy goes further and explains the patron-client relationship in terms of reward and recipient powers. However, in their relationship the reward power is as dependent on the recipient as the latter is on the rewarder. If the great power is the supplier of the reward, then the weaker power possesses strengths which the greater power needs.11 What unfolds is a Hegelian master-servant relationship.12

The recipient of the reward, nevertheless can become dependent on it. This leads us into the classic dependency model where A, say the weaker power, is dependent on B, the greater power, for some benefit. B sustains A's dependency because it accrues benefits from the relationship. The problem for A is that if B is no longer satisfied with the benefits from A, then A must seek out an alternative or perish. Thus A is much more dependent on B than B is on A.13

A.J.P. Taylor claims that when one state is totally dependent on another, it is the weaker which holds the


balance in the relationship. The weaker state can threaten to collapse if not upheld by the greater. Taylor is correct in his assertion insofar as the stronger is gaining a sufficient amount of benefit from its liaison with the weaker power - as would occur in the ideal patron-client relationship. However, if the weaker has no bargaining chips, it will be left out in the cold. The small power's interests are served as long as its policies benefit the greater actor. If the weak power is determined in the pursuit of its interests, the costs incurred by the continuance of a relationship with it, augment for the greater power. As the relationship with the small power is often seen in a short-term perspective, if the costs of the association outweigh the benefits, the relationship will be toned down or done away with altogether.

In becoming dependent upon the strengths of another actor, the weaker associate's growth may be hampered. As Mathisen indicates:

It may occur that a great power offers assistance to a small state merely to encourage it to resist a rival even though it well knows that it is unable to provide anything like adequate help, and consequently exposes the smaller partner to a needlessly hard fate, and perhaps reduces the chances for organized passive resistance to the aggressors.


15. Mathisen, 129.
This type of policy illustrates the use of power by a great power in the pursuit of its own interest at the expense of the lesser power.

If the dependency of the weak state increases to a level whereby the great power can manipulate the smaller without restrictions, then all autonomy is lost and a satellite state arises. The state as an independent body no longer flourishes nor is able to develop along lines other than those dictated by the major power.

II. HISTORICAL OUTLOOK: SINO-KHMER ROUGE RELATIONS TO 1975

Historically the Khmer people have only been of minor interest to the Chinese. Nevertheless some aspects of the Sino-Khmer relationship prior to the coming to power of the Khmer Rouge are worth mentioning as they will shed light on events in the 1975-1989 period.

Sino-Kampuchean relations date back to the third century A.D. It was, however, not until the sixth century that the various chiefdoms of Cambodia united together in order to send tributary objects to the Chinese and seek their help in security matters. Relations between China and Cambodia were most sporadic and were always initiated by the Cambodians. Although the Khmer Empire was the centre of a great civilization, Cambodia was one of the few countries in Southeast Asia which never experienced Chinese incursions or subjugation.
The mercantilist sector of Cambodian society was keen on pursuing economic relations with China. By the 13th century the Chinese were busily trading with Angkor, capital of the Khmer Empire.

With the rise of Siam and Vietnam in the mid-15th century, China focused more on these two rising powers neglecting Cambodia (now in decline) all the more. Nevertheless, there were some 3,000 Chinese in Phnom Penh by the 1540s.

The Vietnamese having finally defeated the Chinese occupiers in 939 A.D. became a formidable force by the late 15th century, challenging Cambodian power and occupying large areas of Cambodian territory. According to Chang Pao-min, between the Vietnamese who thought themselves superior and the Thai who "sought to eclipse Kampuchea from the west," the Khmer Empire came under seige, engendering bitter memories which remain to the present day.

The Vietnamese at times sought to control Cambodia, and at other times regarded it as a buffer state, whereas the Thai looked down on the Khmer as dependent children. As David P. Chandler states:

> The Thai wanted the Cambodians to be loyal; the Vietnamese wanted Cambodia's land and, incidentally, its recognition of their superiority. The Thai demanded service and friendship, but they were usually unable - given the way they organized their armies and the distance between Bangkok and Phnom Penh - to

provide protection. The Vietnamese on the other hand, provided protection of a sort, but their actions led to the disappearance of Cambodia as an independent state.17

Because of China's great interest in Vietnam, and because of Vietnam's patronistic attitude towards the Khmer people, it was logical, as Chang asserts, that somewhere down the road, the Chinese and the Khmer would assume an alliance against the hostile Vietnamese.18

It was French intervention which saved Cambodia from annexation by Vietnam. The intervention, however, had the effect of adding legitimacy to the idea of a unified Indochina, drawing attention to Vietnam as the principal regional actor. By the time imperialist China faded into the annals of history and the People's Republic of China was born in 1949, the lines of division between the various Southeast Asian protagonists were set in the players' minds, if not in reality. China continued to uphold the existence of Laos and Cambodia as separate, independent states and looked with increased interest to Southeast Asia as a whole.

Since 1949, as Shao-chuen Leung indicates, China has sought the formation of a "safe-belt" around its borders. Rather than a sphere of influence whereby China would have a direct role in the management of regional affairs, through the

creation and strengthening of friendly, non-aligned regimes, the PRC would promote its aims and goals from afar.19

At the 1954 Geneva Conference, China called for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Indochina. Beijing pressured Vietnam to withdraw from territory it occupied in Laos and Cambodia, and to acknowledge the 17th parallel rather than the 14th which Hanoi had initially wanted as the cease-fire line to the Vietnamese conflict.20 China for pragmatic reasons, favoured neutralist governments in Laos and Cambodia over communist insurgencies; exemplified in the PRC's call for a dismantling of the relatively small-scale communist resistance forces in Cambodia. Such a demand might indicate that China would uphold a neutral Cambodia and not necessarily a communist one.21

However, one month after the Bandung Conference in 1955, which underscored neutrality and the right for a state to act independently, Sihanouk signed an agreement with the United States which made the Americans the exclusive supplier of military aid to Cambodia. China sensing betrayal, condemned the agreement and warned Sihanouk that there might be reprisals from leftist forces in Cambodia. An alarmed Sihanouk moved to reassure Beijing when on


21. See the statement by David Mozingo in Lawson, 58. Also see Pilch, 21; and Chang, 15-17.
April 1956, he signed a trade agreement between Cambodia and China, the first between the PRC and a non-communist country. In return for recognizing China's importance, Prince Sihanouk in 1956, on his first visit to communist China, was assured of Beijing's support in the event of difficulties with the Vietminh.22

As Armstrong observes, China's reaction to Sihanouk's overtures with Washington, "had shown that its notion of Cambodian neutrality was somewhat stricter than the conventional legal understanding of the term."23

In 1957, the Cambodian government enacted the self-declared Neutrality Act. As Milton Osborne suggests:

> By proclaiming Cambodia to be neutral, despite strong pressure from the US to join the anti-communist camp, Sihanouk sought to have his country's security assured, by accepting aid from both East and West... Basic to Sihanouk's calculations was the belief that should a major crisis develop, Cambodia would have the support of China.24

By August 1958, diplomatic relations with China were formalized, and in December 1960, the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression with Cambodia was signed by the Khmer and the Chinese.


23. Ibid., 188.

24. Pilch, 23. For a similar assertion see Armstrong, 191.
Close cooperation between the Khmer and the Chinese was evident in 1963, with both Cambodia and China opposing the nuclear test ban treaty. In that same year Beijing signed a military aid agreement with Cambodia, pledging to assist Phnom Penh in the event of armed aggression by the United States and "its vassals". In September, Sihanouk announced that Cambodia would remain neutral but if it had to, Phnom Penh would ally itself with China "for she alone would take the trouble to fight." 

The Chinese recognizing both the strategic importance of and, to a lesser degree, an economic compatibility with Cambodia, sought relations with the Khmer people to ward off Vietnamese aggression and more importantly in the late 1950s and early 1960s, American hegemony. With the Khmer remaining suspicious of Vietnamese intentions, the Chinese attempted to bring Phnom Penh on side.

During the Second Indochina War, in the early 1960s, Beijing strongly backed the North Vietnamese-supported resistance in the south. It was also thought that Cambodia could be used as a neutral rear for communist activities in South Vietnam. At the same time, wary of Soviet overtures and offers of assistance to the Vietnamese, and fearing Soviet hegemony and Soviet plans to encircle China, the PRC offered in excess of US$1,000 million per annum in aid to Hanoi if it

27. Ibid., 188.
would refuse Soviet assistance. In effect a dual struggle was being waged. Both the Soviet Union and China would attempt to exploit the Sino-Soviet rivalry, which came to a head with the 1968 border clashes on the Ussuri river, in order to gain Vietnamese sympathy.

Despite what appeared to be a legitimate desire on the part of Beijing to come to an arrangement with Hanoi, relations eventually deteriorated. Due to a negative historical association and what Lawson calls "global strategic considerations," an accommodation could not be reached.

While the Chinese, Cambodians and Vietnamese pursued their respective policies, a group of Khmer students in France were determined they would change the face of Cambodia.

In 1951, the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) was broken into three separate national parties, one being the Khmer Issarak (Khmer Independence) which was later ordered disbanded under the terms of the 1954 Geneva Conference.

Former members of the French Communist Party of Khmer origin, Saloth Sar (Pol Pot) and Ieng Sary joined by Son Sen, clandestinely took up the cause of Khmer communism. Within the chauvinistic Khmer Students' Association (KSA), Pol Pot and Ieng Sary pushed for a reorganization of the communist party breaking free from the Vietnamese control under which it had fallen. Members of the 1956 Paris Khmer


29. Lawson, 4. For the Sino-US nexus see page 20-21 of this chapter.
Students' Union (KSU), including Hou Yuon, Thioun Mum and Khieu Samphan, supported Pol Pot and Ieng Sary.30

In Cambodia in 1961, Pol Pot became secretary of the newly formed secret party, and he and the other revolutionaries went underground. During this period the Paris students were divided between the hardline, ultranationalist group of Pol Pot, Ieng Sary and Son Sen, and the moderates of Khieu Samphan, Hu Nim, Thioun Mum and Hou Yuon. The hardliners wanted to undertake armed struggle against the Sihanouk regime whereas the moderates desired to work within the ranks of Sihanouk's government.31

Hanoi advised Pol Pot in 1965, to follow the moderate line within his party and support Sihanouk's anti-imperialist policy. In late 1965 and early 1966, Pol Pot spent five months studying in China.32 While there, at the birth of the Cultural Revolution, he undoubtedly was injected with a revolutionary fervour which helped establish the ideology which would drive many of his policies in 1975, which called for a raising of the peasantry to power, the re-education of intellectuals, and party purges.


32. Chanda, 62.
Etcheson claims that the Chinese leadership found it difficult to choose between the hardline Pol Potists and the moderate Sihanoukists. In the 1960s, Zhou Enlai is said to have supported the moderate line, wanting to maintain friendly relations with Sihanouk. Zhou's opponents however, according to Etcheson, promoted amicable party-to-party relations with the Cambodian communists.33

In March-April 1967 in Samlaut, following a peasant uprising, Pol Pot founded his revolutionary army and began an armed struggle against Sihanouk's government, thereby rejecting the Vietnamese advice of 1965.34 While radical Chinese may have promoted party-to-party relations with the some 2,000 members of the Cambodian Communist Party, it was to Sihanouk's military leaders, notably Lon Nol, that arms were being delivered.35 On 4 January 1968, the leaders received jet fighters, bomber aircraft, cargo and training aircraft, artillery, automatic weapons, ammunition and explosives.36

But by 1968 Sihanouk renewed overtures to the United States, as a means of strengthening his position against the Vietnamese revolutionaries. Concerned with China's vacillating position, Sihanouk asserted: "The war has been

33. Etcheson, 57.

34. Chanda, 63.


36. Etcheson, 82.
imposed on us because I have not agreed to become the ally or satellite of China, the NLF [National Liberation Front], and the DRVN [Democratic Republic of Vietnam]."37

Sihanouk was correct in assuming that his authority was under siege. While visiting Moscow on 18 March 1970, the Prince was deposed as Cambodia's leader by his right-wing dominated National Assembly. Power was placed in the hands of Prime Minister and Defence Minister Lon Nol.

The take over by Lon Nol who followed a pro-American line, brought about the uneasy association of Vietnam, Sihanouk, the Khmer Rouge and China. Such a relationship for the Khmer Rouge was fruitful, allowing them to build up their forces and test out their options among their new found allies.

On 23 March, from Beijing, Sihanouk announced the formation of the National United Front for Kampuchea (FUNK). He appealed to the Khmer Rouge to join him in resisting Lon Nol's forces. In "A Statement of Support to Prince Norodom Sihanouk," released 26 March, the Khmer Rouge agreed to help Sihanouk fight Lon Nol.38 The Khmer Rouge were rewarded by having important positions within Sihanouk's government-in-exile: Khieu Samphan as Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Hu Nim as Minister of Information and Propaganda, Hou Yuon as Minister of the Interior, Communal Reforms and Cooperatives, and Ieng Sary as executant and chief liaison

37. Armstrong, 207.
38. Etcheson, 130.
officer with Beijing and Hanoi. Pol Pot controlled the army.

The Vietnamese also agreed to support Sihanouk, while at the same time making private overtures to the Khmer Rouge. In April, in private talks with the Khmer Rouge, Hanoi suggested that the two parties establish a mixed military command. The Khmer Rouge fearing Vietnamese domination declined the offer. Tension would remain high between the Vietnamese and the Khmer Rouge, with reports of Pol Pot's forces firing on the Viet Cong from behind in skirmishes with Lon Nol troops.39

It was not until 5 May 1970, that the Chinese denounced the Lon Nol regime and recognized FUNK. Their hesitancy could be due to Chinese uncertainty concerning the direction of, and success of, Lon Nol's policies. As well, there may have been some doubt as to the ability of FUNK to work as a cohesive unit.40

What can be derived from the PRC's recognition of FUNK is China's possible desire to bring the Khmer Rouge under some form of control. With Sihanouk at the helm of FUNK, and due to his diplomatic efforts, China could hope that some of the radicals within the Khmer Rouge would be tamed.41 As well, in line with Chinese support for revolutionary movements,


40. Chang, 29.

41. Etcheson asserts that it was Zhou Enlai's influence that persuaded Sihanouk to accept the Khmer Rouge into positions of power within FUNK. See Etcheson, 175.
Beijing might want to bring an ideological partner into power. Thus the PRC would, without at the same time wishing to offend Sihanouk, suggest the entrance of the Khmer Rouge into the decision making process with the private intent of them eventually taking control of the FUNK leadership. Sihanouk would provide the PRC with the needed diplomatic legitimacy whereas the Khmer Rouge supplied military clout through guerrilla forces.

China nevertheless continued to maintain that its preference would be the establishment of neutral regimes in Indochina. At a meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers held in Kuala Lumpur 21 November 1971, the ministers issued a declaration calling for the establishment of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). China supported the declaration, especially the neutrality clause, as it would slow any penetration into Southeast Asia by Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

Beijing's perception of the Soviet threat stemmed in part from the bitter polemics of the Sino-Soviet rivalry as well as an increased danger of Soviet armed retaliation, following the "Brezhnev Doctrine's" justification for military intervention against Czechoslovakia in 1968. A visit to Hanoi by Soviet President Podgorny on 3 October 1971, increased Chinese anxiety about the Soviet-Vietnamese friendship. Vietnam was driven closer to the Soviet Union.

42. Sihanouk's presence in FUNK permitted Beijing to send supplies directly into Cambodia, by-passing if necessary the NLF and DRVN. Such accessibility would facilitate support of the Khmer Rouge.
when in the 1972 Shanghai Communique, China and the United States agreed to maintain the status quo in Southeast Asia. The Vietnamese feared Sino-American collusion as an attempt to prevent the realization of their major aim - the reunification of Vietnam.

Prior to the Paris Ceasefire Agreement of January 1973, the Vietnamese and Americans separately tried to push the Khmer Rouge into an accommodation with Lon Nol. Throughout a number of meetings in 1972 and finally at the Paris Ceasefire meeting, the Khmer Rouge consistently rejected such a proposal. They, believing that they controlled 90 per cent of the country, were backed by a China which promoted a policy of "no negotiation, no compromise and no coalition government." At the same time Beijing endorsed a declaration, made in February by Khieu Samphan and Sihanouk, which reiterated their joint determination to overthrow Lon Nol's regime. The now anti-Lon Nol stance indicates that there was a jockeying for power between China's hardline radicals and moderates.

Just previous to the Paris Ceasefire Agreement, China signed on 13 January 1973, two agreements with the Sihanouk government-in-exile for the supply of economic and military assistance. Concurrently there would be a diminution of aid

43. Interestingly, the Soviets apparently encouraged a rapprochement between Hanoi and Lon Nol to the exclusion of Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge. See Lawson, 276.

44. Chang, 34.

45. Ibid.
to Vietnam. The significance of the agreements was not what they provided for Sihanouk, but that the Chinese now clearly supported the Khmer Rouge ascension to power. At a 10 April Hanoi reception, Sihanouk conceded that his position was symbolic and that real control of the insurgency remained with the Khmer Rouge.46

In April and May 1974, Khieu Samphan was invited to Beijing where he was guaranteed a donation of Chinese military aid for the Khmer Rouge insurgency. At the same time, the Chinese government provided Khieu Samphan with a plane to visit other parts of Asia and Africa. Although China's charity was appreciated, Khieu Samphan stressed in a Beijing address that the Khmer Rouge were not "the slaves or satellites of anybody."47

Six months later Ieng Sary was Zhou Enlai's guest in Beijing. Relations between the Khmer Rouge and the Chinese entered a period of friendship.48

The fortified assurances to the Khmer Rouge were undoubtedly enacting what China had termed its Three Worlds Theory. In 1974, China deemed the first world that of the United States and the Soviet Union, the second world comprised Japan,

46. Simon, 59. Simon also notes that from August 1972 Peking's media linked the Cambodian government in exile with Khieu Samphan as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence rather than with Sihanouk as leader; Simon, 97.


48. Burchett suggests that while the Khmer Rouge needed their association with the Chinese, Pol Pot "secretly despised them." See Burchett, 66.
Europe and Canada, and the third world included the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The second and third world would collaborate in opposition to the superpowers. China considered itself an integral part of the third world in its struggle against Soviet hegemony. The Three Worlds Theory was the precursor to post-Mao pragmatism which would help shape Sino-Khmer Rouge cooperation.

Both China and the Khmer Rouge relied on each other. The Chinese in order to stop Soviet and Vietnamese expansion in Southeast Asia needed to bolster the new rulers of Kampuchea as an obstacle to Moscow and Hanoi. The Khmer Rouge had no choice but to turn to the Chinese for assistance. Because of the Soviet Union's de facto alliance with Vietnam, and the American's support of Lon Nol, China was the only alternative. What must now be determined is whether the Government of Democratic Kampuchea came in on the coat-tails of China and if so, would it be a dependent country, subservient to its larger donor.

49. As Michael Yahuda indicates, the Three Worlds thesis was the most significant regression from ideological conformity in the pre-1978 period by the Chinese. See Yahuda, Towards the End of Isolationism: Chinese Foreign Policy After Mao (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 86. As well, for China's shift to realpolitik and the Three Worlds Theory see Samuel S. Kim, "Normative Foreign Policy: The Chinese Case" International Interactions 8, no. 1-2 (1981):62.
CHAPTER 2: In Power?

17 April 1975, was to be a day Cambodians and the world were never to forget. This was the day the Khmer Rouge stormed Phnom Penh. In achieving their goal of gaining rule over the Khmer people, the Khmer Rouge hoped to purify and transform a society which they believed had been polluted by external forces. Over the following three years in cleansing operations, more than a million Kampuchean citizens were to perish at the hands of their leaders in an effort to take Kampuchea back to year zero; a time when Kampuchea was free from foreign influence.

The newly proclaimed Republic of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) was guided by a strong xenophobia and ultranationalism which would place it in direct conflict with its neighbours and more specifically, Vietnam. Promoting a traditionalist perspective of reuniting the Khmer people of Indochina, Kampuchea would essentially rely on what Kiernan considers to be a Maoist ideology for the attainment of its goals.1 At first, China and Kampuchea would adhere to a similar ideological line and therefore could be seen as natural allies. However, as time passed, ideology was replaced by

1. See Ben Kiernan's statement in Burchett, 58. Nationalism can be defined as a patriotic attachment to one's homeland and culture leading to a policy of national independence. Franz Schurmann defines ideology as a systematic set of ideas used for the attainment of specific goals with action related consequences; see Schurmann, Ideology and Organization in Communist China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 18-25. Nationalism can be a driving force within one's ideology. For a synthesis of the Khmer Rouge's declaratory ideology see Etcheson, 28-32.
national interest as the principal factor guiding Sino-Khmer relations.

In this chapter covering the 1975-1978 period of the Sino-Khmer association we will indicate that although the Sino-Khmer amity rested on the bounds of a patron-client framework there were differences of opinion between the two parties. Neither the Chinese nor the Khmer Rouge leadership should be viewed as monolithic. According to Kiernan, policy platforms slowly evolved from being ones of strict ideological conformity to ones increasingly based on national interest and self-preservation. The Sino-Khmer outlook was transformed as the various political factions of the respective partners vied for political authority.

By 1975, the Khmer Rouge consisted principally of two factions. One group comprised Pol Pot and his followers Ieng Sary, Son Sen and Khieu Samphan. Khieu Samphan, a once claimed moderate, had somewhere along the road been co-opted by the Pol Potist group. This faction can be seen in the mid-1970s as toeing a line similar to that of the leftist radicals in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). However, such alliances were not static. As the balance of power changed within the CCP, the Pol Potists reassessed their friendships. While the Pol Potists were greatly influenced by Maoism and the Chinese Cultural Revolution, their nationalistic tendencies prevailed with the Khmer Rouge desiring their own form of communist society distinct from

2. Burchett, 58.
that of the Chinese, Soviets or Vietnamese. Even the Chinese mentors were to be looked down upon. Wilfred Burchett asserts that "there is evidence that, while fawning on Chinese leaders and depending heavily on them for material support, Pol Pot secretly despised them." The Chinese were not held to have successfully attained the ideal state of communism.

The second faction of the Khmer Rouge consisted of Hu Nim, Hou Yuon and those who, as did the Pol Potists, applied the Chinese Cultural Revolutionary model to Kampuchea (of which Khieu Samphan was once a member). The difference between Hu Nim's supporters and those of Pol Pot was that Hu Nim and Hou Yuon looked more to the Chinese model of communism as a base and, according to Burchett, were supported by the right wing of the CCP as opposed to the radicals.

Mao Zedong himself is considered by Nayan Chanda to have supported the Pol Potists. On a visit by Pol Pot to Beijing on 21 June 1975, Mao praised the Khmer Rouge stating: "You have achieved in one stroke what we failed with all our masses." Later that year Mao advised a visiting Vietnamese

3. Ibid., 66. Etcheson in his Rise and Demise of Democratic Kampuchea is sadly mistaken when he suggests that the Pol Potists or Stalinists are allied with the right of the CCP. While the Pol Pot faction later associated itself with Deng Xiaoping, this was done out of power politics type motivations rather than ideological conviction.

4. Burchett, 66. Etcheson is again incorrect as he places the Hu Nim faction with the left of the CCP. See Etcheson, 28-32.

5. Chanda, 16.
leader to "learn from the Khmer Rouge how to carry out a revolution." 6

As Chanda indicates, the Gang of Four, the radical group tied to Mao, was also supportive of the Pol Potists. The favourable relationship between Pol Pot and his followers and members of the Gang of Four - Qiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen - extended back to the days of the Cultural Revolution. 7

Although the influence of the Gang of Four predominated up to the mid-1970s, there was some evidence of factionalism within Chinese ranks. The Chinese government mouthpiece, the Xinhua News Agency in July 1975, pitted Ieng Sary, and thus Pol Pot, within a pro-Moscow grouping. The Agency, states Lawson, wrote that the Vietnamese had "intimidated elements friendly to Peking in the Khmer Rouge and bolstered the position of the pro-Moscow factions led by Ieng Sary." 8 Doubtful that such a statement would be supported by the Gang of Four - one that condemned their long time friend Ieng Sary - it may be assumed that a faction unfavourable to Pol Pot would have promoted such ideas.

Chanda's depiction of Chinese internal politics in 1978, leads one to believe that Zhou Enlai could have pushed for a denunciation of Ieng Sary and his cohorts. Zhou, desiring a

6. Ibid., 17.
7. Ibid., 74-78.
8. Lawson, 308. Unfortunately Lawson does not explain this allegation.
more pragmatic policy in the conduct of Sino-Soviet relations was probably joined by Deng Xiaoping in criticizing the left-wing elements of the Khmer Rouge. Zhou believed that Pol Pot and his followers were moving much too quickly and possessed too much zeal to be successful revolutionaries. In 1975, Zhou warned Khieu Samphan and Ieng Thirith not to attempt to achieve communism in one full sweep but rather in progressive stages. While ideology may provide a basis for revolutionary action, the means to the implementation of a proposed plan must be done carefully, not hastily. But Zhou was to die in 1976, leaving a free hand initially to the Gang of Four. Meanwhile, Deng was purged while Hua Guofeng was confirmed in the premiership.

Hua however was not supportive of the Gang of Four; its members were subsequently arrested by him on 6 October 1976. Although Hua could be seen as a Maoist, Chinese politics moved to the right of the political spectrum with the rehabilitation of Deng as Vice-Premier. As Burchett suggests, the fate and fortunes of the Pol Pot and Hu Nim groups followed the battleline of Deng's struggle with the radicals.

In Kampuchea, Pol Pot recognized that he would have to distance himself from the Gang of Four if he were to

9. The Khmer Rouge thought that communism could be attained without the long and arduous process of going through various stages.


guarantee a continuation of Chinese support. Denouncing the "counter revolutionary Gang of Four anti-Party clique" on 22 October 1976, Pol Pot would capitalize on China's antagonism towards the Vietnamese, playing on Chinese sentiments by condemning Vietnam. Pol Pot executed Hu Nim and his associates, decreasing significantly any opposition, and alternatives to Pol Pot's extremism, from within the ranks of the Khmer Rouge. The Chinese leadership did not approve of Pol Pot's radicalism; but it was increasingly obliged to go along with his leadership for "national interest" reasons - i.e. opposition to Vietnam. If Beijing wanted a foothold in Kampuchea it would have little choice but to support the Pol Pot faction.

Alfred Burchett epitomizes the predicament the Chinese leadership was facing with regard to Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge when he writes:

If the Peking leadership had been more secure they would surely have done more to avoid such a risky course. But in early 1977 the Chinese Politburo was deeply divided. Deng was only in the first stages of a comeback that threatened more than one member of the ruling 'group' and, none was willing to risk his position by contradicting Maoist policy on an issue such as this. Thus the two weak and divided governments of Phnom Penh and Peking became locked in their disastrous course.

Nevertheless, it was still in China's interest to continue backing the Khmer Rouge because of its perception of Vietnam as a Soviet proxy. Yet, even though China appeared to...

12. Etcheson, 176.

support the Khmer Rouge, Pol Pot was suspicious of Sihanouk's influence and thus would try to ensure that Beijing would stay loyal to the Khmer Rouge. Relations between Prince Sihanouk and the Chinese leadership although distant, remained cordial. It was not at all evident that Sihanouk would be excluded from any Chinese involvement in Kampuchea. Following the Pol Pot takeover, Sihanouk was to reside in Beijing, remaining titular head of Democratic Kampuchea.

Mao believed that Sihanouk should work in union with the Khmer Rouge, as in Mao's view their differences were marginal.\footnote{Chanda, 104.} In September 1975, the Khmer Rouge invited Sihanouk to return to Phnom Penh. Before Sihanouk left Beijing, Mao personally asked that the Khmer Rouge not send the Prince and his wife "to the cooperative."ootnote{Barnett, 22.} While not sending their Highnesses to the cooperative, upon their return to Phnom Penh, it became evident that the differences between Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge were so "marginal" that following Zhou Enlai's death in 1976 and Sihanouk's resignation as titular head of the DK on 2 April 1978, Sihanouk was placed under an undeclared house arrest in Phnom Penh!\footnote{Chanda, 43.} The Chinese thought the Khmer Rouge were being exceedingly harsh with the Prince and would have preferred greater cooperation between the two leaderships.
The Khmer Rouge were to prove intransigent concerning Sihanouk's freedom of movement and access to the outside world. On a visit by Zhou Enlai's widow, Deng Yingchao, to Phnom Penh in January 1978, the Khmer Rouge turned down a request for this longtime friend to visit Sihanouk. The Pol Potists were adamant that they would determine who could see Sihanouk.17

However, as Pol Pot's and his follower's international standing declined they were persuaded by the Chinese to allow Sihanouk increased freedom. He would be used to woo the international community into giving the Khmer Rouge greater respect and sympathy.18

Chinese relations with the Khmer Rouge and Sihanouk exemplify an interesting point in small-great power relations. When the small power perceives itself as having the ability to forge ahead with its policies, it can dismiss any minor demands that a greater power may make. However, this can only occur when the greater power receives some benefit from its friendship with the smaller state. Once the smaller power founders in its internal and external decision making ability, it is no longer able to disobey even the most minor of demands made by its greater associate for fear of antagonizing it.

17. Ibid., 210-211, and Chang, Kampuchea Between China and Vietnam, 59

18. This point shall be expanded upon in Ch. 3.
Although important to the Chinese for diplomatic reasons, Sihanouk, because he did not hold power in Kampuchea, was effectively of peripheral interest - a second option so to speak. The main focus was on the Khmer Rouge. In August 1975, the PRC promised the newly declared Democratic Kampuchea approximately one billion dollars in aid over a five year period. Almost US$20 million was given as an outright grant, and Chinese technicians were sent into Kampuchea to assist in post-war reconstruction.19 In addition, Wang Shangrong, Deputy Chief of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) met with DK's Defence Minister Son Sen on 10 February 1976, at which time they signed an agreement on non-refundable aid.20

Chanda asserts that China supplied the Khmer Rouge with aid in the hope of transforming the guerrilla army into a standing one. While not desiring direct military confrontation between the numerically far superior and better equipped Vietnamese and the Khmer Rouge, China wanted to ensure that the Khmer Rouge could stand firm against the Vietnamese.21 Vietnam would not be allowed to expand into what China saw as its domain. China would, according to Mao, Zhu De, and Hua Guofeng, "fight shoulder to shoulder and

19. Chanda, 17. The following section dealing with the Sino-Khmer Rouge association is drawn from Chanda, Brother Enemy and Chang, Kampuchea between China and Vietnam. Chang claims that the loan was of US $150 million not US $1 billion. See Chang, 44.


march forward" with the Kampuchean people to ward off hegemony and expansionism.22

Although the Khmer Rouge were no doubt appreciative of China's support, they maintained that the programme under way in Kampuchea was their own and that they alone should guide the country's destiny. On the first anniversary of the Khmer Rouge victory, on 17 April 1976, Ieng Sary pronounced: "A country's defence should be the work of its own people, and revolution in a country should be completed by the people of the country independently."23 Ieng Sary was in essence calling for a posture of self-reliance whereby a state has full control over, and gains self-sufficiency in, the politico-strategic, economic, and military spheres. Ironically, the Chinese were to later criticize the Khmer Rouge for not being self-reliant enough, depending too much on China to come to their assistance.

At a Beijing banquet, given in Ieng Sary's honour on 31 March 1977, the presence of General Wang indicated that military links between the DK and the PRC were firm. At the same gathering, Ieng Sary was urged to seek better relations with ASEAN.24 Beijing's strategy was to rally ASEAN and the DK in a united front against Vietnamese (read Soviet) "hegemony" attempts. As well, China perceiving increased international disgust with the Khmer Rouge record of brutality inside Kampuchea, believed it better that the

22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 9.
24. Ibid., 90.
DK government improve its legitimacy by making conciliatory gestures to ASEAN rather than remain inward-looking.

In Beijing, at the celebration of the 28th anniversary of the PRC's existence, Pol Pot revealed his position to the world. At the celebration, CCP Chairman Hua Guofeng told Pol Pot and other Khmer Rouge leaders that they "are not only good at destroying the old world but also good at building a new one."25 In turn, Pol Pot praised Mao for leading China down the right revolutionary track opposing those that wished to betray the cause of Marxism-Leninism.26 In return for the Khmer Rouge leader's warm words of praise, on 5 October, the Chinese signed a protocol with Democratic Kampuchea promising more Chinese arms shipments to Cambodia.27

In January 1978, following Madame Deng's, (Zhou's widow,) visit to Phnom Penh, in a Radio Phnom Penh broadcast the Khmer Rouge asserted that they were fighting principally "by relying on their own efforts."28 As well, the radio announcement promulgated:

We distinguish between good and bad friends. We respect and love friends who are good to us, who respect the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Cambodia, and who deal

25. Etcheson, 176.


27. Chanda, 220.

28. Ibid., 211.
with us on an equal footing. But our friendship making criterion is not based on whether this or that friend can provide material aid. It is based on the principle of equality, mutual respect, and mutual benefit, on sentiments of solidarity in accordance with the principle of respecting and protecting the rights of each country, be it large or small to manage its own destiny....29

The Khmer Rouge while accepting - as a matter of necessity - Chinese material aid, clearly wished to lay claim that Democratic Kampuchea was a sovereign, independent state. True independence, that of self-reliance also recognizing the limitations of one's place in the regional and global systems, could not be maintained indefinitely while taking with one hand and not giving enough in return with the other.30

Subsequent to Madame Deng's visit there was a massive increase in Chinese aid to Cambodia. The PRC sent long-range 130mm and 150mm artillery pieces, MIG-15 fighters, assorted anti-tank weapons, and amphibious vehicles to Kampuchea through the port of Kompong Som (Sihanoukville). As well, there was an increase in the number of Chinese advisers sent to the DK, with an estimated 5-6,000 consultants in Kampuchea by September 1978. In addition, the Chinese were believed to have been training Kampuchean pilots to fly MIG-jet fighters.31

29. Ibid.
30. See the discussion in Ch.1, p.3 of this work.
31. Chanda, 212, and Chang, 59 & 70.
Vietnam

The Sino-Khmer Rouge friendship while having an ideological component to it, was basically sustained by antagonism towards a common foe - Vietnam.

Both Kampuchea and China were in dispute with Vietnam concerning territorial jurisdictions. Kampuchea and Vietnam laid claim to a number of islands in the Gulf of Thailand. As well, Vietnam and Kampuchea disagreed on the location of their respective borders. China and Vietnam also conflicted over island claims, specifically over the Paracel and Spratley groupings. As Kampuchea did, China disagreed with Vietnam as to the delineation of their common border.

Shortly following the Khmer Rouge takeover of 17 April 1975, the Vietnamese found the Khmer Rouge asserting their independence and laying claim to the Gulf of Thailand territories. Invading Phu Quoc and Poulo Panjang islands in early May, the Khmer Rouge faced a counter attack, with the Vietnamese protecting territories they saw as their own.32

The attack on the islands should not singly be seen as a quest for territory which once belonged to Kampuchea. The skirmishes must also be recognized as part and parcel of a longer term Khmer Rouge scheme to remove all Vietnamese from Cambodian territory.

Khmer antagonism towards the Vietnamese was historical. Later on, as stated in the 1978 Livre Noir, resentment of

the Vietnamese continued with the Khmer Rouge believing that Hanoi sought to prevent the consolidation of power by the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). In a mid-1977 tour to a number of Southeast Asian countries, Ieng Sary accused the Vietnamese of having ulterior motives concerning Southeast Asia and of interfering in Kampuchean internal affairs. Ieng Sary's fears were typical, with Cambodians historically concerned with being swallowed up by Vietnamese expansion unless they resisted any encroachment. The border skirmishes and eviction of Vietnamese must therefore take into account the prevailing Khmer Rouge suspicions as well as land claims themselves.33

In addition to confrontation over island claims, the Cambodians and Vietnamese were at odds over border demarcation. Throughout the 1975-1978 period, Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese troops were to face each other at the Vietnamese-Cambodian border many times.

On 4 May 1976, Vietnamese and Cambodian officials met for two week talks on the border issue. The Vietnamese, much to Khmer Rouge dissatisfaction, adhered to the border as delineated in a pre-1954 French map, which gave Cochin China to Vietnam and ignored maritime boundaries. To the Kampucheans, Hanoi's position was evidence of Vietnam's desire to engulf Cambodia. Because of the Khmer-Vietnamese

33. Nair, 92.
inability to agree on minor matters concerning the border issues, a proposed June summit was cancelled.34

From January 1977 onwards, a new series of Kampuchean attacks on the Vietnamese border began. The incursions were designed to place pressure on the Vietnamese to give up territory which Kampuchea laid claim to in the May 1976 talks.35

In April 1977, the number of Khmer Rouge attacks on Vietnamese territories augmented. This followed a decision by Pol Pot to end any "pretext to normalcy with Vietnam."36 On 30 April, there were a number of attacks on Vietnamese villages and townships in An Giang Province in the Mekong Delta.

On 24 September, prior to Pol Pot's October 1977 visit to Beijing, the Khmer Rouge moved into Vietnam's Tay Ninh Province. Looking at why the Khmer Rouge committed such brutality which led to the killing of hundreds of villagers, Chanda asserts that the Khmer Rouge, on the external level, wished to prove their resolve in combatting the Vietnamese, indicating to the Chinese the compatibility of interests China and Kampuchea had concerning Vietnam.37 For the Chinese however, Vietnam was seen as an agent of Soviet "social imperialism." As well, Hanoi's regional

34. Chanda, 32-33.
35. Pilch, 29.
37. Ibid., 195.
ambitions were perceived as a threat to ASEAN, which Beijing wished to support against Soviet hegemony. Stephen Heder brings out a domestic reason for the events, suggesting that the Cambodian Eastern Zone leaders wished to prove their loyalty to a highly suspicious Pol Pot.38

The Vietnamese would not sit idly but rather retaliated. In October, they pushed their forces as far as 15 miles into Cambodian territory. In an even greater show of force in mid-December 1977, Hanoi sent 50,000 troops with hundreds of armoured vehicles, artillery pieces and air cover into Kampuchea. The Vietnamese goal was to remove the Khmer Rouge from Vietnamese territory and make them realize that Hanoi would not remain passive in the face of Kampuchean aggression. Hanoi achieved its goal making significant territorial advances; occupying much territory until February 1978.39

The Khmer Rouge reacted to the Vietnamese attack by condemning them internationally; denouncing them for aggression, claiming that they attempted to stage a coup d'etat in Kampuchea and, in February 1978, breaking formal diplomatic relations with them.

Following their withdrawal from territories gained in the December 1978 incursion, the Vietnamese proposed a conference with the Khmer Rouge on the border problems, mutual withdrawal from the frontier, and an arrangement for

38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., 203; Chang, 54; and Pilch, 29.
international guarantees and supervision of the border. The Kampucheans declined the offer indicating that there would be no negotiations between the two warring parties. The Vietnamese proposal put forth to the United Nations was unequivocally blocked by the PRC.

China's newly proclaimed opposition to negotiations was a major policy change. While initially urging negotiations, political reality dictated a more forceful stance on the part of the Chinese. Geng Biao, Secretary General of the CCP's military commission indicated that,

...the divergence between Vietnam and Cambodia could no longer be covered up. Our efforts to prevent the contradiction between them from coming out into the open since the liberation of Cambodia in 1975 finally failed. Therefore, in December, the Party Central Committee decided to give energetic support to Cambodia, strengthening it so that it might cope with the possible new situation when negotiations fail to solve the problems.40

The Chinese policy reversal is a significant, pivotal point in Sino-Khmer relations in the 1975-1978 period. With the severance of diplomatic relations between Democratic Kampuchea and Vietnam, the Chinese had realized that the Khmer Rouge had excluded any compromise with the Vietnamese. Military aid was the only way China could sustain the Khmer Rouge and serve Chinese interests against the Vietnamese. Obviously the Khmer Rouge knew this and played on it.41


41. As well, China's position was altered due to an increasing role played by the Soviets, see p.45 and the reference made to them by Hua, p. 49 of this work.
It was not Vietnamese intransigence that left insoluble the Vietnamese-Kampuchean conflict. Strong nationalism and what Burchett terms as Pol Pot's megalomania alienated the Vietnamese from the Khmer Rouge.42 Ironically, it was Vietnam that promoted Khmer nationalism into 1976 so as to ensure Cambodian independence from China.43 Hanoi was unhappy with the Cambodian communist party's movement away from relations with other Indochinese communist parties and the desire by Cambodia to develop a foreign policy distinct from Vietnam's. Displeased with an assertive, nationalist anti-Vietnamese grouping in Cambodia, the Vietnamese nevertheless tried to maintain a dialogue with the Khmer Rouge.

Chanda asserts that it was not until the fall of 1977 that the Vietnamese had become certain of the extent of China's aid to the Khmer Rouge.44 Hanoi then became convinced that Beijing's support for the Khmer Rouge formed part of a policy of "encircling" Vietnam.

Before 1977 however, calling for solidarity among the three Indochinese countries and the strengthening of the countries "special relationship", Vietnam, in a joint communique signed by Laotian and Vietnamese officials on 12 February

42. Burchett, 69.
44. Chanda, 199.
1976, beckoned for long term mutual aid and coordination. But the proposed scheme was couched in language which would coyly extend nothing but friendship and brotherliness, with Vietnam playing the role of the elder sibling, to the Kampucheans. A wary Khmer Rouge discounted the proposition as a Vietnamese plot to establish an "Indochina Federation" to dominate the smaller Khmer nation.

In July 1976, a number of Vietnamese journalists visited Kampuchea at the invitation of the Kampuchean government. Although their stay could not be considered a success, the visit indicates, at least, a semblance of civility between Hanoi and Phnom Penh.

Neither the Chinese nor the Kampucheans sent an official delegation to the Fourth Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party in December 1976, even though invitations requesting their attendance had been extended. The Kampucheans as a token gesture did send a group of seven journalists. At the Congress, the Vietnamese again called for the strengthening of cooperation and the defence of the three Indochinese states.

In February 1977, as Chanda indicates, Vietnam sent a delegation of women to Phnom Penh to promote the Vietnamese-Khmer amity. As well, from 15-17 February, Vietnamese

45. Ibid., 31.
46. Ibid., 34.
47. Ibid., 84.; Chang, 47; and Barnett, "The Chinese Invasion," in eds. Pilger and Barnett, 21.
Deputy Foreign Minister Hoang Van Loi travelled to Phnom Penh to persuade the Khmer Rouge to participate in a meeting of the Indochinese states – tantamount to what the Khmer Rouge considered to be an Indochina Federation. To coax the Khmer Rouge into the talks, Loi offered Vietnamese assistance in the repatriation of Khmers who had fled Kampuchea in the previous few months. February proved a chilling month as both offers were rejected.48

Even though it became quite obvious, following Pol Pot's October visit to Beijing, that the PRC was increasing assistance to the Khmer Rouge, the Vietnamese never gave up hope of luring Kampuchea away from China. While Pol Pot was still in Beijing, Vietnamese top negotiator Phan Hien asked China to set up a meeting between the Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese officials. The request can be interpreted in two ways. First, Vietnam may still have hoped for some form of accommodation between itself and Cambodia. Second, according to Chanda, Vietnam was ascertaining what amount of power China could wield over the Khmer Rouge. The Vietnamese were disappointed to find that the Chinese were able to organize the meeting, convincing the Khmer Rouge to meet with Hanoi officials.49

Although Vietnam made conciliatory overtures towards the Kampucheans, the Khmer Rouge relentlessly continued an internal purge of Khmer Rouge, especially in the Eastern

49. Ibid., 199.
Zone, who were suspected of sympathizing with Vietnam. On 17 April 1977, the date of the second anniversary of the Khmer Rouge takeover, Ieng Sary admitted to anti-Vietnamese purges in Cambodia, despite elements of the Cambodian Eastern Zone vowing that there could not be a political solution so long as the Vietnamese were in Kampuchea. Although unadmitted, by July 1977, the Khmer Rouge had gained Chinese support for their purges. In a confidential report, Huang Hua justified the Khmer Rouge purges because they "purified its army and fortified its fighting ability."51

Believing that Pol Pot's hostility to Vietnam could no longer be tolerated, and that the Chinese-Kampuchean alliance posed a threat to Vietnam's security, on 25 December 1978, in a dry season offensive which would place in power a regime sympathetic to Vietnam, the Vietnamese attacked Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge could not have done more to provoke Hanoi. As John Pilger put it:

Pol Pot increased his attacks on the ricelands [of Vietnam] to a level of almost daily atrocities in Vietnamese border villages; and finally the Vietnamese, who had offered the Khmer Rouge a demilitarized border with international inspection, had little choice but to 'invade' Pol

50. Even though in May 1978 the Eastern Zone leaders affirmed the need to eradicate Vietnamese elements from within their ranks, many of the leaders were themselves executed, being considered traitors. This is only one indication of the unpredictability and volatility of Khmer Rouge politics. See Chanda, 248-251.

51. Ibid., 91-101.
Pot's charnel house..., in so doing, [putting] an end to the genocide of the Khmer people.  

John Spragens Jr. finds three reasons for the Vietnamese invasion of Democratic Kampuchea. First, he suggests that Vietnam faced domestic considerations. The constant barrage of Cambodian attacks on the Vietnamese border, more frequent after the December 1977 Khmer Rouge invasion, intimidated those Vietnamese who resided in the New Economic Zones (NEZs) which were consequently crippled. Thus in order to maintain the population's support Vietnam had to act.

Second, Vietnam feared, because of deteriorating relations with China, a two-front war with both the PRC and the DK. By removing one front it would be easier for Vietnam to engage China should it attack.

Third, there could have been a humanitarian factor to the invasion. Both Vietnamese and Khmers were being slaughtered by the Khmer Rouge. The only way of stopping the executions would be by removing the Khmer Rouge from power.

A fourth factor behind the Vietnamese invasion might have been Soviet encouragement. Wishing to gain influence in Indochina, the Soviets would advocate a pro-Vietnamese regime in Cambodia. Such a regime could help counter the Soviet Union's socialist foe, China. The Chinese certainly

52. Pilger, "Only the allies are new," in eds. Pilger and Barnett, 93.

53. See Etcheson, 193-194. I have reversed the order of Spragen's latter two points believing that the humanitarian factor was much less important for Vietnam than the power politics reasoning concerning the threat posed by China.
emphasized the Soviet factor. In fact, the Soviet-Vietnamese friendship treaty of November 1978, gave the Vietnamese assurances of Soviet support which were needed if Vietnam were to launch its attack on Kampuchea.

If Cambodia were simply a proxy of China then there really only need be one factor fuelling Cambodian aggression - Chinese economic and military backing. However, as Etcheson indicates, Cambodian hostility in the mid-1970s, in addition to Chinese stewardship, was due to: first, leadership pathology, characterized by "malignant paranoid schizophrenia"; second, the Khmer Rouge xenophobic nationalism and the Khmer Rouge desire to consolidate and maintain party control independent of the Vietnamese party apparatus; and third, fear of Vietnamese intentions and power.54

To underline that Cambodia was not a mere proxy of China we must look at the divergence of views between the Khmer and Chinese concerning the Vietnamese.

The Sino-Vietnamese Relationship

Anthony Barnett aptly indicates the predicament both Vietnam and China were in, and the role Kampuchea and Vietnam were to play, when he states:

The conflict between Vietnam and Cambodia was never a 'proxy war' between the USSR and China as Brzezinski has claimed. On the contrary, the determining conflict was between Vietnam and China, with all other conflicts organized around

54. Ibid., 187.
that focal point. Neither Peking nor Hanoi however wanted open antagonism: both feared it would have incalculable consequences (as indeed they are now beginning to discover). It was against their better judgement that developments in Cambodia, which were of secondary importance to each of them, detonated a major confrontation between the two countries.55

In this next section we will briefly look at the Sino-Vietnamese relationship. Both China and Vietnam mutually attempted to maintain cordial relations even in the face of the Kampuchean imbroglio. Unfortunately, stemming from Khmer Rouge provocations, the conflict's scope broadened, forcing China and Vietnam to harden their positions.

As had Kampuchea, China disputed its border and the sovereignty of a number of islands with Vietnam. In the continuing saga over the Paracel and Spratley islands, in January 1974, China took over the Paracels. In turn, on 11 April 1976, Vietnam proclaimed that it had "liberated" six islands of the Spratley archipelago from the Chinese. On the Sino-Vietnamese border itself, the number of border incidents increased from an estimated 100 in 1974, to approximately 1100 in 1978.56

China and Vietnam, respectively, believed that the other opponent was intent on expansion of its territory. The Vietnamese asserted that the Chinese wished to gain favour in, if not access to, what it called its Nanyang. China


voiced its concern over the perceived Vietnamese desire to form an Indochina Federation. Nevertheless, although fear and antagonism existed between the two neighbours, neither desired an intensified Kampuchean conflict which would prejudice its respective interests or allow, in the case of China's trepidation, Soviet involvement, or of concern to Vietnam, Chinese regional preponderance.

On 25 September 1975, Vietnamese Communist Party Secretary Le Duan and top Vietnamese planner Le Thanh, travelled to Beijing on an aid seeking trip. While the visit was made at a time when Vietnamese leaders still wished to maintain their wartime cooperation with the Khmer Rouge, the mission was only partially successful with Hanoi receiving a meager interest-free loan to finance Vietnamese imports of oil and consumer goods.57 The assistance could hardly be considered generous from a fellow socialist brother. Nevertheless, although Sino-Vietnamese relations were to increasingly deteriorate, there was no desire to induce a final schism between the two nations.

1976 proved to be a year of scarce contact between Vietnam and China. While the Soviet Union extended its hand to Vietnam, a wary Hanoi purposely established political distance between itself and Moscow so as not to antagonize China and other Southeast Asian nations.58 Internal political turmoil, as various factions vied for power in


China with the passing of Mao Zedong and Zhao Ziyang, prevented China from making any major initiatives in 1976.

In talks held by Chinese President Li Xian and Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong on 10 January 1977, China listed seven major areas of dispute between itself and Vietnam. They were:

1) Vietnamese slanderous comments against China;
2) land boundary differences;
3) maintenance of their common railroad;
4) claims for the Spratley and Paracel islands;
5) Beibu Gulf Sea claims;
6) poor treatment of overseas Chinese (Hoa) by the Vietnamese;
7) economic aid to Vietnam.59

Conspicuously absent was any reference to Sino-Vietnamese relations with the Khmer Rouge.

The Chinese through to 1977, did not forthrightly commit themselves to assisting the Khmer Rouge. Rather, they wooed the Vietnamese, alerting them of the Soviet presence, hoping that Vietnam would side with China. However by July 1977, Huang Hua in Beijing's strongest statement to Vietnam, warned that China supports,

...the stand of Kampuchea and her people against Soviet revisionist social imperialism and will not watch indifferently any intervention in Kampuchean sovereignty or coveting of Kampuchean territory by social imperialism...[and would] support Kampuchea and her people in their struggle and in their actions to protect Kampuchea's territorial

integrity and national sovereignty by giving all possible assistance.60

No doubt the latter statement was made for Soviet benefit as much as for the Vietnamese.

With increasing Kampuchean and Vietnamese offensives and counter-offensives in 1977, Le Duan and a Vietnamese delegation still not totally certain as to China's position, travelled to Beijing on 20 November 1977, in the hope of avoiding a final split.61 However, following the meeting China, with seeming regret, confessed that the split between itself and Vietnam could no longer be hidden.

The December 1977 Vietnamese incursion into Kampuchea sparked only minor reaction by China. Xinhua News Agency reported the Khmer Rouge allegations as well as the Vietnamese counter-charges. In January 1978, China as usual, signed its annual agreement on the supply of goods and payments with Vietnam. As Chanda asserts, Beijing could have delayed the signing of the agreement if the Chinese wished to show their displeasure of Vietnamese actions.61 Nevertheless in a statement made to visiting French Prime Minister Raymond Barre, the Chinese affirmed their belief that Cambodia had "fallen victim to aggression by Vietnam."62

60. Chang, 50; and Lawson, 313.
61. Chanda, 209.
Chanda asserts that the Khmer Rouge December 1977 decision to suspend ties with the Vietnamese, following the latter's successful military campaign, had been planned to pressure China into greater action. The Khmer Rouge believed that China needed to be prodded into speeding up the granting of China's aid promises. As well, Deng who had once been branded a counter-revolutionary, had to be brought on-side. He had to be persuaded that Chinese involvement was necessary because the conflict could not be resolved through negotiation.

It would appear however, that Cambodian pressure was not enough in and of itself. The small power could not push the greater into action. It would prove to be Vietnamese policies and the belief that the Soviet Union was behind them, that spurred China into siding, more than ever, with the DK.

Whereas prior to 1977 one can say that Vietnam did much to avoid conflict with China, the same cannot be said about Vietnamese actions in 1978. Soviet-Vietnamese relations were part of the catalyst which helped ignite Sino-Vietnamese relations into a burning problem for both the PRC and Vietnam. In February and March, there were high level contacts between military leaders of the Soviet Union and Vietnam. In June, Vietnam unilaterally withdrew from Sino-Vietnamese Vice-Foreign Ministerial talks on territorial disputes.

63. Chanda, 209.
Although the Chinese statement at the Sino-Vietnamese meeting of January 1977 made no reference to Kampuchea, on 17 June 1977, the Vietnamese lashed out at the Chinese stating that Beijing had:

...ceaselessly given all-round support to the Kampuchean authorities in launching their border war of aggression against the Vietnamese people...and in carrying out an anti-Vietnamese policy aimed at...sabotaging the tradition of solidarity and friendship between Vietnam and Kampuchea.64

Hanoi accused Pol Pot and his followers of colluding with China in destroying the cooperative relationship between the three Indochinese parties. China rebuked Hanoi and linked the Vietnam-Kampuchean border conflict to: the Sino-Vietnamese territorial dispute, the malign treatment of ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, and other anti-Chinese provocations.65

Vietnam's ties with the Soviet Union were strengthened when the Vietnamese joined the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) on 30 June 1977. China was quick to claim that Vietnam had become a puppet of the Soviet Union. On 2 July the Beijing Review charged:

The Soviet superpower with its own hegemonist aims provides cover and support for the Vietnamese authorities' regional hegemonism, while the Vietnamese authorities serve as a junior partner for the Soviet Union.66

64. Chang, 63.
65. Ibid., 64.
66. Ibid., 65.
The Vietnamese, while not an appendage of the Soviet Union, certainly did come to rely on Soviet aid. With an increasing number of skirmishes on the Sino-Vietnamese border, by the end of August the Soviets were massively airlifting military hardware to Hanoi, providing offensive missiles to be used against China. By mid-September some 4000 Soviet personnel were in Vietnam and in mid-October Hanoi had been supplied with the most advanced MIG-23 jet fighters.67

It is true, as Chang Pao-min pronounces, that if Vietnam had not been supported by the Soviet Union, Hanoi would have been more cautious in its dealings with China and perhaps Kampuchea.68 Vietnam however, as did Kampuchea, had a mind of its own and chose the route to be followed by calculation and assessment of its options. With hostility between China and Vietnam, the latter was obliged to ally itself with the Soviet Union. While there is no doubt the Soviets coaxed the Vietnamese, Vietnam was most certainly not railroaded into the Vietnamese-Soviet friendship.

On 3 November 1978, the Vietnamese-Soviet Treaty of Friendship was signed; the relationship was solidified. With the promotion in December of two pro-Soviet military men, Vietnamese Defence Minister Vo Nguyen Giap and Army Chief of Staff Von Tien Dung to Prime Minister and Minister

67. Ibid., 68-69; and Chanda, 258.
68. Chang, 66.
of Defence respectively, Soviet influence in Vietnamese politics was to be felt for quite some time.69

China perceived the Soviet Union as inducing Vietnam's internal policies. Ill-treatment by Hanoi of the Hoa, Vietnamese of Chinese origin, was seen as a part of the larger Soviet plot of encirclement. While harassment of the Hoa was not uncommon the Vietnamese move against Cholon, the business center of Ho Chih Min City, on 24 March 1977, was of an unprecedented scale. Following pro-Mao demonstrations on 20 March, the Vietnamese arrested many of the Vietnamese Chinese in Cholon and seized their property.70 A decree ordering 30,000 Hoa private businessmen to cease operations led to the fleeing of some 70,000 Chinese from Vietnam.71

China reacted to the Vietnamese internal actions by decreasing contact between Hanoi and Beijing to a minimum. On 12 May and 30 May 1977, China cancelled a number of aid projects to Vietnam. On 16 June, all three Vietnamese consulates in China were closed. On 3 July, any additional aid programmes were cancelled and all Chinese technicians were withdrawn. Total aid withdrawal amounted to some US


70. For an overview of China's overseas Chinese policy and the implications of it for its relations with Vietnam, see Chanda, ch. 8, "The road to war," 231-247.

$900 million. Finally, on 11 July, the Sino-Vietnamese border was closed.72

Not only were diplomatic sanctions imposed but as well, at a July Politburo weekly meeting, the Chinese decided that Vietnam should be dealt with forcefully, exerting physical pain on them, with Vietnam to be "taught a lesson."73

Perhaps justifiably reacting strongly to Vietnam's anti-Chinese actions in early 1978, the Chinese wrongly rejected earlier motions by Vietnam for a closer relationship. Cutting off all aid to the Vietnamese, the Chinese inevitably drove the Vietnamese to the Soviets. With a closer Sino-American arrangement in 1978, encouraged for example by the Carter administration's agreement to export military-related technology to China, Beijing dashed any hopes of reconciling its differences with the Soviet Union.74 The Soviet Union became the main instigator of conflict in China's eyes and consequentially Vietnam suffered.

Although China was no longer treating Vietnam with kid gloves this did not preclude that the Khmer Rouge were to receive unequivocal support. On the contrary, because China now took a greater interest in the Vietnamese-Kampuchean

72. Chang, 61; and Nair, 109.
73. Chanda, 261.
debacle, the Chinese felt freer to speak their mind and even criticize the Khmer Rouge.

In 1978, China had agreed to send the Khmer Rouge more supplies; however the Chinese would not send advisers as Beijing had promoted the view that each country must conduct and wage its own battles. During a Beijing visit by Son Sen at the end of July 1978, Deng heavily criticized the Khmer Rouge, reinforcing the view that the Khmer Rouge must become self-reliant, not constantly looking to China for help, and form a united front of those who oppose Vietnam. China urged the Pol Potists to work with Sihanouk, to reinstate him as Head of Government and to improve Kampuchea's international reputation. In August, China warned the Khmer Rouge that should Phnom Penh become engaged in a full-scale military operation against Hanoi, the PRC would be unable to help militarily.

Regardless of declaratory policy when it came to actual policy China did in fact provide great assistance to the Khmer Rouge in the latter part of 1978. As well as the twice weekly flights from China across Laos, Beijing provided an additional five Boeing 707s which flew between Canton and Phnom Penh. By the end of 1978 an estimated

75. Chanda, 260.
76. Ibid., 261. In 1976, returning from a visit to Kampuchea, PRC Minister of Economic Relations with Foreign Countries Fang Yi told the Romanian ambassador in Beijing that the Khmer Rouge "have gone too far in promoting self-reliance," probably meaning they were too inward-looking. See Chanda, 79.
77. Chang, 73.
5,000 Chinese personnel were in Kampuchea. Although Deng, in a November meeting with Thailand's Prime Minister, stressed his dislike of the Khmer Rouge, he stated that China could not allow such a strategically important area fall to Vietnam.

It appears that following China's advice in the fall of 1978, the Khmer Rouge began "opening" to the world. The Khmer Rouge invited many international delegations and officials to visit Kampuchea. Ieng Sary on a visit throughout Southeast Asia called for closer ties with Thailand and Malaysia, desiring the formation of a united front to combat Vietnamese hegemony. Pol Pot reportedly stated in a *Xinhua News Agency* interview on 11 December 1978, that rather than attempt to overthrow Vietnam in one-blow, recognizing their constraints the Khmer Rouge were prepared, if necessary, to engage in protracted war, as the Chinese model promoted.

Nair claims that Kampuchea was a pawn in the politics between Hanoi and Beijing. Singapore's Foreign Minister S. Rajaratnam went one step further and claimed that Vietnam and Kampuchea were proxies of their client states, the

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78. Chanda, 262.
79. Chanda, 325.
80. Ibid., 331.
81. Ibid., 344.
82. Nair, 105.
Soviet Union and China respectively. Both Nair and Rajaratnam are incorrect in their assertions. If we look at our continuum Kampuchea would more accurately have played the buffer state for the 1975-78 period. The DK clearly stated and exercised its independence often to the PRC's chagrin. Maintaining a belligerent posture was something the Kampucheans deemed necessary whereas the Chinese saw it as a potentially explosive stance. Of course, it must be remembered that Kampuchea could play the buffer insofar as the regional balance was not disrupted. Thus in 1978 when Vietnam decided to side with the Soviet Union, Kampuchea was required to slide into the Chinese camp bringing the regional balance back into a state of equilibrium.

It is at this latter stage that one can begin speaking of a patron-client relationship developing. With no ally available and the augmenting bargaining power of China, the DK became increasingly dependent on China. However, Beijing also relied on the Khmer Rouge to assist China promote its own regional strategy.

Thailand

Evaluating relations between China, Thailand, and Kampuchea, will help illuminate the transition of the DK moving from their stance as a buffer, to falling into the precarious, yet reassuring position of becoming a client for a much greater patron.

83. Nair, 97. Rajaratnam feared that if the Vietnamese-Kampuchean conflict was a proxy war such a conflict could be initiated anywhere else in Southeast Asia
In the hope of severing links between Beijing and the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), an internal threat to Thailand which the Chinese assisted, Bangkok established diplomatic relations with the PRC on 1 July 1975.

The Khmer Rouge also supported the CPT. They did so to uphold a fellow communist movement with the desire to prevent Vietnamese influence over it. And, China encouraged the Khmer Rouge to support the CPT, curbing Vietnamese hegemony and pressuring Bangkok to join Beijing in combatting Vietnamese expansionism.

Friction in Khmer Rouge-Thai relations is not only accredited to the Khmer Rouge relationship with the CPT, but to other factors as well. Due to charges of smuggling activity, Thailand and Kampuchea engaged in a number of border clashes, with the DK asserting land claims over areas where smuggling occurred. Although negotiations between Khmer and Thai leaders over the antagonisms were held, they came to a halt with the October 1976 military coup followed by the appointment of Thanin as Thailand's Premier. With Thanin in power the Khmer Rouge believed that the Thai might aid anti-communist rebels opposing DK forces.

Beijing's influence was paramount in ameliorating relations between Kampuchea and Thailand. However, the success of Beijing's influence depended upon the policies and aims of the Thai leadership at any given time.

China was able to persuade Thanin to consider a Thai-Kampuchean rapprochement. Nevertheless, Thanin also sought
to entertain friendly relations with Vietnam, endeavouring to de-escalate border clashes with Vietnam, end a blockade of trade with Laos, and open embassies in Phnom Penh and Hanoi.84

On 20 October 1977, General Kriangsak Chomanan took over control of Thailand following a successful coup against Thanin. Kriangsak proved to be less willing to accept the Chinese position. He found it difficult to believe that Vietnam was as intent on expansion as Beijing had painted it to be.85 On 2 December 1977, an agreement was signed to normalize relations between Hanoi and Bangkok.

On a 3 January visit by Thai officials to Phnom Penh, DK Deputy Premier and Foreign Secretary Ieng Sary warned that Kampuchean and Thai security were inextricably linked. If Kampuchea did "not enjoy peace and security...other countries in Southeast Asia [would] also not enjoy peace and security."86 Ieng Sary's statement was absolutely correct; after the opening of conflict between Vietnam and Kampuchea, Thailand was to find Vietnam violating Thai air-space and shelling refugee camps within the Thai border.87

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84. Nair, 83-84.
85. Ibid., 88-89.
87. Nair, 95.
Thailand increasingly perceived the Vietnamese conflict with Kampuchea as, first, part of a Soviet-Vietnamese expansionist plan. And second, as fuelled at least in part by what were considered to be hostile Vietnamese-Khmer historical relations. By late 1978, stemming from Soviet overtures to Vietnam, Thailand determined that the Soviet Union and Vietnam were a greater threat to its security than Thailand's longtime foe, China, and the PRC's friend, Kampuchea.

Thailand both willingly and because of Chinese pressure began to permit PRC arms shipments to the Khmer Rouge through Thai ports of entry. Thailand appreciated that with Vietnam siding with the Soviet Union, the regional balance had to be stabilized meaning a closer Sino-Thai friendship; hence a less antagonistic Thai-Khmer Rouge association.

With the formation on 2 December 1978, of the Vietnamese backed Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation (KNUPNS), and the subsequent Vietnamese attack on Kampuchea of 25 December 1978, the political lines of allegiance had been drawn. While in the 1975-77 period the Khmer Rouge were relatively independent and aggressive, by 1978 political circumstance and Chinese influence encouraged a less erratic posture by them. Recognizing the need for legitimacy, the DK government sought closer ties with the outside world.

88. Ibid., 113.
The Thai-Khmer Rouge amity not only indicates the importance and relevance of the balance of power concept in modern history, but also the power that a larger state such as China can wield over an increasingly weak and isolated state such as Kampuchea for its own end. The new Sino-Thai-Kampuchean amity would lead the Khmer Rouge into a dependency relationship whereby they would rely on both a contiguous and non-contiguous power.
CHAPTER 3: The Intricacies of Puppetry

Following the successful invasion by the Vietnamese of Democratic Kampuchea, and the establishment of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, the Chinese government would be confronted with supporting the Khmer Rouge as a military opposition force rather than as a governing body.

In this chapter we will look at the evolving relationship between the PRC and the Khmer Rouge in the 1979 to 1982 period. We will see how China, along with a majority of the international community, stood behind the ruthless Khmer Rouge in the formation of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK), as opposed to recognizing the Vietnamese installed PRK regime. China increasingly became the key to the Khmer Rouge's survival, able to influence this strongly nationalistic group more than ever, and by doing so implicate itself in an alignment of forces that would, at a later time, cast suspicion and doubt on the PRC. We shall observe how the Khmer Rouge and the Kampuchean conflict increasingly became only a part of regional power rivalry in the game of power politics.

On 7 January 1979, the Vietnamese installed an eight member Revolutionary Council in Kampuchea under the leadership of Heng Samrin as President and Pen Sovan as Premier. China

1. The CGDK will be deemed a "government in exile" rather than the actual government. Although the PRK has yet to be recognized by the United Nations as the legitimate governing power in Kampuchea, we will assume that it is, with the help of the Vietnamese, the principal policy maker and law enforcer there.
had been humiliated by a tributary power. While diplomats hurriedly fled from Cambodia across the Thai border, the Khmer Rouge were chided by their Chinese helpers.

At a 13 January 1979 meeting, Deng scolded Ieng Sary and the Khmer Rouge for "being too excessive". As soon as the Chinese perceived the effect of a Vietnamese *fait accompli* in Kampuchea they began urging the creation of a united front with Sihanouk. Beijing would help the Khmer Rouge if they would agree to a coalition whereby Sihanouk would be Head of State, with Pol Pot as Minister of National Defence and Supreme Commander. Deng warned Sary not to "put the Communist party in the foreground; rather [to] emphasize patriotism, nationalism and democracy." Clearly Deng hoped that there would be a resurgence of ancient Khmer antagonism against the Vietnamese. The making of Chinese foreign policy would concentrate on power politics and the Chinese national interest as opposed to any ideological conviction.

An alignment of forces was to come about that would pit China and her followers against Vietnam and her allies. In Utapao on 14 January 1979, senior Chinese policy makers met with Thai Premier Kriangsak. The beginning of a *de facto* alliance which would last for the next decade was at hand. Thailand tacitly agreed, at China's request, to participate within a strategic triangle which would link Thailand with the PRC and Khmer Rouge forces. Cambodian personnel were provided by the Thai government with transport and transit

facilities, and Thai territory was used to supply the Khmer Rouge. In addition, Khmer Rouge leaders were allowed to use Thailand as a stepping stone for foreign excursions.3

Increasingly, it became evident that the Chinese would not be content simply trying to tame the Khmer Rouge by bringing them into a united front, or by helping them through the Thai connection. Here was a golden opportunity to teach their long-time subject, Vietnam, a lesson. In Beijing on 8 January 1979 a high ranking official of the People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, emphatically stated:

The Vietnamese are crazy. They believe they have defeated the French and Americans and now the Kampucheans, and now they think they can defeat China. They must be taught a lesson. There will be a war.4

Deng, while speaking to the U.S. Senate in Washington on 29 January 1979, submitted that "We cannot allow Vietnam to run wild everywhere.... We may be forced to do what we do not like to do.... Vietnam must be taught some necessary lessons."5 Deng continued along the same lines when he asserted during a 7 February state visit to Tokyo: "Vietnam must be punished severely, if we remain inactive the military action (in Kampuchea) might spread to ASEAN."6

Linking of the Chinese campaign to ASEAN security was a way

3. Ibid., 348-49.
4. Chang, 86.
5. Ibid.
6. Pilch, 35.
of legitimizing China's actions and placing its policies next to ASEAN's in the formulation of a united front against Vietnam and its backer, the Soviet Union.

The Chinese followed up on their warnings. By the end of January some seventeen regular divisions, or approximately 225,000 men had been massed against the Sino-Vietnamese frontier. As well, over seven hundred fighter aircraft and bombers had been brought closer to the border.7

With many of the Vietnamese in Phnom Penh on a state visit, the 16 day lesson began 17 February, with the Chinese attacking the Vietnamese all along their mutual frontier. The same day of the attack the new Cambodian leadership signed a 25 year "Treaty of Peace and Friendship with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam." While teaching Vietnam a lesson, Deng condemned the meddling of Vietnam in the affairs of the Indochinese states. On 26 February, he stated that "China could not tolerate the Cuba of the Orient [i.e. Vietnam] to go swashbuckling in Laos, Kampuchea or even on the Chinese border."8

Was China acting out of concern for the ASEAN and Indochinese states when attacking Vietnam? Certainly it was important for China to gain influence in Southeast Asia for strategic, political and economic reasons. Therefore, if China's interests coincided with those of ASEAN and the Southeast Asian states, it would be in China's best interest

to promote the policies of those countries. However, there was much more to the border conflict. The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia provided the Chinese with the opportunity to punish one of China's many children in the protection of another. Perhaps reminiscent of a period where China made its claim as the Middle Kingdom, it had to maintain, according to traditional values, control over the happenings and developments around its periphery. Had Beijing not reacted to the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, the PRC would have lost its credibility as a great power in the eyes of the world.

Domestically, as Copper indicates, the Chinese believed that if they had not reacted to Vietnamese border encroachments and the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, the Chinese leadership may have been seen as weak by its own people, inviting internal disorder.9 Moreover, harassment by the Vietnamese forced the Chinese to allocate resources to the Sino-Vietnamese border thereby impeding the implementation of China's 1978 "Four Modernizations" programme.10

Of course one cannot ignore China's obsession with the idea of encirclement. Vietnamese aggression was seen as a piece in a larger puzzle wherein the Soviet Union was attempting to encircle China, curbing any further development of a


China which could challenge Soviet regional and global influence.11

Last but not least and central to the thesis of this work, was the Chinese need to defend a smaller power, namely Cambodia, from a regional baron, Vietnam. Although as already mentioned, having scolded the Khmer Rouge for past transgressions, Cambodian security was still fundamental to China's interests in Southeast Asia. As Sheldon Simon appropriately states:

... the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs blurs in great power policies toward the third because the former views the latter's domestic political systems as important components of great power security...12

The attack on Cambodia by the Vietnamese could not, therefore, be ignored. Deng himself admitted that part of the purpose for the Chinese attack on Vietnam was to pull

11. However as Devendra Kareshik suggests, Soviet involvement in the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese border conflict was minimal. A 15-ship contingent of the Soviet Pacific Fleet had been sent to the Vietnamese coast to intercept Chinese operational plans and communicate them to the Vietnamese - hardly staunch support of the Vietnamese effort. See Devendra Kareshik, "Soviet Policy Towards Southeast Asia: An Overview." in ed., Parimal Kumar Das, 169-181. For further discussion of Soviet aid see pp88-89 of this thesis.

With regard to American involvement, contrary to John F. Copper's claim that the US denied even moral support for the Chinese invasion of Vietnam, what one saw as Chanda indicates was tacit approval of Chinese actions by the US and the beginning of Sino-US defence coordination. See Copper, 49-50; and Chanda, 358-60, respectively.

Vietnamese troops away from Cambodia. In a 6 March official PRC document, "The Invasion" of Cambodia by Vietnam, Beijing admitted a connection between the Chinese attack on Vietnam and the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea.

China's escapade, the attack on Vietnam, costing US $2-3 billion, made the point in the name of Cambodia and other Southeast Asian states that intervention was not an acceptable way of carrying out foreign policy, and it indicated to the Vietnamese that they would not have a free hand in the rule of Indochina. Moreover, as Sola intimates, China's action in the end would save the Democratic Kampuchean resistance allowing it to preserve its legitimacy and exist on its own national territory. This arguably could have been a faux pas on the part of the Chinese. Recognition of the Vietnamese installed regime although sanctioning the right to intervention, may have

13. Chanda, 358. However Chanda indicates that the Vietnamese did not dispatch their regular Vietnamese divisions on the Cambodian border to the Sino-Vietnamese frontier but rather sent militia and regional forces. See Ibid., 361.


15. The cost of the war was taken from Gary Klintworth, "Vietnam's Withdrawal from Cambodia." (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Working Paper 117, January 1987), 11.

16. Sola, 122-123.

17. See concluding chapter.
saved the Khmer from, or at least reduced the duration of, war on Kampuchean territory.\textsuperscript{18}

Were the benefits of China's hostilities enough to counterbalance the costs of her engagement? The Vietnamese, as Chang Pao-min asserts, undoubtedly became more determined to remain in Kampuchea. If they had withdrawn it would appear as though they were yielding to Chinese pressure.\textsuperscript{19}

By stating that the attack on Vietnam was initiated to pull the Vietnamese back from Cambodia, the Chinese provided Vietnam with the ultimate argument to remain in Kampuchea. The Chinese action could be seen as legitimizing the claim that the Khmer Rouge were a Chinese toy used for China's own hegemonial interests. Thus the Vietnamese felt that they had as much a right to stay in Cambodia as did the Chinese.

Moreover, China's action helped bring another power into the fore - the Soviet Union. Following the Sino-Vietnamese conflict the Soviets sent long-range maritime patrol aircraft on reconnaissance flights over the South China Sea. As well, the Soviets established bases at Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay, and Soviet aircraft carried stores into Vietnam and Kampuchea.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{18} Although it could be argued that the Chinese attack on Vietnam caused damage and hardship to a failing Vietnamese economy, the fact that Vietnam remained in Cambodia for another decade, would indicate the weakness of such an assertion.


\textsuperscript{20} Takeshita, 30. The establishment of Soviet military bases in Vietnam at Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay were not necessarily direct results of Chinese actions but could have
forces in Kampuchea with late model Soviet T-54 and T-55 tanks, 130mm canons and surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) 2s and 3s.21

Although Deng tried to tie the Chinese attack on Vietnam, indicating the Soviet connection, to the preservation of ASEAN security, at least in the short term, ASEAN was not supportive of Chinese policies. While the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia brought such states as Malaysia and Indonesia together with others such as Thailand, China's invasion of Vietnam caused some division among ASEAN member states. Fortunately a United Nations Security Council resolution tabled by ASEAN in March 1979, condemning both Vietnam's involvement in Kampuchea and China's harassment of Vietnam, was vetoed by the Soviet Union. Had the resolution not been vetoed one would have probably seen Thailand (and Singapore) voting alongside China, thereby dividing ASEAN once again.22 ASEAN had become a major player in the Kampuchean conflict, which China and Vietnam would try to woo.

Maintenance of the Khmer Rouge, the entrenchment of Vietnam in the Cambodian war, and giving the Soviet Union more cause been influenced by the Sino-Soviet rift in general, as well as other factors.


22. Nair, 120.
to play a greater role in the Indochina conflict are certainly not positive results emanating out of the Sino-Vietnamese conflict. In addition, it was not at all certain that ASEAN would side with China. Hence it could be surmised that all that the Chinese attack had accomplished was a flexing of Beijing's muscles at the expense of Chinese internal reforms. Once China had committed itself to the Kampuchean cause there would be no turning back without losing face - something China would not do.

Central to Beijing's support of the Khmer Rouge were continued calls for the formation of a united front comprising the Khmer Rouge and other anti-Vietnamese groups. Such a coalition of forces was in the Chinese leaders' minds the "magic weapon for victory" in the campaign against external aggression.23

Not only would Chinese leaders have to encourage the formation of such a coalition by the various parties, but it would also be necessary to persuade the international community that such a grouping was the legitimate representative of the Kampuchean people. Beijing couched its argument, according to Chang, in a legalistic framework. Starting from the March 1979 United Nations Security Council Meeting onwards, the Chinese continuously invoked Vietnamese action in Kampuchea as open aggression. Heng Samrin and his regime as parties to this aggression, should not, said the Chinese, represent the Kampuchean people. Because of the

Khmer Rouge atrocities, as Chang asserts, "only by adhering to the legalistic principles could China expect to muster credible international sympathy for the ousted Khmer government and at the same time justify her own support for it." Recognition of Democratic Kampuchea was a matter of principle, not any approbation of its policies.

Because China was pursuing a legalistic approach concerning Vietnam's intervention in Kampuchea, it was important that Beijing propose its own initiatives in establishing peace between itself and Hanoi, so that China would appear sincere in its foreign policy endeavours. Peace talks between the two warring parties began in April, with China emphasizing Vietnamese regional aspirations and, searching for an overall solution to all the issues of the conflict. Vietnam, on the otherhand, viewed the Sino-Vietnamese border problem as the root cause of tension. Because of these perceptual differences the talks were destined to failure.

It is probably true that China was not all that interested in easing tensions between itself and Vietnam. For as long as Hanoi was forced to expend its resources in both Kampuchea and on the Sino-Vietnamese frontier, there was the possibility of Vietnam having to rethink its strategy and succumb to the pressure of its greater neighbour, China.

24. Ibid., 113-114 and 116 respectively.

The complexity of the Kampuchean situation did not only preclude the involvement of the Kampucheans, the Vietnamese and the Chinese. China's support of the Khmer Rouge meant the inclusion of Thailand and ASEAN into any Chinese foreign policy decision making process, and a greater role played by the Soviet Union in attempting to influence Southeast Asian politics.

Thailand

With the loss of Kampuchea to the Vietnamese, the traditional buffer zone which protected Thailand from Vietnam no longer existed. For this reason, Thai Premier Kriangsak Chomanan visited Moscow 21-27 March 1979, with the hope of gaining a Soviet guarantee that Vietnam would leave Thailand alone.26 As Tim Huxley suggests, Kriangsak although opposed to Vietnam's presence in Kampuchea nevertheless privately shared with the Vietnamese the long-term strategic objective of preventing China from expanding southwards.27 The fact however, that Moscow supported Vietnam's position in Kampuchea and the new status quo, and that China had already gained assurances from Thailand


27. Kriangsak preferred a compromise solution whereby Vietnam would still have an influence in Kampuchea helping to keep the PRC at bay. In effect Thailand wanted a return to the previous balance of power. See Huxley, 48-49.
allowing the use of Thai territory to assist the Khmer Rouge, quashed any hope of Soviet sympathy at this point.28

Besides economic incentives China played a game of give and take with the Thai in another area.29 In mid-May 1979, the China-based *Voice of the People of Thailand* (VOPT) radio station, a Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) medium, condemned the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea and the Soviet backing of Vietnam.30 The CPT, a threat to the stability of the Kriangsak regime, could be used by China as a bargaining chip to gain concessions from Thailand. Although material aid to the CPT was at a minimum by 1979, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) still maintained contact with its Thai counterpart. Effectively, if the Thai were unwilling to help China and the Khmer Rouge, the Khmer Rouge might be convinced to link up with the CPT, and/or China would reinstate its direct support of the CPT, making the latter a force to contend with.31


29. China provided Thailand with a number of economic incentives to gain cooperation with it. For example, shortly following the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia China signed a five year crude oil contract with Thailand. See Simon, *The ASEAN States and Regional Security.* (Stanford: Hoover Institute Press, 1982), 66 and 118. Chanda states that in return for allowing arms shipments to pass through Thai territory, the Thai were allowed to keep a portion of the arms. See Chanda, 381.


While the Vietnamese 1979 White Paper declared Vietnam's peaceful intentions towards Thailand, the Vietnamese also warned the Thai not to harbour the Khmer Rouge on Thai territory nor to supply arms to the Khmer Rouge. As well, if there was any collusion with the Chinese against Vietnam, the responsibility would lie with Thailand. Because the Thai did not heed the Vietnamese warning, by late April, shortly after the commencement of Sino-Vietnamese peace talks, Vietnam had already driven some 60,000 Khmer forces into Western Kampuchea and began to cross the Thai border in pursuit of others.33

The Chinese stood behind the Thai with Deng proclaiming, "Any threat to Thailand is a threat to China." In October, speaking to Thai Air Chief Marshall Harin Hongskula, Deng in effect pledged Chinese support to all of Southeast Asia in the event of Vietnamese aggression. He said, "China will stand on the side of the ASEAN countries if Vietnam attacks them. It will stand on the side of differentiation between party-to-party relations and state-to-state relations. On a visit to Malaysia in December 1978, Deng proclaimed that "party-to-party relations should be kept separate from state-to-state relations." Thus China's government could still maintain official diplomatic relations with the Thai government while the CCP and CPT could continue their friendship as well. Thailand therefore sought assurances that the CPT would not be supported by the Khmer Rouge or the CCP. See Donald Hugh McMillan, China in Asian International Relations. (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, The Australian National University, Working Paper, No. 67., 1983), 123.

32. Nair, 123.
Thailand if Vietnam attacks it."35 Not only was China providing support, at least on the moral plane if not the physical, to the Southeast Asian states but the PRC was also saying that support of Democratic Kampuchea need not entail a risk of provoking Vietnam because of confirmation of Chinese support.

Thai cooperation with the Chinese did increase. In 1979, there were an estimated 190,000 Kampucheans who had sought shelter on Thai territory.36 In December, Kriangsak moved the border refugee camps further into Thai territory, forming four regional holding centres with a capacity of 40,000, supported by a national holding centre capable of providing for some 200,000 refugees. The camps endorsed by the Chinese were perceived by the Vietnamese as existing to supply the Khmer Rouge with rear support, medical supplies and sanctuary.37 Pol Pot himself admitted that "Thailand and our guerrilla units have trade contacts with each other."38 Thai officials however insisted that they were not supporting Pol Pot to empower the Khmer Rouge, but rather were seeking international support for the neutralization of Kampuchea.39 Yet as Simon suggests, the Thai had previously admitted that an independent Cambodia, even under the Khmer Rouge, was not any real danger to

35. Ibid., 118.
36. Nair, 121.
37. Ibid., 137.
38. Simon, The ASEAN States and Regional Security, 77.
39. Ibid., 96.
Thailand, but a Cambodia which would be an integral part of a Vietnamese bloc, would be.40

From late 1979 onwards, the number of Chinese delegations to Thailand increased. A high powered group led by Deng Yingchao, the widow of Premier Zhou Enlai, visited Phnom Penh in February 1980.41 The Vietnamese were suspicious of the Chinese visits and told the Malaysians that "they had proof of meetings held in Bangkok among Pol Pot, Chinese and Thai officials, of Pol Pot living in Thai territory and in receipt of Chinese arms supplied through the Thai government."42

In March any apprehension on the part of the Thai towards closer cooperation with the Chinese on the Cambodian question dissipated. General Prem Tinsulanond replaced Kriangsak as leader of the Thai government. As Kriangsak left office also went, according to Huxley, any desire for a broad negotiated settlement: "opposition to Vietnam's role in Cambodia became an end in itself."43 Collaboration with the Khmer Rouge was firmly established and Thailand now openly exposed itself to the perils of the Sino-Vietnamese conflict.

On 10 June 1980, the Thai government announced that any of the Khmer refugees residing in Thailand could return to

40. Ibid., 67.
41. Nair, 143.
42. Ibid., 96.
43. Huxley, ASEAN and Indochina, 50.
Kampuchea. A large-scale voluntary repatriation of the refugees began amidst cries from Vietnam and Phnom Penh that the repatriation was a recruitment drive for the Khmer Rouge. On 22 June, Khieu Samphan announced that a number of those repatriated from Thailand had reached the Khmer Rouge camps. The Vietnamese increased the number of military exercises in the frontier region and, on the same day as Khieu Samphan's statement, the Vietnamese People's Army (VPA) forces crossed the border at Non Mark Moon, fighting on Thai territory for three days, overrunning two large encampments, seizing two Thai border towns, shelling others, and causing 60-75,000 refugees to flee their camps.

During his July 1980 Beijing visit, Thai Foreign Minister Sitthi Sawetsila harshly criticized Vietnam. At the same time, Beijing reaffirmed its support of Thailand and suggested that should Thai sovereignty and neutrality be disrespected, Vietnam might require a second lesson.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was another important broker in the Kampuchean conflict. Both China and Vietnam heeded the demands of ASEAN.

44. Nair, 150.

45. Huxley, ASEAN and Indochina, 51; Nair, 148-150; Simon, The ASEAN States and Regional Security, 69 and 109; and Buszynski, 68.

46. Nair, 148.
although opposed to both the Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea and the subsequent Chinese lesson, would find it difficult to maintain an equidistant stance. If ASEAN recognized the PRK regime as legitimate ruler of the Khmer people, this could open the way for further Vietnamese incursions into its member countries. Conversely, if ASEAN sided whole-heartedly with the Chinese, Vietnam might take it upon itself to teach its own lessons to its Southeast Asian neighbours.

As Weatherbee suggests, ASEAN's principal objective was to free Southeast Asia from great power conflict and domination. The question was how, without jeopardizing its own position. Nair presents us with ASEAN's four point strategy. First, ASEAN would support the Khmer Rouge and the continued existence of Democratic Kampuchea's seat at the United Nations. ASEAN saw the Khmer Rouge as the only effective opposition to Vietnam's dominance of Kampuchea and regional hegemonial intentions. However, ASEAN did emphasize the distinction between Pol Pot the leader, and Democratic Kampuchea the regime. Second, ASEAN would work towards diplomatic and economic isolation of Vietnam condemning the Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea. Third, as we shall see, ASEAN promoted the creation of an anti-Vietnamese coalition, pressuring China and the Khmer Rouge to consider such a proposal. Fourth, while chastising

47. Donald E. Weatherbee, ed., Southeast Asia Divided: The ASEAN-Indochina Crisis (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 8. China had a similar interest but directed its energies against Vietnam and the Soviet Union while still wanting a regional role.
Vietnam for its actions ASEAN nevertheless kept the way open to Vietnam, fostering dialogue and conflict resolution.48

At the United Nations, ASEAN vociferously supported the preservation of Democratic Kampuchea's seat in the General Assembly. While neither the Phnom Penh regime nor the Khmer Rouge, as Nair points out, were truly representative of the Khmer people, in ASEAN eyes the worst of two evils had to be chosen.49 On 21 September 1979, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) accepted the UN's Credential Committee report which recommended that Democratic Kampuchea retain its seat by a vote of 71 in favour, 35 opposed, and 34 abstentions. ASEAN as a whole now joined China in toting the blame for prolonging the sadistic Khmer Rouge's survival. As Chanda opines: "the Pol Pot regime might have been reduced to a band of guerrillas in the hills, but it was voted in as the only legitimate representative of the Cambodian people."50

With Vietnam urging the other ASEAN states, such as Indonesia, to put pressure on Thailand, thereby undermining Chinese influence, and with China coalescing with ASEAN to push Vietnam out of the region, ASEAN realized that it had


49. Ibid., 131.

50. Chanda, 377-378. As we shall see in Chapter Four, the existence of a mere handful of guerrillas does not necessarily mean it is easier to maintain political stability.
to take a firm stand between both Vietnam and China. For this reason, in Kuantan on 27 March 1980, Malaysian Premier Datuk Hussein Onn and Indonesian President Suharto put forth what became known as the Kuantan Principle. Essentially the declaration called for both the Soviets and Chinese to leave the Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese alone. In exchange for western economic aid and a recognition by ASEAN of Vietnamese security interests in Kampuchea, Hanoi was to maintain a neutral position between Moscow and Beijing. The proposal was not adopted as it was unacceptable to the PRC, Thailand and for the moment, Vietnam.

While the June incursion by Vietnam into Thai territory brought together Malaysia and Indonesia within the ranks of ASEAN, where they jointly condemned Vietnam, one would see in mid-1980 an ASEAN still very much concerned with maintaining a balanced position between the contending regional powers. While a partial pullout by the Vietnamese in recognition of the Heng Samrin regime was considered, a united ASEAN still called for a complete Vietnamese withdrawal. Also, direct alignment with the Chinese according to ASEAN, while weakening Vietnam through protracted war, would increase the scope of Soviet involvement, and in the view of Malaysia and Indonesia,

51. Vietnam's view was that China was using ASEAN against the Indochinese countries, weakening them and at the same time destabilizing ASEAN, thereby leaving room for Beijing's own expansion into the region. See Chang, Kampuchea between China and Vietnam, 141.

52. Huxley, ASEAN and Indochina, 54-55; Pilch, 38; Nair, 143-144; and Simon, The ASEAN States and Regional Security, 99.
could leave the door open to a greater regional role for China.53

Vietnam, China and the Soviet Union

While Thailand and ASEAN played pivotal roles specifically in the Sino-Khmer Rouge relationship and in the Kampuchean imbroglio in general, it was Vietnam's position supported by the Soviet Union, and China's stance as the regional great power, which were the most important determinants in ensuring the existence of the Khmer Rouge as a force to be reckoned with.

In attacking Vietnam, China having made its point, but essentially having accomplished little else, moved from a strategy of teaching Vietnam a lesson to one where she would "bleed Vietnam white." Following the February-March 1979 Sino-Vietnamese border dispute China would frequently make border attacks on Vietnam, with Vietnam initiating its own incursions.54

Attempting to have Vietnam overextend itself, Beijing hoped that Hanoi would exhaust its resources and so not be able to continue its occupation of Kampuchea. Vietnam in turn further fanned the flames when in April and May the Vietnamese purged Kampuchean Chinese causing a mass exodus

53. Nair, 148.

54. By November, Hanoi charged China with over 1,000 armed provocations in the six month period following the conclusion of the border war. The PRC blamed Vietnam for over 330 military incursions in the August-October period alone. See Chang, "The Sino-Vietnamese Conflict Over Kampuchea," 206.
to flee to Thailand. In May, more than 40,000 Kampuchean Chinese fled their homes in a single week.55

In what was becoming a tit-for-tat match between Vietnam and China, in September 1979, Beijing announced four danger zones in the disputed Hainan island area, warning foreign airlines not to enter into the newly proclaimed Chinese airspace. As well, the Chinese released photos of Chinese missiles and troops in training operations while rumours circulated that China's 42nd army was being moved to the Sino-Vietnamese border. China's actions incensed Vietnam which perceived Beijing as provocative with the Chinese challenging the Vietnamese in yet another area, the South China Sea.56

As Simon observes, "It cost Beijing little to sustain resistance in Cambodia [and in rallying against Vietnam] particularly since the 500,000 refugees along the Thai-Cambodian border form a potential Palestinian-type resistance."57 For this reason China could promote a policy of bleeding Vietnam white. Speaking to Japanese Prime Minister Ohira on 9 December 1979, Deng affirmed: "It is


57. Ibid., 70. The exception to this would of course be the costs incurred in the February-March 1979 Chinese lesson.
wise for China to force the Vietnamese to stay in Kampuchea because that way they will suffer more and more..."58

Vietnam, rather than submit to Chinese pressure, dug in its heels. With an initial 100,000 Vietnamese troops used to invade Kampuchea, by May the number of troops in Kampuchea had reached 150,000 and by October there were some 200,000 men stationed there. By August, practically every Kampucheanc province was ruled by a Vietnamese counterpart under a special "sister province" arrangement. Finally, by November some 250,000 Vietnamese were settled in Kampuchea under a Vietnamization programme.59

While trying to make Vietnam suffer, China at the same time attempted to make the Khmer Rouge more acceptable to the international community. As Chanda suggests, China was convinced that Vietnam would eventually seek peace, therefore the Chinese leadership had to prepare the way internationally whereby a repentant and reformed Khmer Rouge would be permitted to come to power.60 It was international relief, according to Chanda, which "revived the Khmer Rouge [but] Chinese supplies [with the help of the Thai] reequipped them to full strength."61 Prince Sihanouk goes


59. Chang, 203.

60. Chanda, 378. However, it is not at all evident that in the long term China would actually promote the coming to power of the Khmer Rouge. China's real intentions are difficult if not impossible to surmise.

61. Ibid., 382; and Nair, 140.
further when he credits the Khmer Rouge success entirely to China. In 1979, he stated:

The People's Republic of China, which is sincerely and authentically anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist, has had to take charge in so-called "Democratic Kampuchea" of finance, the pretended "national" economy, industry, national defence, river and maritime ports, diplomacy et cetera. All this could only satisfactorily function thanks to the many sided and massive aid and extremely generous "cooperation" granted by Peking....

Pol Pot and Ieng Sary try to cover themselves with glory by claiming a total independence without precedent for over 2000 years. What a mockery! The reality is that whether China wanted it that way or not...the "foreign" policy of the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary government has always been, in fact, in the tow of the Chinese government.62

Sihanouk's assertions although acceptable for the 1979-1982 period, did not give enough credit to the Khmer Rouge over the 1975-1978 period when they held power. It was true however, that the Khmer Rouge were now becoming part of the same life line as the Chinese - China was their source of oxygen.

Yielding to PRC pressure the Khmer Rouge announced, in September 1979, a new political programme under which they would consider uniting with other forces to struggle against Vietnam. In December, Khieu Samphan replaced Pol Pot as Prime Minister, requesting Sihanouk to resume his former

position of Head of State. Khieu Samphan began to promote a more conciliatory Khmer Rouge. He called for the holding of UN sponsored elections, as did China, after a total Vietnamese withdrawal. As well, at China's behest he offered to establish amicable relations with Vietnam once a troop withdrawal occurred. The Chinese assured the international community that any future coalition of forces would not be led by Khieu Samphan.

The new Chinese and Khmer Rouge initiatives were deplored by the Vietnamese. At a January 1980 conference of Indochinese Foreign Ministers in Phnom Penh, the ministers demanded that China stop using Thai territory to aid the Khmer Rouge and bring down the PRK government. They also denounced China's role in the region as one whereby Beijing sought hegemony and expansion. As well, they stated that there was "no room among the Khmer people for Pol Pot, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary and other traitors including Sihanouk."

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64. See Nair, 33; Simon, The ASEAN States and Regional Security, 98; and Chang, 121, respectively. A similar promise as to the coalition leadership's composition was made in January 1979, see p.64 of this work.

Although China's programme of presenting a new Khmer Rouge was gaining ground, the Vietnamese were no closer to withdrawal than they were the day they invaded. Vietnam according to China, much to its chagrin, had become a puppet of the Soviet Union. Hanoi, in fact, openly declared its reliance on "the military solidarity, friendship and cooperation between Vietnam and the Soviet Union as a firm guarantee for their victory in the socialist construction and nationalist defence." Since 1978, the Soviet Union provided an estimated US$3 million per day to aid the Vietnamese war effort in Kampuchea. According to Western estimates, Soviet aid to Vietnam by mid-1979 provided sixty per cent of Vietnam's development budget, one-third of rice imports and numerous occasional loans.

However, as with China and the Khmer Rouge in the 1975-78 period, from 1980 onwards there were some differences in approach to the Cambodian crisis taken by the Vietnamese and the Soviets. As Leif Rosenberger indicates, in early 1980 Moscow appeared to cut back aid to Hanoi and was annoyed at the way the Vietnamese were handling the aid granted them. In 1981 the Soviets would try through bilateral consultations to foster better relations with the PRK and would take a more conciliatory attitude towards the Khmer


Rouge - emphasizing the need for Hanoi to consider the Khmer Rouge in any peace process. China would nevertheless see the Soviets as conniving with the Vietnamese, intending to gain control over Southeast Asia and strategically contain China.

With Soviet and Vietnamese power projection in the region, China on 6 March 1980, perceiving the ongoing negotiations with the Vietnamese over the Sino-Vietnamese border conflict as futile, called off the peace talks. Now, the Chinese offensive turned to creating a stable and reorganized government-in-exile which would most definitely include the Khmer Rouge - China's tentacles in Southeast Asia.

The negotiation process and a new Khmer coalition

The Chinese wanted to follow the same process that they had undertaken in late 1979. While appearing ready to negotiate a peace settlement for Indochina, Beijing would continue remoulding the Khmer Rouge, making the Khmer communists within a coalition of anti-Vietnamese forces more presentable to the world.

68. Due to limitations of space suffice it to say that Rosenberger's argument casts doubt on any illusion that the Soviet Union and Vietnam were continuously walking hand in hand down the Kampuchean road. See Rosenberger, 208-226. For a short discussion of Moscow's quest for bilateral relations see Simon, The ASEAN States and Regional Security, 52.

69. Simon, 60. As well, the PRC believed the Soviets would try to position themselves in such a way that they could stop the flow of European and Japanese energy sources by cutting off the sea-lines-of-communication (SLOC) between the Persian Gulf and East Asia. See fn. 21 this chapter.
ASEAN, as the principal initiator of the Kampuchean peace process, in a UN General Assembly resolution on 23 February 1980, called for a neutral Kampuchea and non-alignment of anti-Vietnamese forces with the PRC, and a stop to Vietnamese threats against Thai security. This resolution triggered a long and arduous peace process which would last to the decade's end.

Hanoi did not approve of the ASEAN proposals and in a statement of Indochinese Foreign Ministers issued in Vientiane on 18 July 1980, the ministers blamed China for the existing turmoil:

China's perfidious policy is to turn the problem between Kampuchea, Laos and Vietnam with China into one between the three countries and Thailand, to pit the ASEAN countries against the Indochinese countries in order to weaken the latter, cause instability to the former and thus facilitate the carrying out of Peking's expansionist and hegemonist designs in Southeast Asia.

Hanoi put forth its own peace proposal, most notably calling for the disarming of the Cambodian resistance and greater cooperation between the PRK, Vietnam, Thailand and ASEAN.

70. Pilch, 39.


72. For a listing of the proposals see Huxley, ASEAN and Indochina, 61. It is worth mentioning that the ministers were probably also responding to the July Carter meeting with Hua Guofeng in Tokyo where the US President stated that there was mutual agreement between the US and the PRC concerning the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea. See John Pilger, "Only the allies are new" in Pilger and Barnett, 93-94.
Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach reaffirmed that Vietnamese forces would remain in Kampuchea as long as the threat from the Khmer Rouge and China existed. By September however, at the 35th UN General Assembly debate on Kampuchea, Vietnam had changed its tune. Undoubtedly fearful that ASEAN would side with the PRC, Hanoi announced readiness to make a partial withdrawal and endorsed the March 1980 Kuantan proposal which would free Indochina from Sino-Soviet influence.

ASEAN pressed forward when in October it called for a United Nations sponsored International Conference on Kampuchea (ICK). Initially China was opposed to the conference, however by December the Chinese indicated a willingness to attend while insisting on a partial Vietnamese withdrawal. By the end of December China dropped its demand for partial withdrawal as a prerequisite to the holding of the ICK. However, the Chinese stressed that a complete pullout would be necessary to attain a political solution. Beijing's concession proved to no avail as Vietnam and the Soviet Union disapproved of the conference mandate which dealt solely with Kampuchea. The two allies recommended discussion on the more fundamental issues concerning the region's security.

73. Simon, The ASEAN States and Regional Security, 68.

74. Nair, 154-55.

75. Huxley, ASEAN and Indochina, 63; Nair, 170; and Chang, Kampuchea between China and Vietnam, 121-22.
It was Vietnam's turn to take the initiative. On 28 January 1981, at a gathering of the Indochinese Foreign Ministers in Ho Chi Minh City, the ministers called for the signing of a treaty of peaceful coexistence between the Indochinese states and China. Again Vietnam reaffirmed that it would withdraw its troops only when the Chinese threat dissipated. In the interim, Vietnam would undertake a partial withdrawal if Thailand took on a neutral position, not making Thai territory available to anti-Vietnamese forces. In April, Vietnam explicitly stated that it would only pull out all its forces if China concluded a non-aggression treaty with the Indochinese states.76 Again on 29 May 1981, Vietnam offered a partial withdrawal pending Thai compliance with Vietnamese demands.77 A stern warning to Thailand followed in mid-June, declaring that Vietnam would not hesitate to take military action against Thailand if it continued to repatriate Khmers to Kampuchea.78

The Vietnamese proposals had some effect. On 16-17 June 1981, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers decided not to follow China's policy of bleeding Vietnam white.79 The ministers stated that: there would be no return to Khmer Rouge rule unless the Kampuchean people so desired; there would be no


77. Buszynski, 71.

78. Nair, 171. Concerning the repatriation question see pp. 77-79 of this work.

79. Ibid., 172.
time limit for Vietnamese withdrawal; all Cambodian factions
would be disarmed; and a neutral interim-administration
would preserve law and order until UN supervised elections
could be held. The Chinese responded negatively to the
proposals, stating that they were opposed to any disarming
of the various factions, the dispatching of a UN peace-
keeping force, or the establishment of any interim
government in Kampuchea.80

The negotiation process which had begun in early 1980 came
to a head when the ICK convened at the United Nations on 13
July 1981. ASEAN sought to reduce regional tension rather
than make Vietnam suffer, the PRC wanted a wholesale
condemnation of Vietnam forcing its withdrawal, and Vietnam
and the Soviet Union looked to blacklist China and the Khmer
Rouge as the true regional villains. Neither party gained
all that it desired out of the ICK. Both Vietnam and China
were partially found at fault for the continued existence of
the Kampuchean problem. ASEAN, because of Chinese
objections, could not offer aid to Vietnam. The PRK was not
present at the discussions nor was there any official
proposal calling for the disarming of the Khmer Rouge - thus
the Vietnamese were displeased.81

80. Huxley, ASEAN and Indochina, 62-63, and Justus van der
Kroef, "Kampuchea: Patterns of Factional Conflict and
International Confrontation," Asien 5 (October 1982):58,
respectively. For further delineation of PRC/ASEAN
differences see Nair, 172-174.

81. Chanda, 387; Huxley, 60-64;and Pilch, 40. For the
Chinese ICK position see Chang, Kampuchea between China and
Vietnam, 123. For an outline of the ICK 17 July
declaration, see "ICK Declaration 17 July 1981," Documents
on the Kampuchean Problem 1979-1985. See Nair, 176-77 for
The ICK revealed how complex the Kampuchean conflict had become and how it was a part of a larger game between many regional and non-regional actors. As well, the watering down of the ICK resolution disclosed the influence China still wielded over its neighbouring states. Beijing's desire to preserve the Khmer Rouge and the legitimacy of Democratic Kampuchea was as strong as ever.

Running parallel to the negotiation process, calling for the withdrawal of Vietnam from Kampuchea, was the attempt to reconstruct the Khmer Rouge into a more credible and stable power. On Thai Premier Prem Tinsulanond's 27-31 October 1980 Beijing visit, he asked that the Khmer Rouge leadership be transformed into something more acceptable. Beijing agreed with him, urging the Khmer Rouge to join forces with Prince Sihanouk and/or Son Sann. However, neither non-communist anti-Vietnamese faction wanted to associate with the Khmer Rouge.82

In Jakarta, Ieng Sary at a 23 November 1980 press conference, called for Sihanouk to play a more active role in a Democratic Kampuchea coalition, on the condition that he accept that expulsion of the Vietnamese was of primary importance.83 Sary's invitation was probably hastened at

China's success in keeping the Khmer Rouge virtually unscathed during the ICK.

82. Buszynski, 68; and Nair, 159. Sihanouk's disdain for the Khmer Rouge is evident in a statement made in November 1980 cited in Nair, 166. Weatherbee discusses Thailand's and Singapore's plea for a new Khmer Rouge leadership, see Weatherbee, 4.

83. Nair, 160.
the request of the Chinese, but the fact that Sary placed a condition on Sihanouk's entrance into a coalition revealed the significance of Khmer nationalism within the ranks of the Khmer Rouge, and an uneasiness with its dependency on China.

Essentially China had agreed to the coalition so as to ease ASEAN anxiety of the Khmer Rouge. As Nair appropriately indicates, China's predicament was "how to accommodate support for the Khmer Rouge with support for Son Sann and any others, and ensure that the addition of the new elements would not hamper the Khmer Rouge resistance in Kampuchea."84 ASEAN viewed the formation of a coalition as the foundation for a settlement with Vietnam. However as Huxley states, the Chinese and perhaps the Thai "saw the main potential vitality of a resistance coalition as a means of maintaining international support for Democratic Kampuchea rather than as a basis for a settlement with Vietnam."85

In February 1981, Sihanouk announced that he would be willing to participate in a united front coalition. In fact, Sihanouk's tooth had been sweetened by military aid from China. Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang voiced open support for either Sihanouk or Son Sann to lead a united front anti-Vietnamese movement in Kampuchea.86 This call for

84. Son Sann had travelled to the PRC in December 1980, but left China with no assurance of aid. See Nair, 164.

85. Huxley, ASEAN and Indochina, 64.

86. Chang, Kampuchea between China and Vietnam, 122; and van der Kroef, 66.
leadership was contrary to Khmer Rouge demands which had stated that in any coalition the other factions would have to find themselves subordinate to the Khmer Rouge. China, the greater power, dominated the game.

In April, the Chinese again set the bait, luring the non-communist members further towards the idea of an anti-Vietnamese coalition, this time offering arms shipments to Son Sann and more to Sihanouk on the condition that the weapons not be used against either Son Sann's forces or the Khmer Rouge.

At a meeting between Sihanouk, Son Sann and Khieu Samphan, the three failed to reach an agreement on the coalition. Son Sann had demanded complete control of the coalition and called for the exile to China of the Khmer Rouge top leaders. As Simon suggests, the Chinese applied little pressure on the Khmer Rouge to comply with the non-communists' demands and thus the talks failed.

In December, ASEAN pledged its support for the idea of a Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK). As Nair indicates, ASEAN's acceptance of the coalition coincided with China's realization that support for the Khmer Rouge seat in the United Nations was eroding.

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87. van der Kroef, 62.
88. Chang, 122.
89. Simon, *The ASEAN States and Regional Security*, 103.
would be more forceful demanding greater flexibility on the part of the Khmer Rouge.90

In a February meeting between Prince Sihanouk and Khieu Samphan, Sihanouk declared that an agreement had been reached on a future alliance. Although China maintained a low profile during the talks, two days later on 23 February 1982, the Prince announced that China would supply his FUNCINPEC-Moulinaka forces with modern infantry weapons.91 China's hand was at play again - it was definitely not the Khmer Rouge who had convinced Sihanouk to participate in the new grouping.

In Tashkent, Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev on 22 March 1982, proposed a normalization of Sino-Soviet relations. The same month, China's Vice-Premier Han Nianlong stated that China's interest in the Khmer Rouge was not ideological.92 This confession confirms that China was now formulating its policy according to the power politics school whereby the Khmer Rouge were used as a means to gain influence in a region which China saw as important to its security. Both the Tashkent speech and the Vice-Premier's comments undoubtedly signalled to the Khmer Rouge that they might become a puppet of China and that they, under the right conditions, could be disposed of. However, for the

90. Nair, 182-183. As well see Weatherbee, 4; and Pilch, 41.

91. van der Kroef, "Kampuchea: Patterns of Factional Conflict," 63; also see Chang, 124.

92. Chang, 124-125. For Han's 1980 position regarding China's view of the Vietnamese see Chanda, 129.
moment Beijing still needed the Khmer Rouge to help prevent Vietnamese and Soviet hegemony and expansion.

Early in 1982, the Vietnamese were very active militarily gaining control of the Laotian and Thai frontier. Although they lost the Cardomome and Elephant mountains, the gains made were impressive. As well, an unprecedented compliment was paid to the Chinese in May 1982 by Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach for having decreased the number of border incidents. Therefore, it is possible that the Khmer Rouge became more cooperative in forming an anti-Vietnamese coalition as they too recognized the force of realpolitik.

On 22 June 1982, in Kuala Lumpur, the three anti-Vietnamese factions declared the formal establishment of the CGDK. Sihanouk would hold the post of President, with Khieu Samphan as Vice-President in charge of foreign affairs and Son Sann as Prime Minister. The continuance of aid to the various factions would be permitted.

The coalition was viewed with hostility by the Soviets and the Vietnamese. Moscow labelled it aggressive and

93. Martial Dasse, "Cambodge: La Tutelle Vietnamiennne," defense nationale 39e annee (avril 1983), 103. Nair suggests that the Vietnamese were conciliatory because of Soviet and internal Vietnamese Communist Party pressure to better relations with the PRC, see Nair, 187.

94. Rosenberger, 227. The number of incidents dropped to 30 per month versus 100 per month in 1981. However, there were conflicts over the Paracels in March 1982, see Nair, 180.

provocative, and Hanoi claimed its creation was the work of Beijing and Washington for the purpose of serving their selfish interests.\textsuperscript{96} It is certain that the formation of the coalition perpetuated the Khmer Rouge's existence as a thorn in the side of Vietnam and the PRK.

If we recall from Chapter One, when a power moves from being a buffer towards a position whereby it becomes dependent on one ally's support, the sovereign power's ability to make independent decisions diminishes. The Khmer Rouge had, in the latter part of the 1975-1978 period, moved towards a specific power. However, the Khmer Rouge sliding further along the continuum from being a buffer state to one in a proxy-client relationship with the PRC, a move stemming from the Khmer communists' previous dependency on China, also approached a third power, Thailand. Bangkok, desired as did the Khmer Rouge, the preservation of the status quo which in effect would ensure the existence of Democratic Kampuchea.\textsuperscript{97}

Michael Handel's conditions for a proxy-client relationship are evident in the Sino-Khmer Rouge amity of 1979-1982. The association existed between two unequal powers, and was relatively evenly balanced between voluntarism and coercion, although Chinese pressure often did prevail. The patron, China, clearly had greater bargaining power over its client,

\textsuperscript{96} Nair, 186.

\textsuperscript{97} See p.6 of this work.
the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge had to be content with Chinese support as they had no other patron to turn to.98

Ironically, it was fortunate for the Khmer Rouge that Kampuchea was only a small part of a greater regional power struggle. The Khmer Rouge undoubtedly thrived on the prolongment of Sino-Vietnamese tensions, for as long as the hostilities continued China would see fit to support a Kampuchean resistance which would ensure a Kampuchea independent of Vietnam. As well, China having committed itself to the Kampuchean cause could not ignore Vietnam for fear of losing face and international credibility - another plus for the Khmer Rouge.

While initially Thai assistance to the Khmer Rouge and Thai cooperation with the PRC helped the Khmer communists, later calls by Thailand and ASEAN for a reformed Khmer Rouge would work against them. ASEAN's demand for a more balanced approach to Vietnam effectively pushed China to consider a united front coalition of anti-Vietnamese forces, and paved the way for the 1982-1989 negotiation process which called for Vietnam's withdrawal from Kampuchea.

China's decision to support Sihanouk as head of the CGDK, although largely ceremonious, could in the longer term have negative implications for the Khmer Rouge. It would remain uncertain whether the Chinese leadership would not in the long run, if the option remained and the Khmer Rouge

98. Ibid., 7.
appeared weak, be content in reinstating Sihanouk in office, using him as their lever in Indochina.

Clearly China's assertion that ideology was no longer a factor in the Sino-Khmer relationship, while indicating its prior importance, revealed that pragmatic power politics was to be the norm in the conduct of Chinese international relations.
CHAPTER 4: Dependency or Breaking Loose?

In the 1979-1982 period the Khmer Rouge had moved into a position of mutuality where they had given up some of their autonomy, permitting the People's Republic of China to influence how the Khmer communists should pursue their domestic and foreign policy. As the Third Indochina War continued the Khmer Rouge became entangled in a proxy-client amity verging on a relationship whereby there was a growing dependence on China.

In this chapter we will examine the 1982-1989 period: a time whereby the Sino-Khmer Rouge relationship would come under increasing strains with international pressures and threats of shifting balances of power questioning the role the Khmer Rouge would be allowed to play in the Kampuchean conflict. Would the Khmer Rouge be under the complete shadow of the PRC with only the smallest of rumblings heard from a dissatisfied Khmer Rouge leadership? Had the Chinese recognized that supporting the Khmer Rouge was a faux pas, with China leaving them by the wayside or would China find it difficult to extricate itself from assisting its Kampuchean allies? What could the Khmer Rouge and the Chinese do pending more conciliatory gestures on the part of Vietnam and increased pressure by all parties involved in the conflict to find a resolution to hostilities?

With the formation of the CGDK Vietnam would continue to be condemned as the aggressor in the Kampuchean conflict. At the same time as the declaration on Kampuchean soil of the
CGDK's creation, Indochinese Foreign Ministers were meeting in Ho Chi Minh City where they quickly denounced the coalition and those parties involved in its founding. They declared:

...the rigging up of the so-called "Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea" is a farce aimed at concealing the evil face of the Pol Pot clique, an attempt to reimpose the genocidal regime on the Kampuchean people just saved from death, and a plot hatched by reactionaries in the Chinese ruling circles and the ASEAN countries to interfere in the Kampuchean internal affairs and to continue creating tension in Southeast Asia. 1

While condemning China and ASEAN, the Indochinese ministers once again offered a partial withdrawal from Kampuchea, expressing a willingness to find a political solution. The offer however, could also be perceived as an effort to weaken the newly formed coalition and the influence of China.

Essentially the proposal was identical to ones made since January 1981. The withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea was to be taken as a gesture of goodwill. A partial withdrawal was based on the condition that China no longer use Thai territory to help Khmer reactionaries, and that Pol Pot troops and other groups be disarmed. The ministers reiterated their desire for an international conference on Southeast Asia. As well, they called for a safety zone along the Thai-Kampuchean border. Radio Beijing in turn criticized the proposal for a partial troop withdrawal.

withdrawal as 'a trick played to divide people' with the security zone being declared a 'fraud'.

Other than China's support of the CGDK the Vietnamese had another reason to be wary of recent Chinese actions. China had entered into dialogue with Vietnam's backer, the Soviet Union. Moving on from Brezhnev's March 1982 Tashkent speech and a similar speech made in Baku in September of that year, the Chinese officially announced commencement of the first round of Sino-Soviet normalization talks.

The October negotiations disclosed three Chinese conditions for the normalization of relations between China and the Soviet Union. One condition was a halt to Soviet support of Vietnam's military occupation of Kampuchea. The Chinese also offered the prospect of Sino-Vietnamese normalization talks which would be linked to a progressive, but unconditional withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea. Negotiations with the Soviets could on the one hand shut out the Vietnamese, diminishing any opportunity for Vietnam to play regional hegemon. On the other hand the talks could remove a principal reason for continued Chinese support of the Khmer Rouge - that of preventing Soviet

2. Nair, 190. Regarding the July 1982 proposal also see Nair, 87-88; Rosenberger, 226; Weatherbee, 7; "Documents on the Kampuchea Problem 1979-1985," 163.

3. The other two conditions were a reduction of Soviet forces along the Soviet-Mongolian border, and a withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

4. Weatherbee, 16.
encroachment into a region China deemed its own sphere of influence.

The Chinese proposal for Sino-Vietnamese negotiations was based on secret low-level talks held between the two protagonists in mid-1982. In this period the Vietnamese had proposed a truce from early August to October, which the Chinese rejected. Nevertheless the truce was unofficially observed allowing both sides to celebrate their national days undisturbed.5

The Vietnamese and probably the Khmer Rouge were concerned about ongoing discussions between their respective supporters. These in turn could lead to a diminution of the smaller powers' support. In October, at a high level Soviet-Vietnamese meeting in Moscow, the Vietnamese were urged to reach a settlement with ASEAN and find a solution to the Indochina conflict. Concurrently the Khmer Rouge would probably not only fear that a Sino-Soviet rapprochement would leave them without financial and material assistance to continue on in their struggle to regain power, but also the beginning of Sino-Vietnamese dialogue could conceivably reduce China's concerns about Vietnamese hegemony and a loss of Southeast Asia to Vietnam. Such sentiment would diminish China's need for the Khmer Rouge - the PRC's regional tentacle.6

5. Rosenberger, 227.
6. For the Sino-Vietnamese meeting see ibid., 226.
China's overtures should be seen in the context of the prevailing international scene and China's own domestic developments. While in the 1970s relations between the PRC and the United States were healthy, by the early 1980s they had deteriorated. Controversy over the American association with Taiwan, bilateral trade disputes such as that concerning textiles, and a number of minor issues clouded the Sino-American relationship.

At the same time one saw an increasing demand by Chinese policy makers for China to take an independent position in world politics—remaining aloof of any particular power. In September 1982, Deng Xiaoping declared:

> Independence and self-reliance have always been and will always be our basic stand. We Chinese people have our friendship and co-operation with other countries and peoples. We value even more our hard-won independence and sovereign rights.7

Calls for a more independent posture combined with conciliatory moves on the part of the Soviets and China's disillusionment with the United States (particularly under the leadership of Ronald Reagan), led to a repositioning of China situating itself somewhere between the two superpowers.8 Increased contact with Vietnam was part of


the same game plan: the Chinese undoubtedly anticipated better relations with the Soviets because of China's friendly gestures towards a Soviet ally.

Even while the Vietnamese were making substantial gains in the 1982-83 dry season offensive, defeating the Khmer Rouge at Phnom Chat and entering several kilometers into Thai territory, Sino-Soviet-Vietnamese negotiations continued. There were reports of Sino-Vietnamese meetings in Romania in early 1983, while in February Vietnamese officials attended a Beijing dinner given by prominent Chinese diplomat Zhang Dewei - their first since the 1980 breakdown in Sino-Vietnamese relations. The officials offered a second partial withdrawal with the promise of annual troop withdrawals and the Chinese dropped their demand to total withdrawal as a prerequisite to negotiations.


Other statements concerning China's desire to remain independent can be found in: Harding, 18. A later statement is by Zhao Ziyang in his article, "The objectives of China's foreign policy: for lasting peace, increased friendly cooperation and co-prosperity," *International Affairs* 61, no. 4 (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, Autumn 1985):578.


10. *Ibid.*, 54; and Rosenberger, 228.
accusing the PRC of using the Khmer puppets to further its goal of regional expansionism.11

On 1 March 1983, China put forth what became known as its Five Point Proposal, calling for:

1) unconditional Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea

2) a cessation of Soviet assistance to Vietnam

3) normalization negotiations following the withdrawal of Vietnam's first batch of troops

4) a promise by China to take practical steps to normalization of relations with Vietnam and the Soviet Union

5) an independent, neutral and non-aligned Kampuchea. 12

Chinese overtures seemed for nothing because at the resumption of Sino-Soviet talks in March 1983, in a move to reassure the Vietnamese, the Soviets refused to discuss Kampuchea stating that it was an issue to be settled directly between the Chinese and the Indochinese peoples.13 Soviet intransigence was to the Khmer Rouge benefit as it


13. Rosenberger, 229.; and Chang, *Kampuchea between China and Vietnam,* 125-26. The Soviet position was identical to the Vietnamese; see Pilch, 42.
ensured that Chinese suspicion of the Soviet's regional intentions would persist.

Thailand's relationship with China was undoubtedly also of concern to the Khmer Rouge. In December 1982, Thai Deputy Foreign Minister Arun Phanupong visited Moscow for talks with his Soviet counterpart. The security of Thailand would be determined by the results of the Sino-Soviet dialogue. Should a warming of relations occur between China and Vietnam, because of Soviet pressure on Hanoi, Bangkok could hope for a reduction of hostilities on the part of Vietnam against Thailand.

Fortunately for the Khmer Rouge the warming trend was progressing slowly and China was not about to let the Soviets become too intimate with the Thai. In February 1983, on a nine day visit to Thailand, Chinese Chief of Staff Yang Dezhi renewed China's pledge of military assistance to Thailand in the event of Vietnamese aggression. As long as the Thai were assured of Chinese support and the Soviet Union and Vietnam loomed suspiciously in the corners of Indochina, Thailand would remain in the Chinese camp and thus supply lines and camps of refuge would be assured to the Khmer Rouge.

The Khmer Rouge had to be extremely careful as it seemed that Chinese sentiment in their favour, at least at the declaratory level, was on the wane. Although the Chinese had not stopped aiding the Khmer Rouge they, as previously done in late 1981 and early 1982, stated that the Khmer
Rouge had not been the ideal leaders of the Kampuchean nation. Chinese officials stated:

Yes, the Khmer Rouge made mistakes, serious mistakes,...They failed to form a proper united front in 1975, after victory. They forced people out of the city, which was a stupid move. They suppressed money and they have abused their own people....

Since 1979 the Khmer Rouge have recognized their mistakes. The Communist Party was dissolved in December 1981. The Khmer Rouge have fundamentally changed their politics.14

Beijing, nevertheless, was quick to point out that the Khmer Rouge had a new outlook and were reforming themselves, thus tacitly indicating that the Khmer Rouge were still needed by the Chinese in the carrying out of Beijing's regional politics.

However, on 31 January 1983, Prince Norodom Sihanouk met with Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang and was hosted at a banquet by Deng. Although a member of the coalition, the Khmer Rouge must have found it disquieting to see Sihanouk, China's old friend, on such cordial relations with Beijing. The idea of the Khmer Rouge returning to power on their own, according to China's declaratory policy, was an unlikelihood. Zhao Ziyang avowed: "We will never let the Khmer Rouge come back in power alone."15 The statement was telling on two counts. First it was an admission by China

15. Ibid.
of its influence over the political situation in Kampuchea, and second it was an affirmation of support for the other partners in the CGDK.

Sihanouk ran with the Chinese criticisms of the Khmer Rouge. In an interview with the *Bangkok Post* he stated that China and the Soviet Union were looking towards a neutral Kampuchea. Sihanouk boasted: "The Chinese promised me they have no intention to dominate Kampuchea but would like a neutral country with Norodom Sihanouk as its effective leader." In addition, the Prince mentioned the possibility of civil war unless a disarming of the various factions occurred or a peace-keeping force was created. The Khmer Rouge were under seige. By Sihanouk's account it was the circumstances that had changed not the Khmer Rouge. The Prince's comments broadened a schism where mistrust and ill feelings predominate within the CGDK to the present day.

In June 1983, China asserted that the combined forces of the members of the CGDK could militarily defeat the Vietnamese. Khieu Samphan contested in a 1986 interview, promoting Khmer Rouge might, that 1983 was a crucial year for his followers. He affirmed:

> It was the year we started launching long-range missions inside the country. We started to operate in bright

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16. "Sihanouk: China has no designs on Kampuchea," 5 October 1983, of the *Bangkok Post* in Bekaert.

17. Ibid.

18. van der Kroef, "Dynamics of the Cambodian Conflict," 12.
daylight, and not at nights as before. In 1983 we started moving towards the Tonk Sap (military zone number 1) and other far away areas of the country. 19

Sihanouk disagreed with the Chinese position indicating that force perceptions differed among the ranks of the contending parties. 20

Political manoeuvring continued throughout 1983. In September, the Soviets shot down the Korean Air Lines (KAL) jet. At the United Nations the Chinese abstained from a vote which condemned the Soviet action. 21 Only a year earlier China would have probably jumped at the opportunity to find fault with the Soviet rival. Moscow, although undoubtedly appreciative of the Chinese gesture, would not renew a friendship with the Chinese at the exclusion of Vietnam. On 31 October, the 3 November 1978 Soviet-Vietnamese treaty of friendship and cooperation was renewed. 22

In early 1984 it became evident that the Khmer Rouge were gaining on the offensive. In addition to their regular attacks on various convoys and isolated areas, the Khmer Rouge actually carried out successful raids on a number of urban areas: Kampong Thom (January 19), Siem Riep (January


20. van der Kroef, 12.


22. Ibid.
The successes can be, as Karl D. Jackson suggests, accredited to a "positive relationship between money, military supplies, and successful recruiting...."24 A factor in the Khmer Rouge success was, largely due to Chinese assistance, their growth in numbers from a November 1982 strength of 20,000-35,000 troops to 40,000-50,000 men in early 1984.25

While Beijing's support for the Khmer Rouge continued, the Khmer Rouge were not the only ones to gain Chinese assistance. On a 1984 visit to the United States, Premier Zhao Ziyang stated:

...the surest way to force Vietnam to pull out of Kampuchea is to support the resistance forces in Kampuchea and exert political and moral pressure on Vietnam.26

C.Y. Chang best epitomizes the Chinese position at the time. He indicates that,

In order to avoid the political justification for the preservation of Khmer Rouge power, China has been forced to adopt a military approach to the solution of the Kampuchean crisis.27

23. Karl D. Jackson, "Indochina in Early '84: Doves of Peace or Dogs of War," in Weatherbee, 41.

24. Ibid., 39-40.

25. Ibid.


China's military approach included minimal support to the non-communist factions and was coupled with diplomatic initiatives involving Vietnam, the Soviet Union and ASEAN.28 In Vientiane in January 1984, the Indochinese Foreign Ministers complained that China was using the Kampuchean issue and the CGDK as cards in its global strategy for hegemony.29 In the Vientiane proposals the ministers put forth six possible outcomes to the conflict. The scenarios were disregarded by China and the Khmer Rouge as mere propaganda.30

In July 1984, the Khmer Rouge were again under attack. This time it was ASEAN's turn to take a jab at them. At an ASEAN ministerial meeting, members suggested the retirement of some of the Khmer Rouge leadership. China quickly came to the Khmer Rouge defence. Deng threatened to cut off aid to the entire CGDK if one partner of the coalition were to be removed.31 The Chinese continued to publicly insist that it was the Soviet-Vietnamese alliance that was the root cause of tension, not the Khmer Rouge.32

However, as Jacques Bekaert points out, behind the scenes the Chinese did urge the Party of Democratic Kampuchea to

28. This will be expanded upon throughout this chapter.
30. For the six scenarios see Pilch, 43., and Weatherbee, 123-126.
31. Chanda, Brother Enemy, 394.
115

accept a more flexible line.33 The Khmer Rouge nevertheless resisted such calls, going so far as to provoke serious incidents against the soldiers of the National Sihanoukist Army (ANS) - whose leader was a member of the CGDK.34 Bekaert indicates that privately Chinese officials stated that the Khmer Rouge were relics of the past, remnants of the Gang of Four era. Yet a leader of Son Sann's KPNLF found the Chinese position difficult to fathom. He complained:

If everybody believes we are the good guys how come we get so little compared to the Khmer Rouge. And if everybody claims they never want to see the Khmer Rouge back in power how come the Khmer Rouge get so much.35

China's declaratory policy differed from its actual policy.

In October, the three leaders of the CGDK - Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Khieu Samphan and Son Sann - visited Beijing. In addition to suggesting that if necessary China would be willing to teach the Vietnamese another lesson, Deng came to the defence of Pol Pot. He remarked:

People want Mr. Pol Pot to stop his activities. We do not deny that Mr. Pol Pot has made mistakes but we cannot


34. "Kampucheans leaders meet to thrash out differences," 17 August 1984, of the Bangkok Post in Bekaert.

35. "Mr. Son Sann goes to Peking," 7 July 1984, of the Bangkok Post in Bekaert.
accept that he has to go. His army is fighting hard.36

Sihanouk in a turn around to 1983, when he disagreed with China's opinion that the combined forces of the CGDK could defeat the Vietnamese, now claimed that Beijing was not taking the military capabilities of the non-communist resistance seriously enough.37

China's upholding of the CGDK and then its focus on the Khmer Rouge to the neglect of the non-communist factions can be seen through another of Bekaert's revelations. In 1984, there was a suspected internal reform of the Khmer Rouge. Several members, including Thioun Mumm, Thioun Thioun and Keat Chuon left the organization. They were recognized as the progressive elements within the Democratic Kampuchean Party. Bekaert suggests that although Pol Pot, Ieng Sary and Ta Mok were the powerful leaders of the party, Son Sen and Khieu Samphan were those that led the way for the progressives. From this one perceives a two-prong approach, calculated or not, to the Khmer Rouge and Chinese policies. Escapees who fled the Khmer Rouge camp of Klong Wah in October 1984, claimed that,

>The CGDK is something between Khieu Samphan, Son Sann and Sihanouk. The other Khmer Rouge leaders have nothing to do with it.38


37. Ibid.

38. "Would you buy a used car from Pol Pot?," 2 August 1985, of the *Bangkok Post* in Bekaert.
Therefore, for external purposes, one had the CGDK which gave Democratic Kampuchea legitimacy on the political front, with China offering little more than moral support to the other members. On the military plane China principally backed the less "progressive" elements of the Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot and his lackeys. It is not yet clear however, how progressive one could claim Khieu Samphan to be; he no doubt was not in disagreement with China's and Pol Pot's military strategy.39

December 1984 brought with it a couple of initiatives on the part of the Soviet Union and Vietnam. For the first time in fifteen years a senior official of the Soviet Union visited Beijing. Soviet First Deputy Premier Ivan Arkhipov went to China despite Beijing's objections to Moscow's Vietnam policy.40 Shortly after Arkhipov's visit Vietnam's Thach, in an unprecedented letter to Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian, wrote:

We will never forget what China did for us during the Vietnamese war and the assistance we have received from you. Now we would like to engage in secret talks to restore the friendship of the old days.41

39. Remember that Khieu Samphan's position vacillated between the moderates and the more hard liners. See pp. 15-16, 25-26 of this work.


China's obduracy was revealed in Beijing's reply: there would be no talks until Vietnam withdrew its troops from Kampuchea. The Soviet Union undoubtedly encouraged Vietnam to try and reconcile its differences with China. Interesting however, was the December refusal by Hun Sen, while in Paris, to meet with Sihanouk because he was allied to Pol Pot. It would seem odd that Vietnam should wish to negotiate with China and yet the PRK would not meet with the Prince. Perhaps Vietnam's influence over the PRK regime was not as great as assumed, or maybe Vietnamese intentions had not yet been relayed to the PRK leaders as an accommodation was to be reached by the greater powers first.

At a conference of the Indochinese Foreign Ministers held in Ho Chi Minh City in January 1985, the ministers while censuring the Chinese and Thai "reactionaries" for supporting the Khmer Rouge, nevertheless offered a warm hand to the Chinese. They stated:

...the three Indochinese peoples invariably treasure their honoured friendship with the Chinese people and always look forward to an early restoration of their friendship.

Among a number of other proposals the ministers insisted that Vietnamese forces would be withdrawn if the Pol Pot

42. Ibid.

43. "No cutting up the Kampuchean pie, says Sihanouk," 28 December 1984, of the Bangkok Post in Bekaert.

44. Pilch, 46.
clique was excluded from any negotiated settlement. As Justus van der Kroef suggests, Vietnam's goal was to split the CGDK by offering the prospects of Vietnamese withdrawal and a new regime for Kampuchea thereby removing their greatest thorn, the Khmer Rouge, from any sanctioned political participation in a future Kampuchea.

The Vietnamese had good reason to fear the Khmer Rouge. In April, while the Chinese and Vietnamese were holding private talks in Beijing, the Khmer Rouge were increasing their guerrilla attacks; they were even thought to be threatening Phnom Penh. In fact, a member of the Khmer Rouge revealed to a Khmer nationalist: "We have such quantity of ammunition in the interior we won't have problems for long."

Nevertheless the Khmer Rouge, under pressure from China and the Vietnamese diplomatic offensive, opted to proclaim a number of their own proposals and their vision of a future Kampuchea. On 14 and 24 July 1985, Democratic Kampuchean radio, Voice of Democratic Kampuchea, broadcast statements from a meeting of the leadership of the "National Army of Democratic Kampuchea," held 6 July. A future Kampuchean government would be "a liberal capitalist regime,

45. The Indochinese five-point proposal can be found in "Ho Chi Minh 18 January 1985 5 Point Proposal," in Documents on the Kampuchean Problem 1979-1985.

46. van der Kroef, "Dynamics of the Cambodian Conflict" Conflict Studies 183 (1986): 3. I emphasize 'sanctioned political action' because war is the extension of politics by other means.

47. "Sihanouk seeks room for manoeuvering" of the Bangkok Post, 26 April 1985, in Bekaert. Also see van der Kroef, 5; and Pilch, 64.
economically, and a parliamentary regime, politically." Cambodia should promote an "independent, peaceful, neutral and non-aligned policy." As well, "through elections the party may or may not participate in the responsibility of national government." The future president of Kampuchea would be "Samdij" Norodom Sihanouk.48

Sihanouk was not impressed with the announcement, complaining to Western reporters that the Khmer Rouge were killing a large number of ANS forces and seizing their weapons, underlining the contradictions in the Khmer Rouge statement.49 The Vietnamese and the PRK regime maintained that the Pol Pot clique had to be eliminated. This could be accomplished through the cessation of Chinese and Thai aid to the Khmer Rouge.50 The Beijing Review on the other hand argued that the Khmer Rouge were searching for a political solution.51

On the surface it appeared that the Khmer Rouge responded to some of Vietnam's and the PRK's concerns. On 24 August, considered progressives Son Sen and Khieu Samphan were

48. van der Kroef, 21; and "In Search of the moderates" 9 August 1985, of the Bangkok Post in Bekaert. Note that the use of 'Samdij' is a sign of respect.

49. van der Kroef, 4. As van der Kroef indicates the significance here is that the announcement was made in Beijing, undoubtedly a signal to the PRC that Sihanouk was displeased with Khmer Rouge policy. See Peter Carey, "Prospects for Peace in Cambodia," FEER (22 December 1988): 17-18.

50. Ibid.

51. van der Kroef, 22; and "Phnom Penh 16 August 1985," Documents on the Kampuchea Problem.
promoted within the ranks of the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot was retired. Son Sen was appointed Secretary General of the Supreme Committee of the National Army of Democratic Kampuchea (NADK), and chairman and commander in chief of the NADK. Pol Pot's resignation as military commander was cosmetic in nature, for he assumed the post of "Chairman of the High Technical Office for National Defence," a post concerned with analysis and exploration of strategies in the national defence field. In addition, as van der Kroef indicates, although the National Army's Supreme Commission which Pol Pot headed was said to be abolished, there was no evidence that its principal function of overseeing overall strategic leadership and the training of DK forces had ceased or been taken over by another organ.52

China applauded the change in leadership indicating that it would help unite the Khmer people in their opposition to Vietnamese aggression.53 However it would be premature to suppose, as Bekaert did, that China "no longer saw Pol Pot so important from a military point of view," for Pol Pot was never far in the background.54 As well, contrary to Khmer Rouge statements other radical elements, such as Ta Mok, who

52. van der Kroef, 10; "How deep is the change in the DK?", 4 October 1985 of the Bangkok Post, in Bekaert; "Pol Pot rides into Chinese sunset 'on a white horse,'" in Bekaert.

53. van der Kroef, 9-10.

54. "How deep is the change in the DK?"
were also thought to have declined in power, would be a major force in the late 1980s.55

The Vietnamese were sceptical about Khmer Rouge reforms. As van der Kroef reasons:

...the Vietnamese have some grounds for their scepticism as they view the Pol Pot demotion and the DK's July declaration. History shows that in their struggle for power, various Communist parties, including the Vietnamese party, have for tactical reasons been quite ready not just to drop from leadership [or appear to have done so] those who have become an embarrassment, but also to play down their formal Communist affiliates by changing their name and objectives, so as to attempt to acquire a broader, including 'bourgeois capitalist', appeal.56

Khieu Samphan although toning down the traditional Khmer Rouge rhetoric, vowed to continue fighting the Vietnamese. In September, he opined:

It will not be the same as in 1975-78. The situation is different today. Facing us is a clear well-identified enemy. Vietnam is ready to swallow Kampuchea. We are today fighting for the survival of our country, not to establish a certain type of regime. We have always fought for Kampuchea. This

55. Ibid. It is plausible that the retirement of Pol Pot was only a temporary measure allowing him to regain his health after having visited doctors in Beijing in June for treatment of malaria and high blood pressure. See "Very sick Pol Pot leaves HQ for China," 19 November 1986 of the Bangkok Post, in Bekaert.

56. van der Kroef, 23.
is today our true policy: the survival of our nation.57

A reformed Khmer Rouge seemed a dubious assertion even if for the moment the once long term goal of complete social transformation was of lesser importance.

The Chinese did not give up their regional military strategy which included supporting the Thai who had been assisting Democratic Kampuchean forces. In November, China gave 24 Chinese type-59 main battle tanks to Thailand as part of a military grant-in-aid. Later they were to supply the Thai with 18 130mm guns, 37mm anti-aircraft guns and 85mm anti-tank guns.58 Obviously Beijing still believed that a military solution might be the way to achieve a Kampuchean settlement.

The stated transformation of the Khmer Rouge had some effect on the cohesion of the CGDK. On 25 January 1986, ANS and Khmer Rouge troops joined forces in an attack on Vietnamese positions east of Battambang.59 Then on 28 March, all three


59. "Who is winning the war in Kampuchea?," 7 February 1986, of the Bangkok Post, in Bekaert.
parties to the CGDK participated in another attack on Battambang.60

On 17 March, the CGDK launched their own eight point peace proposal. The initiative called for:

1. CGDK-Vietnam negotiations based on a phased withdrawal by Vietnam from Kampuchea

2. UN supervision of the withdrawal and a ceasefire

3. CGDK-PRK negotiations to establish a quadripartite coalition government with Sihanouk as President and Son Sann as Prime Minister

4. free elections with United Nations supervision

5. restoration of an independent, neutral and non-aligned Kampuchea with a liberal democratic regime

6. UN guarantees of Kampuchean neutrality

7. reconstruction of Kampuchea

8. a non-aggression and peaceful coexistence treaty between Kampuchea and Vietnam.61

The PRC supported the new initiative, stating that "consultations on an equal footing, free from external influence," should occur between the various Kampuchean political groupings. China also offered a more congenial relationship between Hanoi and Beijing providing that Vietnam withdraw its troops and give up its anti-China


Vietnam rejected the CGDK proposal on the grounds that it did not call for the disarming of the coalition forces, particularly the Khmer Rouge.

In his famous Vladivostok speech of 28 July 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev opened the door to more serious negotiations between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. In a call for a normalization of Sino-Soviet relations he stated that the resolution of the Kampuchean imbroglio rested with the improvement of relations between the sovereign nations of China and Vietnam.

In September, Deng Xiaoping insisted that the Soviets had to take a firmer, more influential, step vis-à-vis the Vietnamese. Perhaps they had, for in that same month Hanoi announced a willingness to negotiate with China. The Soviets also pointed out that Heng Samrin and others of the PRK regime were once Khmer Rouge members and therefore an accommodation with the more progressive elements of the Khmer Rouge should occur. Hence, in an October proposal put forth to the Austrian delegation of the United Nations, the Vietnamese offered to accept a Khmer Rouge presence under the leadership of Khieu Samphan in talks with the

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63. Pilch, 48-49.

64. Gary Klintworth, "Mr. Gorbachev's China Diplomacy," 5.

65. Pilch, 64.

66. Ibid., 67.
Finally, in December, Hanoi called for the meeting in Bucharest of all four Kampuchean factions. Recognition of the Khmer Rouge right to participate in the negotiation process can be seen as a victory for them. However, by including the Khmer Rouge into the process they would have to give up their objective, at least on the declaratory level, to exclusively hold power. They were now one of many factions which staked a claim to mould the future of Kampuchea. In fact, the Chinese, according to Gary Klintworth, were now discussing the neutralization of the Khmer Rouge rather than allow them to act freely. In addition to the restraints imposed on the Khmer Rouge by China, the Khmer Rouge power base was also eroding because of inroads made by the PRK regime on the domestic economic front. These reduced the woes of the Khmer people which the Khmer Rouge exploited to gain support.

In a 2 December 1986 internal document, Khmer Rouge consternation was evident. They claimed that calls for the


68. Pilch, 67.

69. Klintworth states that Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang had, since 1986, stated that the Khmer Rouge should be neutralized. See Klintworth, "China's Indochina Policy" Paper presented to the Department of International Relations and North East Asia Programme (Canberra: The Australian National University, 13 April 1989), 19. Klintworth's assertion is interesting but as recent events show the Chinese had not yet "neutralized" the Khmer Rouge to prevent them from attempting to take power. Nor is it certain that this was the Chinese intention at the time.

70. For a discussion of the PRK's economic reforms refer to "Avoid the train," The Economist (19 April 1986):44.
resignation of Khmer Rouge leaders were causing low morale and confusion in the ranks. Admitting that the Khmer Rouge were "somewhat excessive" during their rule, they maintained that the time of their reign was the best period in Khmer history. They would oppose any moves to remove their leaders from power and would make all efforts to preserve party solidarity. Although there were inclinations towards a capitalist phase in post-Vietnam Kampuchea, the Khmer Rouge admitted to having a separate policy agenda.71 Despite external pressure, it seemed that internally the Khmer Rouge were planning on preserving the bulk of their previous positions.

The 1987 to 1989 period witnessed increased efforts at reaching a political settlement parallel to a Vietnamese withdrawal. Prince Sihanouk positioned himself at the fore, appealing to most interested parties as a moderate.

In early 1987, Sihanouk refused to comply with Vietnam's request to meet with Hun Sen. His rejection stemmed from objections by the other members of the CGDK.72 However by the spring of 1987, the Prince was whistling a different tune. Rather than working with the CGDK he announced on 7 May, his one year leave of absence from the coalition to protest recent killings of his soldiers by the Khmer Rouge.

71. Nayan Chanda provides us with this valuable evidence, see "Support for Sihanouk," FEER (14 July 1988):14. Movement towards a capitalist type economy was promoted by the Khmer Rouge 6 July 1985, see pp.119 & 120 of this work.

In a telegram to his son, Prince Norodom Ranaridh, Sihanouk stated:

...my conscience does not allow me to serve as a pawn - even if a pivotal one - on the chess board of confrontation between two antagonistic power blocs...73

China promptly pointed out that the Prince was only on a leave of absence and that he still headed the CGDK. Presumably fearing a loss of the CGDK's credibility without the Prince, the Khmer Rouge appealed for him to stay on as the CGDK's leader. Sihanouk replied that he would not be:

...content with the beautiful words of Khmer Rouge propaganda. It is necessary that they give irrefutable proof that they have changed. Otherwise I shall not put an end to my leave of absence.74

Vietnamese Foreign Minister Thach capitalized on Sihanouk's move, announcing:

I think if he [Sihanouk] can contribute to reconciliation he could have a very good role.... But when he made a coalition with Pol Pot he merely committed suicide. Now he must make some distance between himself and Pol Pot. Otherwise the Cambodian people will never accept him. 75

74. This last section and Sihanouk's quote were taken from Chanda, "The Prince makes waves," FEER (18 June 1987):48.
At the same time as Sihanouk's resignation, Soviet Secretary General Gorbachev suggested in talks with Nguyen Van Linh that Vietnam not be too harsh on the Khmer Rouge. Gorbachev propounded the "unification of all [Cambodia's] national patriotic forces", urging the Vietnamese to accept some Khmer Rouge in the negotiation process. Following consultations between the Soviet Union, the PRK, Vietnam and Indonesia, a call was made in July by Jakarta and Hanoi for the holding of talks between the Heng Samrin regime and the CGDK.

On 27 August, the PRK government stated that it would meet with the "other groups of Khmers and their leaders, except the criminal Pol Pot and some of his close collaborators."

In early September, Hun Sen announced that the Khmer Rouge, excluding Pol Pot or Ieng Sary, could have a role in the negotiations and in a political accommodation. The Khmer Rouge forthrightly rejected the offer to meet with Hun Sen. Their argument and that of the KPNLF was that any

76. Chanda asserts that this offer refers to the Sihanouk and communist forces which were allied against the Lon Nol regime. See Chanda, "Cambodia in 1987," 112; and "Peace Offensive," Asiaweek (9 October 1987), 17. The latter article incorrectly suggests that the Khmer Rouge were not included in Gorbachev's coalition. Pilch absurdly postulates that Gorbachev may have wanted to tie the PRK and Khmer Rouge regime together thereby forcing out the non-communist elements of the coalition. See Pilch, 51.

77. Chanda, "Cambodia in 1987," 113. Chanda gives a number of reasons for Hun Sen's conciliatory disposition: the PRK inability to secure domestic legitimacy and political support, Moscow pressure on Vietnam, the political costs of a continued Vietnamese presence in Kampuchea, and the opportunities provided by Sihanouk's leave of absence. See Chanda, 110-11.
meeting of the various Khmer political factions with the Heng Samrin regime would imply that the Kampuchean crisis was the result of civil war, not Vietnamese intervention.78

The Khmer Rouge and KPNLF denunciation of the proposed talks, or 'cocktail party' as it became known, did not stop the PRK nor Sihanouk from forging ahead with their own game plan. In what a western diplomat declared as "an attempt to woo Sihanouk and destroy the coalition," Phnom Penh on 8 October, offered a five point plan which tempted Sihanouk with a high position in any future government, and promised elections which would be scrutinized by foreign observers. Any future Kampuchean government would be peaceful, independent, democratic, neutral and non-aligned.79

China recognized Sihanouk's determination to go his own way in the event that his other coalition partners did not agree with him. In a snub to the Khmer Rouge the Chinese leadership, perhaps hoping to prevent a Sihanouk-PRK alliance, told Sihanouk that they wanted him to lead a


79. "Phnom Penh woos the Prince," Asiaweek (23 October 1987):31. Elections would follow a complete Vietnamese withdrawal with a cessation of foreign aid to all the resistance groups. The PRK proposal was similar to one made at a meeting of the Indochinese governments in 1983. As well, the PRK proposed negotiations which would lead to the establishment of the Thai-Cambodian border as one of "peace and friendship." This had been rejected by the Thai when proposed in 1980; see Hiebert, "Peace or Propoganda" FEER (22 October 1987):35; and Chanda, "Cambodia in 1987," 113.
future Cambodian government where neither the Khmer Rouge nor Hun Sen would have a dominating influence.80

Sihanouk, putting China's offer aside, opted to meet Hun Sen at Fere-en-Tardenois 2-4 December. The two leaders agreed that a political solution through negotiations with all the Kampuchean parties was the only way of resolving the conflict. For the first time Hun Sen stated that he had no difficulties accepting Khieu Samphan as a coalition partner.81 Following the attainment of an accord an international conference would be held to ensure its maintenance and the independence of Kampuchea.82

At the diplomatic level the Khmer Rouge were outshined by the Prince. In the short term they would try and compensate for ground lost to Sihanouk, by placing less emphasis on military initiatives. This change of heart not only stemmed from the flurry of activity on the diplomatic scene, but also came from an internal reality imposed upon the Khmer Rouge because of disunity in the ranks, a higher desertion rate and low morale among the forces. As Chanda indicates, the Khmer Rouge generally estimated at approximately 35-50,000 troops, was seen in 1987 as having force numbers in the environs of 15-20,000 troops.83


83. Ibid. 105-106. Refer back to page 113.
dry season offensive which disrupted many Khmer Rouge border camps and logistics, had a prolonged effect on the Khmer Rouge. They had to adopt another strategy rather than deplete valuable resources in military combat. By bribing villagers with American funds donated by the PRC, or paying higher prices for crops, the Khmer Rouge embarked on a "village strategy" whereby they would try and win the hearts and minds of the peasantry rallying anti-Vietnamese support. The Khmer Rouge change in position was clearly tactical. Within a few years one would again see them on the military offensive.

Especially at a time when the Khmer Rouge were considered to be weak, it would be in their interest to promote as vigorously as possible a Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea. With China's diplomatic assistance such a move would leave a vacuum into which the military arm of the Khmer Rouge could enter, trying to regain what it had lost on the political front. Moreover, not only was the withdrawal of the Vietnamese necessary but also there should follow a purge of any Vietnamese sympathizers. Cryptically one Khmer Rouge cadre told a group of peasants: "When the water rises, fish eat ants, but when the water recedes ants eat fish."


85. Porter, 821.
The Vietnamese had promised a complete withdrawal by 1990 regardless of whether a political solution had been reached. On 29 November the Vietnamese withdrew an estimated 20,000 troops from Kampuchea. However western intelligence sources in Bangkok claimed that within a few weeks of the withdrawal an additional 12-15,000 new men were brought in. While China and the Khmer Rouge said that the withdrawal was a propaganda trick to gain international prestige, the PRK regime warned that if any external forces took advantage of Vietnam's withdrawal to create further instability Phnom Penh would, "discuss with our Vietnamese friends new measures to adopt...." 

Following some political juggling Sihanouk agreed to meet with Hun Sen in early January 1988. At St. Germain-en-Laye 21-22 January, although invited, neither the Khmer Rouge nor the KPNLF participated in talks held between Sihanouk and Hun Sen. Sihanouk called for the withdrawal of Vietnam from Kampuchea, the dismantling of the PRK regime leading to the establishment of a provisional government.

86. The Vietnamese were pressured by the Soviets to drop their demand for a political solution before a full withdrawal would occur. See "Peace Offensive," Asiaweek (9 October 1989):17; and John Schidlovsky, "War has crippled the people and the economy," Sydney Morning Herald (17 December 1988):18.


and the holding of general elections under international supervision. An international peace keeping force (IPKF) would not only safeguard free elections but would also protect the new regime against overthrow by the Khmer Rouge. Hun Sen responded favourably, however he would not relinquish control over Kampuchea until elections were held.89

In a Pravda editorial, Vsevolod Ovchinnikov acknowledged that "both the [Soviet Union and China] have the possibility to facilitate the success of the negotiations - to promote contacts between the opposing sides."90 Chinese journalists, however, were not as keen to admit their governments's ability to influence events in Indochina. In the Beijing Review, while the Chinese previously called for the Soviet Union to apply greater pressure on the Vietnamese, Wan Guong stressed: "As a matter of principle, issues in all parts of the world should mainly be resolved through consultation among the concerned countries in the region."91


The Chinese, Khmer Rouge and KPNLF feared that Sihanouk would go his own way, forging an alliance with Hun Sen, leaving the others behind. The groups' fears were exacerbated by the resignation of Sihanouk as President of the CGDK at the end of January. Sihanouk reproached the Chinese for their refusal to disarm all Khmer factions, accusing them of wanting to keep the Khmer Rouge armed.

The Khmer Rouge, probably realizing that because they continued to be the strongest force militarily, claimed that the Prince would return to the CGDK.

While the Chinese and their allies were mistrustful of Sihanouk, the Prince and the PRK were themselves fearful of the Khmer Rouge. In a People's Republic of Kampuchea Armed Forces (PRKAF) March 1988 confidential report, the PRK government revealed its frustration at the army's inability to prevent the Khmer Rouge from "infiltrating remote areas, building its underground network and collecting information and foreign villagers to join the Khmer Rouge." With the


93. Pilch, 51, and Becker, 17.

94. Becker, 170.

95. Bekaert, "Cambodia: A nasty little war," in International Defence Review 3 (1989):290. Also see Tom Fawthrop, "Cause for Optimism," FEER (3 March 1988):18. The Chinese had armed the Khmer Rouge with AK-47 and SKS rifles, B-40 rocket launchers, RPGs, 12.7mm heavy machine guns, and mortars from 60 to 120mm. See Bekaert, 290, who puts NADK forces at 25,000 regulars. The number of Khmer Rouge range from Chanda's estimate of 15-20,000 troops (see p.131 of this work), to 30,000 as proposed by Field, "Sihanouk-ACT II," 31. There is general consensus that the Khmer Rouge outnumber the combined forces of the KPNLF and ANS. It
Khmer Rouge working in small, undetectable groups, they engaged in the military assassination of PRK cadres and were believed, according to East European sources, to have "vast" networks of informers and agents within the PRK administration.\textsuperscript{96}

Even though the Heng Samrin regime recognized that the inclusion of some elements of the Khmer Rouge in the political process was necessary, the disbanding of the powerful NADK was imperative. When asked what type of solution could be reached without the participation of the Khmer Rouge, Hun Sen replied:

\begin{quote}
We can negotiate a general solution or a partial solution. A partial solution is the People's Republic of Kampuchea and Sihanouk agreement.\textsuperscript{97}
\end{quote}

Any complete solution to the Kampuchean crisis would entail the Khmer Rouge as participants within the peace process. One should note however that their inclusion in negotiations would not preclude compliance by the Khmer Rouge to the demands of the other parties. While Khieu Samphan was wary of the peace process itself, labelling it as an attempt "to make sure the Vietnamese continue occupying" Kampuchea, the Khmer Rouge used negotiations as a means to maintain a

\begin{quote}
should be noted however that even a small number of guerrilla type forces can cause havoc.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{96} Bekaert, 291.

\textsuperscript{97} Fawthrop, 18-19. In addition, Hun Sen stressed the PRK's independence from Vietnam. Also see Jon Swain, "Kampuchea and the turning back of the clock to...Day 1, Year 0," The Australian (28 June 1988):13.
certain powerhold over the process. The crux of the matter truly lay with the Khmer Rouge military might - something that neither they nor the Chinese would dare weaken.

Calling for the complete withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Indochina, Beijing argued that the Vietnamese position was flawed. Vietnam's estimation of troop numbers did not take into account "volunteer forces" and according to the Chinese:

As the aggressor Viet Nam has no right to make the exclusion of the Khmer Rouge, which has been fighting against its invasion, a precondition for the withdrawal of its troops from Kampuchea.

In June, China's allegiance to the Khmer Rouge was again attacked with accusations of China promising asylum to Pol Pot should it help bring about a political settlement. On 24 June, Beijing categorically denied the allegations which had been put forth in the Washington Post.

The Thai were also sceptical about the Vietnamese offer to withdraw. They argued that it would be easy for Vietnam to retain its Khmer speaking soldiers in Kampuchea and claim

98. Becker, 171.


100. "Kampuchean peace hopes rise as China offers refuge to Pol Pot," Sydney Morning Herald (20 June 1988); Becker, 171; Swain, 13.
that they are part of the PRKAF. In a move to diminish Thai influence Vietnamese Foreign Minister Thach asked for the help of his old foe, the United States. He argued that the,

United States should try and persuade Thailand to deny sanctuary to the Khmer Rouge and cut Chinese supply lines in return for a total Vietnamese withdrawal and a coalition government in Cambodia under Sihanouk.

The Vietnamese had their own incentives to consider withdrawal. On 3 July, in an unprecedented move, Vietnam's rulers admitted the loss of more than 55,000 men in the Third Indochina War. As well, Vietnam's own economy needed a complete overhaul to avoid its collapse.

On 1 July, to coincide with the ASEAN Foreign Minister's 4-5 July meeting, China advanced another peace proposal. China's initiative included measures to ensure that the Khmer Rouge would not regain exclusive power, the establishment of a provisional government before the withdrawal of all Vietnamese troops, and a freeze on all the factions military activities prior to the holding of free


103. Bruce London, "Vietnam plan to settle 700,000 in Kampuchea," The Australian (4 July 1988):5. The Thai concern of Vietnamese moles remaining in Kampuchea still persists. China's policy of bleeding Vietnam white may be assumed to have had an effect on Vietnam's decision to withdraw. See Ch. 3.
elections. In addition, China agreed to consider the implementation of an IPKF.104

Nevertheless, while stating that they would disallow a predominant role for the Khmer Rouge, the Chinese continued to arm their communist ally. The Khmer Rouge not only possessed arms to immediately wage war, reportedly they had arms caches which would allow them to continue making war should the Chinese withdraw their support.105 Hence, Sihanouk argued that any IPKF had to remain in Kampuchea at least five years to ensure that the Khmer Rouge did not "maltreat" the other forces.106

At their meeting, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers aware of the threat Vietnam posed to regional security, also appreciated the concerns of Sihanouk and the PRK with respect to the Khmer Rouge.107

On 10 July, Sihanouk demanded that China stop assisting the Khmer Rouge and that Thailand cease giving sanctuary to

104. Tasker, "Sweetening the cocktail," FEER (14 July 1988): 12; and Becker, 171. Having been accused of agreeing to harbour Pol Pot should the need arise, China found itself in basic agreement with the United States that the Chinese would not support the return of the Khmer Rouge to a dominant role in Kampuchea. See Catherine Sampson, "US and China vow to block comeback by Khmer Rouge," Time (16 July 1988):9.


106. Steketee, 8.

them, arguing that only China and Thailand could prevent the return of the Khmer Rouge to power. He stated:

They [the Khmer Rouge] live and grow thanks only to the (aid) of China and thanks to the (delivery) of that aid by Thailand. As long as China and Thailand do not drop the Khmer Rouge, the problem...will never be resolved.108

Sihanouk also called for the vacating of the Democratic Kampuchean seat at the United Nations. He was later persuaded by China to drop the demand. As well, the Prince resigned as president of the CGDK, stating that he believed the Khmer Rouge were a greater threat than the Vietnamese. He hoped that his resignation would isolate the Khmer Rouge and thereby weaken them. Sihanouk also argued for an IPKF citing Khmer Rouge opposition to it as proof of its effectiveness.109

What was heralded as an important conference on the path to a political settlement appeared to only offer the usual rhetoric. On 25 July, the four Kampuchean factions, together with Vietnam, Laos and ASEAN, participated in the Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM I). Although each faction, except the Khmer Rouge, submitted peace proposals, each party proved as intransigent as ever. One positive result of the conference nevertheless, was that it did stimulate further negotiations.


It was obvious that the Khmer Rouge had wanted to see what was proposed at JIM I before making their own initiatives to try and discredit both Sihanouk’s disapprobation of them and demands for a cessation of Thai and Chinese assistance. On 15 August, the Khmer Rouge disclosed their own ideas for a settlement.

On the surface the Khmer Rouge seemed quite generous. They agreed to the establishment of a quadripartite government headed by Sihanouk who, following a dismantling of both the Heng Samrin regime and the CGDK, would organize elections for a new government. As well, they sanctioned the convening of an international conference which would adopt measures ensuring "the [Khmer Rouge] does not abuse other parties and that all other Cambodian parties do not abuse one another and, at the same time, to ensure that [Vietnam] cannot return to commit aggression against Cambodia." Following a political settlement the Khmer Rouge consented that they would reduce their force numbers to the same level as other parties forming a quadripartite national army. A ceasefire would be ratified once it was established that all the "forces of aggression from Cambodia" had been withdrawn.


111. Bekaert, "New search for peace in Cambodia," Guardian (8 August 1988):14; Simon Long, "China and Kampuchea: Political Football on the Killing Fields," Pacific Review 2, no. 2 (1989):153; and Hiebert, 32. At roughly the same time as the Khmer Rouge proposal, NADK forces overran pro-Vietnamese forces in the Pailin area indicating that the military offensive was still important to the Khmer Rouge. See Bekaert, 14. On other Khmer Rouge gains see Paisal
Perhaps due to the American pressure that Thach had called for, or a realization that the Khmer Rouge image was tarnishing even more, the Thai decided to reevaluate their own position. Kraisak Choonhaven, son of Thailand's Prime Minister, announced that: "Thailand must take the initiative if China doesn't change its stand toward the Khmer Rouge."112

In another challenge to the Khmer Rouge both the Soviet Union and China were now discussing Kampuchea at the Deputy Foreign Minister level. The Soviets and Chinese still differed over whether Sihanouk should head a provisional organ, as Moscow suggested, or a provisional government, as Beijing proposed, both with quadripartite representation; but, at least there was progress towards a healthier dialogue. China reiterated that there would be no return to the policies and practices of the recent past.113 While the talks were going on, Xinhua News Agency reported that the Vietnamese were insincere in their plan to withdraw, disguising their troops in the uniforms of Cambodian soldiers. A Soviet Southeast Asia specialist in response to the Chinese allegation and despite Chinese claims to the contrary about supporting the Khmer Rouge, stated:


113. Long, 153. Zhao Ziyang told a Japanese delegation that the Khmer Rouge would not be allowed to assume exclusive power, and that the Heng Samrin regime must not be allowed to continue in power. See Robert Delfs, "Passing the test," FEER (3 November 1988):36.
The Chinese obsession with the troop withdrawal raises certain doubts...In fact, they have put their stake on the return of the Khmer Rouge to Phnom Penh.114

The important outcome of the Sino-Soviet dialogue, as Robert Delfs observes, was the Soviet Union's willingness to acknowledge China's right to play a regional role in Southeast Asia.115

However, as Chanda suggests, the game was getting tougher. While in the summer of 1988 American aid was pegged at US$35 million per annum in covert CIA assistance (non-lethal), and US$3 million in official humanitarian aid to the non-communist factions of the CGDK, Sihanouk hinted that this might be increased and expanded to include lethal aid. A United States House of Representatives and Senate joint resolution called for the United States to "use all appropriate means available to prevent a return to power of Pol Pot, the top echelons of the Khmer Rouge, and their armed forces."116 The augmented concern over Indochina by the United States was partially due to Sihanouk's lamentations that China had decreased its aid to the non-communist factions. As well, according to one American administration source:

115. Delfs, 36-37.
The big difference now and earlier years is that now there is discreet cooperation between the ANS and the Heng Samrin regime and the US aid is going to strengthen Sihanouk against the Khmer Rouge.117

Arguably, American assistance could do more harm than good by strengthening the non-communist forces to a point where civil war between the various factions could go on in perpetuity. In effect, one might assume an American loss of confidence in the political process.

Probably sensing increasing international concern about the Khmer Rouge, on 3 November 1988, one would see China support for the first time a United Nations resolution which tacitly condemned the Khmer Rouge. The resolution on Kampuchea stated that there must be no return to "the universally condemned policies and practices of the recent past."118

However, a Peking based diplomat noted the Chinese concern that too much emphasis was placed on the Khmer Rouge role and not enough on the Vietnamese withdrawal.119 At a November meeting between Sihanouk, Hun Sen and Son Sann, at


Fere-en-Tardenois, the Khmer Rouge were again absent. The Prince against Hun Sen's call for a disbanding of the Khmer Rouge conceded, in a statement similar to the Chinese position, the right and necessity of Khmer Rouge participation in the negotiation process. He stated: "You cannot push the Khmer Rouge to the wall without beginning a new and vicious civil war..."120

Reacting to the negative climate enveloping the Khmer Rouge, Li Peng on a visit to New Zealand stressed that China would most certainly not support the Khmer Rouge once the Vietnamese had withdrawn from Kampuchea. In addition, Li suggested China might consider cutting aid to the Khmer Rouge if a definitive timetable for the Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea could be set.121 Yet, the Beijing Review reported that Li supported a quadripartite coalition and opposed any single party "to be excluded or to take power exclusively."122

Perhaps sensing Li's and other PRC leaders' disgruntlement with the Khmer Rouge, not having participated in previous meetings between the various factions, on 25 November


122. The Beijing Review article in which this is cited also reaffirms China's support for the Khmer Rouge July 18 peace proposal. Note my italics, stressing that Khmer Rouge inclusion in the process is imperative. See "Li: Principles on Kampuchea and ASEAN," Beijing Review (21-27 November 1988):5.
following calls by China for the Khmer Rouge to be more flexible, Khieu Samphan sent a cable to Sihanouk stating his willingness to participate in a meeting of all the factions at the Prince's earliest convenience.123

At another level of the diplomatic game, during the first visit of a Chinese Foreign Minister to Moscow since 1957, Qian Qichen held talks with the Soviets in early December, with Kampuchea dominating the agenda.124

Probably fearing a Sino-Soviet rapprochement which could diminish the Khmer Rouge role in Southeast Asia, Khieu Samphan attempted to appease Sihanouk. Meeting with the Prince on 15 December, Khieu Samphan agreed to accept Sihanouk's peace plan and stated that Pol Pot had stepped back from the leadership of the Khmer Rouge.125


125. Becker, 200; and "Pol Pot has 'stepped back'," The Australian (16 December 1988):8. John Hayes however claimed that Pol Pot remained in power, directing military operations from a base near the western province of Ko Kong. Hayes also states that the Khmer Rouge fear of a warmer Sino-Soviet relationship led them to try and gain as much ground as possible before a Vietnamese withdrawal. See Hayes, "Thailand to police Khmer Rouge camps," The Age (12 December 1988):8. Lindsay Murdoch reported that Pol Pot was operating from within Thailand's Trat province. See Murdoch, "Old Enemies get together in search of Cambodian peace," The Age (19 January 1989):3. James Pringle in "Pol Pot to be dumped by China," The Australian (2 February 1989):8, claims that a special unit of the Thai army, Task Force 838, is responsible for Pol Pot's security and that of Ieng Sary and Ta Mok.
On 21 December 1988, at a meeting of all the Cambodian factions in Fere-en-Tardenois little was accomplished. This time a stalemate arose because of Sihanouk's insistence that all participants had to agree to his peace plan. 126

Thailand's position also wavered following the Sino-Soviet meetings. In January, Hun Sen was received in Thailand and Thai Foreign Minister Sitthi Sawetsila travelled to Hanoi to meet with his counterpart. The Thai Foreign Minister indicated that his and Thach's positions were approximating each other. Shortly after the Thai-Vietnamese announcement the Chinese agreed to meet with Hanoi officials. 127

The first round of Sino-Vietnamese normalization talks were held 13-17 January 1989, between Vietnamese Vice-Foreign Minister Dinh Nho Liem and Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Liu Shuqing. Then on 20 January, Liem met with Chinese Foreign Minister Qian. 128 In early February, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze held talks with Qian and Deng Xiaoping primarily discussing Kampuchea. On 5 February, in a joint statement, both parties appreciated the need, following the withdrawal of the Vietnamese, for a halting of


arms assistance to the warring parties of Kampuchea and a freezing of the armed forces.129

Undoubtedly fearing the cessation of arms aid, the Khmer Rouge having concentrated on the political initiative over the past few years were again preparing themselves militarily. There were reports of the Khmer Rouge conscripting villagers to plant land mines and act as ammunition porters. As well, Khmer Rouge rocket sites had been found very near Phnom Penh and in an effort to keep out external influence at the O'Trao camp there was the savage burning down of a United Nations hospital. Of the 50-60,000 refugees being held in United Nations sponsored camps in Thailand under Khmer Rouge control, more than 6,000 of these were reported to have been forcefully taken into the interior of Kampuchea to act as a bulwark against the Vietnamese.130


In early February, Sihanouk had realized that the meetings between Vietnam, China and Thailand could lead to his political demise. On 2 February, he complained that recent diplomatic activity will turn Kampuchea into a "Thai-Vietnamese condominium" with China acting as overseer.

Probably fearing isolation, Sihanouk closed ranks with the other members of the CGDK at the Jakarta Second Informal (JIM II) meeting held 21-22 February. The Prince was reinstated President of the CGDK, arguing for a continued Khmer Rouge presence in the negotiation process. However all the Khmer factions demanded that measures be taken to prevent the recurrence of genocidal policies and practices of the Pol Pot regime and the resumption of armed hostilities...

As well, all the Khmer factions called for, in tandem with Vietnamese withdrawal, a stop to interference and the external supply of arms. They however refused to sign a final joint statement and meet at a closing news conference, hinting that some personal differences remained.


132. Long, 156, argues that Sihanouk called for a continued military and political presence for the Khmer Rouge. John Pedler, 19, states that Sihanouk wanted the Chinese and Thai to drop their support for the Khmer Rouge thereby weakening them.


Khieu Samphan at JIM II had refused to rule out a future role for Pol Pot. And earlier on a Khmer Rouge cadre warned that: "If there is a quadripartite government, we will disband. If not, we will fight on." While having stated that they would lay down their arms if the Vietnamese withdrew their forces, doubting Vietnamese sincerity, Khieu Samphan urged the Thai and Chinese to continue assisting the Khmer Rouge. He stated: "We believe Thailand and other countries will not be so naive as to cease support for the resistance forces now [that] the situation is bleak for Vietnam."

The Khmer Rouge hesitancy to make firm, concrete endeavours to disarm and concentrate solely on the political arena would indicate that a metamorphosis of the Khmer Rouge was not occurring but rather the apparent change of heart was a tactical manoeuver. When Khmer Rouge United Nation's representative Thioun Prasith was asked, "What you are saying is that the transformation is not really deep or sincere but that it has to be done?," he replied, "Yes I agree." Pol Pot was now thought to be operating from across the Oddar in what was known as camp V4. He

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135. Long, 155.


reportedly told commanders to prepare to occupy one half of Battambang Province once Vietnamese troops pulled out.\textsuperscript{139}

In one of the greatest threats to the Khmer Rouge, Deng and Chatichai in a 17 March meeting, stated that:

\begin{quote}
\textit{a political settlement must be accompanied by the elimination of elements who may cause civil war.}\textsuperscript{140}
\end{quote}

According to Chinese and Thai declaratory policy a political settlement could mean the disbanding of the Khmer Rouge. Of course, even if concrete steps were taken by Thailand and China to weaken the Khmer Rouge, this would not necessarily mean that the Khmer Rouge could not "hold their own" with the benefits of material and territorial acquisition.

On 5 April, the Vietnamese pledged the unconditional withdrawal of their troops from Kampuchea by 30 September 1989. Within a few days on 7 April, Sihanouk asked France to organize an international conference on Kampuchea. By May, it was both Sihanouk and more significantly Hun Sen who regained the diplomatic initiative. Now that Vietnam had decided on a withdrawal date, the PRK had to prepare itself for a period when Vietnamese forces would not be present to support the Vietnamese installed regime.

\textsuperscript{139} Lindsay Murdoch, "The Ogre Who Stalks Cambodia's Future," \textit{The Age} (25 April 1989):11.

\textsuperscript{140} For the entire statement see "Sino-Thai Talks on Kampuchea," \textit{Beijing Review} (2 April 1989):7.
On 1 May, in a move to assuage Sihanouk, Hun Sen renamed the People's Republic of Kampuchea, the State of Cambodia (SOC). In talks held between Sihanouk and Hun Sen 2-3 May, the two leaders agreed to the formation of an International Control Commission (ICC) which would oversee the Vietnamese withdrawal. Sihanouk would also consider returning to Cambodia as head of state in a coalition which would effectively pit itself against the Khmer Rouge following Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia. The Prince announced his willingness to break ranks with the Khmer Rouge if they refused his peace plan. However, Phnom Penh first had to amend the Cambodian constitution and form a quadripartite coalition government. While Hun Sen revised the constitution he reiterated his opposition to any Khmer Rouge participation in an interim government. The Khmer Rouge would only be allowed to participate in a commission which would set up and ensure free elections. Because of this stumbling block, Sihanouk warned that there would be no support from the Khmer Rouge.141

Meeting with Hun Sen 6 May, Thai Prime Minister Chatichai proposed a ceasefire agreement which would remove any pretext the Vietnamese might use to return to Cambodia. Khieu Samphan rejected the proposal which would restrain any military manoeuvres the Khmer Rouge might be engaged in. As well, Khieu Samphan in a joint press conference with Sihanouk declared that the Khmer Rouge would only recognize the Vietnamese withdrawal once a quadripartite government was established.142

Thailand, having halted artillery support to the Khmer Rouge, had promised that it would no longer aid the resistance forces once the Vietnamese had withdrawn. In a meeting of the Vietnamese and Chinese Deputy Foreign Ministers, China also announced that it would cut the flow of aid once the Vietnamese withdrew.143

While the Vietnamese and the Khmer Rouge were said to be mounting new offensives and the Khmer Rouge were shifting refugees further into the Cardamomes, away from the Thai and international relief agencies, the Khmer Rouge leadership released a revised peace proposal.144 On 12 May, the Khmer Rouge...


144. The various military manoeuvres can be found in, "The menace in the mountains," The Economist (20 May 1989):28; Sricharatchanya, 24; "Sihanouk Makes Concession in Jakarta...
Rouge accepted that supervision was necessary not only for the Vietnamese withdrawal but also for a ceasefire following the withdrawal and for the disarming of all the factions. Following withdrawal there would be a reduction of forces to an agreed level.145

Hun Sen contested that even if a settlement was reached the Khmer Rouge would continue fighting a guerrilla war.146 Son Sen of the Khmer Rouge however argued that following a Vietnamese withdrawal, an illusory action as he perceived the Vietnamese offer a trick, the Khmer Rouge would create a nationalist political party and compete in general elections. He went on to state that the Khmer Rouge would abide by any election results and would not wage civil war to solve Cambodian differences.147

The present battle, according to Son Sen, had been transformed from a revolutionary war into a guerrilla war as it was now "waged by the population to liberate the country."148 General Tran Cong Man, editor of Vietnamese Talks," 85-86; Hiebert, "Standing alone," FEER, (29 June 1989):18; and Chanda, "Going it alone,":10-11.


146. Williams, "War 'inevitable' despite progress at peace talks," 21.


148. Karmiol, 784.
Quan Doi Nhan Dan stated that the Khmer Rouge now occupied between 10-20 per cent of Cambodia. "Of course," he stated, "once they hold 20% in remote areas, then guerrilla warfare could last a long time."149

Meeting in Paris 30 July-1 August, nineteen countries plus the four Khmer factions tried to find a political solution to the Cambodian quagmire. Even though China appeared more flexible, undoubtedly not wanting to appear intransigent following the massacre in Tienanmen Square of 4 June, and was reluctant to give its resolute support to the Khmer Rouge, there would be no radical change of policy and thus no political settlement.

The major problem to be resolved was how to contain the Khmer Rouge in a future quadripartite government. While on the political front China had unsuccessfully pressured the Khmer Rouge to consider a smaller, less proportionate role in a future coalition regime, militarily there was little movement on the establishment of an IPKF.150 One Western diplomat stated: "The bottom line is that [the establishment of an IPKF] looks discouraging - in fact it looks increasingly like suicide to send our soldiers in to fight a desperate Khmer Rouge..."151

149. Hiebert, 18.


151. Robinson, 18 and 33.
As one analyst contends, in order to arrive at a political settlement the various factions had to agree to a scheme for power sharing, and both China and Vietnam had to remove Cambodia out of their "balance of power calculations."152

Vietnam was calling for an Afghanistan type situation whereby external forces would withdraw and leave the existing regime to rebuild itself. As no surprise, China and the Khmer Rouge rejected such a suggestion which would leave the PRK regime in power. Vietnam's proposed withdrawal was seen as a way of keeping the PRK regime intact or enhanced by Sihanouk's participation.153 Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Liu Shuqing stated:

> We don't believe that this is a real and complete withdrawal because Vietnam showed no sincerity at the conference. Without sincerity and effective supervision, the withdrawal is unbelievable.154

Not only would the Vietnamese have to withdraw their troops but the Khmer Rouge and Chinese also called for the expulsion of a claimed 1.2 million Vietnamese settlers. Hun Sen bitterly responded by demanding the complete disbanding of both the political and military wings of the Khmer Rouge.155

153. Ibid.
154. Delfs, "Repeating the lesson," 23.
All the Khmer factions were militarily preparing for the withdrawal of the Vietnamese. State of Cambodia forces had expanded the size of the militia with a build up in regional forces as well. It was claimed that at its current level the SOC could hold its own in a guerrilla war.\footnote{156}{Robinson, 18 and 20.}

There was some speculation as to disunity among the ranks of the Khmer Rouge. Ta Mok, it was believed, wanted to fight to the death, whereas Ieng Sary took a more conciliatory approach.\footnote{157}{Field, Tasker and Hiebert, 16.} It appeared that the more radical approach prevailed, as Khmer Rouge forces were being ordered to fight until the last Vietnamese soldier and civilian was driven from Cambodia.\footnote{158}{Tasker and Hiebert, MA test of arms," FEER (28 September 1989):21.} While there were threats that Thailand would drop its assistance to the Khmer Rouge, NADK forces were storing arms caches for just that eventuality.\footnote{159}{The Thai said that they were waiting for the United States to act against the Khmer Rouge before they closed the Chinese supply route. See Robinson, 20; and Field, Tasker and Hiebert, 15. For the American position see Susumu Awanohara, "Spreading the bets," FEER (28 September 1989):24.} As well, according to Thai sources, despite Chinese rhetoric, all three Cambodian factions were receiving increasingly large amounts of aid from the PRC.\footnote{160}{Tasker and Hiebert, "A test of arms," 20.} The fact that China was assisting all three factions might lead one to conclude that China may want a civil war. For as long as Cambodia

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{156}{Robinson, 18 and 20.}
\item \footnote{157}{Field, Tasker and Hiebert, 16.}
\item \footnote{158}{Tasker and Hiebert, "A test of arms," FEER (28 September 1989):21.}
\item \footnote{159}{The Thai said that they were waiting for the United States to act against the Khmer Rouge before they closed the Chinese supply route. See Robinson, 20; and Field, Tasker and Hiebert, 15. For the American position see Susumu Awanohara, "Spreading the bets," FEER (28 September 1989):24.}
\item \footnote{160}{Tasker and Hiebert, "A test of arms," 20.}
\end{itemize}
was in the throws of war China would not have to fear a Soviet-Vietnamese condominium in the region.

As proposed, the Vietnamese did withdraw their troops at the end of September, with the final 26,000 troops leaving Cambodia 26 September. Vietnamese withdrawal has not meant peace. There are still the displaced Vietnamese living in Cambodia which are seen suspiciously by China and the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge and some East European diplomats suggested that several thousand Vietnamese troops and military advisers had returned to Cambodia at the end of October. Indeed Vietnamese Ambassador to Phnom Penh, Ngo Dien admitted that an undisclosed number of military advisers had returned on the PRK's request to help with logistical problems in Cambodia's north-west, repair tanks and other military vehicles, and train recruits and officers. Allegations by the Khmer Rouge that there were at least 5,000 Vietnamese troops around Battambang and Sisophon were denied by Cambodia's First Deputy Foreign Minister Dith Munty. By February 1990 the Khmer Rouge claimed that there were some 17,000 Vietnamese troops stationed in Cambodia. What is most important is not whether the troops are there or not, or whether the Vietnamese are merely advisers, the Khmer Rouge statement clearly indicates that they will use any Vietnamese presence as a way of


blocking a resolution to the Cambodian imbroglio through diplomatic means.

China's support for the Khmer Rouge has not diminished following the Vietnamese withdrawal. On the 40th anniversary of the PRC on 26 September, newly selected Communist Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin announced that China would continue following a leftwing political orthodox outlook. This in turn would probably mean a continuation of support for the Khmer Rouge if considerable pressure could not be exerted on China to discontinue its support for them.

The Khmer Rouge were found to be testing their might in a number of areas. Reports that they were concentrating on getting their political machine in order, leaving military initiatives to Sihanouk and Son Sann, seemed to be unfounded as Ta Mok had moved troops under his command into the Western provinces of Pursat and Kompong Speu. While there were continued reports of severe brutality, reminiscent of the 1975-78 era, it was said that in the refugee camps a more civil Khmer Rouge, promoting education and worldly knowledge, reigned.

Nevertheless, by 22 October, the Khmer Rouge had captured the town of Pailin, and were moving towards the city of Battambang with the Khmer Rouge reportedly destroying two


bridges on the main Battambang to Phnom Penh road by January 1990. As well, there were unconfirmed reports of the Khmer Rouge seizing Samlot province at the end of October.165

A number of analysts recognize that the dry season offensive of 1989-90 was crucial for the Khmer Rouge.166 In the October to May period there has been a testing of Hun Sen's will and strength, which will no doubt help the Khmer Rouge launch a more effective attack next year. However, there is a danger in such a strategy for the Khmer Rouge. As Delfs indicates the international community will become:

increasingly uncomfortable if the results of the dry season fighting suggest that resistance coalition leader Prince Norodom Sihanouk is indeed only a figleaf and that the Khmer Rouge is the only militarily viable resistance force.167

Fearing a Khmer Rouge comeback, various supporters of the Khmer resistance could drop any assistance to them, doing an about face by supporting the Hun Sen regime as the legitimate government of Cambodia. What has been labelled the "Australian initiative" has in many ways attempted to do just that.


166. Tasker and Hiebert, 21.

167. Delfs, "Repeating the lesson," 23.
The proposal put forth by Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans on 24 November 1989 was yet another attempt at reaching a political solution to the Cambodian crisis. The proposal's premise was that rather than seek a power sharing formula which would undoubtedly fail, the United Nations should be directly involved in seeking a solution to the Cambodian problem and encourage an appropriate change in the Cambodian seat at the United Nations. The goal of the initiative was to facilitate the holding of free and fair elections setting in place a framework which would facilitate the establishment of a neutral, sovereign, non-aligned and independent Cambodia.

Evans, having had assistance from US Congressman Stephen Solarz in formulating the proposal, recommended that a Supreme National Council (SNC), which would act as the repository of Cambodian sovereignty in a transitional period, that time between the implementation of a comprehensive agreement and the holding of national elections, be established. The Council could either comprise: the four factions, be bipartite with representatives of the CGDK and the SOC, have prominent members of the four factions in an individual capacity, or have non-party officials in addition to party officials.

168. Unless otherwise stated the details about the Australian initiative in this next section have been taken from an address made by Gareth Evans, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, to Sydney Institute 13 March 1990; and Cambodia: Issues for Negotiation in a Comprehensive Settlement. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, February 1990. Initial reactions to the Australian initiative are noted, even though they extend slightly beyond the cut-off date of this thesis.
Any of the four options provided for the composition of the SNC are based on the belief that an accommodation can be reached and that there is general compatibility, something which unfortunately has not been witnessed for quite some time. While it is true there is dialogue between Sihanouk and Hun Sen and Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge, the various alliances whether they be by individuals or parties, vacillate frequently depending on the political gains which can be made at any given moment.

Even though the five members of the UN Security Council, including China and the Soviet Union agreed in February 1990 to the goal of a transitional government and UN peacekeeping role, there were serious flaws in such a composition according to both the SOC and the Khmer Rouge. Hun Sen fearful of relinquishing power and of military defeat by CGDK forces while agreeing on a SNC, suggested that there be a temporary division of the SOC into two administrative zones to be controlled separately by his government and the Khmer Rouge resistance forces. While the United Nations could have a role in the organizing of elections and monitoring of a ceasefire, administration of Cambodia would have to be divided. For the other factions, the dismantling of Hun Sen's government was a prerequisite to any solution. Allowing the Hun Sen regime to operate alongside a UN administration would give it de jure versus de facto recognition.169 The Khmer Rouge have stated that they would

accept a substantial role for the UN, however they insist on a quadripartite provisional government which would be installed prior to the calling of a ceasefire and the holding of national elections.170

If a SNC were created the chance that the Khmer Rouge would voluntarily give up its seat in the UN is almost non-existant. As Ben Kiernan indicates, even if there were a schism between Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge, the 1982 coalition agreement stipulates that the Khmer Rouge would remain Cambodia's UN representative. As Carlyle A. Thayer and Kiernan suggest the only way to remove the Khmer Rouge from the UN seat would be to convict them of Genocide, thus allowing outside powers to force them out.171 Evans' own proposal suggests that a change in status of the UN seat could be done in letter to the Secretary General from the SNC, or along Kiernan's lines by the Credentials Committee and the General Assembly, which again would rest with the SNC, the cyclical flaw in Evans' plan. Although the removal of the Khmer Rouge from the UN seat is highly desirable this does not preclude that they will not continue to wage civil war. It is even more probable that the Khmer Rouge will be less cooperative in any political undertakings.


If the UN were to have a role in a transitional period there is the problem of the substitution of authority. According to the Australian proposal one could have wholesale replacements brought in or substitutions of those in either leadership or administrative positions. The difficulty again rests with Hun Sen's desire to remain in control. With respect to the Khmer Rouge, which has been reluctant to reveal anything about its leadership and administrative organs in the past, it is doubtful that it would now expose its own authoritative and administrative arms to the scrutiny of the UN, for such a move would make any guerrilla campaign vulnerable.

Evans did make provisions for additional authority which would have jurisdiction above or alongside existing administrations. While such a proposal would be more ammenable to Hun Sen (he and Sihanouk endorsed such a plan in February 1990) the Khmer Rouge concerns are still not dealt with. Monitoring of the various administrations is another possibility but a very risky one with no guarantees that all parties will respect, or for that matter give total access to, UN administrators.

There is also the difficulty of policing. Evans proposed the partial or total disbanding of existing police forces with the replacement of them by UN forces. However once again there are no assurances that the UN forces could

maintain control over guerrilla forces which know the terrain better than any other occupying force.

Indeed as is often the complaint about UN peace-keeping operations, there are little or no means of enforcing any abrogations in the agreement other than those stipulated under the UN Charter. The Australian proposal itself states that the agency in charge of policing Cambodia, the United Nations Cambodia Task Force Control (UNCTFC), role is "to supervise, monitor and verify agreements made by all Cambodian parties, not to enforce them...."173

Some military measures would have to be taken to ensure that there would not be a recurrence of hostilities during a ceasefire. While the military branches of the four factions would remain intact, weapons custody measures have been proposed. However with the Khmer Rouge having arms caches in unknown areas there are no assurances that these arms could not be used at a time of their choosing. The rooting out of guerrilla detachments would also be problematic. In addition there would have to be a withdrawal of foreign troops, with a commitment to their non-return. The presence of Vietnamese advisers and even Vietnamese residents in Cambodia could prove a problem as in the past.

While the prospects for peace in Cambodia have exacted a very high price already, one cannot ignore the enormous

complexities and costs involved in mobilizing such a UN task force. With a minimum of some 2500 UN police, 5,500 UN troops and 5,000 administrative staff the cost of implementing the Australian campaign for 12 months would be US$1.3 billion or US$1.7 billion for 18 months.174 If we recall, Sihanouk himself has said that any UN presence would require at least five years before the Khmer Rouge threat would be diminished to a manageable level.175 Even if the costs were met, with the Khmer Rouge estimated at a higher number than that of the UN forces, it is most improbable that they could be kept under control. Having ruled Cambodia for eleven years, the SOC forces would have the greatest opportunity to restrain the Khmer Rouge. It would appear that international recognition, not necessarily meaning support, coupled with a cessation of external assistance to the various factions, would be the optimal choice.176

China is the key to the solution. If Beijing were willing to cease its assistance this would help anti-Khmer Rouge forces gain the upper hand. For China to support the Hun Sen regime would require a reevaluation of the new political realities in Southeast Asia - a thing the PRC leaders are hesitant to do. Nevertheless, Evans' proposal has gained favourable response from the PRC which has labelled it as


175. See p.139 of this work.

176. These ideas are commensurate with those of Ben Kiernan, stated in "Time is ripe for Evans to dump the Khmer Rouge."
"positive" and "realistic," promoting an increased UN role. In addition Beijing is no longer insisting on a quadripartite transitional government. One is not certain whether the slight change in attitude is to gain political advantage or whether this is a true change in policy, although the former is more plausible.

The utility of Evans' plan is that it provides a number of options for consideration. As well, the plan has mobilized the support of the international community, through the workings of all five members of the Security Council. Unfortunately at the peace conference held in Jakarta 27 February 1990, the four Cambodian participants could not come to an agreement. The stated reason for failure was that the Khmer Rouge would not allow any reference made to its genocidal practices of the past, something that the other factions insisted on. The real reasons for failure no doubt relate to the complexities of the proposal already discussed.

CHAPTER 5: Along the Continuum of Small and Great Power Relations

For the small power the game of great power politics is a very precarious one to play. As Vital noted, the small state is dispensable, and is a non-decisive increment to a primary state's powers.1 The Khmer Rouge wavered between success and failure in this game.

In the 1975-1978 period when they ruled Kampuchea, Khmer Rouge policies were guided by a strong nationalism with ideological underpinnings. Impassioned chauvinism ensured that the Khmer Rouge prided themselves in maintaining an independent posture. They wanted to be the masters of their own destiny.

In their programme of social reconstruction the Khmer Rouge erred in turning to China for assistance. Increasingly insulated from the rest of the world, rejecting Vietnamese offers of friendship, the Democratic Kampuchean leaders coaxed China to stand firmly on their side. Internal purges of the Democratic Kampuchean party made certain that China would associate itself with the more radical elements of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary.

Convincing the PRC to assist the Khmer Rouge however was not very difficult. Beijing found a friend which could now help in thwarting any Vietnamese or Soviet regional hegemonial

1. See p.2 of this work.
aspirations. The Khmer Rouge would help break the chain which the Chinese believed was trying to encircle them.

Approaching China for material assistance to build a new Kampuchea encroached on the sovereignty of the Khmer leaders. While traditionally a buffer, the realignment of forces led Kampuchea to lean towards one ally thereby placing itself in a patron-client framework. China would now become the principal external policy maker in the Kampuchean conflict.

Following the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge would heavily rely on China's military and political clout to defend Khmer Rouge interests. In an association where the patron, China, had greater bargaining power than the client, the Khmer Rouge, the Chinese would promote the creation of a united front of anti-Vietnamese Khmer factions. The Khmer Rouge had little choice but to comply with China's wishes, for they had now not only leaned to one power but had in fact adopted a neighbour, Thailand, and another power, the PRC, as their guarantors.

China, not interested in easing regional tensions, was instrumental in formulating a coalition of forces which would defend her client's interests. ASEAN with Thailand in particular, and the newly formed CGDK, perpetuated the continued existence of the Khmer Rouge. When either of the latter parties grumbled about the Khmer Rouge, the Chinese convinced them that continued support of the Khmer Rouge was imperative.
Internationally, couched within legalistic arguments, Democratic Kampuchea was comfortably enshrined in the community of nations, to the chagrin of the Vietnamese backed PRK regime. In order to fortify the political legitimacy of the Khmer Rouge, Sihanouk was promoted as chief of the CGDK, while militarily Beijing concentrated on strengthening the Khmer Rouge. A placating amount of aid was given to the non-communist factions.

By 1982, the Khmer Rouge found themselves in what Chong Li Choy labels a reward-recipient relationship. Both China and the Khmer Rouge needed each other for their own political reasons. China continued to assert that it would not abandon the Khmer Rouge, with Chinese assistance helping them grow in numbers.

To mollify the other members of the CGDK and the international community a cosmetic face-lift of the Khmer Rouge was undertaken. Nevertheless Khmer Rouge attacks on their anti-Vietnamese coalition partners continued, helping to weaken them, thereby lending force to the Khmer Rouge's own power.

Due to a number of political initiatives instigated by Prince Sihanouk, the rules of the game changed. China no doubt feared greater collusion between the Heng Samrin regime and the Prince, for if this occurred China would have

2. See p.7 of this work.
great difficulty, if not find it impossible to influence events in Indochina.

Stemming from the changing political scene, the PRC leadership talked of neutralizing the Khmer Rouge. In a dependency relationship where A, the Khmer Rouge, is dependent on B, China, B can be cast aside if A does not feel it is gaining enough in its reward-recipient association.

Choosing the Khmer Rouge rather than siding with the PRK, may have decreased the duration of the Indochina conflict but, the benefits accrued to China might not have been as great. If Beijing had supported the Heng Samrin regime, and not assumed that it was completely in the tow of Vietnam, there could have been a rebuilding of the Cambodian state. This state might have accepted China's hand of friendship, needing economic assistance to grow - something that Vietnam could do less ably then the PRC. However the solution was not so simple for it was obvious Beijing had its own game plan.

Because of the Cambodian crisis China gained a strong ally in the way of Thailand, improved relations with ASEAN member states, taught her old tributary power Vietnam a lesson, and gained a rapprochement with the Soviet Union, all at very little cost to herself. China's support of the Khmer Rouge was then not a faux pas, but rather a pragmatic assessment of what China might gain in supporting the Khmer Rouge.
With Thailand stating that a political solution is needed, Bangkok following an American initiative, might move on its own without China. Even as the post-4 June 1988 Chinese leadership continues to support the Khmer Rouge, a Thai reevaluation of the Indochinese conflict would mean a cutting of the supply lines from the PRC to the Khmer Rouge. Thailand, being a smaller state, can be more readily influenced by international pressures than China. A case in point would be the January 1990 demands by 90 members of the Thai Lower-House of Parliament urging Prime Minister Choonhaven to block foreign arms shipments to the Cambodian resistance - an encouraging initiative.3

In the earlier years of the CGDK the Khmer Rouge more often than not followed on the coat-tails of China's leadership. With the probable realization by the Khmer Rouge that their fate was dictated too much by their Chinese mentors, they began preparing for a period wherein they could be a guerrilla force very much on its own. Too much dependency on China would hamper the growth of the Khmer Rouge.

While in a reward-recipient relationship the recipient can threaten to collapse in order to gain further gifts from the donor, this only works if the donor believes it can exact more from the friendship, and also if the provider has the ways and means to continue support.

China still needs the Khmer Rouge as a bargaining chip in extracting concessions out of Hanoi. Knowing this the Khmer Rouge has some room to manoeuvre. Moreover, with significant forces on the ground and substantial arms caches it can, to an extent, disregard China's directives, or can gain further concessions from Beijing. Undoubtedly the Chinese leadership realizes that the Khmer Rouge have the men and material to disrupt any agreement which is unfavourable to them. With the military situation in Cambodia still very unstable it would not be in the PRC's interest to "sanction" the Khmer Rouge out of existence. The Australian initiative even if salvageable would not preclude a peaceful resolution to the Cambodian crisis. What is needed is confidence, with mistrust dominating any framework cannot work, with or without Chinese support or international pressure. The explicit will of all four Cambodian parties is imperative in order to spell peace.

In the meantime another option for the Khmer Rouge is to try and regain some of its own independence. Hence, to avoid stagnation, arms were stored and political programmes to win over the peasantry were implemented. One can now perceive the Khmer Rouge attempting to return along the continuum to a place where greater autonomy and political power may be had. Following the Vietnamese withdrawal of 1989 the SOC has demanded that the Khmer Rouge be excluded from the political process altogether. For the Khmer Rouge only the military option remains. The road to regaining power would be a long and arduous one with the Khmer Rouge, in the interim,
rebuilding and gaining ground as a guerrilla force. It would appear that the Khmer Rouge believe that they have more to lose through compromise than by fighting.

While neutrality has been suggested as a possible future programme for Cambodia, (e.g. in the Australian proposal) at present it is simply not feasible. The external conditions, especially China's explicit consent to the idea, do not exist. Nor is the concept a credible one with continuing belligerent attitudes among the various Khmer factions. The aims of regional and global actors must be compatible with those of a neutral state. Increasingly it is becoming evident that the Khmer Rouge continue to present a threat to a peaceable Cambodia.

Even if elections were held in Cambodia, there is no guarantee that there will be stable government. For this to occur there would have to be international support with the various backers of the PRK and the resistance forces, ceasing all aid. Again, however, with arms caches the conflict could continue for at least a couple of years if not longer. The Cambodian healing process, having to cure deep historical wounds, will be a lengthy one.

What we are left with therefore, is a bleak picture for Cambodia. Amidst negotiations, peace is not imminent, as the Khmer Rouge continue to move back and forth along the continuum of great power-small power relations.
Appendix I

Chinese agreement of arms to the Khmer Rouge for the 1976-78 period discussed on a visit by Ieng Sary to Beijing in April 1975.

In 1976, we will deliver first of all necessary arms and equipment to give basic training to cadres on-the-spot. This will include:

(1) Part of the equipment of an anti-aircraft artillery regiment, part of the equipment for a radar regiment and equipment for a military airfield.

Four escort vessels and four fast torpedo boats for the naval forces.

Part of the equipment for a tank regiment, part of the equipment for a liaison regiment, part of the equipment for three artillery regiments and the equipment for a battalion of pontoon bridges for infantry use.

Other equipment and arms to be delivered are the following:

(2) Anti-aircraft guns for the Air Force will be delivered in 1977. Radar equipment will be delivered in 1977-78. Combat planes, including bombers, will be delivered according to the rhythm of the training of plane crews and the building of new airfields. Another part of airfield equipment will be delivered in accordance with the tempo of new airfield construction.

As for the six further naval escort vessels, four will be delivered in 1977 and two in 1978. As for the additional eight fast torpedo boats, four will be delivered each year in 1977-78.

The equipment for the three artillery regiments, except for 130mm cannons, will be delivered from the beginning of 1977, the other equipment will be delivered during the last six months of 1976. Equipment for the tank regiment will be successively delivered in 1977-78. Equipment and arms for the liaison regiment will be delivered in 1977. Three hundred kilometers of overhead communication cables will be delivered in 1976, so there remains another 1,000 kilometers. Please let us have your concrete requests about this and we will make arrangements accordingly....

(3) Regarding the procedure and methods of delivery:

The major part of such equipment can be transported by boat and unloaded at Sihanoukville (Kompong Som) port. The planes will have to be dismantled and crated for the transport and will be reassembled in Kampuchea. Submarines and tankers can proceed directly to Kampuchea, but what has
to be done to guarantee the navigation and security of the vessels is a relatively complex question which will require later discussions on the concrete details.

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