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# VIETNAM-CAMBODIA CONFLICT

## REPORT

PREPARED AT THE REQUEST OF THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS  
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL  
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(II)

## FOREWORD

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,  
*Washington, D.C., October 4, 1978.*

This study was prepared by Douglas Pike, Foreign Service Information Officer on detail as scholar in residence, Congressional Research Service, Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, Library of Congress, at the request of Hon. Lester L. Wolff, chairman of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs.

The findings expressed are those of Mr. Pike and do not necessarily reflect the views of the members of the Committee on International Relations.

CLEMENT J. ZABLOCKI, *Chairman.*

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## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, D.C., October 4, 1978.*

In an effort to present to the Congress and to the concerned public a timely and scholarly review of the historical background of the present crisis in relations between Vietnam and Cambodia—a conflict which has broad ramifications for all of Asia—the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs requested the preparation of this study.

The study was undertaken by Douglas Pike, Foreign Service Information Officer on detail as scholar in residence at the Congressional Research Service, Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, Library of Congress.

The findings and judgments contained in this report are those of Mr. Pike and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Library of Congress, the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, the Committee on International Relations, or its members.

With that in mind, however, the subcommittee wishes to state its gratitude to Mr. Pike for his work on this study, which the subcommittee feels is of particular use to public and private sources attempting to understand events in Southeast Asia and to help formulate U.S. policy in a time of rapidly shifting events.

LESTER L. WOLFF, *Chairman.*

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## VIETNAM-CAMBODIA BORDER WAR

"Our country," wrote a Hoc Tap editorialist in 1966, "is the focal point of all the acute contradictions that exist today in the world." Indeed Vietnam has been such a focal point, indeed it continues to be. And there is, at the moment, no more exquisite contradiction than Vietnam's border war with her erstwhile comrade nation, Cambodia.<sup>1</sup>

This article takes a look at that war. It is divided into four sections. First there is a review of the history of Vietnamese-Cambodian relations, including the ethnic dimension and the intra-Communist relationship. This is followed by a recapitulation of the major events of the war. To provide context in this there is a brief section on the internal Cambodia scene. Then, the three major likely outcomes of the war are listed and discussed. These are: indeterminate protracted conflict; establishment of a Cambodian client government; and negotiated settlement. Finally, there is a discussion of the meaning, such as it is, of this war to the rest of the world. A conclusion follows.

### A HISTORY OF ANIMOSITY

The Khmer Empire at one time extended from the Mekong Delta, across the Indochina Peninsula, deep into what is modern day Malaysia. It was an exotic civilization whose story is one of brutal turbulence and bursts of creative brilliance. At its height, it was actively involved with all of its neighbors, relationships generally marked by recurrent warfare of unusually bloody combat, and by aggression and counter-aggression in which ruthlessness was the general rule.

As an illustration: A 10th century Khmer Emperor, irritated by some act by the King of Java, vowed he would see the head of his enemy served up to him on a platter. When this word got back to the King of Java, he outfitted an expedition, sailed up the Mekong, captured the Khmer Emperor in a riverside battle, decapitated him and sent his head in a pickle jar back to the Khmer Court.

In the 17th century, Khmer martial passions cooled and the lust for empire died. The Cambodians turned to religion, to ancient Hinayana Buddhism, embracing it passionately. Although increasingly preoccupied with the spiritual they never became pacifists. Indeed, French officers who commanded Cambodians in the Viet Minh War rated them the best natural soldiers in Indochina, superior to the Vietnamese in fighting ability.

Degeneration of the Khmer Empire and loss of imperial spirit served mainly to whet the ambitions of Cambodia's neighbors, the Thais (Siamese), the Burmese and, most of all, the Vietnamese. The Thais sacked Angkor in 1431, annexed several western Provinces in 1603 and frequently forced annual tribute and conscripted Cambodians for wars against Burma.

<sup>1</sup> A note on place name usage. The initial Kingdom of Kambujadesa or Mon Khmer (500 B.C.-1400 A.D.) came successively to be known as the Khmer Empire, Cambodia, Khmer again and currently, Kampuchea. Because Cambodia is best known and still in wide use, it is employed here for all 20th century references.

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The Vietnamese were particularly ambitious. In fact it can be said that the history of Vietnam is 1,000 years of resisting encroachment by China and 400 years of encroaching on Cambodia. The Vietnamese incursion began in earnest in the 15th century as part of what has been called the "Long March to the South." Vietnamese moved out of the Red River Delta, south along the coast, paused to build the royal capital at Hue, then on into the Mekong Delta and against the Khmers. Even today Mekong Delta place names—such as Rach Gia and Soc Trang, which are Cambodian not Vietnamese words—bear witness of the Cambodian past. The Cambodian name for the delta, "Kampuchea khrom," means "Southern Cambodia."

Initially the Khmer Emperors encouraged the Vietnamese, offering them privileges in the land as a means of countering their more ancient enemy, the Thais. In the 1830's an unusually ambitious Vietnamese Emperor began serious intrusion. He installed agents to collect taxes and to provide corvée labor. The Khmer Emperor turned to Thailand in alliance. The result was a 6-year Thai-Vietnamese war, fought across Cambodia, ending with Cambodia more or less occupied by both armies.

The arrival of the French colonialists, at about the time of the American Civil War, put a halt to dismemberment of the Khmer Empire. But subsequently there was scarcely a Cambodian who did not believe that given the opportunity, the Vietnamese would resume the enterprise which was interrupted by the French.

Cambodia became a French Protectorate in 1864 and if it acquired a new master, at least this meant survival. The Cambodians during 80 years of French rule therefore found colonial status somewhat less odious than did the Vietnamese. Even so there was loss. The French manipulated Cambodian-Vietnamese hostility for their own ends. Vietnamese nationals dominated colonial Cambodia administration and (in competition with ethnic Chinese) financial activities. The threat to Cambodia by these surrogate French was a constant reminder.

With independence in 1954, Cambodia, under Prince Norodom Sihanouk, once again faced the potential Vietnamese enemy. Sihanouk's general strategy was to seek outside guarantees for Cambodia neutrality and assurances for its territorial integrity. At least 30 countries, including some in Europe acceded to the Sihanouk request. Ironically, among those guaranteeing Cambodia's borders was North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. Sihanouk also attempted what he called balance of contending forces strategy, which did not work well, but which explains why at the same moment he was denouncing America as an aggressor in Indochina and supplying U.S. Air Force target planners with map coordinates of Vietcong camps in Cambodia.

## PERSONAL STEREOTYPES

At the individual level throughout the years Vietnamese and Cambodian attitudes have remained intransigent. The dominant Cambodian emotion regarding Vietnam is fear. This is reflected in ethnic and racial stereotypes. Cambodians consider Vietnamese aggressive, excitable, boisterous, and insolent (while they regard themselves as gentle and pastoral minded). A common Cambodian term for

a Vietnamese is "thmil," meaning "eternal godless enemy"; another is a term meaning "double-headed snake." The honorific Cambodian term "brother" is seldom used in addressing a Vietnamese.

For their part, the Vietnamese regard Cambodians with contempt and apply to them such racial stereotypes as dirty, lazy, antimechanical. A common Vietnamese term applied to Cambodians is "cao man" meaning "base barbarian," acknowledgment of the "amok" syndrome which can mark the behavior of an aroused Cambodian.

The meaning of this probably is more important to the Cambodian than to the Vietnamese. For centuries Cambodian thinking was permeated by a sense of insecurity. We are surrounded by wolves, runs a Cambodian proverb, some Thai and some Vietnamese. The sense of this was indicated by Prince Sihanouk who noted in a 1966 interview that Cambodians had suffered from imperialism from every Vietnamese regime in history. He added:

*Question:* Which are, on a regional level, the foreign policy problems which most seriously concern the Cambodian Government?

*Answer:* Our main problem is to protect the present borders of our country, now reduced to a minimum after having been a great empire. Our Thai and Vietnamese neighbors occupy vast tracts of a land which was once ours and where still live for the most part still faithful to the motherland, 3 to 4 millions of Khmers. We are not claiming these territories taken away from us through ruse or violence. But we are determined to preserve whatever land is left to us.

This concern did not change under the Lon Nol government. One of its most frequently used propaganda slogans in the 1970's was: "Viet Cong, Eaters of Cambodian Territory."

In what virtually is a straight line continuation of past characterization, the present rulers of Cambodia portray Vietnamese as aggressive, greedy enemies—almost every pronouncement uses the terms "expansionist" and "annexationist," whose aim is to subjugate Cambodia and eventually turn all Cambodians into Vietnamese. Again, the theme is national survival.

Other countries throughout history have found themselves similarly surrounded by enemies, but most have been able to play one against the other to insure survival. Cambodia's experience has been that this does not work. That fact is Cambodia's heritage. History teaches Cambodia there is no certainty in balance of power politics, no protection in alliances.

In this context then it can be seen that the current "border" war has deeper psychological implications, and is not simply a matter of argument over boundaries. The genesis of the war may be found in questions of demarcation. Boundaries were only crudely fixed by the French and usually at Cambodian expense. But the war touches fundamental passions and fears that cannot be treated merely by adjudication that draws some new lines on a map.

Also in this context it can be seen that Cambodia's hostile, if not aggressive, behavior toward Vietnam and Thailand is not entirely irrational. Cambodia has tried various means to fend off its enemies. Nothing has worked well. What is left is irrational or seemingly irrational behavior. This might be called the small bristly dog gambit. The rule—as it is for a small dog surrounded by bigger, stronger dogs—is to bristle, assuming an aggressive posture and appearing so

<sup>2</sup> Sihanouk interview, Christian Science Monitor, July 28, 1967.



fearfully troublesome, so indifferent to consequences, as to convince others to leave you well enough alone. It may not work, but it holds as much promise for the Cambodians as any other.

#### CAMBODIAN COMMUNIST VS. VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST

If the ethnic relation of Cambodian to Vietnamese has an abysmal history, the association of Vietnamese Communist with Cambodian Communist has hardly been any better. It is a relationship continually plagued by disputes, hostility and even small-scale military actions. This did not begin in December 1977 when most of the world became aware of trouble. If the Cambodians are to be believed, it began in 1954 when Vietnam sold out the Cambodian cause at the Geneva Conference—as the Vietnamese later came to believe they were sold out by China and the U.S.S.R.<sup>3</sup>

Communism came to Cambodia later than to the rest of Indochina. The movement began in Vietnam in the mid-1920's and by 1930 had a secure if small foothold. Laotian Communists were active in Viet Minh War. There is no record of activity by Cambodian Communists as such prior to the 1960's. Earlier, such Cambodians as were moved to embrace communism did so within the Vietnamese movement. Organizationally, Cambodia was a regional jurisdiction of the Indochinese Communist Party and its successors. This was the case for example in the original (1949) Provisional Committee of the Cambodian Revolutionary People's Party (Ban Van Dong Than Lap Dang Nhan Dan Cach Mang Cao Mien), a headquarters element plus a number of cadre committees (ban can su) under the general control of Nguyen Ngoc Son.

However this past is no longer acceptable to the Cambodian Communists, who are now busy rewriting history. In 1978 a party genealogy was published for the first time. It states that the party was founded September 30, 1951, with a four-man central committee and 10,000 members.<sup>4</sup> There is little to substantiate this. During the Viet Minh War several insurgent forces did exist in Cambodia, possibly numbering 10,000. But these—the most important being the Khmer Issarak and the Khmer People's Liberation Army—were Marxist-nationalist amalgams. As far as it is known none had the "apparatus" of a formal Communist Party.

In the early years of the Vietnam war, around 1960, dissident Cambodians including incipient Marxist revolutionaries, put their hopes in the gradual leftward drift of Cambodian politics. This trend shifted in September 1966, when elections brought Lon Nol to power and the extreme left went underground. The following year, "armed struggle" under the Pracheachon Party (People's Revolutionary Party) or the Khmer Rouge (as they were dubbed by Prince Sihanouk) broke out in Battambang Province. By the end of 1968, Khmer Rouge activity was reported in 11 of the country's 19 Provinces. The leaders then apparently are the same men running Cambodia today.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>The long history of poor relations was documented at the time. See Douglas Pike, "Cambodia's War," Southeast Asia Perspective, No. 1, March 1970. Also David B. Brown, "Exporting Insurgency: The Communists in Cambodia," a paper read at a SEADAG Conference, December 1971.

<sup>4</sup>Listed were: Chairman Siem Heng, Secretary-General Tou Samouth, Son Ngoc Minh and Chan Samay. Siem Heng was half Vietnamese.

<sup>5</sup>Major Cambodian leaders at the present in rank order appear to be: Pol Pot (also known as Pol Phat, Saloth Sar, Nuon Soun, and To Sant), the Party secretary-general; Nuon Chea, apparently number two, military/defense duties; Ieng Sary, foreign relations especially China relations; Son Sen (or Sann), state security/military committee; T. Nhum, party security; Vorn Vet, economic affairs; Kien Samphan, chief of state.

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In the important formative years the Cambodian Communists received little aid from their Vietnamese comrades. This was because the Vietnamese were obliged to choose between Cambodian Communists and Prince Sihanouk and they chose the latter. Hanoi considered the Cambodian Communist movement too small<sup>a</sup> to be effective and wanted all Cambodian dissidents to pursue a united front route (managed covertly by the Vietnamese Communist Party which would include Cambodians) and make primary use of ethnic Vietnamese living in Cambodia.

Thus, when the Cambodian Communist movement was launched, it was largely on its own. Not until April 1970, with the overthrow of Sihanouk, did the Vietnamese Communists begin intensive organizational and assistance work among their brothers in Cambodia. But this late date treatment merely confirmed Cambodian suspicions that the Vietnamese were more interested in exploiting Cambodian communism than in developing it. As a result, even in the earliest days, Cambodian leaders held the Vietnamese at arm's length, told them little about their strategic plans, in fact, hardly confided in them at all. A principle of independence was established early, at the price of proletarian solidarity. Steadily there grew among Cambodian Communists the belief that what the Vietnamese wanted—indeed had always wanted—from Cambodian and Laotian communism was subservience, if not total control.

Because of this, the resultant Cambodian insurgent force which was created is all the more impressive. Pol Pot and his associates built an army in an amazingly short time, from virtually nothing in the late 1960's to 50,000 in about 3 years and to 70,000 and total victory 3 years after that, a unique major phenomenon in modern military history.

Publicly through the years the Vietnamese maintained a facade (to which the Cambodians by their silence contributed) of revolution-unity, the "tradition of combat solidarity" as it was expressed by Hanoi writers. Combat solidarity was the theme of a Party pamphlet in 1930, reportedly written by Ho Chi Minh, which explained the reason the Vietnam Communist Party name was being changed to the Indochinese Communist Party. Ho argued that since all three Indochinese countries were "politically under French imperialist rule and oppression \* \* \* they cannot struggle separately." The theme appeared again at the ICP's 8th Plenum (1941) which promoted the idea of a united front against the French, and again in 1951 at an Indochina conference which brought Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians together for a general war strategy session. In 1966 (Cambodia revealed in 1978) the two Communist Parties signed an "agreement in principle to cooperate." Once again, in the June 7, 1970, joint statement, the idea of being bound by fate was pressed:

The Indochinese people keenly recognize that the destinies of their countries are closely related and that none of them can live peacefully in independence and freedom when the territory of another is invaded by imperialist aggressors.

In truth the idea of a more or less common enemy as a bond cementing the three revolutionary movements was the thinnest sort of glue. In 1970, in Cambodia, it began coming unstuck. Anticolonialism by this time had little reality for Cambodians and the anti-imperialist

<sup>a</sup> At the time only a few hundred. Cambodia Communist Party growth, according to intelligence sources estimates were 8,000 by early 1970; 60,000 by early 1972; currently about 90,000 members.

impulse, while stronger, was insufficient motive for Cambodians to make any sacrifice for Vietnam. Increasingly Cambodia's proper route was seen, not as solidarity with Vietnam, but as neutralism. The quarrel among Cambodian leftists was how best to achieve this under a Marxist banner.

In April 1970, Vietnam launched what proved to be the last great effort to forge unity. It staged an Indochina summit conference and proposed formation of a mighty united front, one to be modeled after the highly successful Viet Minh, which would unify the political and diplomatic activities of the three parties. Probably this was intended to be the first move in creating a joint military command. Intelligence reports at the time so indicated, and certainly the idea made good military sense at least for the Vietnamese. But the Cambodians and Laotians wanted none of it. The form was established, a single Indochina revolution was created on paper, but it never came to life. For years afterward the Vietnamese maintained the pretense—gala celebrations each anniversary—but it was clear to all that voluntary Indochinese unity was a stillborn idea.

Out of the conference did come a Vietnam-Cambodia liaison office, with the task of improving day-to-day relations in the field. The office was abolished by the Cambodians in 1973, after the Vietnamese signed the Paris Agreement which universally the Cambodian Communists saw as one more sellout by the Vietnamese. Vietnam retaliated by withdrawing some of its technical advisers and logistics personnel.<sup>7</sup>

During these years there was another level of Vietnamese activity in Cambodia, one about which we knew little until recently. It was a concerted Vietnamese effort to manipulate decisionmaking in the Cambodian Communist movement and to promote the careers of certain Cambodians. Khieu Samphan recently described the effort in unflattering terms:

When the Vietnamese set up their sanctuaries in Cambodia in 1965 \* \* \* they secretly established a special Cambodia Army headed by a group of evil men as their instrument on Cambodian soil. They incited this handful of Cambodian traitors to create a new party to destroy the Cambodian Communist Party, create a special state administration that would divide and destroy the Cambodian Revolutionary Army and oppose and attack the Cambodian revolutionary state power under the KCP leadership. However, these plans were defeated \* \* \*

After liberation the Vietnamese continued efforts to stage a coup d'etat in Kampuchea, using a handful of traitorous forces which were Vietnamese agents.<sup>8</sup>

As might be expected, eventually this triggered a deadly but highly obscure power struggle among Cambodian Communists. It reached its peak in the spring of 1977. Many cadres and members were purged, not only those considered to be Vietnamese agents, but also those whose only crime was to have been trained in Hanoi.<sup>9</sup> Some party jobs were filled by four different persons in 12 months.

<sup>7</sup> It was believed at the time—in 1972—that all Vietnamese forces were withdrawn from Cambodia. However, recent press reports from the region state that some Vietnamese military forces remained in Cambodia after the Paris Agreement and that their persistent refusal to leave was one of the causes of the present border war. This is doubtful, but possible.

<sup>8</sup> Cambodian Government official statement of Dec. 20, 1977. Initially it was believed that the Cambodian Communist Party was composed of three major factions: (1) The original Khmer Rouge, mostly middle class Marxist intellectuals with ties to the French and Soviet Communist Parties; (2) the Sihanoukists/nationalists/Maoists, with ties to Peking; (3) the so-called Hanoi 6,000, ex-Viet Minh and others recruited and sent to Hanoi for training and infiltrated back in the late 1960's. Presumably out of these factions has now emerged a smaller more monolithic party under the close control of Pol Pot.

<sup>9</sup> Reference to this purge was made in a Radio Hanoi broadcast, Feb. 10, 1978.

The power struggle/purge, although primarily a personal and factional contest, also involved several doctrinal disputes. One of these had to do with individual ideological orientation, whether toward Hanoi, Peking or Moscow. A second was over the party's general bloody-handedness. A third was a youth vs. age competition. Finally the struggle in some way pitted the military against the party. Permeating this factional struggle—as in the war with the Vietnamese—was clash of two brands of communism, one orthodox, one heterodox.

#### THE BORDER WAR

We now turn to events of the past 3 years, the border war between Communist Vietnam and Communist Cambodia. First, however, something must be said about the internal Cambodian situation, so as to provide context.

#### CAMBODIAN SCENE

Cambodia since Communist takeover, said one observer, has become 1984 out of Kafka. The official theme is purification and equalitarianism. Purify the society by forced suffering equally imposed on all. Deliberately engender social trauma to provide a common shared experience, in which all must suffer equally. Having conquered the enemy—runs the slogan—we now must conquer ourselves.

The method of approach is what might be called the principle of elimination:

(1) Eliminate the urban center notwithstanding the argument of history that civilization did not begin until the advent of the city and cannot exist without it. Three million people were removed from Phnom Penh, leaving a ghost city of some 25,000, mostly soldiers. The city's famed cathedral, modeled after Chartres, was disassembled and stone by stone carted off into the jungle.

(2) Eliminate the marketplace as an institution. Eliminate money: Millions in rial notes were blown into the street when the state bank was dynamited, and they lay there for many months, ignored and worthless. Eliminate the economic middlemen because he is a source of evil and corruption (as is the economy itself).

(3) Eliminate communication of ideas. There are no newspapers, no magazines, no radio stations. A 2-week bonfire in Phnom Penh was fed by books, documents, files, bookshelves, and library furniture.

(4) Eliminate personality in government. Now the country is run by Angkor, "the Organization." Rule is by faceless shadows without dimension. Angkor is remote, omniscient, omnipotent, Mafia-like. Blackshirted youths come to the villages; they say they have no names, only that they represent Angkor.

(5) Eliminate organized religion. A bitter struggle is underway with the Buddhist Sangha, at one time the strongest social institution in Cambodia. Monks are defrocked, temples emptied.

(6) Eliminate class. There is no hierarchy. Language is purged of all terms of social distinction.

(7) In short, eliminate modern Cambodia and return the country to the time of Angkor.

The result is enormous social upheaval, starvation, cholera epidemics, mass migration, an extraordinary death rate among the

young, the elderly and the ill, an incredible amount of human suffering. Perhaps 1 million are dead; perhaps 2½ million.<sup>10</sup>

Such is the context in which the current military struggle must be viewed. The history of that struggle can now be pieced together with reasonable accuracy, from candid official statements and from scattered information filtering out.

#### THE BORDER WAR

Major developments in the past 3 years are these:

(1) April and May 1975: Victory for communism in Indochina. A series of land and island grabs by both Vietnamese and Cambodians. This was, of course, a time of chaos and confusion, in which some seizures were the result of a local commander's initiative rather than on orders from the center. The Cambodians (say the Vietnamese) attempt to seize Phu Quoc and Tho Chu Islands and kidnap 500 persons in the process. They make incursions in Ha Tien and Tay Ninh Provinces. The Vietnamese (say the Cambodians) seize Poulo Wai Island April 17, and make forays into Ratanakiri and Mondulhiri Provinces. During this period Hanoi sends an official note to Phnom Penh suggesting establishment of formal diplomatic relations. Cambodia does not reply for nearly 3 months.

(2) June 1975: Pol Pot heads a three-man delegation to Hanoi to discuss seizure of the Poulo Wai (according to Cambodia in January 1978). A border liaison group is established to deal with border disputes.

(3) August 1975: Increased Cambodian incursions bring Party Secretary Le Duan to Phnom Penh. This is a first team effort to prevent further deterioration. Unofficial reports say Le Duan warns the Cambodians that Vietnam will tolerate no further border incidents. Cambodians again raise the matter of Poulo Wai Island.

(4) December 1975: The Cambodians (say the Vietnamese) engage in a series of border skirmishes in the highland Provinces of Komtum and Darlac. The Vietnamese (say the Cambodians) attempt to sponsor a coup d'etat against the Cambodian Government, but the plot is foiled.

(5) May 1976: A preparatory and agenda meeting is held in Phnom Penh (say the Vietnamese in January 1978) to plan for a June 1976 summit meeting of the two Communist Parties. Preparatory meeting is halted midway by the Cambodians but not until a tentative agenda is fixed: (a) Discussion of an agreement in principle that all border disputes and conflicts be negotiated; (b) discussion of joint indoctrinational efforts among the respective populations in the border region on how to avoid conflicts; (c) discussion of establishment of a permanent liaison group to handle conflicts and disputes as they arise. Later the Vietnamese would maintain<sup>11</sup> that agreement was reached to settle the issue and that negotiations actually began, only to be broken off by Cambodia.

(6) April 30, 1977: After 1 year of relative quiet, Cambodia (says Vietnam) sends division-sized forces into Ha Tien-Chau Doc region to loot and stir up trouble in the Vietnamese new economic zones.

<sup>10</sup> Lon Nol, claiming exclusive secret sources in Cambodia, said the total number of dead was 2.5 million. New York Times, Sept. 12, 1977.

<sup>11</sup> The Vietnamese Ambassador to Peking, talking to Japanese journalists in January 1978.

(7) Summer of 1977: Hanoi and Phnom Penh exchange official messages on cause of border war. Reportedly Vietnam pressures the Chinese to mediate. There is no significant result.

(8) September 1977: Under General Vo Nguyen Giap, Vietnam launches systematic and extensive attacks into Cambodia. These are shallow, less than 10 miles' penetration for the most part, but along virtually the entire 650-mile border. In late September the Cambodians begin forays along a 90-mile front in the Tay Ninh region.

(9) November 1977: The war escalates sharply as the Vietnamese 9th Division spearheads a major military operation into the Parrot's Beak region of Svay Rieng Province. Penetration at some points is nearly 35 miles. The Vietnamese employ 130-millimeter artillery, T-62 tanks, Sky Raider fighter-bombers. The Cambodians claim 2,000 of the 20,000 invaders are killed.

(10) December 25, 1977: The Cambodians—through the Standing Committee of the Cambodian Peoples Revolutionary Army in special session—decide to go public with the war. Official statement and announcement of break in diplomatic relations are made December 31.

(11) January 1978: Vietnamese military forces estimated at 60,000 and involving as many as six PAVN divisions<sup>12</sup> (versus 20,000 Cambodians) begin new operations in Takeo and Kampot Provinces, occupying (say the Cambodians) some 400 square miles of territory. The Cambodians (as of January 7) claim to have killed or wounded 29,200 Vietnamese in the previous 4 months of fighting, with a kill ratio of better than 20 to 1.

(12) February 15, 1978: The SRV sends a diplomatic note to Cambodia calling for immediate negotiations which, Hanoi says, the Cambodians refuse to accept.

(13) April 1978: Border clashes continued through late winter and early spring. The Vietnamese charge in early April that Cambodian incursions into Vietnam are averaging about 12 per week. Cambodian countercharges indicate similar level of activity on the part of the Vietnamese. Press reports from Bangkok during this period state that virtually all Vietnamese occupation forces have been quietly removed from Cambodia. This could not be verified.

(14) May 15, 1978: Cambodia sends Hanoi a diplomatic note proposing a 7-month cooling-off period after which—if there are no border incidents—talks could begin (the period was shortened to "3 or 4 months" on June 12 by Ieng Sary while on a visit to Tokyo). Cambodia (June 17) says the proposal has been rejected by Hanoi.

(15) May 17, 1978: Heavy fighting again reported on the border, chiefly in the Tay Ninh/Mimot region.

(16) June 4, 1978: Ieng Sary at a Tokyo press conference charges the "collaboration of Vietnam with the CIA to overthrow the present Government of Democratic Kampuchea." Vietnam replies (Radio Hanoi and Nhan Dan, June 27): "Have the Kampuchean authorities gone crazy? Their fabrication is so ridiculous that people cannot help but laugh openly."

(17) June 24, 1978: Hanoi reports a new series of border incidents in the Tay Ninh and Kontum regions, claiming two battalions of Cambodian Army are wiped out.

<sup>12</sup> Including the 5th, 7th, 9th (which took Saigon), 812th (the Dien Bien Phu Division) and the 320th. The Cambodian Revolutionary Army divisions are the 1st, 8d, and 200th.

## PUBLIC POSTURE

Both sides make bids for world public opinion, the Vietnamese far more skillfully than the Cambodians.

The essential Vietnamese position with respect to the border war is one of magnanimous restraint; that of the Cambodians, righteous outrage. The Vietnamese speak of rational settlement of the issue, the Cambodians speak of survival. (Cambodian rhetoric used against the Vietnamese against the United States in the Vietnam war.) The Vietnamese describe Cambodia in terms of past cooperation, the Cambodians describe past Vietnamese perfidy. The solution to the problem, say the Vietnamese is to negotiate. The solution, say the Cambodians, is Vietnamese withdrawal and future assurances. Both sides speak of sacred borders, the determination not to be dominated. Both claim they are not waging war, only resisting aggression. Both avow they are untarnished by aggressive ambition, want only friendship with the other.

The Vietnamese charge the Cambodians with launching raids in order to get food and medical supplies. The Cambodians charge the Vietnamese with economic warfare (burning rubber plantations, for instance), seizure of rice and dreaming ultimately of incorporating Cambodia into a federation of Indochina.<sup>18</sup>

Both sides hurl grisly atrocity charges: Dismembering children and hurling pieces of their bodies into burning huts; extracting the livers of wounded to be eaten; tearing fetuses from women's wombs; raping; butchering entire families; sacking pagodas; looting hospitals and schools. The Cambodians say the Vietnamese take no prisoners (a report confirmed by reliable sources). In Hanoi, Vietnamese give visitors briefings with color photos. The Cambodians surface Vietnamese prisoners who describe months of preparation for the attack. Both sides traffic heavily in captured documents. Both take selected visitors to the front.

## SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM PROSPECTS

The three most likely outcomes of the border war, in descending order of probability appear to be these:

(1) An inconclusive ending. Indeterminate warfare rising and falling in intensity, perhaps for years. Possibly a tacit understanding will develop on the maximum magnitude to be observed.

(2) Establishment of a Cambodian client government. This would involve Vietnamese manipulative efforts to put into power—at the village level and at the center—Cambodians of cooperative attitude. Beyond this, the Vietnamization of Cambodia.

(3) Negotiated settlement. This could be either private, between the two parties only, or international, involving some third party such as China, the U.S.S.R., the U.N. or others.

Less likely outcomes include the total physical military occupation of Cambodia by the Vietnamese Army; full-scale proxy war between the U.S.S.R. and P.R.C. or regionalizing of the war, drawing in Southeast Asian countries and possibly the P.R.C. and the U.S.S.R.

<sup>18</sup> A lengthy SRY White Paper on Cambodia, released Apr. 7, 1978, in Hanoi said that a Federation of Indochina, to include Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, had been the Indochina Communist Party's goal beginning in 1930, but that idea originally had been abandoned in 1954.

## PROTRACTED CONFLICT

The most likely prospect for the war at this writing is an indeterminate condition, that is more of the same. The initial assessment of most observers, in early January 1978, was that the Vietnamese would take matters firmly in hand and resolve the issue quickly. This has not happened.

In continued warfare, the Vietnamese find themselves in a dilemma. Protracted conflict in no way serves their interests, yet the two general alternatives—unilateral withdrawal or escalation of the war—appear even less attractive.

Military withdrawal, whenever it comes and under whatever conditions, probably will be difficult. Unilateral disengagement could be downright painful and might have major repercussions at the politburo level in Hanoi.

Escalation brings the danger of enmeshing Vietnam in Cambodia (in a "Vietnam" as one observer put it). It would damage diplomatic ventures in Southeast Asia and might result in less economic aid from around the world. It could cause the Cambodians to rally around what most of them certainly must now consider to be a thoroughly detestable government.

Thus the two options could cancel each other out, leaving the struggle to devolve into a protracted but limited war.

Vietnamese strategy to date has been high technology for Western style warfare, rather than to refight the Vietnam War. General Giap has adopted the tactics and techniques of his former enemies, the Americans, whose 1970 incursion into Cambodia the present Vietnamese operation much resembles.

The Cambodians strategy is difficult to discern.<sup>14</sup> They say they embrace people's war, which means a combination of armed and political struggle. The armed struggle involves running a guerrilla war against the invader using the standard three types of military units. Political struggle involves: (a) mobilizing and motivating support by the Cambodian people; (b) undercutting Vietnamese determination by various nonmilitary means; and (c) enlisting external assistance and support (in part by vilifying the Vietnamese).

Considerable premium is apparently being placed on soliciting outside aid. As a Cambodian response, this tactic is traditional. As noted above it was the heart of the Sihanouk strategy. Probably it was the reason Cambodia went public on the war. Said one ranking official: "Our only alternative is to fight for the attention of our friends, near and far, on the five continents. It is a fight for world opinion."<sup>15</sup>

It appears that Cambodia is getting such military assistance as is absolutely necessary. In May 1978 the Cambodian military exhibited sophisticated weaponry, all Chinese-made, for Yugoslav television including 180-millimeter long-range artillery, 57/75- and 82-millimeter antitank guns and 120-millimeter self-propelled mortars.

<sup>14</sup> Indeed it is difficult to determine much about past Cambodian Communist military strategy or even the thinking of its leadership. During the war years the Cambodian Communists did not issue news reports, invite foreign journalists, operate underground radio or publish books and periodicals. Such propaganda tracts as were distributed were anonymous, only nominally political, critical but not hostile to Sihanouk, mildly antireligious and indicated little either about grand strategy, ideology or mind set of the leaders.

<sup>15</sup> Cambodian Ambassador to the PRC, Pech Cheang, at Dec. 31, 1977, press conference.



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Central to Cambodian strategy is the question whether the Cambodian people can be rallied. Sihanouk was brought out of house arrest to denounce the Vietnamese (in April) although Radio Moscow in mid-July 1978 said he was back in jail. But what of the terror unleashed these past 3 years? Will it be overcome by the memory of past (and present) Vietnamese brutality? If the stories of the holocaust brought out by refugees have any validity at all it is difficult to imagine the average Cambodian is willing to fight and die for the present regime. Yet, demonstrably the Cambodians have fought, and well, for at least 3 years. There seems to be a missing factor here. Some refugees have offered an explanation: The terror and killing was in fact real and extensive but was confined almost entirely to middle-class urbanities; if a Cambodian villager were selected at random and asked how heavy had the hand of the regime fallen on him, statistically the chances are he would say that he had been deprived of consumer goods (of which he had few before) but that life in the village had not changed all that much. Coupled to this is the centuries old fear and hatred of Vietnamese. Even so the villager must be aware of what is happening in his society, the bloodletting, the brutal destruction of the social system. The Cambodian people face a grim choice: History vs. horror.

Official Cambodian assessment of the situation is favorable and optimistic. Pol Pot<sup>16</sup> listed what he regards as major Vietnamese strategic weaknesses:

(1) The Vietnamese, in engaging in aggression, lose world support. They will suffer other loss, such as loss of economic aid. The Vietnamese heart is not in the prospect of a long war.

(2) The war is economically destructive for Vietnam, costly to conduct. It will result in loss of production in Vietnam, which will bring even worse food shortages. This will increase grumbling at home from people who have come to expect rapid economic development.

(3) It will engender bolder opposition to authority within South Vietnam where already there is much insecurity and considerable resistance.

(4) Vietnam cannot long fight a high-technology war because it will soon expend its resources and weapons. Vietnam can be defeated militarily.

These arguments are reminiscent of those put forward with respect to North Vietnam by American observers early in the Vietnam war.

It is currently fashionable for outsiders to dismiss Cambodian military potential because of the force ratio: Vietnam with 50 million people and 615,000 men under arms (4th largest army in the world) vs. Cambodia with 8.5 million<sup>17</sup> and a 90,000-man army. But this too was an early assessment in the Vietnam war. Conclusions based on force ratio must be treated cautiously. It could be, as with Vietnam, that this is the kind of war in which other factors determine the outcome.

<sup>16</sup> Made at a Jan. 17, 1978, mass rally observing the 17th anniversary of the founding of the Cambodian Revolutionary Army.

<sup>17</sup> The population of Cambodia as set by observers varies by as much as 1.5 million. Even official Cambodia references vary by as much as 1 million. The 8.5 million figure may be high. Account must be taken of course of recent war dead. The Cambodians say 800,000 persons were killed during the war. No figures are given on deaths since the end of the war. As noted above, that figure ranges as high as 2.5 million.

## CLIENT STATE

As an outcome, this could range from modest to ultimate. It could be establishment in Vietnam of Cambodian government-in-exile which will return to Phnom Penh if Pol Pot is deposed by internal action. It could be the capture of Phnom Penh and establishment of a lackey regime under a kept Cambodian Communist Party. As an interim move in this direction the Vietnamese could in effect partition Cambodia; for some months the Cambodians have charged that Vietnam is training Cambodians in Vietnam to take over a portion of eastern Cambodia which Vietnam will detach by military means. The ultimate ambition of course would be to absorb Cambodia and Vietnamize it, which the Cambodians also charge.

A client Cambodian state, from the Vietnamese view, has both attraction and peril. On balance there are probably more pluses than minuses. Certainly the time has never been more propitious. Cambodia is in traumatized chaos, having literally torn itself apart. Its people are numbed by terror. Its institutions, including the entire economic system, have vanished, leaving a socioeconomic vacuum. What better moment than for the Vietnamese to step in and restore sanity. The Cambodian people would be liberated from barbarism and put on the road to a better life. The world's worst example of human rights violation would be removed. The socialist world would be freed of an agonizing embarrassment.

The Vietnamese could simply remove the present regime, end the war and withdraw. Or they might be tempted to accomplish what probably is their goal; establishment in Cambodia of the kind of arrangement that exists in Laos.

Full takeover already is the charge leveled by Cambodia. An official statement<sup>18</sup> said the Vietnamese were systematically destroying Cambodian village administration and installing "hooligan remnants of the old Cambodian society," as the new officials. Vietnamese purpose, it said is, "to encroach upon, threaten, pressure and compel Cambodia to kneel down and follow Vietnam's Indochina strategy, forcing Cambodia to join the Vietnam-dominated Indochina federation so that Vietnam could easily annex Cambodian territory and thus become an expansionist power in Southeast Asia."

Arguments against the possibility of a client state are formidable. First and most important is that it may not work. Any regime installed by Vietnam, by virtue of the fact that it is Vietnam installed, will find governing difficult. Vietnamese blessing is the kiss of death for a Cambodian leader. It can be argued that one of the enduring lessons of the Vietnam war is that it is difficult if not impossible to make a client state truly viable. Further, when initial attempts fail, there is an overwhelming temptation to intensify efforts, thus plunging Vietnam deeper and deeper into the quagmire.

A second argument is that takeover of Cambodia would upset the regional balance of power, destabilize Southeast Asia and quite possibly frighten the ASEAN nations into reviving the SEATO idea. More remotely, as suggested above, it could trigger a proxy war between the PRC and the U.S.S.R. which possibly would lead to big-power intervention. None of this would be in Vietnam's interest.

<sup>18</sup> Radio Cambodia, Jan. 6, 1978.

Third, the client state makes sense only when the center is in control of the society and has a power structure. If the governing arrangement in Cambodia is what we think it is—deliberately non-unified authority—a client state may be technically impossible. What exists in Cambodia apparently is a commune-type administration in the village; a very small group at the top, with virtually no governmental infrastructure in between. In effect there is no center to control. Capture of Phnom Penh would be meaningless. Vietnam would be obliged to send monitoring and control units into every village. This would not be a client state, but military occupation government.

In any event, the determinant in a client state is organization. It is not spirit that determines success but good organization. In this instance, the organization must be countrywide and total. It must be managed in the face of systematic sabotage, formal resistance, and with history against it.

#### NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT

Viewed superficially the Vietnam-Cambodia border war would seem ripe for a standard sort of negotiated settlement. This could be done by the two parties dealing privately in bilateral talks. Or it could involve outsiders who would nudge, cajole and pressure both sides into agreement.

The basic Vietnamese position favors such a settlement. The most recent gesture in this direction came in the February 5, 1978, a three-point proposal in which Hanoi called for: (a) A cease-fire along the border with military forces on each side pulling back 5 kilometers from what they think is the border; (b) negotiations in Hanoi, Phnom Penh, or on the border to write a new border treaty; and (c) establishment of some sort of international inspection and guarantee apparatus.<sup>13</sup>

The Cambodians also stated early and officially that the dispute could and should be negotiated—on the basis of the "five Bandung principles." Khieu Samphan in his December 30, 1977, nine-point statement reiterated, in point 5, Cambodian willingness to negotiate.

However, despite this appearance of willingness, several conditions exist which militate against at least an early negotiated settlement.

There is, in the first instance, a negotiational impasse, a product of the positions of the two sides. The Vietnamese indicate (and say privately) that they will not move out their forces until negotiations begin. The Cambodians refuse to begin negotiations until Vietnamese military forces leave the country. This situation could be bypassed—Vietnam could pull out its forces insisting they never were in Cambodia, or the Cambodians could claim to have driven the Vietnamese out when they had not and thus were willing to talk—but not easily.

Another difficulty here is that settling the border issue is only peripheral to the central problem. Border demarkation is more symptom than cause. Any mediator therefore who thinks primarily in terms of lines on a map is doomed to disappointment and failure. Somehow he must also address himself to the broader psychological issues. This is particularly true if the Cambodians mean what they say (and probably they do), that what motivates the Vietnamese in this war is an imperial dream, to populate Cambodia with some half million Vietnamese a year and eventually to drown Cambodia in

<sup>13</sup> The declaration subsequently was officially forwarded to the U.N. Secretary-General, possibly indicating Vietnamese interest in U.N. mediation.

a Federation of Indochina. To those who believe this, negotiations are meaningless.

There are other impediments. No small matter is the paranoid mentality of the present Cambodian leaders. A negotiated settlement would probably involve replacement of the present leaders (it could be a condition imposed by Hanoi) and thus the Cambodian leadership is in a personal life-death struggle. The Sino-Soviet dispute represents something of a block to settlement, particularly if negotiations involve either party. Significant U.S. participation is precluded for several reasons, chief of which is that the United States is a recent enemy of both contending forces. Finally, there is the matter of domestic politics in Hanoi at the Politburo level. Vietnamese policy toward Cambodia these past 3 years can be read in terms patient diplomatic and mediation efforts and this policy prevailed for a period, but failed. Others, chiefly the military elements in the Politburo, argued for a military solution (a sort of "teach the wogs a lesson" policy) and eventually got their opportunity. Any outcome therefore will have a bearing on this Politburo dispute.

#### THE BORDER WAR AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD

The initial reaction of the world to announcement of the Vietnam-Cambodia border war was not to get involved. In earlier years there would have been a strong impulse among many nations to do something. Now each acted cautiously, unwilling to make a commitment. With the exception of China, this condition still obtains. The war therefore has only limited meaning to the outside world.

Neither Vietnamese nor Cambodian efforts to induce extensive outside support appears to have come to much to date. Most governments have issued some sort of statement on the war. Many of these have been picked by the Hanoi mass media and interpreted as support for the Vietnam cause. However, an examination of original text of these statements indicates not support for the Vietnam cause so much as support for the proposal (advanced by Vietnam, but also endorsed by Cambodia) that negotiations end the war. Cuba and Yugoslavia appear rather solidly behind Vietnam while Cambodia has drawn somewhat stronger than normal support statements from North Korea and the Communist Parties in Australia and Sweden. A common theme in all of these is that the war may in some unspecified way advance the cause of world imperialism.

The U.S.S.R., because of its intimate ties with Vietnam, has a major interest in the war. It stands firmly with the Vietnamese although the heart of its position is support for negotiating a settlement and thus bringing the matter to a close.

Moscow portrays the war chiefly in terms of Chinese hostility for Vietnam, based, it says, on Chinese resentment over Vietnam's success in the Vietnam war. Chinese support of Cambodia is pictured as an example of Peking expansionism, its policy of pitting nation against nation in Asia, encouraging terrorism and subversion on the territories of young independent Asian nations, economic blackmail, armed provocations and military pressures—all of which are seen at work in Cambodia in the service of the PRC. Hundreds of Chinese are serving and fighting (in advisory role) in Cambodia and Peking is generously supplying weapons, Moscow claims, quoting Western news sources.

As the war continued to fester month after month, gradually becoming entrenched and institutionalized in Phnom Penh and Hanoi, new influences appeared affecting relations with other countries. Most were subtle and for the most part indirect. Cambodia abandoned its extreme posture as the world's only hermit people's republic and started dispatching representatives abroad on fence-mending missions. It sought to patch up relations with Thailand and engender some support in Southeast Asia. It intensified its efforts to strengthen ties with China. For Vietnam, the war killed what had been a dying policy in any event, maintaining equidistance in the Sino-Soviet dispute, and put Vietnam on a collision course with China. It also caused Hanoi to look more kindly on ASEAN than previously, and to renew its overtures of normalized relations with the United States.

#### THE CHINA CONNECTION

China's public position on the Vietnam-Cambodia war is that Moscow instigated it to extend its hegemony in the region. Vietnam was a willing junior partner in the venture since the war serves Vietnamese ambition, which is not only to establish a Federation of Indochina, but to dominate all Southeast Asia. China did not encourage Cambodia to attack Vietnam and she challenges Vietnam to prove otherwise. China helps Cambodia partly because she considers the Cambodian cause correct (that is the actual border issue—China says the boundary was unfairly fixed by the French at Cambodia's expense); because of her international duty to Socialist nations; and because Cambodia is victim of aggression (China helps Cambodia in the same spirit as she once helped Vietnam). Cambodia, says China, eventually will win the war because moral factors always prevail over material factors—as the Vietnamese themselves once proved—and that in this current contest, the moral factors favor Cambodia.<sup>20</sup> The Chinese appear interested in seeing the dispute mediated. There also appears to be a concern by Peking of somehow being entrapped by the war (the suggestion has been made in some quarters that the whole affair was provoked by the Cambodians for just this purpose) which carries over into caution even to possible mediator role. Assertions of direct U.S.S.R. involvement, by Peking, are largely confined to passing on Cambodian claims: "On the Krek battlefield European nationals were seen in Soviet tanks. They had pointed noses, red hair and wore white clothing like that worn by iron foundry workers \* \* \* (low emission) radio broadcasts picked up from the tanks were in Russian."

Vietnam's war against Cambodia irritated China, in part because Cambodia is important to China, more so apparently than the Vietnamese originally realized. But more importantly Cambodia was a symptom of improper Vietnamese behavior during the past several years, that is ignoring the obligation of deference which China feels is due it by Vietnam. Vietnamese military action against Cambodia, coupled with increased intimacy with the U.S.S.R., studied insults over the offshore islands and mistreatment of overseas Chinese in Vietnam, all combined to cause China to act. And act it did, in a series of startling moves which added up to a kind of brinkmanship that soon had the Vietnamese anxiety ridden.

<sup>20</sup> For a full and representative statement of Peking's position see People's Daily commentary, Peking NCA, July 11, 1978.

China's basic purpose apparently was to dissuade Vietnam from any new and drastic moves in Cambodia, such as occupation of Phnom Penh and establishment of a client state, or partitioning Cambodia and installing a pro-Hanoi government in the eastern zone. If such was the Chinese intent, it appears to have succeeded. The border war has dropped in intensity. Perhaps it succeeded too well. China may have overplayed its hand and so rattled the Vietnamese as to stampede them into a much closer embrace of the U.S.S.R., one which conceivably may result in the arrival of U.S.S.R. military on Vietnamese soil.

#### SOME CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE BORDER WAR

(1) The Cambodian-Vietnamese heritage of mutual ill will and distrust is as deep and abiding as exists anywhere, comparable to the Greek-Turkish, Arab-Jew, Moslem-Hindu antipathies. The present border war therefore is part of an ethnic conflict whose roots can be measured in centuries.

(2) Whatever ties did hold the Communists of Vietnam and Cambodia together during the past 40 years—and always they were more tenuous than outsiders believed—they no longer exist.

(3) Cambodia's historic experience is that foreign relation devices which work well elsewhere—such as balance-of-power politics and military alliances—do not work for Cambodia. The Cambodians see the issue in the current war as Cambodian survival.

(4) Vietnamese Communists long have regarded a Federation of Indochina as the proper ultimate political configuration for the peninsula. Of necessity this would require Cambodian and Laotian acquiescence, or at least find rulers in the two countries who are amenable to the idea. In creating a Federation of Indochina the Vietnamese are in no hurry.

(5) The present border war, which is actually internecine Communist conflict, has been going on since at least 1970. Neither side can be condemned as instigator; neither is simply a victim.

(6) Vietnamese military strategy employed in Cambodia is Western-style high-technology warfare. It has not been as successful as Vietnamese planners expected, in that the quick, hard, military blow did not have the immediately decisive effect anticipated.

(7) Cambodian behavior in the war is not as irrational as appears. There is logic both to Cambodian strategy and rhetoric, particularly when viewed in the light of Cambodian history.

(8) China in mid-1978 began engaging in brinkmanship with Vietnam over several issues, one of which was the border war. This had the effect of inhibiting Vietnamese moves, military or otherwise, in Cambodia. It also tended to make the war itself something of a pawn in the three-way struggle among Vietnam, China, and the U.S.S.R.

(9) Outside-nation response to the war has been a universal reluctance to get involved. All call for a negotiated settlement but none seems willing to lead the mediation, for fear of becoming enmeshed. As the conflict continues, this reluctance is likely to grow.

(10) The most likely future of the war appears, as of this moment, to be indeterminate; that is, a debilitating, inconclusive rise and fall in the level of battle. The second most likely outcome—Cambodia firmly turned into a client state—is an attractive prospect for Vietnam

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but one fraught with dangers. The third most likely outcome, negotiated settlement, may eventuate but barriers are formidable.

(14) The chief and most reliable indicator of a break in the situation is the Cambodian leadership itself. Pol Pot and his associates are a weathervane, for their fate and the war are bound together. Any change in Cambodian leadership quite probably will signal a significant new direction for events.