THE VIETNAM-KAMPUCHEA-CHINA CONFLICTS:
MOTIVATIONS, BACKGROUND, SIGNIFICANCE

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Introduction

The aim of the seminar from which these papers and discussions derived was to analyse the basic causes and underlying political dynamics of the two related conflicts that were then (September 1978) welling up between Vietnam, Kampuchea and China. Since that time, the earlier low-level violence of 1977-78 has escalated dramatically into open warfare, following the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea on December 25 in support of an insurgent Khmer 'National United Front for National Salvation', the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime and the installation of Heng Samrin as head of a new Kampuchean government backed by Vietnam. These developments resulted in a sharp intensification of the Sino-Soviet rift, a serious blow to China's prestige as Kampuchea's protector, Hanoi's further 'tilt' towards Russia and away from China, and finally the Chinese invasion of Vietnamese territory on 17 February.

This widened the international ramifications of the conflict dangerously at the level of global power politics. Yet although the consequences of this further chain of events have been far-reaching, they do not contradict or outdate significantly the analysis of the motivations and objectives of the various antagonists, as set out in these papers last September. The underlying logic of the situation in which the various antagonists have found themselves has worked itself out inexorably, but not in unexpected ways. The potentiality for an intensified conflict was plain to see even then, although most of us hoped that restraint and moderation would prevail. What none of us could then anticipate was whether the conflicts would escalate, or how far, or with just what effects on the other participants in the drama.

No attempt has been made, therefore, to modify the papers presented here in order to take account of subsequent events. Their

* For the sake of convenience rather than consistency, the terms Kampuchea and Cambodia have both been used interchangeably by different authors in these papers. The name officially used by the Pol Pot regime between 1975-79 was Democratic Kampuchea.
relevance has not been substantially diminished. Most of the key elements in the later situation can nearly all be seen here in embryo. Instead, some brief comments on later events will be given here in order to relate the earlier discussions to the rapidly developing situation of early 1979.

One point that these papers and discussions do underline is that the origins of the two conflicts must be traced back to their local roots; they are not to be explained just in terms of great power rivalries. The latter are important in shaping the international parameters, of course, but it is local factors and attitudes which in the last resort are likely to prove the decisive ones. The intransigence of the Kampuchean regime of Pol Pot towards Hanoi throughout 1977-78 is hard to comprehend unless we take into account the quite extraordinary antagonism Kampuchans have long felt towards the Vietnamese. David Chandler made a revealing observation on the long list of very basic differences between the two peoples, that 'the cultural frontier between Vietnam and Kampuchea (is) ... one of the sharpest in Southeast Asia'. Also important has been the long history of friction between the Communist Party of Kampuchea and the Communist Party of Vietnam, traced here by Ben Kiernan and Carlyle Thayer. In those circumstances the gradual intensification of the disputes between the two governments into open conflict becomes more readily comprehensible, although it still seems almost incredible that the Pol Pot government remained so obdurate against compromise and at times even provocative towards the Vietnamese during the earlier stages of the dispute, when a negotiated settlement might more easily have been achieved. We can now see, as we could not see last September, that by pushing Hanoi's leaders to the point of all-out intervention the leaders of Democratic Kampuchea were bringing about their own downfall.

Likewise, the historical background to China's modes of thinking about her relations with Vietnam is revealing, as Wang Gungwu's fine survey brings out. The view of Indochina from Peking is inevitably very different from Southeast Asian views: yet traditional Chinese views no longer seem to fit the present day situation in the new Southeast Asia.
Mr Whitlam's contribution to the seminar directed attention to another important dimension of the current situation in Vietnam, the refugee problems. We hear little in Australia about the expulsion of Vietnamese from Kampuchea which is creating a flow of refugees into Vietnam far greater than the more widely reported exodus of Chinese refugees from that country. Mr Whitlam had visited Vietnam only a few weeks before the seminar and talked extensively with Vietnamese leaders.

If we compare the political situation that has developed in Indochina since the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea with that which prevailed at the time these papers were given, the most striking difference has been the greater prominence of the international politics of the conflict vis-a-vis the local factors. Although Chinese support for the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea and Soviet support for Vietnam were becoming increasingly important elements in the power equation prior to December 1978, these were essentially secondary rather than primary considerations. They would not have stood in the way of a negotiated settlement if the Hanoi and Phnom Penh authorities had been disposed to reach one. And it seems probable that if such a settlement could have been achieved the Vietnam-China dispute too would have abated. Russia's influence in the whole affair was relatively unimportant at that stage, despite Vietnam's adherence to COMECON in July and the signing of a Russo-Vietnamese Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in November, for the Hanoi leaders were making it very clear that they wanted to avoid falling into too great a dependence on the Soviet Union. There is every reason to believe that if the Pol Pot government had at that stage been replaced from within Kampuchea by one more willing to reach agreement with Vietnam, the conflict would probably not have escalated in the way it did.

The Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea changed the basic power equation quite radically. Not only did it result in the ejection of the Pol Pot government from Phnom Penh and its replacement by a Hanoi-backed government (although without destroying Pol Pot's forces or capturing him, as we shall see), but it also dramatically
reduced China's capacity to influence the course of events there. Because the very speed of the Vietnam armoured *blitzkrieg* enabled it to cut off Pol Pot's forces (and other troops resisting the Vietnamese) from any source of Chinese arms or supplies on a substantial scale, China seemed initially to have been dealt out of the poker game, unless she was prepared to raise the stakes to the dangerous level of threatening an overt invasion of Vietnam on that country's northern frontier, thereby incurring the risk of Soviet counter-measures and some international criticism. After a delay of nearly two months the Chinese did embark upon this course, but neither their motivations nor their precise objectives are yet clearly apparent at the time of writing these lines. Many observers believe that China's motives had more to do with the Sino-Soviet conflict and the global balance of power (not least, her own credibility in that context) than with any particular aims related to the Indochina situation, apart from her vaguely worded intention to 'punish Vietnam'. On the other hand, there have been indications that some Chinese supplies are again getting through to the anti-Vietnamese guerilla forces in Kampuchea and that the latter are still maintaining effective resistance after nearly two months of fighting; so the Chinese leaders may have calculated that Vietnam has not succeeded in sweeping the board in Kampuchea and may therefore be more vulnerable to Chinese pressure than initially seemed likely.

Clearly, then, the actual situation on the ground in Kampuchea may yet prove to be the crucial variable in this equation, just as much as the great-power calculus of gains or losses in the international sphere. Kampuchea's new civil war is, in effect, the joker in the pack. If it drags on, or develops into a hard-fought struggle between a Vietnam-backed government of Kampuchea and a China-backed guerilla resistance which cannot be suppressed, the international aspect of the conflict is likely to be both dangerous and intractable. The Vietnamese will in that case probably be either reluctant or unable (or both) to withdraw their forces, which one might have hoped they would be willing to do if they were confident that the Heng Samrin government could survive without them. It is not yet clear from the
sketchy news reports coming out of Kampuchea whether Heng Samrin's
government has been able to muster substantial support from opponents
of the former Pol Pot government, or whether it is regarded by most
Kampucheans as merely a puppet of the Vietnamese. Presumably the
intensity of traditional Kampuchean hostility towards the Vietnamese
will operate increasingly to the advantage of the guerilla forces
as time passes. It may well be that neither the Vietnamese nor the
Chinese will find it within their capacity to bring the war to an
end by a quick and overwhelming military victory or by exerting
pressure towards a negotiated settlement. That is a dreadful prospect
for the long-suffering people of Kampuchea.

This being the case, there is now every likelihood that a drawn­
out and dangerous conflict will ensue, possibly at a low level, but
ruinous and cruel for both the Kampuchean and the Vietnamese people
in their currently parlous economic conditions, as well as perilously
destabilizing for the power balance in the region. Two consequences
appear almost inevitable. The Vietnamese will be driven even more
deeply into military and economic dependence upon the Russians. And
any success the Chinese may have in strengthening the anti-Vietnamese
forces in Kampuchea will merely aggravate Vietnamese suspicions of
China's motives, which will probably incline the Hanoi leaders towards
even greater determination to settle their problems with Kampuchea
by force rather than by political means and a dash of compromise.

These considerations have a direct bearing on Australia's
interests and policies in the dispute. It seems to me axiomatic that
Australia's primary interest in such a tangled situation is that great
power involvement in the affairs of the Indochina states should be
minimized (including China's), which means also, in effect, that
internal conflicts should be insulated as far as possible from external
pressures. In present circumstances, these conditions seem likely
to obtain only on the basis of some degree of (tacit?) Vietnamese
hegemony over Kampuchea and Laos. That such a situation probably
cannot be prevented is, no doubt, unfortunate, but the only foreseeable
alternative to that is an increase in Chinese political and military
leverage in both countries, which is bound to be destabilizing rather than the reverse in present circumstances. The basic objective that Australia and other Southeast Asian governments should keep foremost in mind must surely be to minimize the degree of Vietnamese hegemony over Kampuchea, e.g. by increasing the bargaining power and options of the Heng Samrin government or any other in Phnom Penh, so that the Kampucheans are not utterly subservient to Hanoi and Moscow, or else looking desperately towards Peking as the only other possible source of political support. One might even hope that in the long run Kampuchea's leaders might see that there could be advantages in looking towards ASEAN (as a concept, an international framework, rather than an immediate counterweight to Vietnam or China or Russia) to maximize their country's independence and secure its territorial integrity. If the only alternative scenario is the prospect of China trying by fair means or foul to infiltrate more weapons and supplies to the anti-Vietnamese forces in Kampuchea, or threatening to 'punish' or invade Vietnam from the north, the dangers of serious conflict are very grave. Moreover, it is in the long-term interests of Australia and all other governments in this part of the world that events in Indochina should develop in such a way that Vietnam herself will not by pushed by the conflict with China into a deeper dependence on the Russians, but will feel able to draw back from that dependence as soon as possible towards a more equitable relationship with China.

The geopolitical realities of this situation have been more clearly recognized by the ASEAN nations in their response to recent events than by the Australian government. The Australian reaction has been a matter of playing to the gallery back home for momentary domestic political advantages, as on so many foreign policy issues since 1950, rather than seeking to utilize the rather limited political influence we do possess towards achieving more important long-term objectives. Australia's first reaction was to condemn the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea and to cut off our very modest foreign aid programme to Vietnam. This meant that we no longer retained any degree of 'leverage' whatever vis-a-vis Hanoi as the international situation developed further, and also that we were bound to be regarded by her as less than even-handed in our attitudes to the whole affair 'We are
at the head of the pack against Vietnam', according to an Australian official quoted in the *National Times*. That may have been a high-minded moral response to an act of aggression, but it was not to be matched by an equivalent response on the occasion of China's invasion of Vietnam. The ASEAN nations, on the other hand, by expressing a more restrained reaction initially, have left themselves in a position where they could perhaps exercise good offices towards encouraging a negotiated settlement and could thus hope to exert some influence on the final outcome. The contrast in terms of political sophistication is dismaying.

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These papers were presented at a seminar organized jointly by the Asian Studies Association of Australia and the Research School of Pacific Studies of the Australian National University in September 1978. One of the aims of that seminar was to bring together scholars with a specialist knowledge of the Asian countries concerned from all parts of Australia, along with interested politicians, civil servants and journalists. It also served to underline the point made most eloquently by Dr Stephen FitzGerald in his Conference Lecture to the ASAA Second National Conference at the University of NSW in May 1978, that we now have scattered throughout our universities in Australia an impressively large and diverse group of scholars with expertise on various Asian countries. (The lecture appears in the *ASAA Review* 2, July 1978, pp. 1-13.) The seminar was the first attempt to bring many of these people together and to air our views publicly on a matter of national importance. It is hoped that other such ventures will soon follow.

The organizers wish to express their gratitude to the Australian National University SOCPAC Printery, to Malcolm Salmon, Dr Virginia Matheson, Jan Grocott and Mr H. Gunther for their contributions to the publication of this set of papers.

J.A.C. Mackie
In this paper I will be dealing with the historical background, or what might in some sense be called the excuses for anti-Vietnamese feeling in Cambodia. My comments will cover both the colonial era, particularly events in the 1830s and 1840s, and the period of Sihanouk's rule: I will also discuss those elements of Cambodia's past behaviour which have been selected for use by the Kampuchean rulers of today. I will say something, and Ben Kiernan will be saying more, about the way these choices and animosities can be focussed on the relationship between the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) and the Communist Party of Vietnam.

First on traditional animosity: when I was in Cambodia in the 1960s the main events in popular memory were the wars against the Vietnamese, the tortures inflicted by the Vietnamese on Cambodians, and the joy with which the Cambodians did something they called Kap Yuon, which means to 'cut Vietnamese'. 'We are happy killing Vietnamese; we no longer fear them, however powerful they may be', wrote a Cambodian official in 1856. He told his followers to kill all the Vietnamese they could find 'from the northern part of the country, to the southern border'. A magazine which was highly popular in Cambodia when printed in 1969 carried a picture of an excited crowd of 19th century Cambodians brandishing weapons and shouting slogans about their determination to 'kill Vietnamese'. There is a background of violence and prejudice, then, which I am going to talk about. On the Cambodian side, it is based on perceptions of Vietnamese behaviour. On the Vietnamese side, of course, it is based on Vietnamese pressures and Cambodian behaviour.

I think the reason for this prejudice is very simple. The cultural frontier between Cambodia and Vietnam seems to me to be the sharpest in Southeast Asia. It certainly was very sharp in the 19th century. If you moved from one village to the next, you found complete changes in such very basic things, besides the language of
course, as hairstyle, clothing, food, architecture (Cambodian houses on stilts, Vietnamese houses on the ground), kitchen utensils, alphabet, educational systems, agricultural techniques, treatment of the dead, foreign relations, attitudes towards history ... you could go on and make an almost complete set of oppositions — outside of the day-to-day business which occupied rice farmers and fishermen.

In terms of behaviour, the record becomes especially detailed in the 19th century when you have the filling out of southern Vietnam with resident Vietnamese, the weakening or breaking up of the Cambodian court, and some events of the early 19th century such as Vietnamese and Thai occupation of Cambodia at various times. There was a set of alternating loyalties on the part of the royal family between the Thai and Vietnamese. If a ruler had a Vietnamese alliance, pretenders to the throne would have a Thai alliance; this conflict would be solved by invasions or occupations by both countries. Now to give three quotations from the Vietnamese. It seems to me that they have a sort of timeless quality that some of you might even recognize from the period of American involvement in Vietnam. Says the Vietnamese emperor in 1814: 'Thanks to the power of our court they (the Cambodians) have regained their country and chased out the enemies. Therefore they should now try to manage things so as to act in future in a coordinated manner, just as when one raises one's arms, one's fingers rise in harmony'. The 17th volume of the Vietnamese annals says this about the Cambodians: 'They must work harder, more laboriously, they should learn to speak Vietnamese, and our dress and eating habits should also be followed. If there is any outdated, uncivilized custom that they have it should be made simpler, or should be dropped, and we should work to achieve this goal'. This is the 'civilizing mission', of course, about 50 years before the French arrived to proclaim their own. In the 20th volume of the annals there is a passage that seems to me very familiar nowadays. A rebellion against the Vietnamese had broken out. Says the emperor: 'The Cambodian nation, ever since it became a tributary of our court, has suffered no hardship or oppression, why should its people then be so turbulent and unfaithful to us'? And,
praising the Cambodian monarch in public correspondence, he complained in secret, 'the Cambodians have always been impervious to our commands'. Telling them in public that they had matured, he referred to them in private as 'monkeys in pens and birds in cages'. That kind of language, of course, does not help a diplomatic dialogue very much. When you add to this the violence that laid Cambodia to waste in the period 1830-1850, you have a legacy of contempt and resentment on either side, reinforced by a sense of superiority and repeated anger which have changed very little from regime to regime in either country. The current regime in Vietnam, whatever its innermost feelings may be, is certainly working hard to overcome its old feelings of superiority; but in view of the long memories that people have, it seems to me that Kampuchean authorities think that no matter what the Vietnamese say, the authorities in Vietnam still believe what they always believed; and if they say the opposite, they are merely (and as usual) lying.

In the colonial era, Vietnamese villages in southeast Cambodia were encapsulated in the landscape. By the late 19th century they tended to be Catholic and allowed no intermarriage with local Cambodians, unlike the Chinese. Vietnamese did not intermarry, even with Chinese.

The Vietnamese fitted into the French school system rapidly, and the Vietnamese in Cambodia were used by French bureaucrats in provincial administration. If you look at the personnel roles of a provincial French residency, you find of the twelve or so Indochinese employees who would be working under a French resident, ten would be Vietnamese (with recognizably Vietnamese names) and only two would be Cambodians. These would be employed as translators. They were not clerks; they were not in charge of public works; they were not in charge of accounts or of research. This is a point I may be overstressing, but it would seem that the Cambodian peasant in the 1930s, insofar as he was in touch with authorities at all, would probably have been in face-to-face contact with a Vietnamese bureaucrat rather than with a Cambodian or with a Frenchman. I am sure that it would be easy to resent that. The first nationalist newspaper that
came out in Cambodia in 1936 objected to the presence of Vietnamese in the government. These editorials did not only ask why are there not more Cambodians, but why there were so many Vietnamese. Other aspects of Vietnamese behaviour are the foundation of the Indochinese Communist Party in 1930; no Cambodian component, after all, was envisaged before 1951, as Ben Kiernan will point out. Shifting now to the Cambodian component of the 1950s, you will find a tremendous resentment against the Vietnamese among the Cambodian communists and what they felt to be the sell out by the Vietnamese at Geneva. The Vietnamese allowed the Sihanouk delegation to make all the points in terms of Cambodia's future, and allowed no internal role for the communist forces. These, in fact, had not been terribly active, but there were several thousand of them who were subjected to repression by the Sihanouk regime in the 1950s and 1960s. In the Sihanouk period, of course, there were frequent border clashes and some Sihanouk-baiting by the South Vietnamese regime, perhaps encouraged by the Americans. The Vietnamese in Cambodia itself were aloof from Cambodian politics. This meant that local people were suspicious of them, and believed that they were aliens — either Catholic or communist. Perhaps they were right. It has not been studied, but places of Vietnamese population density in Cambodia, such as the rubber plantations and the fisheries in Kampong Chhnang, tended to be active in supporting the Vietnam resistance. Also these areas tended to be where the Cambodian Communist Party set down its roots in the period 1945-54 more easily than in other parts of the country.

Let us shift now to those aspects of the past which the Pol Pot regime has selected for its use. I use these words with care because a great deal of Cambodia's past has been rejected entirely by the regime. Khieu Samphan, for instance, has said that the communes in Kampuchea have led to 'all sorts of depraved social and cultural blemishes being wiped out'. He spoke of phases in Cambodian history from the time of slavery to the liberation of 1975. In 1977 communist theorists pushed enlightenment back 15 years to the foundation of the Communist Party in Kampuchea in 1960. For some reason they start their era in the year AD 1. There were, therefore, 1960 years of 'slavery' in Cambodia's past — an idea easy to peddle and to memorize, but impossible to confirm.
There are four things in the past which would be useful for our discussions today. They are selected out of Cambodia's past experience. One is that peasants built Angkor. The communists do not go into detail as to why this was done — and do not tackle the issue of voluntary servitude at all.

Secondly, they point out that the peasants defeated the Americans under the leadership of the CPK. Thirdly, that traditional patriotism involved the killing of Vietnamese. *Kampuchea Dossier*, a book put out by the Vietnamese government in 1978, describes a recent Cambodian raid on a Vietnamese village where people came in yelling 'Kap Yun' which is the cry, of course, of the 1840s. This cry, ironically enough, was the essence of Cambodian nationalism under Lon Nol. The only aspect of the marshal's policies (if you can call them that) which people recognized as legitimate was his sponsorship of anti-Vietnamese behaviour.

The fourth point which is useful for our purposes today is to see what the leaders have selected or chosen in their negotiating tactics and positions, vis-a-vis the Vietnamese. The key point here is that from 1954 onward, Cambodian diplomacy consisted of, and I am quoting Steve Heder here, demanding acquiescence to prepared Cambodian texts. Cambodians said: 'Here is our text; you can take it or leave it; there is no flexibility in it'. This is a tactic that succeeded in Geneva in 1954, when Cambodian representatives kept repeating their position without change. Finally, they wore down the likes of Molotov, which took some doing. Later, Sihanouk and his colleagues said that all it takes to succeed in diplomacy is to keep repeating things until people give you what you want. This was Cambodia's policy toward Vietnam in the 1960s, and the key time here is 1966-67, when Sihanouk was demanding guarantees of land frontiers. This meant recognition by foreigners of Cambodian maps. These maps, of course, are not dishonest; but Sihanouk refused to enter into discussions as to the ambiguities of frontiers on different editions of French Indochinese maps. When he asked countries for their support, they gave it to him or refused to give it to him, for various reasons. The government of
South Vietnam, for instance, refused to give it, saying roughly: 'We'd like to talk about these issues rather than just acquiesce to them'. The United States refused for the same reasons, saying, 'This isn't our business — this is something that you should talk about with the Vietnamese'. Now the NLF, of course, for reasons of their own, quickly signed the agreement, indeed ceremonially signed it, and said, 'Yes we do acquiesce to them'. What you find now is that the Socialist Republic of Vietnam wants to pursue negotiations while Kampuchea sticks to the Sihanouk/NLF position, saying in fact, 'you already agreed in 1966/67'. The SRV is an incumbent regime rather than a revolutionary one. Now it has to take a position saying, we are open to talk about these things but we are not going to accept your position. This means that they are pursuing the same sort of 'treacherous' policies that they have always been noted for by the Cambodian people. It seems to me that one tragedy of Cambodia is that its leaders seem to be unable to accept the fact that Cambodia/Kampuchea, at least in the eyes of other nations (or rather Kampuchea's national interests and the fate of Kampuchea's people) are simply not as important as the people and interests of other states. This is something that Sihanouk never realized; and it is to his credit that he did not. Cambodia was the most important country in his field of vision and so it is too in the field of vision of the Pol Pot regime. The society was as hierarchised as any in Southeast Asia before 1970 and it now refuses to accept compromise or humility in any public form. This is not playing a game, this is the business of the Vietnamese saying, 'Why then when we helped you so much (and the Vietnamese help is never mentioned publicly), why are you so turbulent and unfaithful?' Why can they not (as Americans often complained about Vietnam) just be reasonable? Now the Vietnamese, like the Americans before the war, but nowhere near as hypocritically, want a 'reasonable solution' to problems in Southeast Asia, so that they can get on with the job of consolidating their progress after years of suffering. This does not mean necessarily that Cambodia has to take a back seat in an Indochinese federation dominated by the Vietnamese, but it does mean that the Cambodians should stop shooting at the Vietnamese and stop yelling at the Vietnamese and stop behaving as if they were a country
that needed so much respect. Nations now behave with less fervour and with perhaps more realism, whereas the regime in Democratic Kampuchea (like all the regimes in Cambodia since 1945) is inward-looking, with an immense memory, very proud of victories which might not to outsiders seem significant but are victories nonetheless; and in 1977 at least a willingness forced on it by its leaders and shared by a great many of its people to behave in the international arena, i.e., vis-a-vis Vietnam, with the same intensity that had succeeded in the revolution. The obvious question to ask here is why they do this. I am not sure I have an answer. I am sure, however, that valuable ideas will emerge in the following papers and discussion and I close with a quotation from a Cambodian schoolmaster, written in the 1940s: 'Since ancient times our kingdom has been poor in solidarity but rich in passion, and this has attracted the ill will of foreign powers'. This is very poignant, and very true. And the end, unless it is the end of a viable Cambodian state (which seems to me a faint possibility, but not something I wish for), is nowhere in sight.

Footnotes


KAMPUCHEA-VIETNAM: THE CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT

Ben Kiernan

The Indochina Communist Party (ICP) was formed in 1930. Initially termed the Vietnam Communist Party, the name was changed to the ICP soon after, at Comintern instigation. While this reflected proletarian internationalism it also coincided with traditional Vietnamese attitudes of paternalism towards Kampuchea and Laos. In an early letter 'to comrades in Cambodia' the ICP leadership wrote that 'Cambodia has no right to a separate Communist Party', and that 'there is no way we can envisage a separate Cambodian revolution. There can only be one Indochinese revolution'. Although there was recognition of the right to self-determination of 'minority populations', this was described as coming within the framework of a 'Union of Soviet Republics of Indochina'. This was the thinking in the 1930s.

This position was modified in 1940, when the Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee of the ICP resolved 'to settle the national question within the framework of each of the three countries of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea, and ... to create favourable conditions for the Kampuchean and Lao peoples to develop the spirit of independence and sovereignty ...'. But attitudes of Vietnamese superiority remained in the ICP. In June 1950, during the armed struggle against the French, the ICP-sponsored Kampuchean People's Liberation Committee opened a political training school for cadres in the liberated areas of Kampuchea. According to Vietnam News Agency, the programme of studies included the political policy of the Cambodian revolution as part of the Indochinese revolution, and the experiences of the Vietnamese revolution.

Then in 1951 the ICP was divided into three parties: the Vietnam Workers' Party, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, and the Kampuchean People's Party. Since that date, the Vietnamese party has made no public mention of an 'Indochina Federation', while constantly stressing the need for a 'special relationship' between the three parties.
in resistance to imperialism'. Still, old attitudes did survive to some extent. In June 1952, the Committee of Viet Minh Cadres in Kampuchea observed that 'the Khmer People's Party is not the vanguard of the working class, but the vanguard party of the nation ...'. This formulation indicates that the Vietnamese Party still saw the Marxist-Leninist status of its Kampuchean counterpart as relatively low.  

The resolutions of the Geneva Conference on Indochina in 1954 dealt a severe blow to the Kampuchean communists. While the Vietnamese and Lao parties were conceded secure areas of territory, the Kampucheans were not even admitted to the Conference. As a result of it, they were obliged to go into exile, or take their chances with Sihanouk's government which had been conceded total control of Kampuchean territory. This deliberate tactical concession by the socialist camp would, it was hoped, lay the basis for greater revolutionary gains in the long term by attempting to consolidate only what was considered possible in the short term. But to many in the Kampuchean Communist Party it was nothing short of a sell-out.

The next six years were disastrous for the Kampuchean People's Party. Cadres exposed to government repression suffered a similar fate to that of the revolutionaries in South Vietnam, who were also disarmed and exposed to Diem's repression. Despite significant popular support,  the Party was decimated in the 1955 and 1958 elections as a result of police intimidation of voters, harassment of candidates, break-up of political rallies, imprisonment of party members and party candidates, and censorship of newspapers, in the face of all of which the party had been disarmed, and had no territory in which to take refuge. Still, in 1955, one Khmer Party candidate drew 25% of the vote in his electorate even though he had spent the entire campaign period in gaol.

Sihanouk's consolidation of power and elimination of opposition parties by 1958 heralded an even fiercer campaign of repression of the revolutionaries. The editor of the party newspaper was assassinated in full public view outside a military barracks in Phnom Penh in that year. In the same year, according to Pol Pot, 90% of the party's rural cadre was also wiped out. In September 1960, the party secretly called its first congress to study and analyse the critical situation.
The decision was made at the 1960 congress to adopt a new political strategy of determined self-reliance, without depending on the support of the socialist camp, which in practice meant the Vietnamese party. Son Ngoc Minh, the party leader most faithful to the Vietnamese line, was removed from his post. Also, given the disastrous results of dependence upon parliamentary means of struggle without the protection of armed force, the party decided to prepare for armed insurrection against the feudalist regime and its imperialist backers, based in the rural areas. Meanwhile the Vietnamese communists were engaged in a life-and-death struggle with American imperialism. It was important to them that Kampuchea not be used as a base from which they could be attacked in the rear. Thus, they supported Prince Sihanouk's policy of neutrality in the conflict, despite his repression of communism at home. It is obvious that American imperialism had placed the Vietnamese party in a dilemma with regard to Kampuchea. This dilemma could not be resolved in a manner satisfactory to both the Kampuchean and Vietnamese parties, and there is little reason to expect the Vietnamese to have sacrificed much for the Kampuchean party, especially after it had adopted its own independent line.

The overthrow of Prince Sihanouk in 1970 created a new situation. Lon Nol's new alliance with the United States and his attacks on Vietnamese communist sanctuaries threatened the Vietnamese revolution, opening the way for close cooperation between the Vietnamese and Kampuchean parties in resisting the Phnom Penh regime. Still, the aims of the two parties in Kampuchea remained different. The Vietnamese forces wanted freedom from harassment so they could pursue their attacks on the Americans in Vietnam, and were prepared to settle for Prince Sihanouk's return to power in Kampuchea, or even just the incapacitation of the Lon Nol army in the border areas. On the other hand, the aim of the Kampuchean party was a peasant revolution in Kampuchea that would lay the basis for a self-reliant and socialist economy. Although not mutually exclusive, the aims of the two parties were thus independent and at times clashed.

It should be pointed out that despite these clashes and rivalries
there was substantial cooperation between the two parties, particularly after the Indochina People's Summit Conference of April 1970 in southern China. This largely came to an end after the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement on Vietnam in early 1973. Although it did not achieve a ceasefire, the agreement did release large numbers of US bombers formerly operating over Vietnam for use against the Kampuchean revolutionary army. In the six months to August 1973, about 200,000 Kampuchean were killed or wounded in one of the most intensive bombing campaigns of the war. While this was going on, however, the Vietnamese were urging the Kampuchean to negotiate with Lon Nol, and scaling down their arms supplies to the Kampuchean, as part of their implementation of the Paris agreement. There seems little doubt that the Kampuchean, who had always refused to negotiate with Lon Nol and who now had to suffer the consequences of the Vietnamese entering into a peace agreement with Thieu, saw this as another sell-out by the Vietnamese party. Reports of serious clashes, particularly over arms supplies, date from 1973.

The 'Indochina Federation'

Although the Vietnamese have not raised any proposals for an 'Indochina Federation' since the dissolution of the ICP in 1951, there is little doubt that they would like more influence in Phnom Penh than the Kampuchean party as it is constructed presently is prepared to allow. According to Nayan Chanda: 'Observers in Hanoi believe that Indochina solidarity is an article of faith with Hanoi in order that it can play the vanguard role in Southeast Asia'. Whether that's true or not, according to one Vietnamese official also quoted by Nayan Chanda: 'We insist on a special relationship because there is not another example in history of such a relationship, as when two people who have shared each grain of rice, every bullet, suffering and victory'.

Phnom Penh's view is that it wants a 'normal relationship' with Vietnam rather than a 'special relationship', which has been defined by Phnom Penh radio: 'A "special friendship" and "special solidarity" is a friendship without a frontier, a solidarity without a frontier'.

Sea border

The sea border is, I think a fairly important factor in the dispute.

Although no fighting has taken place on the seas or islands that make up the maritime frontier between the two countries since June 1975, there are indications that serious disagreements over the sea border are behind the failure to arrive at a reconciliation by this stage. It is worth noting that this dispute is extremely important for Kampuchea, not only because there are 'strong possibilities of finding oil and natural gas' in the disputed seabed, but also because most of Kampuchea's 'available continental shelf is in dispute with either Vietnam or Thailand, whereas those two countries have large areas of continental shelf where their sovereignty is unchallenged'.

In 1966, border negotiations took place between Sihanouk's government, and the Vietnamese NLF and DRV. As a result the Vietnamese communists agreed to recognise islands north of the Brévie line — drawn by the Governor-General of French Indochina in 1939 — as Kampuchean. Given this concession, the Vietnamese refusal to recognize the line as an international boundary, but simply a line delineating 'administrative and police jurisdiction', must have seemed academic to the Kampuchceans. In 1970 Vietnam published its own different version of the sea border (Vietnamese Studies, 28), although its 1978 position was that no agreement was reached during the 1966 negotiations. In May 1976 the Vietnamese 'attempted to reconsider the frontier of Kampuchea-Vietnam, particularly the maritime frontier, introducing plans of annexation of a big part of the seas of Kampuchea', the Kampuchceans regarded this as a breach of the agreement (although in 1966 there is no evidence that a sea border agreement had been reached) and broke off the negotiations.

The Vietnamese agree that they have changed their attitude to the sea border, from one of de facto recognition of the Brévie line as the frontier, since 1966. Nayan Chanda reported a Vietnamese official as saying to him in 1977: 'At the time we agreed to the Brévie line we were not aware of the problems of territorial waters, continental shelf, etc — those new phenomena'.
Revealing the importance it attaches to the offshore dispute, in mid-1977 Vietnam assigned its chief delegate to the Law of the Sea Conference to the Embassy in Phnom Penh. This was just after claiming a 200-mile offshore economic zone in May 1977 which, combined with newly announced claims by Thailand, would have left Kampuchea in control of only a narrow triangle of the sea and seabed off its coast. Apparently the Kampucheans first openly named the Vietnamese as an adversary when Vietnam's foreign minister was signing joint communiques with Indonesia, and, pointedly, Thailand, pledging peaceful negotiations over maritime disputes.

**Resistance movements**

In terms of resistance movements along the border areas which might be causing misunderstanding, the most important one I think is an area where there is a substantial population of ethnic Khmers living inside Vietnam and along the border, the Triton and Tinh Bien districts of Vietnam between Hatien and Chaudoc. According to a French map printed in 1949 and a Saigon government map printed in 1972, the population of these districts is almost totally Khmer. In this area alone in May 1977, 40% of all Vietnamese civilian casualties along the entire border in 1977 were suffered, and throughout January 1978, during the large scale fighting, there were 'persistent reports of Vietnamese setbacks' in this area. The particular reasons for this are still obscure, although some pointers are available.

According to ethnic Khmer defectors whose accounts were broadcast over Phnom Penh Radio in January 1978, all was not well among the 700,000 or more ethnic Khmers who live in Vietnam's Mekong Delta, known to them as Kampuchea Krom, or Lower Kampuchea. They said on the Phnom Penh radio that the CIA-connected 'KKK', or 'movement of struggle of the Khmers of Kampuchea Krom', was still active, and in April 1976 even 'became powerful against the Vietnamese authorities'. Based in the 'Seven Mountains' area of Triton and Tinh Bien districts, the movement engaged in armed resistance against the Vietnamese communists. Independent refugee sources reported a rebel attack on a Vietnamese border artillery
post in the area on May 5, 1977, in which a number of artillery pieces 
were destroyed. This attack was not listed in the comprehensive list 
of alleged border incursions carried out by the Kampucheans, so it 
would appear to have been the work of the KKK. However, in November 
1977 the KKK suffered successive defeats, its leader was killed in action, 
'and the liberation army was all scattered'. Four surviving members 
of its leadership were then enlisted by the Vietnamese for espionage 
work in Kampuchea, and they all defected to Kampuchea in December 1977. 
Most recently a major clash took place in this area on June 16, 1978.

Border delimitation and demarcation

In their statement of January 20, 1978, the Vietnamese claimed 
that Kampuchea's official map of its frontiers, published in 1977, 
'does not conform to the facts of history'. Examination of the map 
reveals two discernible departures from past maps of the border between 
the two countries. One is the maritime border, discussed above.

The other is what previous maps have depicted as a box-like 
salient of Vietnam's northern Tay Ninh province that juts into Kampuchea's 
Kompong Cham province. Five different maps of the border give this 
box different shapes. All disagree on the relationship of the boundary 
line to a stream in the area, although they all agree that the border 
does not follow the stream. This is important because French colonial 
authorities apparently never put into place one of the only two markers 
tended to demarcate the boundary of this box-like salient. Some 
of the maps also show a number of villages with Khmer names just inside 
Vietnamese territory. Such a village apparently accounts for at least 
one of the differences in the shape of the salient on the various maps. 
The high percentage of ethnic Khmer among the population of the area, 
recorded in the 1949 and 1972 maps mentioned above, complicates the 
issue further. Following the 1966 negotiations, the Vietnamese publicly 
recognized Kampuchean sovereignty over Khmer villages in ambiguous 
border zones in that same section of the border.

Kampuchean national united front and communist maps, printed
since 1970 but possibly showing the same boundaries as one printed by Sihanouk's government in 1969, all show the salient as Kampuchean territory. Kampuchean belief that this defined section of land is clearly theirs may account for the high number of Vietnamese civilian casualties (up to 50% of the total civilian casualties along the entire border in 1977) sustained in this precise area, which the Vietnamese claim the Kampuchean forces have attacked 'for occupation purposes', as distinct from the 'annihilation purposes' they attribute to Kampuchean attacks on Vietnam military at other points along the border. 19

A Vietnamese map of local Kampuchean attacks indicates attempts to wrest this box-like salient from Vietnamese control. The area was one of the major Vietnamese sanctuaries during the anti-American war. It appears that Vietnam called its troops back home from sanctuaries in Kampuchea after the war ended, but not immediately; some Vietnamese troops did stay for an unknown period in another section of the country. More serious to the Kampucheans, however, was the settlement in this area of Vietnamese civilians, refugees who had fled the war in their country but possibly did not return there when it ended. That is currently what the Kampucheans claim. Added to this is the possibility of more recent settlement of former urban dwellers into New Economic Zones set up in the area by the Vietnamese government since 1975.

This raises the very sensitive issue of Kampuchea's territorial survival, against settler expansionism, as they see it. In their view it was by this means that their country was nearly wiped off the map (as was neighbouring Champa) by Vietnam and Thailand in the nineteenth century, and then carved up by Thailand in World War II. Kampuchea's precarious fate is a question that dominates Khmer nationalism.

There is a map published by Paul Hamlyn in the mid-1970s, which shows a large area of Kampuchea as part of Thailand, including Battambang; it is obviously the border which was temporarily taken by the Thais in World War II. That was thirty years ago. Since April 1978 the Khmer leaders have talked explicitly about 'defending the race of Kampuchea', from Vietnam's plans 'to swallow all of Kampuchea and eliminate its race at the end of the determined period'; 'defending the national
dignity and the race of Kampuchea to assure its continued survival'. The Khmer people, they say, 'do not want the soul of the nation of Kampuchea extinguished', or its race to be eliminated. They want the right to dispose and decide 'by ourselves our own destiny, and the race of Kampuchea to be everlasting'.

In this connection it seems that the existence of a border dispute is, ironcally enough, an important reason why Kampuchea has failed as yet to respond to Vietnamese calls for negotiation. Agreements in 1966-67 between Vietnamese and the Kampuchean government produced statements by the Vietnamese that they recognized and undertook to respect 'the territorial integrity of Kampuchea within its present frontiers'. These were unilateral statements (Kampuchea did not recognize Vietnam's frontiers) in return for which Kampuchea agreed to permanently shelve all its claims on 'lost territories' such as the Mekong Delta, and smaller tracts of land illegally transferred to Vietnam by the French between 1870 and 1914.

This meant that Kampuchea now formally considered its borders inviolable, immutable and intangible, i.e., that the borders can never be 'touched' by negotiations for further readjustments. This had the effect of reserving Kampuchea's right to resolve (in its favour) any ambiguity in the delineation of the frontiers. These ambiguities would necessarily be minor (the box-like salient of Tay Ninh province seems a typical case) because the French delineation in most cases was quite clear. But the importance to Kampuchea of this right is unquestionable, as one government editorialist explained in 1969, during the Sihanouk period:

Most foreign governments consider that Kampuchea is not very sane because she grants an importance which they lack to "several little uninhabited islets", to several acres of forest, and even to some old stones (Preah Vihear). Why not abandon these to those who want them, for is this not the price, at minimal cost, of reestablishing good relations with neighbours? The Thais and the Vietnamese ... never cease to avow their good intentions towards Kampuchea, their desire to settle once and for all this frontier problem in a friendly spirit ... (Others) cannot understand why Kampuchea refuses to take the broad view ... The point at issue is not the value of the land claimed but much more. In Saigon as in
Bangkok, (they) would only consider the most minimum satisfaction resulting from these claims as a sign that Kampuchea is beginning to "unbend".... It is certain that the least surrender of a parcel of national land would lead to a serious psychological shock to the Khmers as well as a sense of impotence towards the expansionist aims of her neighbours. Conversely, the Siamese and the Vietnamese would draw the conclusion that Kampuchea is the "sick man" of Southeast Asia and that they are chosen to take over her heritage .... The traditional method used by the Court of Annam ... is to "pick away" without let-up. The actual claims are "modest and reasonable" ... but we know from experience that methods begun in this manner lead inevitably to the annexation of the areas, then the provinces and eventually of all the left bank of the Mekong....

But Kampuchea ... does not intend to fall into her neighbours' trap nor will she be the dupe of diplomatic by-play. The actual frontier itself is the Khmers' last line of resistance.... To accept proposals to negotiate .... would be a tacit acknowledgement of eventual defeat ....

The Kampucheans seem to feel that the Vietnamese would do the same in 1978. At any rate, it evident that the Kampucheans regard the frontiers as non-negotiable when they broke off the 1976 negotiations in Phnom Penh as soon as it was clear that the Vietnamese wanted to 'redraw' the maritime border.

Kampuchea broke off diplomatic relations with Vietnam on December 31, 1977. On that day, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand established an 'interim' Mekong Development Project Committee, to exploit the river's enormous hydroelectric and irrigation potential. Kampuchea refused to join this committee and possibly even sees the project as a severe threat to its independence. In 1972 a World Bank review of Mekong development plans pointed out that the planned construction of two big dams, one at Stung Treng in Kampuchea, would displace 700,000 Khmer and ethnic Lao peasants. The main benefits, however, would accrue to Saigon and Bangkok, the review noted. It reportedly went on: 'With both Vietnam and Thailand relying on installations deep inside Kampuchea, the Kampuchean leaders would face the choice of serving their rivals' interests — or facing the military and political consequences if they did not'.

In conclusion, there are many significant differences between the governments of Kampuchea and Vietnam — historical, territorial, and ideological. What may be unclear is whether these differences themselves are fundamental, or whether other factors have intervened to turn 'contradictions among the people' into 'antagonistic contradictions'.

Footnotes.


5. Sihanouk admitted even in 1958 that 39 of Kampuchea's 90-odd districts were 'red' or 'pink'. See *Le Communisme au Cambodge*, *France-Asie* 15, 144 and 145, 1958, pp. 192-206 and 290-306. Party newspapers had a total readership of over 9,000 which represented approximately one-third of total newspaper circulation. See *France-Asie* 15, 144, pp. 200-1.

6. The best account of the 1955 elections in Kampuchea is on pp. 18-20 of 'Looking Back at Cambodia', by Michael Vickery, *Westerly* (Univ. of Western Australia) 4, December 1976, pp. 14-28. Vickery concludes that the 'International Control Commission certified the election as "correct", indicating how little such inspection may mean'.


21. FEER 1 September 1978, letters.

22. For a later analysis of what I consider to be more fundamental factors in the conflict, see *Nation Review,* November 17-23, 1978, p.8.
THE 'TWO-LINES' CONFLICT IN
THE KHMER REVOLUTION

Carlyle Thayer

It is my contention that since at least the mid-1950s, the Khmer revolutionary movement has been split into two camps (or factions). The leadership of these camps disagree about how to conduct revolution in Cambodia and about the role and extent of Vietnamese communist assistance. In the time allotted to me, I would like to trace the 'two line struggle' through four historically distinct periods: (1) 1948-1954; (2) 1954-1963; (3) 1963-1970 and (4) 1970-1975.

Period one, 1948-1954: In 1948 the Communist Viet-Minh Front expanded operations into Cambodia. Nguyen Thanh Son, a member of the Nam Bo Regional Committee, was given the task of organizing resources in Cambodia to support the war effort in southern Vietnam (i.e., Nam Bo). Between 1948 and 1951 bases were established, supply lines were created and control placed over local transport. Taxes were levied on Vietnamese working on rubber plantations, fishermen and other Vietnamese residents (Viet kieu) in Cambodia. In 1951, 150 million piastres was collected, an amount equivalent to one-half the Cambodian budget and three times the budget's expenditure on national defence.

The Khmer revolutionary movement came into prominence in April 1950 when a Congress of People's Representatives met and established a Committee of Liberation headed by Son Ngoc Minh. The Committee sparked military operations against the French. Convoys were ambushed and French administration disrupted. By the time the siege at Dien Bien Phu was drawing to a close, revolutionary forces in Cambodia held down a French force four times their size.

In 1951 the Indochinese Communist Party was split into three national sections. A Khmer People's Revolutionary Party (KPKP) emerged alongside the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and the Vietnam Workers' Party (VWP). It was at this time that the idea of an 'Indochinese
Federation' was first expressed, I might add that the preconditions for this federation were the success of the revolutionary movements in each of the three countries comprising French Indochina and mutual consent. (Dennis Duncanson has averred, however, that the Chinese text of the VWP's 1951 political programme failed to mention the second condition.)

During the period 1952-53, the forces of anti-French Khmer nationalism were most forcefully represented by Son Ngoc Thanh's Khmer Issarak (with whom the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party sought to cooperate) and by Norodom Sihanouk himself who, in 1953, launched a successful Crusade for Independence. Sihanouk's success placed the Khmer revolutionary movement in something of a dilemma. Sometime in late 1953/early 1954 Pol Pot and Ieng Sary returned from France where they had been studying. Touch Samit replaced Son Ngoc Minh as head of the KPRK. Minh left Cambodia and joined Vo Nguyen Giap at his headquarters during the siege of Dien Bien Phu. Minh remained there until after the Geneva conference.

While many specific details remain obscure, the foregoing evidence points to the emergence of 'two lines' within the Khmer revolutionary movement. One line has since become identified with Pol Pot. It favoured the overthrow of Sihanouk (i.e., anti-feudalism) as an immediate objective. It also opposed tying the fortunes of the KPRP to events in Vietnam and Laos. This group was outraged by the results of the 1954 Geneva Conference which witnessed the exclusion of representatives of the Khmer revolutionary movement.

The second line to emerge — the dominant line until 1963 — favoured close cooperation with revolutionaries in Vietnam. This meant support for Sihanouk externally, while adopting a legal united front strategy internally. The instrument of this policy was the Pracheachon or People's Party which was expected to radicalize domestic Cambodian politics. The 1954 Geneva Conference thus marked a watershed for both camps. Although the numbers are in dispute, hundreds of Khmer revolutionaries regrouped in northern Vietnam; others dispersed inside Cambodia or crossed over into Vietnam. Overall the
entire Khmer revolutionary movement was estimated to number around 4,000.

Period two, 1954-1963: Period one witnessed the creation of a Khmer revolutionary movement under the tutelage of Vietnamese communists. Its operations were an adjunct to the war in neighbouring Vietnam. During period two, the 'pro-Vietnamese' leadership of the KPRP would remain in control. At the same time, the minority faction would grow in strength as the policy of peaceful struggle under Sihanouk's government proved increasingly difficult.

During the 1954-63 period the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, along with other members of the socialist camp, backed an increasingly neutralist Sihanouk. After the Prince's visit to China in 1956, for example, he extended diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic. Sihanouk's external policies caused disquiet in Bangkok and Saigon. The latter instigated a series of border clashes and even attempted a coup against the former King. 3

Internally, however, a contradiction emerged between pursuing the KPRP's policy of supporting Sihanouk in power (a policy supported by the Vietnamese communists for obvious reasons) and in continuing a domestic policy of legal struggle. In 1955, for example, the Pracheachon was unsuccessful in the national elections. The Pracheachon's leftist propaganda soon attracted repression by Sihanouk. While the KPRP grappled with this contradiction, the pro-Vietnamese faction remained in control; ironically, Vietnamese aid declined, as Hanoi was unwilling to assist the KPRP in opposing Sihanouk when Hanoi could reap much greater benefits by supporting Sihanouk's anti-Western neutralism.

In 1957, in response to this conundrum, the KPRP set up a committee to review the Party's line. This committee reported back that events were similar to those in southern Vietnam where members of the Nam Bo Regional Committee were advocating to the Vietnam Workers' Party Central Committee a return to armed violence.
Events in Cambodia during the period 1958-63 are murky. In September 1960 the VWP held its Third National Congress. At that time the VWP decided to ratify as party policy the completion of the national democratic revolution in the South (i.e., national liberation). Later that same month, the Khmer Communist Party (KCP) was established. It advocated a two-pronged strategy of (1) national liberation and (2) anti-feudalism (class warfare). Thus, not surprisingly, the years 1962-63 witnessed a divergence of policy between the KCP and the VWP over whether or not to back Sihanouk.

In 1962, after the death of the KCP's secretary, Pol Pot was appointed interim secretary. At the KCP's Second Congress a year later, Pol Pot was made permanent secretary. This leadership change gave birth to a new line, one directed at attacking the forces of Cambodian feudalism — the overthrow of Sihanouk. There can be little doubt that this line was diametrically opposed to that of the VWP and its band of collaborators in the KCP apparatus. In 1963, for example, Sihanouk cut off all US aid to Cambodia, an act which seemingly aligned his country with Vietnam against American imperialism.

Period three, 1963-1970: Period three saw the triumph of the Pol Pot line. Efforts were undertaken in 1963-66 to build up strength in the countryside. The events of the 1967 Samlaut Rebellion need further study as it is unclear whether local events overtook the KCP's internal policy; but what is important is that in the end the KCP decided to push armed struggle against Sihanouk. Nevertheless, the KCP remained a relatively small organization which received little or no foreign assistance. Its legal arm, the Pracheachon, was completely repressed in 1966. Thus, by 1967 both as a result of Sihanouk's repression and as a result of a change in the KCP's line, rebellion began to sputter across the rural areas of Cambodia.

Externally, period three witnessed a deterioration in relations between Sihanouk and the Vietnamese communists. During the period October-December 1964, for example, Sihanouk tried to obtain agreement with the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam concerning Cambodia's boundaries.
Complete acceptance of Cambodia's frontiers foundered over claims to the Hai Tac and Tho Chu islands. During 1965 the Vietnamese communists began to enlarge and expand their sanctuaries in northeastern Cambodia. Although Vietnamese communist presence was tolerated initially, the expansion in size and area occupied soon caused alarm in Phnom Penh. No doubt Sihanouk was concerned about his neighbour's intentions when he learned that Pol Pot, en route to Peking, had stopped over in Hanoi to hold talks with Cambodian veterans and, equally important, to establish formal liaison with the VWP's Central Committee.

The ever-increasing presence of Vietnamese communists on Cambodian soil (estimated in 1968 at 45,000) gravely upset Sihanouk. During 1968-69 he launched an economic drive against the intruders and, in 1969, agreed to the unpublicized American bombing of sanctuary areas. Meanwhile, Pol Pot and the KCP were intensifying their efforts to bring down the Sihanouk regime. No doubt the Vietnamese communists were spared some harsh policy decisions in March of 1970 when a right-wing coup toppled Sihanouk from power. With the Prince's downfall the way was now open for the KCP and the VWP to cooperate.

Period four, 1970-1975: The March 1970 coup provided the VWP with an unexpected dividend: an outraged anti-American Sihanouk willing to cooperate with the Vietnamese communists. Vietnamese leaders such as Pham Van Dong and Pham Hung pressed the KCP leadership to adopt a united front, headed by Sihanouk, as the main strategy of opposing the Lon Nol regime. This marriage of convenience between the KCP and the Khmer Rumdoah (pro-Sihanouk nationalists) was not without its ironies. Sihanouk, it should be recalled, had been quite active prior to 1970 in attempting to repress the KCP.

After the formation of the Royal Government of a National United Kampuchea (GRUNK) in April 1970, and after a congress of Indochinese Peoples held in China, Khmer veterans living in Hanoi began to return to Cambodia to take part in the struggle there. Chinese and Vietnamese aid — the first real external assistance — was now sent overland down the Ho Chi Minh Trail to help the Cambodian Liberation Army. Despite the new cooperation between Khmer and Vietnamese revolutionaries,
relations deteriorated in the latter part of period four as the former
grew in strength.

Period four may be broken down into three phases. The first
phase, March 1970 to mid-1971, witnessed a marriage of convenience
between the Khmer Rumdoah and the Khmer Krahom (KCP). Their mutual
antipathy to the Lon Nol regime was about the only area of agreement
between them. The chart below summarizes the salient differences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khmer Rumdoah</th>
<th>Khmer Krahom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Royalist, pro-Sihanouk</td>
<td>Communist, anti-monarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect religion, maintain</td>
<td>Repress Buddhism, overturn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tradition</td>
<td>tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retain traditional land</td>
<td>Confiscate land, collectivize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>holdings</td>
<td>agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full cooperation with Vietnamese communists</td>
<td>Anti-Vietnamese; force them to leave Cambodia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During this phase the Vietnamese communists seconded political
and military cadres to help the Khmer revolutionaries establish the
National United Front of Kampuchea (NUFK) at village and hamlet level.

The second phase of period four may be dated from late 1971 until
early 1973. It was characterized by the KCP's attempt to free itself
of Vietnamese communist control. As the KCP came to dominate NUFK
at all levels, it began to adopt a programme of radical domestic
change. New, tougher cadres replaced those previously in authority
who were now purged. Allegiance to Sihanouk was curtailed and then
abandoned. In 1972 the new cadres, described by one writer, as
'fanatical outsiders', began the uprooting and relocation of villagers
in the liberated zones. They began to stress themes of self-reliance
such as 'Cambodia for the Cambodians'. The Vietnamese insistence on
maintaining the united front structure with Sihanouk as its head
caused them to clash with the KCP. Scattered fighting between the
Cambodian Liberation Army and the Vietnamese troops/Khmer Blancs soon
resulted.

The third phase of period four followed the signing of the
Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring the Peace in Vietnam in
January 1973. As is well known, the KCP resisted negotiations and as a consequence bore the full brunt of American bombing until the US Congress legislated against it in August 1973. Beginning in the spring of that year (1973) the KCP entered a period of accelerated communization. New KCP cadres began to operate at district level for the first time. Village relocation was accelerated, especially after southern Cambodia was liberated. During April–May 1973, the campaign to denigrate Sihanouk went into high gear. It was accompanied by the in-depth purge of royalists within the NUFK structure as well as by a campaign to drive monks from their temples. Village-level demonstrations were held against the presence of Vietnamese troops on Cambodian territory.

In the end, the Khmer Rumdoah were broken as an effective force. In April 1974 this change in the balance of forces was clearly signalled when Khieu Samphan went on an eleven-nation tour. In Peking he was received by Mao himself. The NUFK was clearly in the hands of the KCP. Assistance from Vietnam dwindled, as might be expected. Vietnamese troops were increasingly drawn back into the frontier region although reports in late 1973 indicated that clashes with the Cambodian Liberation Army were continuing.

During 1974 preparations were set in train for the final offensive against the Lon Nol regime as 50,000 Khmers were mobilized by the KCP. Their offensive succeeded on April 17, 1975 when Phnom Penh was captured.

*Conclusion: the present, 1975-1978.* I would like to end my remarks by making brief comments on several aspects of the contemporary relationship between Kampuchea and Vietnam that might help to explain the present enmity.

i) Treatment of Vietnamese in Cambodia: no doubt the VCP is angered by the treatment accorded overseas Vietnamese (*Viet kieu*) by the Pol Pot regime. Nearly 50,000 have been forced to abandon their homes and livelihoods to flee to Vietnam.

ii) The KCP's internal line: Hanoi is likewise dismayed at the internal line adopted by the KCP, especially its stress on violence.
iii) Anti-Pol Pot resistance: Kampuchea today appears fragmented into military regions. It may be premature to apply the label 'warlordism', but internal dissension appears rife. It is clear, given the 'two line thesis' advanced above, that the VCP is backing an anti-Pol Pot resistance movement.

iv) Other resistance groups: since the liberation of Phnom Penh and Saigon in 1975, various anti-communist groups have sprung into existence. The present regime in Vietnam faces armed opposition by ex-ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) soldiers, Catholics, FULRO (highlanders) dissidents, and Hoa Hao (religious sect). No doubt the operation of these groups, some of whom are active along the common border, has been an irritant. Phnom Penh encouragement and support for one or more of these groups cannot be ruled out.

v) Chinese aid: Vietnam is concerned about Phnom Penh's pro-Peking foreign policy. No doubt Hanoi compares and contrasts the $1 billion in aid given to Kampuchea with China's parsimonious aid towards Vietnam in the period following liberation, aid which has now been completely halted.

vi) Sanctuary: it seems clear that Vietnamese forces continue to occupy areas of Cambodia once used as sanctuaries. Whether or not the Vietnamese feel they have a right to these places, it is clear that the ultra-nationalist regime in Phnom Penh finds the situation intolerable.

vii) Special relationship vs. Indochina Federation: one constant refrain in Kampuchean propaganda is that Vietnam is trying to force Cambodia into some sort of Indochinese Federation. As I have observed, serious consideration of this concept seems to have ended in 1951. Nevertheless, the Vietnamese have pressed for a 'special relationship' to which the Kampucheans have replied, 'we want a normal not a special relationship'. Laos and Vietnam have embodied their 'special relationship' in a 25-year treaty. In practice, this has meant the stationing of 25-30,000 Vietnamese troops in Laos to help in suppressing counter-revolutionaries.
In conclusion, Vietnam has a legitimate security interest in what goes on in Cambodia. This concern relates not only to the existence of anti-communist resistance movements along the border area, but to whether or not the domestic policies of the Pol Pot regime make for domestic stability. As I have tried to demonstrate above, there have been at least 'two lines' within the Khmer revolutionary movement, one pro-Vietnamese (or at least willing to cooperate with the VCP). Given the domestic and foreign policies of the Pol Pot regime, there can be no doubt that the Vietnamese will play upon one of the continuities of history and assist opponents of the regime in Phnom Penh.

Footnotes


2. 'The Manifesto and Platform of the Vietnam Lao Dong Party' supplement to People's China 3, 9, 1 May 1951, p.8.


VIETNAMESE MOTIVATIONS

David Marr

As a historian I am in the uncomfortable position of feeling that we may be paying too much attention to the past. I would like to tilt it a bit to the present, and note the implications for the future if I can. After all, times do change. Each generation should certainly know the past but be prepared to break with it as well. I think all three peoples, the Vietnamese, the Khmer and the Chinese are capable of doing this, given the right leadership and the right circumstances.

I want to deal here with four matters, all rather more general, perhaps, than some of the discussion so far. First, there are the domestic Vietnamese factors, particularly economic, which influence her external relations. Secondly, I have some comments on the Vietnam-Kampuchea conflict. Thirdly, there is the Vietnam-China dispute. And, finally, I have some brief thoughts on Vietnam's regional and international perceptions, looking towards ASEAN and the world beyond.

As regards domestic factors, I do not think anyone can dispute that Vietnam's main preoccupation since May 1975 has been to move from a single-focus wartime mobilization to a multiple-focus programme of reconstruction and development. To put it mildly, this is not proving to be an easy transition. It is worth listing some of the reasons. First, in 1975 I think there was lack of preparation for post-war conditions. Memoirs which have come out since indicate that Vietnamese generals really did not expect to win completely in South Vietnam in 1975, only to achieve a partial victory to be completed in 1976. That meant that a number of very practical postwar planning efforts were not ready when they were needed. Secondly, I think there has been a psychological let-down among Vietnamese after 30 years of intense struggle. Any human being can only take so much tension of the kind that the Vietnamese have faced in both the north and the south over that period. This is expressed in many different ways in Vietnam today.
Thirdly, there are the deep marks in the south of the colonial and the neo-colonial past. The Vietnamese communist leadership has difficulty fathoming southern society, much less working out comprehensive solutions. It does realize, however, that true unification will probably take several decades. Fourthly, there is ample evidence of bureaucratism. Obviously this is not unique to the Vietnamese, although more than one Vietnamese has complained that they got the worst of two traditions — the Chinese Confucian hierarchy and the French official system. Perhaps this can best be symbolized in the constant use of rubber-stamps, and the requirement that multiple copies be submitted for just about everything. This is as evident among Vietnamese communists as it has been among previous non-communist regimes in the south. There is constant evidence too of slippage between top-level policy intent and bottom level implementation.

A fifth reason is that clearly economic assistance from the socialist countries has been reduced, and there has been only modest response from non-socialist countries. The exceptions are Sweden, France, some UN agencies, the World Bank and the IMF. Of course there has been no help whatsoever from the United States. A sixth reason for difficulty is the border problem, one of the things we are discussing today. And finally, most recently, there has been the departure of thousands of overseas Chinese, particularly from the north, highly skilled people in many cases, including factory workers, miners, stevedores and fishermen. This has put a real dent in a number of projects in the north.

Beyond this checklist I think there's a more fundamental problem. Winning a war has one set of scientific, political and even artistic imperatives. Winning a struggle against poverty, ignorance and disease has a completely different set of imperatives. The top leaders of Vietnam, together since the early 1940s, certainly realize this, but they have not been able to formulate and disseminate an alternative vision from that which led Vietnam to victory in 1975. Meanwhile, most of the ordinary Vietnamese are wise enough to know that, unlike a military victory, the communist millenium is not going to be
achieved on a certain day of a certain month of a certain year. Modernization is a process, not a hill to be seized or an enemy division smashed. How does one get millions of people committed to a process?

Given current difficulties with Kampuchea and China it would be all too easy for Vietnam to revert to wartime imperatives, not only as regards its borders but also in determining how its society and economy is organized. My reading of recent speeches and editorials indicates that they have not done this yet, an important element to keep in mind. The longer the armed conflict continues, however, the more likely is a reversion to a total war mentality.

As concerns the Vietnam-Kampuchea conflict specifically, I would explain it four ways: ethnic-historical animosities; inter-party relations; differing perceptions of life; and the Sino-Soviet dispute. We have already had a fair amount of discussion on ethnic and historical factors. I would simply want to emphasize further how the Khmer possess a profound fear and distrust of the Vietnamese stemming from real life, from a series of humiliations and territorial losses extending over many centuries. Most Khmer refuse to believe that Vietnam has no further territorial ambitions, no matter what Vietnamese may say or do. On the other hand, ordinary Vietnamese still tend to look down on Khmers. When I was in Vietnam in early 1978 most people were stunned to read newspaper accounts of violent altercations between the two countries having occurred only weeks after liberation in 1976. Some expressed the opinion that the Vietnamese armed forces should settle the issue quickly, if necessary by marching into Phnom Penh. One middle level official said 'of course, if we wanted to, we could take Phnom Penh in 24 hours'. Others, including some people on the street, were astute enough to realize that actions of that kind would not necessarily solve anything in the long run. Once you are in Phnom Penh, what next? Certainly Vietnamese leaders are aware of the serious regional and international repercussions if they move in that direction.

As for inter-party relations, Ben Kiernan has discussed this, and also Carlyle Thayer. Until some time in the 1960s the Vietnamese
Communist Party clearly served as 'older brother' to the Khmer communists. Whether this was of long term benefit to the Khmer 'younger brothers' is open to discussion. I do not think there is any disputing the relative weakness of the Marxist-Leninist movement in Cambodia right up to the present. Now, whether or not they would have been in a better position today if they had been entirely separated from the Vietnamese movement is an interesting hypothetical question.

Khmer communists did have grievances in terms of their relations with Vietnamese communists. The 1954 Geneva Conference was one turning point. I would want to add, however, that Vietnam also had its grievances vis-a-vis the Chinese and the Soviet Union at the Geneva Conference. Vietnam had reason to feel that its arm was being twisted perhaps in much the same way that the Cambodians felt regarding the Vietnamese. Again in 1973 the Cambodians had a grievance, in that the Paris Peace Agreement was concluded by the Vietnamese and the Americans in such a way as to permit the Americans to switch their bombing attacks to Cambodia. Whether the Vietnamese had any choice is also open to question, however.

It must have been a severe shock to Vietnamese communists in 1975-76 to see a younger group of Khmer revolutionaries violently purge the older members, and then use the anti-Vietnamese theme as a device to retain mass support. In all my discussions with Vietnamese leaders there was a deep sense of anger coupled with an honest inability to understand why any Khmer communist might want to do this.

Part of the problem stems from very different perceptions of politics by the two communist leaderships. Obviously each has different ways of mobilizing masses of people, differing theories and plans for economic development, and different ways of approaching regional and international relations. All of this probably keeps the two countries at odds even assuming they can overcome their historical animosities. On the other hand, it also suggests that a change in communist leadership in either of the two countries, but most likely in Kampuchea, that reduces or eliminates this ideological chasm may be the key to overcoming the sad historical legacy.
Then there is the Sino-Soviet dispute as a factor in the Vietnam-Kampuchea conflict. The Soviet Union hung on in the Phnom Penh of the United States and Lon Nol far longer than was wise, and was thus unceremoniously kicked out in 1975. China quickly became Kampuchea's sole major foreign supporter. It is not a comfortable position for China to be in, however, and one can imagine Teng Hsiao-ping and associates gnashing their teeth at the situation.

What do the two primary antagonists, Kampuchea and Vietnam, want as solutions to the conflict? Vietnam is probably prepared to negotiate a border on the basis of the NLF-Sihanouk agreement of 1966. The sea delineation remains more difficult to resolve than the one on land. Beyond matters of territory, Vietnam would like to see a leadership in Phnom Penh that is at least not violently hostile, even if not necessarily the closest of comrades. This brings us to the question of what is the 'special relationship' to be achieved between the former Indochina states. I have asked Vietnamese to define that, and they have referred to the special relationship with Laos. I do not think any independent Kampuchean government is going to accept that as an appropriate model. Meanwhile the Vietnamese are cultivating Kampuchean alternatives to Pol Pot, but presumably they are wise enough to realize that someone who is promoted today may not necessarily be subservient tomorrow.

Essentially what Vietnam is looking for is not to have three enemies on its border. Clearly Laos is not an enemy. Vietnam can not do much to change China's position. So that leaves Kampuchea. What does Kampuchea want? Having read Ben Kiernan's paper, it seems to me that Kampuchea wants a public admission from Vietnam that the lower Mekong delta was stolen. This resembles the Chinese attitude regarding 19th century losses to Russia. China and Kampuchea want a moral statement above all, which I do not think either the Russians or the Vietnamese are prepared to give, since it would involve complete reassessments of national identity.

Turning now to the Vietnam-China dispute, the first thing to emphasize is its linkage with the Vietnam-Kampuchea conflict. Kampuchea
is more at the root of today's differences between Hanoi and Peking than the overseas Chinese, the offshore islands, or even perhaps, relations with the Soviet Union. Since 1975 China has supported Kampuchea at each crucial juncture. Without this support Phnom Penh could not have taken such an uncompromising position regarding its differences with Vietnam. If we assume that Pol Pot is sane, that he is not some wild-eyed fanatic bent on self-destruction, then it follows that he received certain guarantees from Peking as to what China would do for him in given situations. But China's withdrawal of economic aid to Vietnam was one concrete way to provide support for Kampuchea. Peking claimed this action was in retaliation for Vietnam's treatment of the overseas Chinese, but I think that was strictly secondary. It certainly puts pressure on Hanoi, even if it also risks Vietnam going to the Soviet Union for more assistance.

This is not to ignore the strictly bilateral historical legacy. As Professor Wang Gungwu indicates, there was a millenium of Chinese domination, and there were attempts by every major Chinese dynasty subsequently either to reincorporate Vietnam or to reprimand it forcibly, for not playing the appropriate role as younger brother. Even if one assumes that China will avoid resort to force, and I for one make that assumption at this point, the fact that Vietnam for the first time can use relations with another great power as a leverage must be very hard to get used to on the part of the Chinese. Nevertheless Vietnam has learned from long experience that favourable relations with its giant northern neighbour must eventually be given priority. It has not expressed any territorial designs on China since the Sung dynasty. It would probably be willing to accept the status quo regarding the offshore islands.

So, the big question is, what does China want? Frankly, that is the most puzzling question of all for me. I was frankly surprised, for example, by how upset a Chinese diplomat became when I suggested the idea of de facto recognition of the current Paracel-Spratleys situation. He said very angrily that not an inch of sovereign Chinese soil will ever be sacrificed. I pointed out that the historical arguments he had used to justify possession of the Spratleys could apply equally to possession of Vietnam itself, but he said, 'Oh no,
that was the feudal period'. The Vietnamese often get in the same contradictory position regarding the Cambodians. They admit that the taking of the Mekong delta in the 18th century and the 19th century interference in Cambodian internal affairs were manifestations of feudal class values, yet the favourable territorial legacy of the Le and Nguyen kings is clearly to be defended today with the blood of citizens if the socialist republic.

Is China anxious to prevent Vietnam from becoming not only the most powerful military force in Southeast Asia, but also the strongest economic and political influence on mainland Southeast Asia? Does China see that prospect as absolutely counter to its national interests? Or is China's response primarily determined by its on-going dispute with the Soviet Union? Does it expect Vietnam to remain clear of close relations with the Soviet Union? I really have not been able to ascertain from the statements made by China what the answers are to those questions.

Finally, I would like to say a few things on Vietnam's perceptions of regional and international relations. With highest priority still being given to reconstruction and development, Vietnam has tried desperately to reduce the damage done by the Chinese withdrawal of so many economic projects. Now it is said that COMECON may take up ten or more of these projects. Vietnam has approached India for a few more. There are the recent loans from the World Bank and the IMF which are unrelated to the Chinese projects. The bottleneck concerning Japanese loans and business credits has been removed, although Japan may move slowly so as not to offend China and several of the ASEAN countries. Foreign private investment continues to be very slow, very sticky, and this is as much the fault of the Vietnamese as the private investors. I do not believe the Vietnamese government has quite figured out how far it wants to go along that line, or what the social and political implications are of linking up with overseas capitalist markets. One can also assume that the Soviet Union is trying to discourage such Vietnamese experimentation.

As far as the United States is concerned, perhaps in 1979 there
is some hope of progress in normalization. Yet, surely the Vietnamese cannot expect significant help from the US for several years, especially if China is offended in the process. The Carter administration cannot play the China card and the Vietnam card simultaneously.

All of the problems discussed so far, plus the chance misfortunes of weather in the last few years, lead me to conclude that Vietnam will be unable to fulfill some key aspects of its current five year plan which continues to the end of 1980. Economic disaster will be averted largely because of substantial help from COMECON. Only the next five year plan, from 1981 to 1985, will be able to demonstrate whether Vietnam can really fashion its own independent mix of foreign economic relationships or is destined to become a long-term mendicant of COMECON.

As regards ASEAN, open disputes with Kampuchea and China have clearly been the main reason for Vietnam's new approach to Southeast Asia. It is an effort by Vietnam to explain her position on those disputes and perhaps make some modest bilateral gains. I do not think Vietnam has any intention or desire at the moment to join ASEAN. Nor does Hanoi expect much from any zone of neutrality formula. We have not discussed Thailand at all, but I think it is in an important and sensitive position at the moment. It will be interesting to see if Bangkok can live up to its diplomatic reputation and avoid taking sides in Indochina as well as negotiating the perilous waters of the Sino-Soviet dispute.

It should be apparent that Vietnam has a long term interest in trying to prevent the complete domination of Southeast Asia by any great power or cluster of major powers. The old colonial powers have faded. Japan failed in its attempt at military domination, but of course has to be watched from an economic perspective. The US also failed militarily yet retained significant economic and strategic interests in the area. Looking to the future, it would not help Vietnam to have either the Soviet Union or China dominate Southeast Asia.

What must send shivers down the spines of Vietnamese leaders
is any prospect of a de facto alliance between the United States, Japan and China. That would be the only scenario that might drive Vietnam into a deep strategic dependence on the Soviet Union. Your estimate of the chances of such a de facto alliance developing in the next five years is as good as mine, but there are certainly plenty of signs in the wind. A US-Japan-China alliance would certainly polarize Southeast Asia, and indeed most of the world. As Australia is hardly a dispassionate bystander, we should do all we can to encourage open debate of such matters.
DISCUSSION I

Discussion in the first session opened with one participant posing the question: what are the main reasons for the severity of the domestic policies of the Kampuchean government? He said that the 'fundamentalism' of leaders of the government had been suggested to him as a possible element in this phenomenon.

Other elements of explanation advanced in response to the question included:

- The destruction wrought by US bombing during the war, which had 'destroyed the country economically', and 'left a lot of very angry people, and in the long term starvation'. The leadership had also been 'very much depleted' by long years of fighting.
- The Kampuchean national psychology, which is characterized by 'stubbornness', and an 'inability to compromise'.
- The speed with which the revolution was carried out had meant there was 'no time to build up a set of policies'. One of the Kampuchean revolutionary leaders was quoted as saying: 'We have nothing to go on, no precedents. We're not acting on anything that's happened in our past'.
- The widespread use of young people who have been sent to areas other than their own where, without much knowledge of national custom and still less of local custom, they have proceeded to carry out activities such as the defrocking of Buddhist monks, and so on.

Two matters were raised by a second questioner: the role of Khieu Samphan, president, or head of state, in the Pol Pot regime; and the role of Prince Sihanouk, and in particular whether there was 'any possibility of his returning to play a useful role'.

The view was expressed that although Khieu Samphan held a very high nominal position, and made a broadcast each year on the April 17 revolutionary anniversary, 'he was not in the central core of the leadership'. Discussion on this matter led to references to divisions in the Kampuchean leadership, and to 'very serious purges going on throughout 1977 which culminated in the defection of the vice-president to Vietnam ... he is now working as leader of the rebel group sponsored
by Vietnam'. (The reference was probably to a person known as So Phim -- Ed.) Divisions had been so serious that in the course of 1976 Pol Pot himself had been removed from his position 'for about a month'.

On Prince Sihanouk, it was stated that 'there is no chance at all' of his returning to influence. One speaker stated: 'If there is one thing that has persisted in the communist movement in Kampuchea it is its opposition to Sihanouk and Sihanouk's opposition to it'. There had been a largely unpublicized 'full-scale war' between the two sides between 1967-70. Commenting that the Kampuchean leadership seemed to lack any sense of humour, the same speaker conceded that they showed a flair for 'black humour' in blowing up the national bank, abolishing money in Kampuchea, and then voting Prince Sihanouk a pension paid in US dollars, with which he could purchase nothing.

Discussion then turned to the tripartite US-China-Vietnam relationships.

In connection with what was called 'a bit of a race' between China and Vietnam to normalize relations with the US, the view was expressed that the US placed a much higher priority on normalizing relations with China than with Vietnam. The former US Secretary of State, Dr Kissinger, was quoted as saying: 'Now we're out of Vietnam, it's a third-grade country'. The point was made that in terms of US domestic opinion, 'there was no political capital' to be made out of normalizing relations with Vietnam.

Another speaker stressed the inter-relationship between the two questions in that normalization with Vietnam could act as an impediment to normalization with China, 'which must come first'. The same speaker made the point that the US administration's 'major difficulty' would be getting either of the two things through Congress. The China question was 'a complex domestic exercise', especially in view of US relationships with Taiwan, but 'the administration has to get the China issue through Congress as soon as it can between the November 1978 elections and the presidential election in 1980'.

The following speakers, recalling recent visits made by them
to Washington, made the following main points:

- The contradiction between China's support for the Kampuchean regime, whose atrocities had been widely condemned in the US, and normalization of US-China relations, would not be a major problem. 'I don't think the Americans have ever been troubled with contradictions', the speaker said.

- Recalling conversations he had had with State Department officials responsible for mainland Southeast Asia, the same speaker said: 'They tended to be people who had served in various capacities in Vietnam, and they hated Vietnam, they hated the Vietnamese victory ... All this sort of thing is a real private venom, and I think this is held by people in Congress too, and elsewhere — a kind of backlash ... I think what is happening in Vietnam today is quite shocking, but what appals me really is the swiftness with which the Americans forget what we did there ourselves, and fail to think of what percentage of blame for what is happening now is due to the Americans. It's as if we were not involved at all. It's as if we were talking about some strange tribe that's just been discovered by anthropologists'.

- The next speaker discerned 'several stages' in the development of the Carter Administration's policy to the questions under discussion.

At first the administration had gone in 'with a degree of enthusiasm on China', and with Vietnam as a lower priority. But it was soon realized that the ground had to be carefully prepared before the American people would accept normalization of US-China relations. As for Vietnam, it was above all (US Assistant Secretary of State) Richard Holbrooke who was committed to the cause of normalization of US-Vietnam relations. But he soon realized he was getting nowhere with the Vietnamese, and this issue receded in importance.

In a second stage, the whole complex of questions was 'put on the back burner'.

In the present, third, stage, the speaker said: 'Now I think we have a completely different situation where the new regime in China, the new Chinese power, has provoked a degree of thinking which is different. This is evident in the administration, and probably in
Congress in a more complex way'. The change in the Vietnamese attitude (the dropping of preconditions for normalization of their relations with the US) was also a new element.

Summing up, the speaker said: 'Many things are difficult to predict at this stage. It may be easier to do so (i.e., normalize relations with China and/or Vietnam) after the November elections, when Carter's position in respect of the Middle East and Soviet developments is clearer ... But on a visit of a few days to Washington in August I found there was a considerably more optimistic view on prospects for improved relations both for China and Vietnam than when I was last there in March'.

Discussion closed with a participant quoting an editorial of July 1 in the French newspaper Le monde, dealing with the decision by Vietnam to join the Soviet-dominated economic bloc COMECON. The editorial said notably: 'Responsibilities for the present crisis are widely shared. If the West had had another attitude after the end of the war in 1975 Vietnam would not have been forced by the need to secure aid, even if politically tied aid, to align itself as it has done'.

Footnote
1. A full account of this is given in Ben Kiernan, *The Samlaut Rebellion and its Aftermath: the Origin of Cambodia's Liberation Movement*, Monash University, Centre for South East Asian Studies, Working Papers no 4 and 5, 1975
CHINA-VIETNAM:
NOSTALGIA FOR, REJECTION OF, THE PAST

Wang Gungwu

I will try to be very brief about a number of the more important things which, I feel, need some historical background. Very briefly: what is China so angry about? The four which in my view might do most to answer this question are as follows:

First the question of gratitude for assistance given. Secondly the treatment of the hua-ch'iao (Overseas Chinese). Thirdly the leaning to one side, in this case to the Soviet Union instead of to China, and fourthly, the question of Cambodia, the bullying of Cambodia, the desire as the Chinese see it of the Vietnamese to dominate Cambodia, to dominate the whole of the former French Indochina, and their fear that this could be merely a step in the direction of Vietnamese domination over the whole of the area to the south and southwest of China in the coming period.

I think there are a number of other things mentioned from time to time in the communiques and statements, but these four are the most significant. I shall not, however, deal with all aspects equally. The first point about ingratitude is subjective and emotional and I have nothing directly to say about it. It is one which may be better understood if the whole historical context is examined and it is this context which I will concentrate on here. My approach to the issue of Chinese anger is to ask, 'What has changed from the history that the Chinese are accustomed to, when, in the past, they looked at this area to their south and southwest?' And also to comment on what has not changed.

Let me start with what has not changed. I think in fact, that the only thing related to the four issues that I have mentioned that reflects no change is this Chinese support for Cambodia. This aspect in fact goes very deep into Chinese practice in their relations with the south. From the very beginning, if we look back at the way the
Chinese viewed countries all round them, especially those in the south, and in particular Vietnam, there was this concern to be, as it were, a kind of arbiter in all the power relations in the area whenever China was drawn in. Most of the time China did not care at all what happened in the south and, in fact, the Chinese never directly or actively interfered, intervened or were even curious about what was happening in the area except where they were drawn in through the fact that these countries traded with China and operated something like a tributary system, or at least nominally a tributary system. There were major gaps in the relationships and there was never any unbroken relationship between any single country and China, except probably in more recent times between, say, Thailand and China. The one country that was forced to have an almost continuous relationship with China in the south was Vietnam and there were very special reasons for that.

What has not changed is that whenever there was a question of a neighbour of Vietnam appealing to China or referring to China problems they were having with Vietnam, the Chinese invariably tried to be the arbiter, to calm the Vietnamese down and to try to hold back and restrain the Vietnamese from bullying their neighbours to the west and south. The classic example is that of Champa. I think there is a lot of material at the end of the 10th century down to the 11th and 12th, right through to the end of Champa, where the role the Chinese were asked to play — they were not always able to play any role at all, but whenever they were asked they tried to do so — was to send messages to the Vietnamese to indicate their disapproval of Vietnamese fighting with the Chams. Now the Vietnamese were of course seeing matters quite differently. Very often they would see the situation as in fact obliging them to defend themselves against very aggressive Cham attacks. But fundamentally the Chinese did not see it that way and there are certain relationships between Vietnam and Cambodia today which remind me very much of the relations between Vietnam and Champa in the early days, involving China too in that sort of way. The other side which is related to this — the lack of change — is that in general the Chinese did not want to involve themselves too much with the south because they were so concerned with the dangers from the north.
As the Chinese see it, the major threats in the past, and today, have come from overland, from the north, northeast, northwest, but essentially from the north — and that condition, that problem for the Chinese, I think, remains so real today that it affects all their judgements on questions concerning their borders. The Vietnam problem, of course, immediately comes into that picture. China would not want to have any trouble in the south because the trouble in the north is far too great, far too dangerous. There are new factors which I will come to later on, but essentially this is the only part, I think, where there has been no real change from the past.

Let me briefly now talk about what has changed. In three areas there have been important changes. First, there is a very broad point I want to make. We often talk about 'East Asia', and just now I said that Vietnam was the only country in the south to have had continuous relations with China, the only one. Now the East Asian concept often involves talk about Chinese civilization, which covers the area of Korea and Vietnam as well as China. Some people even extend it to Japan, although that is most controversial, a proposition I have great difficulty in accepting. But in discussions of an 'East Asian' area, many comparisons have been made between Vietnam and Korea in their relations with China, and emphasis laid on their similarities. In fact, for much of the time relations between Vietnam and China on the one hand and Korea and China on the other bear no resemblance whatsoever. It has been a grave error to attempt to extend what China did in Korea to what China did in Vietnam, and I think we must be very, very careful not to draw comparisons between the two. In fact, all the comparisons suggest, where they compare at all, that difference is far more significant than similarity. But therefore if not East Asia what was there before? The term 'East Asia' is a very much more modern term. That's not how China saw it anyway. China saw the problem in terms of being surrounded in different directions by many different powers. They had certain ways of dealing in the north with Korea, in the west with Tibet, and with the southwestern minority peoples, different policies again. In fact, the Chinese were pretty flexible; they had different policies for different directions, different areas
of interest. With Vietnam it was a special one, not the same as for any of the others. And it was not the same as any others because it was the one area which I think the Chinese could never really forget that they had actually ruled for nearly a thousand years and then lost. Now I am not going to talk about how they lost it, why they lost it, and how the Chinese actually successively tried to reconcile themselves to that loss. But I think it is a grave factor. It has created an absolutely unique relationship for both sides, and I stress this because I think by drawing other analogies we are likely to make errors in our judgements about China's relations with Vietnam.

And I say again, if not 'East Asia', is there any kind of regional grouping beyond the unique relationship between China and Vietnam? Now we have also in the last thirty years or so been building up the concept of Southeast Asia. We have paid a lot of attention to it. I think we have been relatively successful in creating and winning international acceptance for the concept of Southeast Asia. But does this mean anything to China, does it fit in? Insofar as it is an idea starting from after the Second World War, obviously it is new. The Chinese had no conception of Southeast Asia, nor did the rest of the world before 1945. But the conception of Southeast Asia does not really fit any Chinese conception of the south at all. There is, however, one area in which this concept might bear upon future Chinese thinking. If they will not necessarily accept the idea of Southeast Asia as such, the unique relationship, as I said, between China and Vietnam and its immediate neighbours (in this case Cambodia as in the past with Champa), may eventually draw China into a different awareness of the south. With these relationships in mind, the Chinese might come, under pressure of world considerations, to a new awareness of their relationships not with Southeast Asia as a whole but with the littoral states of their 'Mediterranean', the South China Sea.

If you go back to the past, the Chinese saw overland relations — with the southwest minorities, with Laos and Burma, and with all the areas inhabited by tribal groups around Kwangsí, Yunnan and the borders between Burma and Laos — as quite distinct and separate from their relations stemming mainly from Canton, with the littoral states of
the South China Sea. Today, if you really drew the attention of the Chinese to the south, it seems to me that an overall concept of the oceanic, sea-going relationship with the littoral states of this 'Mediterranean' might have more meaning for them than the concept of Southeast Asia. I think it is not an accident that Chinese relations with Burma have already evolved very differently from Chinese relations with any other country in Southeast Asia. It is not an accident. And I think the present problems concerning Laos reflect some of these difficulties. Laos is seen as a landlocked state of the overland connection, with overland relations with the minority peoples in the southwest of China, and the Chinese would prefer, if they could possibly arrange it, to continue to work along those lines. But despite this preference, I think circumstances have probably changed too much for them to try to do that successfully.

I think the new situation in the south opens things up and makes it more likely for the Chinese to see a new set of relationships developing around this so-called Mediterranean-South China Sea. It involves, of course, all of ASEAN, Cambodia, and Vietnam and so on. If Taiwan retains its independence, Taiwan too becomes a separate participant in this Mediterranean connection. Now this is new. As I said, the Chinese have never really seen the South China Sea as a sea with a littoral-state system, and a possible inter-state system arising from the countries around the South China Sea. But I think if they are going to be pushed away from the 'central kingdom' idea, pushed towards the south, it may not be towards Southeast Asia that the Chinese will look, but to a South China Sea littoral region which they would understand better and which would be much more comfortable for them to work with. Of course, the implications of this are great, because it involves all the scattered islands in the middle of the South China Sea, all the various potential quarrels which will arise if we in fact look inwards to the South China Sea from the countries surrounding it. Let me not take this too far, but just leave it as a thought.

The second major difference I think concerns what may be called
the 'French connection'. I use this term not because I think France is at all important now. But the French connection was significant in historical terms, as it were, tearing Vietnam away from traditional relations with China. It was significant in that it involved a great foreign power from somewhere else. In the whole history of the relations between Vietnam and China, Vietnam had never had a protector to look after its interests against China. The Koreans had always had very complex relations with the northeastern part of Asia, which offered various counter-balancing forces whether they were Khitans, Jurchens, Mongols, or Manchus, to their long historical ties with China. The Koreans always had to weigh all these factors and had to make decisions, very difficult political decisions, as to which side to depend on. On the whole, the Koreans did better than China in defending their country against barbarian enemies to the north — that is at least in their Korean literature, in their tradition. To the south, on the contrary, the Vietnamese had nobody to look to. The only power that was anywhere near them was China immediately to their north. They had to pay obeisance to some of the rhetoric that the Chinese insisted upon; to some extent they were also quite prepared to accept it. But there was nobody else. It had to be a very delicate and extremely sensitive relationship calling for skills, diplomatic skills, on the part of the Vietnamese, and calling for great preparedness for defence against any Chinese attack all through the history of their relations. The unequal power relationship was obvious to the Vietnamese, but there was nobody else they could turn to for help. The intervention of the French in the middle of the 19th century introduced a new factor, a completely new factor. For a hundred years the French provided a countervailing force in relations with China that the Vietnamese had never had. Now that the French have gone, and the United States has gone, at least the Vietnamese have experienced the privilege of having a protector from somewhere else against any unreasonable demands the Chinese might make upon them. I think this is where the Soviet Union comes in. Not because the Vietnamese like the Soviet Union, or particularly trust the Soviet Union, but because the Soviet Union replaces the French, and if the Americans and the Japanese would do something along the same lines I think the Vietnamese would welcome the whole lot.
The French connection was simply the beginning of a new kind of connection that placed Vietnam in a totally new relationship with China. At least this is how I think the Vietnamese understand it and I think this is the part that troubles the Chinese most. Insofar as the Chinese talked about 'lips and teeth' and used other rhetorical terms to express how close the Chinese and the Vietnamese have always been and so on, they were probably more impressed by the past situation of a quite unique relationship between China and Vietnam. I think they would very much like to get back to square one on that if at all possible. I would suggest that this is not possible and because it is not possible the Chinese are uncomfortable. They do not know how to respond to a situation in which the Vietnamese, after getting rid of their colonial masters, now retain, as it were, the lovely idea of having a connection outside which would give them protection and freedom from the kind of meek subservient relationship that they had to have with China in the past.

And quickly to the last point about the Overseas Chinese. This is new. But you can also say that it is not new because there have always been Chinese who went to Vietnam for one reason or another,—political refugees, criminals escaping from the Chinese authorities, traders who settled in Vietnam over the centuries. There have always been Chinese who settled in Vietnam even after Vietnam became independent in the 10th century. This has been a continuous relationship, so what is new about it? What is new is something that was created by China at the turn of this century. It is quite possible that this was influenced by the modernizing process of identifying nationality, legal identity, political identity, and so on, which occurred almost everywhere at that time. The real change, however, came about when the Chinese adopted the term hua-ch'iao. I have written elsewhere about this. But I think there is a tremendous difference between talking about just Chinese who happened to be overseas and to using the technical term hua-ch'iao which was introduced only at the turn of the century. Before that the Chinese attitude towards Chinese who left, whether criminals, traders or political refugees, was that they were doing something terribly wrong. Essentially, leaving China to
go to live somewhere else was a way of cutting yourself off completely from China, going into complete exile. It was in fact a crime from the Ming dynasty onwards and once you got out it was extremely difficult for you to return. When you did return there were all kinds of restrictions, penalties and so on, for having gone out of China at all. Therefore the words used for such Chinese who went out of China were always very simple and referred to someone untrustworthy, someone who was a vagrant or vagabound, and basically someone unworthy of attention. He was possibly even a traitor or a potential traitor, a spy for foreign powers and so on.

So the whole attitude had been very straightforward and a very negative one. But at the turn of the century, due to circumstances which I need not go into now, the Chinese government eventually began to completely reassess the Chinese overseas in terms of nationality, in terms of Chinese responsibility for the protection of Chinese subjects. All these concepts they had actually picked up from European law. They finally got the hang of it and decided to use the technical term *hua-ch’iao*. Of course it is not entirely technical, it is also very loosely used for Overseas Chinese. But the technical side comes from the word *ch’iao* itself. *Ch’iao* actually means a transient visitor, someone who has not permanently left China but is temporarily resident abroad. This had never been officially acknowledged in the past. Of course they knew there were some Chinese who were temporarily resident traders, for example, who came back and forth. But the recognition, the official recognition, of the temporary residence abroad created the problem that while such Chinese were abroad they remained the citizens of China and might need protection. China now had some official role to play in trying to protect them. Now that was quite new and it has created almost all the difficulties that China now has with each of the Southeast Asian countries in which there are large numbers of Chinese.

Now far be it for me to criticize the fact that the Chinese overseas wanted to be protected by China and felt extremely helpless against colonial powers. Some such powers were more reasonable than
others, but on the whole the Overseas Chinese communities were discriminated against. It was a pretty miserable life for a Chinese living abroad in Southeast Asia when there was no such protection. The Overseas Chinese themselves demanded and asked for protection. This was not something that the Chinese government invented off the top of their heads — obviously there was a new situation and the Chinese government had to respond. But their response to it was very much influenced by learning how useful Overseas Chinese could be because of the fortunes they were making in Southeast Asia. This, in fact, was the main argument at the end of the 19th century that was put before the Chinese emperor. There was a lot of capital out there and if only the Chinese could be asked to invest their capital back in China it would be a great help to Chinese modernization, industrialization and so on. It was argued that all this was going to waste by letting it remain in Southeast Asia. That was the major thrust of the argument leading eventually to the government recognizing that traders temporarily resident abroad should be given protection. Certainly there were other factors as well, but I think this was ultimately the most telling one that persuaded the Manchu-Ch'ing government to change their policy towards the Overseas Chinese at the turn of the century.

I think this factor is still relevant today. But many problems exist as to the status of Overseas Chinese to whom protection must be given, and the function of the Chinese state, insofar as it raises expectations among the Chinese abroad, insofar as it creates hierarchies of relationships among Chinese who are still Chinese citizens, Chinese who are stateless in different parts of Southeast Asia, and Chinese who have become citizens of the different countries in Southeast Asia. There are also Chinese who, in fact, have been virtually absorbed into the population but who may still retain a Chinese name and Chinese customs and who have not become Christians or Moslems or who have not rediscovered Buddhism in any sort of way. They remain as a fourth category. So there has emerged a series, a hierarchy of categories of Overseas Chinese, and I think this has really complicated all the issues for China. These issues are new. Where Vietnam is concerned,
of course, the Chinese did not have, or did not seem to have, the awareness that over the past century and a half, that unique situation of the past was being disturbed by a number of quite fundamental changes in geopolitics, in regional orientation and in this question of the status of the Overseas Chinese. Because they have not given adequate consideration to how much the Vietnamese want to free themselves from the old relationship with China and how much they want to move to a new relationship, the Chinese have made quite a number of miscalculations in the last few months.

Footnote

The Chinese position on the events in Kampuchea and those on its own border with Vietnam is an evolving one and not all its aspects are clear at this stage, but it does seem to be an essentially reactive policy which is developing in response to actions taken by Vietnam as perceived in Peking. Without attempting to place these disputes in the same category as others in which China has resorted to the actual use of force, either to signal its intentions or to deter an adversary, it is useful to look back on these earlier conflicts for what they can tell us about a Chinese 'calculus of deterrence', as Allen Whiting terms it, or perhaps more accurately in the current situation, China's use of coercive diplomacy.

In the three most important disputes in which China has mobilized troops and deployed them beyond her own boundaries, namely in Korea in 1950, in India in 1962 and in North Vietnam between 1964 and 1968, China's leadership was in broad agreement about the vulnerable position of the nation, and in each case this vulnerability was related to the domestic situation. In two of these cases relations with the Soviet Union had deteriorated to the point where China's vulnerability was increased by the danger of tacit collusion by the two superpowers against China. It must be noted that the current disputes with Vietnam take place against a background of domestic stability and confidence, while the opening to Washington has removed the possibility of China having to confront both superpowers simultaneously.

China's response to the earlier provocations and threats was one of belligerence in order to deter the adversary from pursuing his intentions as they were discerned in Peking, but in each case belligerent action was based on an open statement of the Chinese position in the
dispute formulated in highly principled terms. Very early in each
dispute troops were moved close to operational positions with little
attempt to conceal these movements, although in the Korean conflict
the US failed to appreciate the significance of the mobilization and
in 1962 Indian military intelligence was inadequate. In no case did
China either abandon non-military avenues to resolve the conflict or
allow the conflict to reach the point where China had no prudent
option or comfortable fall-back position.

China's style of coercive diplomacy has not been static but
has improved with experience so that the poor signalling, the failure
to appreciate that a position may not seem credible to an adversary,
the need to rely on doubtful third parties and the problems of
misperception which characterized China's behaviour over Korea were
not repeated in the delicate moves and counter-moves over Vietnam
between 1964 and 1968. In particular, the US was always allowed to
retain some 'face' and a relatively honourable escape route from the
confrontation. Timing was also more sophisticated. The first warnings
were issued early, long before the threat was imminent. The signalling
had a rhythm which allowed the enemy time to assess the new situation
and then respond without gaining the initiative in the exchange.

In the current dispute with Vietnam it has been the Hoa people,
usually defined as Vietnamese of Chinese origin, who have constituted
the main objects of difference, whereas the underlying causes of the
breach have received little public attention to date. Consequently
it is upon the 1955 discussions between the Chinese and Democratic
Republic of Vietnam governments on the nationality of Chinese residents
that the CPR's 'principled stand' rests. Vietnam is accused of going
back on these discussions, although publication of the substance of
the discussions or of any agreements reached which might strengthen
the Chinese case has not taken place. Instead the Vietnamese authorities
have accused China of seeking to foment discord between the two nations
by encouraging the 'illegal emigration' of Hoa people since April. By
late May Peking reports mentioned that some 89,000 had left and that
there had been incidents involving Vietnamese armymen firing on refugee
boats. Hong Kong reports at the time suggested that PLA forces stationed in the southern provinces adjacent to the border numbered about 150,000 men, although how many had been moved south recently and therefore constituted a response to the Vietnamese charges of 4 May is not clear. However, an early warning of the serious light in which China viewed the incidents was issued on 24 May, accusing the Vietnamese authorities of 'arbitrary, truculent and illegal actions'. The Vietnamese were told that they must 'bear full responsibility for all the consequences'.

The Vietnamese response came three days later in the form of a proposal to meet to resolve the problem of the status of the Hoa people. The proposal was dismissed in Peking as 'pure propaganda' on 9 June and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs repeated the charges of 24 May laid by the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO) that Vietnamese public security personnel had fomented the tension and were forcing Chinese residents to become naturalized or face discrimination in employment and housing. A new note of warning was added and Vietnam was put on notice that the costs of handling and resettling the refugees would force China to cancel part of its aid to Vietnam.

This threat elicited no response from Hanoi, let alone a conciliatory gesture, and was followed by a strong statement from the Director of the OCAO, Liao Cheng-chih, accusing Vietnamese authorities of persecuting Chinese residents and thereby causing a serious deterioration in inter-state relations. This was followed the next day, 16 June, by a formal note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Hanoi claiming obstructionism and delay in refusing China permission to establish a consulate-general in Ho Chi Minh City, withdrawing the consul-general in consequence and at the same time closing the three provincial consulates Vietnam maintained in the Chinese southern centres of Kwangchow, Nanning and Kunming. At this point two Chinese vessels were on their way to Vietnam to repatriate Chinese residents, although this does not appear to have been done with the agreement of Hanoi.
Real settlement of the public issues was not facilitated by these moves, but on 16 June Hanoi notified Peking of the conditions under which repatriation could take place. Several of these conditions proved unacceptable, particularly one whereby Vietnamese authorities would decide which residents were eligible for departure permits. This led to a major step in the escalation of the conflict with the announcement on 3 July that economic and technical aid to Vietnam was being halted and that Chinese engineers and other technical personnel in Vietnam would be recalled. This step could not have been taken lightly and it placed China in an awkward position. Only days earlier I had been entertained to a lengthy account of Soviet perfidy in the withdrawal of technical aid in 1960, an act which still seemed to rankle with the officials of Nanking. Accordingly, one might assume that the Chinese government acted in this instance out of exasperation and was left with few other options short of a break in formal relations with Hanoi. Beyond this, an escalation of the dispute carried the dangers of open conflict and the possible involvement of other powers. If the object of the cancellation was to bring Vietnam to heel, it failed, since it was followed almost immediately by an announcement that Vietnam had accepted full membership of COMECON.

An impasse had been reached over the question of refugees by late July, although talks continued at the vice-ministerial level, leaving open the possibility of a solution. Meanwhile, an ominous note crept into the exchanges between the two states. On 10 July Vietnam alleged that Chinese fighter planes had intruded into its airspace two days before, an allegation that was promptly denied. Mutual recriminations about violent incidents at border posts continued and China was also accused of having troops in Kampuchea, some of whom were said to have fired into Vietnamese territory. Against this background of charges and events China celebrated Army Day with more flourish than on some other anniversaries. The keynote speech was delivered on 1 August by Hsu Hsiang-chien and published with the title, 'Heighten Our Vigilance and Get Prepared to Fight a War'. The Defence Minister was presenting a global view and concentrated on the warlike and hegemonistic activities of the Soviet Union, but there was one
reference to Vietnam acting at the instigation of Moscow. Later in
the same week a senior Politburo member, Nieh Jung-chen, addressed
a national conference on militia work, outlining plans to conduct a
people's war of defence under modern conditions using tactics of
partial and selective withdrawal in combination with 'tens of millions'
of troops, many of them militia forces under army command. An
atmosphere of awareness rather than alert and mobilization was the
theme of these widely publicized speeches.

The present condition of the conflict leaves China in a difficult
posture with little immediate prospect of achieving either the explicit
or implicit objectives of her policies. China's interests have been
threatened by recent developments, but it seems almost as though China
is still having trouble working out a framework within which to set
the present conflict and that this may account for the short-run policy
failures. Marxist-Leninist theory provides little assistance in the
interpretation of relations between states that are either socialist
or in the process of building socialism, apart from a vague assumption
that these relations will be generally harmonious under the formula of
proletarian internationalism. When relations with the Soviet Union
became tense and led to open conflict an explanation was sought in the
nature of the Soviet system. As Defence Minister Hsu Hsiang-chien
put it in the speech referred to above, 'As the nature of the social
system in the Soviet Union has changed, so have its policies; in its
foreign relations it is energetically pushing hegemonism and expansionism'.

The relationship with Vietnam was also once a close one, and
the cliche used to describe it during the Vietnam War was that the two
nations were as close as the lips are to the teeth. China made much
of its support of Vietnam during that difficult conflict and probably
feels that she is now being ill-treated for her generosity and friend-
ship. But there has always been another component in the relationship
that goes back much further in history to the times when the northern
and central states were under varying forms of Chinese suzerainty.
Accordingly Vietnam is sometimes patronized and the highhandedness
with which China has treated her in this dispute, such as the unilateral
dispatch of the MV Minghua and MV Changli, quite likely stems from this cultural attitude. Vietnam is not seen as having progressed far along the road of building socialism and is therefore more likely to be swayed by the Soviet social imperialists. Major blame is placed on the Soviet Union, described in the mixed metaphorical terms that only the authoritative Renmin Ribao 'Commentator' can manage, as sparing '... no efforts to bind independent Vietnam to its chariot for global expansion and have Vietnam pull its chestnuts out of the fire for it'. Vietnam is not yet accused of having 'changed colour' in the manner of Soviet society and relations between the two peoples are still described as being friendly, despite the actions of certain Vietnamese public security officers. However there have been dark references to 'other domestic causes' behind the persecution of Hoa people and the way is open for a tougher interpretation of Vietnamese policy.

China's interests in the region presently under threat include, firstly, a strategic concern about the possibility of a united Indochina under Hanoi control and well armed on her southern border. China's support for even an unpopular regime in Kampuchea and a small military presence in Laos are intended to counter this possibility, although the prospects for success now look to be diminishing. Secondly, China is anxious that the whole of Indochina should not come under Soviet influence. This policy has been threatened to the extent that the cessation of aid to Vietnam has forced Hanoi closer to Moscow than the leadership might choose and to the extent that Vietnamese influence in Laos and Kampuchea might increase. A third interest motivating China's policy is a desire for friendly relations and some influence not simply around the South China Sea littoral but within the ASEAN region. Rivalry with Vietnam in this region now threatens to develop into more open competition as the Soviet Union backs Hanoi more closely and both seek to exploit the sensitive issue of Chinese governmental protection of the interests of Overseas Chinese, something Peking has carefully disowned since the early 1950s. Peking's actions in support of the Hoa cannot but cause unease in most ASEAN capitals, particularly Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta. The outbreak of serious Sino-Soviet competition within ASEAN would also endanger another Peking
objective in the development of a stronger and independent ASEAN which would be able to resist superpower influence and, along with other regional groupings and producer cooperative unions, do something to break superpower hegemony by gradually restructuring the present international order. Finally, China's general support for the principle of national sovereignty is undermined by Soviet influence in Vietnam and by the possible collapse of an independent though ill-integrated Kampuchea. This principle is jealously defended as part of the general fight against hegemony and the set of assumptions underlying the Brezhnev Doctrine. In all, the events in Vietnam and Kampuchea present such serious threats to a range of China's vital interests that the possibility of stern action to protect these interests would not be inconsistent with deterrent action taken by the CPR on previous occasions when the perception of threat was held to be serious.
The contribution I might be able to make to this seminar flows from an overseas visit I made in May and June. When I planned that visit I had in mind to look into three matters concerning Vietnam. First, the position of refugees, which nobody has mentioned up till now, although it is a matter which is going to concern Australia as much as any other nation in this region for many years to come. Secondly, I had in mind to study how serious in fact was the conflict in the region. Would it lead to a war between Vietnam and China? Thirdly, I wanted to see to what extent rehabilitation was required in Vietnam. In all these matters you will notice that I was looking at it very much from the point of view of how directly was Australia involved, and to what extent could Australia—because of our resources and distance this would largely mean in cooperation with other countries or through international organizations—have an influence on these three issues.

First, the refugees. I looked into this matter in Geneva with the International Committee of the Red Cross and with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. I also discussed it in Bangkok, in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, and in Nanning, the capital of Guangxi province, next to Vietnam, and also in Guangzhou. In the European context refugees used to mean at the beginning of the century those who were leaving the Tsarist Empire. Forty years ago they used to mean those who were leaving the German Empire, largely Jews. Thirty years ago they used to mean those who were leaving the new Russian Empire. Nowadays those whom we call refugees may not be so classified in the technical sense under the relevant international conventions. The Jews were free to leave Germany before the outbreak of the Second World War. The people who are leaving Vietnam now in general are free to leave Vietnam. It is arguable whether they are refugees.
Not only in the State Department, as one of our American speakers
has observed, but in Australia too there are a great number of people
who are intent on saying 'We told you so'. They said three years and
more ago there would be a bloodbath in Vietnam when the country was
reunited and the Americans were expelled. There has not been a bloodbath
in Vietnam and there is not likely to be one. Emotion is played up very
crudely with evil nostalgic motives. I am not suggesting that there
is not distress in social and economic life in Vietnam. I must stress
one point about refugees which is not understood in Australia. I did not
really appreciate the full extent of it, only a fraction of the extent
of it, before I met Mr Paul Hartling, the former conservative Prime
Minister of Denmark who is now the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.
He pointed out that he was also going to help the refugees into Vietnam;
there were already 150,000 of them. There have been almost as many
refugees going into as coming out of Vietnam. You would never believe
it reading the Australian press.

Without going into any great detail, let me read the notes I
made in June after my discussions in Vietnam.

I was accompanied always by Professor Hoang Minh Giam who is
the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the National Assembly,
an old socialist like so many of the people whom one meets in the
capacity in which I went to Vietnam. They are people who have had
experience in the public affairs of their country for up to forty years.
Whatever one may think of people in communist countries of different
brands, they are at least people who know their jobs. One misses the
exhilaration in Washington where one finds that a person is a master
of a job after three months in it. In Vietnam one meets people who know
all the nuances and have been familiar with them for more than a generation.
Now this does not mean that they are always sufficiently flexible. I
got the impression that in Vietnam people were pretty well played out,
they rather felt let down after the war. Nevertheless these people did
have a long-standing, coherent view of what their country should represent.
They knew their history. They knew it under various self-appointed
protectors. I shall read what I was told by Mr Xuan Thuy, now the Vice-Chairman of the National Assembly in Hanoi. He said there were people of Chinese origin wishing to return to China and they were free to do so as long as this was done by lawful means. Vietnam did not wish to stop them going; he asked me about the number of Vietnamese and Chinese in Australia.

Next, I saw one of the vice-ministers of Foreign Affairs, Mr Phan Hien, the one who has been to the ASEAN countries and to Australia. He said the Cambodian regime's excesses are a direct consequence of their doctrinaire views and inability to govern the country effectively. Their brutality is impossible to understand except as an over-reaction by an inexperienced and frightened group of men. Their hostility to Vietnam is an attempt to bolster their credibility and rally some support from the increasingly disillusioned populace. The extent of their brutality, which verges on genocide, is difficult to believe. It is, however, corroborated time and again by Cambodian refugees who are forced to flee to Vietnam. Regarding the Chinese who wish to leave the South, he expressed the view that they simply wanted an easy life, that there was no easy life in sight for any Vietnamese, but that if they wished to leave Vietnam his government would not stand in their way.

The last person I saw was Mr Pham Van Dong, the Prime Minister. He said the Cambodians were hard to understand, but essentially they were dependent on their northern friends. (May I interpose a comment here. One finds in Russia or China, and I found in Vietnam too, that you never name the country or the nation opposed to you. You refer to it in directional terms. Zhou Enlai in a conversation with me seven years ago referred to the Russians as 'our northern neighbours'. Mr Kuznetsov, who stands in for Brezhnev and has had a long experience of foreign affairs — he brought Czechoslovakia into line — referred to 'southern neighbours'. He used the term often; only once did he use the word China ('Kitai').) Mr Pham Van Dong also said that there were people of Chinese origin who wish to leave the country. They were free to do so through normal channels, he said.
From other sources I formed the impression that if one had $3,000 one could leave by air; if one had $2,000, and I have heard from other sources $1,500, officials look the other way when one sets off by sea. The departments in Australia seem to think that half of the 'refugees', as they call themselves, are Chinese. That proportion will be seen to be an understatement as the years pass. The simple facts are that refugees move both ways in Vietnam and are going to move around in our area for many years. Australia cannot hope that the refugees will fade away. Even if some of them are pirates, they can stay under the principle announced by Senator Greenwood some years ago — anyone opposed to communists can do what he likes, he is welcome in Australia. It is not sufficient for the Australian Minister for Immigration to investigate the problem of Vietnamese refugees by visiting every country in the region except Vietnam. The shadow Minister for Immigration has proposed that we should set up holding camps in Australia until the United Nations or some other international body can find another home for them. I cannot think of any investigations or proposals that are more futile.

Secondly on the war between Vietnam and Kampuchea. With all respect to Ian Wilson things have changed since China resorted to war in Korea. Her northern neighbour was then supporting her. When she tried to resort to war in 1958 she didn't have the ships to incorporate Quemoy and Matsu. In 1962, when she rectified the imperial border with India, it was not known, not fully realized in the West that she and the Soviet Union had split up. I would think it very unlikely that China will invade Vietnam; it would be so easy in those circumstances for the Soviet Union then to invade China. Maybe I do not know enough. I have not spoken to Cambodians other than in Canberra since November 1973 when rather to the displeasure of the Foreign Affairs Department, I called on Prince Sihanouk in his residence in the old French legation in Peking. I make bold to doubt all the stories that appear in the newspapers about the treatment of people in Cambodia. I am sufficiently hardened to believe that the last refuge of the patriot in Australia is to blast the regimes in post-war Indochina. Nobody will justify them so your criticisms will not be countered. I also have a hearty
suspicion of every official statement coming either directly or through the press from the Soviet Union or the United States. There has been so much disinformation spread from those two sources that I tend to disbelieve half of them. One factor that has not been mentioned but might be in Vietnam's mind is that she wants to ensure her north-south communications. The Ho Chi Minh trail is now a big highway but it is vulnerable to attack from across the border. We are still in the same phase in regard to the Indochina situation as we were throughout the sixties in regard to China and the Soviet Union. We could not rid ourselves of the idea that communists must always be monolithically conniving at the destruction of the rest of mankind.

The antipathy between the Vietnamese and Cambodians is long-standing. In my conversation with Sihanouk he said if it had not been for Napoleon III, the Annamites would have destroyed his nation. There is also two thousand years' resentment by the Vietnamese against the Chinese. The rivalry between Vietnam and Kampuchea is now fomented by the rivalry between the Soviet Union and China. I would very much doubt if Vietnam would have proceeded as far as she has but for the support of the Soviet Union or that Kampuchea would have done so but for the supplies that she has received from China. My views on this issue have been derived from conversations in Moscow, in Hanoi and, to a lesser extent, in Bangkok and Canton.

My third concern is the rehabilitation of Vietnam. It is painful to see, particularly in Hanoi, what an immense amount needs to be done. If one looks at the bridge over the Red River on the road to the international airport, one sees at once that this sort of infrastructure is worse even than one sees in Bangladesh. I suppose that as a practising politician until recently I have to think out some arguments to bring home to people the urgency of such matters. Therefore I put my argument on the level of international politics. If the Soviet Union is the only practical friend that Vietnam has she will become more attached to the Soviet Union. The only nation that has given any support to Vietnam for years, other than China and the Soviet Union, is Sweden. The
ideology of the Swedish government which initiated it of course is one which would appeal to me. We in the West can be very thankful for the Swedes. Otherwise the only people whom the Vietnamese would recognize as ever having done a thing for them would have been the Soviet Union and China.

Our Ambassador, a very fine career man, was somewhat disturbed when we took the long drive to the international airport from Hanoi. It took nearly two hours. We were in a large vehicle and were clearly Europeans. When people, young people in particular, wanted to show their pleasure at seeing us they would hail us as Russians. The urchins who ten years ago saw Europeans in Saigon used to yell out 'Americans'. The Europeans with whom the general population now identifies in Hanoi are the Russians. We (Australians) are doing a little in Vietnam and it is relevant and appreciated. We are doing what is urgently necessary, I would think, throughout Indochina — that is developing the resources of the country in agricultural, pastoral, rural areas. Over a million people have been sent from Ho Chi Minh City to the countryside, and more are to be sent. Why people out of that city and Phnom Penh have been sent is because the population of such cities inflated by war, can only be fed by imports. Now the Americans are not disposed to send their surplus grains there and the European Economic Community sends its agricultural surpluses elsewhere. The present population cannot be fed. Their food supplies must be increased. Australia is helping very well and it is appreciated. Aid is coming from the Asian Development Bank, no thanks to the Americans. It is coming, I believe, from the World Bank, no thanks to the Americans. I take the point, however, that there are no votes to be got in America from spending money on Vietnam. I also take the point that it is more urgent for America to normalize relations with Peking than to normalize them with Hanoi. One has to sympathize with the Americans: this is the only war they have ever lost and the loss was catastrophic in inflation for them and for the rest of the world, including us, and in a diminution of American prestige and interest in our area. Nevertheless if we wish to encourage prosperity and security in our region we will do what we can to see that the Americans are as magnanimous as they can be when in a good mood.
They could do more than any other people in the world to help in rehabilitating this country which is in its present position because of their obsession with isolating and boycotting China ever since the revolution in 1949.

I have confined myself to three matters, but they are continuing issues and issues on which Australia can have some influence and should certainly try to exercise it.
Some of the parallels between China's reaction to the plight of the Overseas Chinese in Vietnam in 1978 and her response to a somewhat similar pattern of treatment of Overseas Chinese in Indonesia in 1959-60 are striking enough to warrant brief discussion here.

The Indonesian story, reduced to its bare essentials, is as follows. 1 In May 1959, the Indonesian government issued a regulation banning aliens from the further operation of retail stores in rural areas, most of which were run by hua ch'iao, either citizens of Indonesia (often referred to as WNI-Chinese, Warga Negara Indonesia) or citizens of China. Aliens were still permitted to operate stores in the larger towns, down to the level of kabupaten capital, but as the move seemed symptomatic of more widespread anti-Chinese feeling and there was initially a good deal of uncertainty whether the ban applied to all Chinese-owned stores, or only those of aliens, considerable apprehension was aroused amongst all the Chinese in Indonesia, who naturally sought protection through the Chinese Embassy. The move came at a time when a campaign was in full swing to establish 'Socialism a la Indonesia', which Sukarno was then advocating as the basis for his 'Guided Democracy', a time when an intensely strong socialist ideology was dominant, capitalism and private enterprise were regarded with great disfavour and the process of nationalizing the large Dutch estates, banks and business houses, which had previously dominated the commanding heights of the Indonesian economy, was just in the process of being completed, creating a very large public sector now wholly in Indonesian hands. Nationalist sentiment was also very strong at that time and it seemed the elimination of Chinese trade-stores from rural areas might constitute the beginning of a similar campaign against the other alien-dominated sectors of the economy, or at least of an attempt to transfer the lower levels of the Chinese-dominated retail
trade network into the hands of the newly emerging Indonesian private businessmen.

Initially, the Chinese government did not express much concern about the ban, but the issue flared up as an international dispute in October-November 1959, after a visit to Peking by the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Dr Subandrio, to discuss the ban and other matters. The truth about what happened during that visit is somewhat obscure, but according to one reliable report, the Chinese subjected Subandrio to very great pressure to have the ban revoked, but without success. In doing so they not only embarrassed and antagonized Subandrio (who was by no means aligned with the anti-Chinese elements in Jakarta politics) but also put at risk the last stages of negotiations between the two countries over the implementation of the dual nationality agreement that Subandrio and an earlier Indonesian Foreign Minister had signed at the Bandung Conference in 1955, which had then been greeted as a major diplomatic triumph for China, paving the way towards a solution of that thorny problem. In the weeks following Subandrio's visit, the question of whether the ban would be maintained or whether the Indonesian government would back down in the face of Chinese pressure became a subject of heated controversy between right- and left-wing political parties in Jakarta. The issue was used by the leading anti-communists in Indonesia, including some prominent military leaders, as a convenient stick with which to embarrass both the Communist Party and President Sukarno, but as it turned out they were greatly assisted in this by the character of Peking's response to the ban, which came to be seen as a heavy-handed attempt to interfere in a matter of Indonesia's domestic jurisdiction. It seems to me that the Chinese authorities disastrously underestimated the intensity of the Indonesian nationalist sentiment and anti-Chinese feeling that were aroused over this episode. The attempt to put pressure on the Indonesian government ultimately proved to be both fruitless and counterproductive, for it played into the hands of groups which were eager to exploit anti-Chinese sentiments, while it seriously compromised those elements, such as the Indonesian Communist
Party, which were trying to uphold the interests of the Chinese traders.

One can see parallels with the Vietnamese situation in 1978 in several respects here. In both cases, China's actions exacerbated nationalist sentiment in the other country. In both cases, China was thought to be intervening, paradoxically, on behalf of a 'capitalist' class of traders against whom a socialist government was imposing restrictions in the name of the very ideology that China stood for. And in both cases the hectoring methods and attitude of the Peking government seem to have made matters a good deal worse. Essentially, the aim of the Chinese government in the 1959 episode seems to have been to force President Sukarno to take firm action against certain officers in the Army who were taking advantage of the ban on alien traders to impose, under martial law regulations, a wider residence ban also on aliens in the rural areas. There might have been some justification for the Chinese stand on humanitarian grounds — and, indeed, in the form in which it was finally promulgated by President Sukarno in November as Presidential Decree no 10 of 1959, the ban was modified in several significant respects — but the methods adopted by the Chinese seemed tantamount to blatant interference in Indonesia's internal affairs and revealed a serious miscalculation of Indonesian reactions to such pressure.

According to David Mozingo, who has made the closest study of this episode, the Peking authorities faced the awkward dilemma of either doing nothing — and thus failing to uphold the interests of their own nationals in Indonesia — or of trying to put pressure on the Indonesian government to withdraw or modify the ban, which they saw as the work of anti-communist or right-wing elements who were exploiting anti-Chinese sentiment.² But it was the way they tried to do this that revealed their lack of sensibility to Indonesian nationalist susceptibilities, rather than the fact that they were intervening on behalf of the Overseas Chinese. For their most controversial acts of pressure and intervention in an essentially
domestic matter occurred after the cabinet decision was made in early November to promulgate the ban in its final form over President Sukarno's name. To try to drive a wedge between him and his more anti-communist ministers over the issue after that point was totally unrealistic. The attempt to do so merely pushed the more moderate nationalists over to the side of the anti-communists. There was widespread anger in Indonesia during November at the spectacle of Chinese diplomatic personnel travelling around rural areas of Java to encourage Chinese communities to refuse to relocate when ordered to do so. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the legal issues at stake there, the affront to Indonesian nationalist sentiment on a matter which was widely believed to be one of domestic jurisdiction was very great. Equally ill-advised was a campaign of vehemently anti-Indonesian propaganda put out by Radio Peking in early December, coinciding with the despatch of a diplomatic note calling for immediate consultations over the matters in dispute. Phrases such as 'the methods of terror used by Hitler against the Jews will be repeated in Indonesia' and a call for all Chinese to 'rise and fight' the Indonesian government's action (the latter emanating from a pro-Peking newspaper in Hong Kong, not Radio Peking, it must be admitted, but the distinction mattered little in the heated atmosphere of that time) all added fuel to the flames.

The Overseas Chinese were summoned to return home 'to the warm bosom of the motherland' — apparently in the belief that the economic dislocation this was bound to cause would compel the Indonesians to come to terms. Shortly afterwards, however, Peking seems to have reversed its policy; the radio programmes abruptly ceased and a second diplomatic note contained proposals which had been scaled down considerably. Indonesia rejected the call for negotiations, however, and throughout early 1960 China gave assistance with the evacuation of over 100,000 Chinese. There are indications that in the administration of that programme, the Peking authorities were trying also to 'punish' Indonesia by encouraging skilled artisans and even WNI-Chinese to accept repatriation.

The effect of all this was that anti-Chinese sentiment in
Indonesia became far more inflamed than it would otherwise have been. Only one party, the Communist Party, dared to speak out in defence of the Overseas Chinese. Sukarno and those of his ministers who were opposed to the more right-wing and anti-Chinese elements felt unable to take a stand publicly against them, although Sukarno later exerted his authority at a more suitable moment to bring the whole campaign to an end, after it flared up again in the middle of 1960. China had called off its repatriation measures in April and gradually the tensions of the previous year died down. But it was the course of domestic politics within Indonesia which determined the final outcome, not the effects of pressure from Peking.

One can discern another parallel with recent Chinese policy towards Vietnam, I think, in the fact that China's short-term policies over the 1959-60 dispute clashed seriously with the much more successful and far-sighted policies she had pursued in her relations with Indonesia during the 1950s, which she again resumed in the years 1962-65. Not only did she successfully negotiate a settlement of the vexed problem of dual nationality but she also succeeded in drawing Sukarno into a militantly anti-imperialist grouping and what finally became known in 1965 as the 'Jakarta-Peking axis'. In that respect Chinese leaders made a far-sighted assessment of the congruence of Chinese and Indonesian strategic interests in seeking to exclude the other great powers from the exercise of political influence in their region, particularly the USA as the most imminently threatening of them. One would like to think that the Chinese leaders today would similarly realize that they share with Vietnam a similar long-term interest in keeping Russian involvement and influence in the region to a minimum. It is, after all, in situations of tension and conflict not tranquillity, that the opportunities open to the Russians to acquire influence are greatest. But being human and fallible like the rest of us, China's leaders can on occasions allow their sense of patient long-range strategy to be clouded momentarily by anger and misunderstandings about how other intensely nationalistic Asians will respond to their pressures.
Footnotes


DISCUSSION II

Discussion in the second session began with a contribution from a participant who had not long before returned from a five-month's diplomatic assignment in Hanoi. He began by taking up the view expressed by President Carter's national security adviser, Dr Brzezinski, that the Vietnam-Kampuchea conflict was a 'proxy war' between the Soviet Union and China, and counterposing to it the view that the war was primarily the result of long-term historical factors in the immediate region. He said he did not believe the war was subject to either/or explanations, and that much attention had to be paid to 'overlays and interactions' if its dynamics were to be understood.

In relation to the immediate background to the conflict, he noted a resolution of the Communist Party of Vietnam in December 1976 which had spoken of a closeness of relations between the three Indochinese countries in economic, political and defence matters which could well have caused alarm in Kampuchea. On the problem of the exodus of ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, he noted that the negotiations were deadlocked (for example, on the issue of repatriation of ethnic Chinese from Vietnam by ships sent by China for the purpose) because neither side could accept the negotiating formulas proposed by the other. As far as military forces of the two sides in the border regions were concerned, he said that during his time in Hanoi the impression was that there had been no significant new troop movements in the area.

On Vietnam-China relations, he said that his reading of Vietnamese statements suggested that Vietnam estimated that the decline in relations began with the death of Ho Chi Minh (September 1969). He also believed that US President Nixon's 1972 visit to China had 'upset the Vietnamese a good deal'. On China's perception of Vietnam as 'the Cuba of Asia', he said the Chinese saw Vietnam as acting in concert with the Soviet strategy of encirclement of China — the recent coup in Afghanistan had only 'spiced' these Chinese sensitivities. He also noted a degree of rivalry between China and Vietnam in Southeast Asia. At the same time he discerned in recent Chinese statements indications that the Chinese see the Vietnamese as ultimately wanting to put some distance between themselves and the Soviet Union.
On Vietnam's relations with the Soviet Union, he perceived a difference of emphasis in statements by the two sides on Vietnam's July entry into COMECON, with the Russians emphasizing the political factors leading to Vietnam's joining the bloc, and the Vietnamese emphasizing the economic side.

He professed himself 'a little more optimistic than some who spoke this morning' about prospects of improved relations between the United States and Vietnam — if not fully 'normalized' relations, at least diplomatic relations. He said he thought diplomatic relations could come within six months or so.

In a comment on China's relations with Laos, the speaker noted that the Chinese aid programme to Laos was continuing, although he was doubtful of a claim made by an earlier speaker that its road-building troops were still in the country. He noted that the Laotians in their statements and conversations laid stress on the point that they were not, as is generally believed, subservient to Vietnam.

A second speaker, referring to the negotiations on the problem of ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, claimed that the Chinese 'were not yet negotiating seriously' in that they were requiring the Vietnamese to sign statements which included Chinese political rhetoric on the affair. For example, the documents put forward by the Chinese for Vietnamese signature referred to the 'ostracism, persecution and expulsion' of ethnic Chinese from Vietnam. He said he believed that the Chinese position was influenced by a subjective resentment of the prominence of the international role played by Vietnam in recent times. He said the Chinese 'wished to cut the Vietnamese down to size'.

The question of the further motives of the Chinese in their policy towards Vietnam was raised by a third speaker.

Successive speakers ranged widely over this question, canvassing the following major and minor points:

China's aim to cause economic disruption in the north of Vietnam by encouraging the movement out of Vietnam of Chinese with
skills of vital importance to the economic activity of that part of the country. In this connection, reference was made by several speakers to Vietnamese allegations of a Chinese-organized 'fifth column' in Vietnam, which spread rumours of an impending war between the two countries, a war in which people of Chinese origin living in Vietnam would be regarded by the Vietnamese as 'traitors', or potential traitors, if they did not return to China. One speaker expressed doubt that the Vietnamese would have wanted to lose these people, whose departure in numbers exceeding 100,000 had 'torn the guts out of' the northern economy.

. The measures taken against private traders in Ho Chi Minh City, which had struck particularly hard at people of Chinese descent.

. A recent visitor to Vietnam found Chinese allegations of 'ingratitude' on the part of the Vietnamese in relation to Chinese war aid justified. He said: 'The Vietnamese now are playing down the aid the Chinese gave them. But when you are in Vietnam about two out of every three trucks you see have the Chinese emblem on them'.

. China, in terms of its attempts to win the good opinion of Southeast Asian nations, might have an interest in seeing Vietnam more closely associated with the Soviet Union. With such a public image in Southeast Asia, China might see Vietnam as less of a threat than a Vietnam with an independent stance and perhaps an independent model of development.

. The issue of citizenship. In 1955 there was an agreement concluded between the two sides that Chinese resident in Vietnam, and Vietnamese resident in China, should be subject to a policy of encouragement by the respective authorities to adopt the local citizenship voluntarily. By 1977 people of Chinese origin in Vietnam who wished to retain Chinese nationality were objects of suspicion, seen as possible security risks, especially in view of Vietnam's conflict with Kampuchea. There is the additional complication that in 1956 the Ngo Dinh Diem regime in South Vietnam forced all people of Chinese origin to take Vietnamese nationality. The North Vietnamese at that time undertook to consult with the Chinese government on this question after the liberation of
South Vietnam, and from 1960 onwards the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam promised to cancel the Diem edict concerning the Chinese in South Vietnam. However, in 1976, these people were instructed to register to vote as Vietnamese nationals, the Vietnamese authorities maintaining that the Vietnamese nationality held by these people was 'a reality left over from history'. One speaker described this attitude as 'a significant policy error' on the part of the Vietnamese. Another speaker saw inconsistency in China's position in that it claimed the right, now that the numbers of people wishing to cross into China had become so large, to close its doors to people living in Vietnam who disclaim Vietnamese citizenship but whom China now interprets as Vietnamese citizens. This speaker said: 'If there is any truth in the 'fifth column' theory, and if the Chinese were responsible for stimulating the movement of people out of Vietnam, then one must conclude that they seriously miscalculated the numbers who would want to come across'. One speaker estimated that the exodus was 'about half' made up of border dwellers who had been wooed by the Chinese, rather than city dwellers proper. The general phenomenon of the sensitivity on citizenship issues on the part of countries which have recently acquired independence, not only in Asia but in Africa as well, was pointed out by one speaker who predicted that for a long time to come there will be a process of relocation of ethnic minorities from other countries back to the lands of their ancestors.

There was some discussion as to the correct location in time of the beginning of Sino-Vietnamese differences. A number of speakers placed it at the beginning of the 'proletarian cultural revolution' in 1966, quoting various sources and incidents in support of this idea. Another speaker pointed out differences over the military tactics to be pursued by the Vietnamese in the period immediately preceding the Tet offensive of early 1968.

A number of speakers maintained that the issue of Chinese residents in Vietnam was a secondary matter in the dispute — secondary, for example, to the emerging alliance of the United States, China and
Japan which the Vietnamese perceive as greatly to their disadvantage. Emergence of this alliance could only deepen Vietnam's dependence on the Soviet bloc.

There was considerable discussion of Vietnamese efforts to create a new counterweight through its contacts with Western countries to replace the Chinese counterweight in its relations with the Soviet Union which had disappeared with the collapse of its past cordial relations with China.

In this connection, there was talk of Vietnamese efforts to reach agreement with Western companies and even governments on development projects, including development of its oil resources. There was also discussion on the prospect of the lifting of the US embargo on trade with Vietnam once diplomatic relations between the two countries are established. The active preparatory work of some American commercial interests who look forward with keen anticipation to this turn of affairs was referred to.

One speaker sounded a general warning against what he described as 'cultural imperialism'. He said that before Australians expressed wonder at how 'these people got themselves into a position like this' in considering the China-Vietnam-Kampuchea imbroglio, they should reflect on Australia's own 'utter inexperience' and 'considerable incapacity' in handling the most marginal of frictions between our neighbours, and involving ourselves in issues of tension with neighbours, or for that matter with others. He suggested that in terms of 'crisis management' Australia was still very much in the beginners' class, and invited seminar participants to consider the fact that in the crisis under discussion, particularly that between China and Vietnam, matters could come to the most extraordinary point in terms of the language employed by the two sides in their official statements, and yet be kept within 'manageable' bounds.
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