CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM'S REGIONAL FUTURE

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In the course of 1987 Prince Norodom Sihanouk transformed the Cambodian problem from the cold question of stalemate to the hot one of negotiated settlements and regional readjustments. Our delegations' discussions in Southeast Asia occurred between Sihanouk's first and second rounds of discussions with Premier Hun Sen, and the topic of Cambodia dominated many of our discussions. It was clear that, although no one could predict the course or outcome of negotiations, all felt that Sihanouk had moved the general situation into the beginning of the end of stalemate.

The new situation has encouraged some bold thinking in Thailand regarding relations with Vietnam, and has allowed the Vietnamese to consider the possibility of an open and peaceful regional policy. The new situation is certainly less welcome in China, but it is not without its advantages for Sino-Soviet relations and, in any case, is beyond Chinese control.

Despite these positive developments, there is no imminent danger of peace breaking out in Indochina. Prince Sihanouk faces a formidable challenge to his gamesmanship in achieving a negotiated solution acceptable to Phnom Penh and credibile to his anti-Vietnamese supporters. The other two resistance groups, the KPRPF and the notorious Khmer Rouge, as well as the Vietnamese, the Chinese, the Thais and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) all face major policy movements with significant domestic political ramifications. Last but not least, the purely technical problems involved in withdrawal of Vietnamese troops, setting up a security force, disarming and resettling resistance groups, constituting a coalition government and so forth are not to be solved with a handshake. With luck, the ending of stalemate will not last as long as stalemate itself.

However, the problems associated with the process of ending stalemate are not, in my opinion, the most important ones for Vietnam's foreign affairs. Stalemate has had the effect of extending a strategic context of hostility between Indochina and the non-communist world beyond its natural life, and it has added the old/new context of Sino-
Vietnamese hostility. How stalemate ends will set the strategic context of these relationships into the next century. Even a negotiated settlement will not ipso facto guarantee a peaceful environment.

Fortunately for all of us, my task of addressing the Cambodian problem and its significance for Vietnam is lightened considerably by Gareth Porter's excellent article in the most recent FOREIGN AFFAIRS[1]. So I will minimize my recounting of the details of Cambodian affairs, and concentrate instead on impressions of our discussions in Thailand and Vietnam, and my discussions in China in February, and then proceed to analyse the prospects of the endgame situation.

DISCUSSIONS IN ASIA

We had the opportunity to discuss the Cambodian situation with a wide range of people in Thailand and Vietnam. The Institute for Security and International Studies of Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok organized a seminar for us which included a number of academic, military and business leaders. In Vietnam we were hosted by the Institute of International Relations and met repeatedly with officials and researchers, including Foreign Minister Thach. On a separate visit to China a few weeks later, I was hosted by the Southeast Asian division of the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations and discussed the Cambodian question with them and a number of other research institutes as well.

All discussants took seriously the change of situation brought about by Sihanouk's negotiations, but—as one would expect—opinions and evaluations diverged from there. The Vietnamese emphasized the trend toward the deterioration of their international isolation, noting improved trade relations and a less decidedly anti-Vietnamese posture on the part of Thailand and the rest of ASEAN. In Thailand a sharp difference of opinion has developed over whether to continue an uncompromising pro-China, anti-Vietnam policy or whether to become more flexible with Vietnam and more guarded with China. A spread of opinions was also apparent in China. There the range varied from resolute maintenance of China's stalemate position—condemnation of Vietnam, support for the Khmer Rouge, and Vietnamese withdrawal as a precondition to negotiations—to a cautious recognition that Sihanouk's initiative and Gorbachev's redirection of Soviet

foreign policy had transformed the environmental assumptions of China's policy toward Southeast Asia. In sum, the Vietnamese were hopeful, the Thais were busily readjusting, and the Chinese were reluctantly attentive.

**Vietnam**

In Vietnam there was an enthusiasm and perhaps even a certain smugness in discussing progress in regional relations in 1987. Among the economists there was a hope that verged on desperation that Vietnam's economic isolation was beginning to lift. The foreign affairs specialists were happy to see Vietnam's 1985 policy change on Cambodia (which included the announcement of a unilateral Vietnamese withdrawal by 1990) beginning to bear fruit, and were excited to be thinking about Vietnam's postwar strategic posture. They were full of praise for Indonesia and cautiously optimistic about Sihanouk.

Some of the more troublesome attitudes that we heard in Vietnam included talk of "the Indochinese revolution," excessively negative opinions of China, and the opinion--forcefully defended by one senior analyst--that even if the Cambodian issue were resolved, the U.S. would find some other pretext to continue its hostility toward Vietnam. These remarks merit further discussion.

The idea of an Indochinese revolution was, in my opinion, the most problematic remark. In a sense, of course, the term is accurate, because the anti-colonial revolution and the anti-American war were fought against a common enemy, in roughly the same time frame, by roughly similar social-political forces, with varying levels of coordination. It might be said that the French created an Indochinese revolution when it created Indochina, and the U.S. reinforced the common fates of the three countries through its war in Laos and the invasion of Cambodia. But the Cambodia-Vietnam relationship has been quite different from the Laos-Vietnam relationship throughout this period. To pick only the most dramatic point, if there were an Indochinese revolution, the main Cambodian portion of it was the anti-Vietnamese Khmer Rouge. And what sort of revolution was Year Zero: bourgeois-democratic or socialist?

Of course, the major problem with the "Indochinese revolution" is that it appears to lay an ideological groundwork for an Indochinese political unit dominated by Vietnam. This is precisely what is unacceptable to the Cambodian resistance groups and threatening to Thailand and ASEAN. It should be noted that other ideological and policy statements by Vietnam counterbalance the suggestiveness of hegemonism. The Soviets and the Vietnamese both hold that
Cambodia is not currently a socialist country, but merely one being aided by socialist countries. This is useful ideological cover for future compromises affecting the structure of the regime in Phnom Penh; history will not have to reverse itself in order to have a pluralist parliamentary system. Correspondingly, the Vietnamese have often claimed that they will countenance a non-communist Cambodian coalition government as long as the "Pol Pot clique" (a specific list of top Khmer Rouge leaders, not the entire Khmer Rouge) does not take part. But the Vietnamese are not famous for straightforwardness, and a phrase like "Indochina revolution" provokes an allergic reaction.

That Vietnam has a negative attitude toward China is hardly surprising, but the extent of the anti-Chinese sentiment, the suspicion of ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, and the purges of persons associated with China, all do not augur well for regional relations. It appears that a China expert in Vietnam must be rigidly anti-Chinese in order to be above suspicion (and, unfortunately, the reverse of this seems to be true for Vietnam experts in China). There are no ethnic Chinese China experts at the Institute of International Relations in Hanoi, and I have heard that in some ministries people who had studied in China were removed from their posts. There were occasional references in Hanoi to the ethnic Chinese as China's "fifth column," though this slur was vigorously disputed by officials in District 5 (part of old Cho Lon) in Ho Chi Minh City. In some respects the foreign relations people seemed less rigidly anti-Chinese in 1988 than they had in 1986, because now the possibility of changes in China's policy seems larger, but the overall impression is of a mutual, visceral antagonism between the two countries.

Of course, the salience of such antagonism for foreign policy is difficult to gauge, because to a great extent it is an expression of a hostile foreign policy. There are certainly major aspects of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship that have been positive, and in a different foreign policy environment those can be expected to come out of the closet. Nevertheless, the depth of recent antagonism seems so great that one could expect that Sino-Vietnamese relations in the foreseeable future will bear a residue of hostility and suspicion.

The final troublesome attitude was the suspicion that the United States was implacably hostile to Vietnam, and that the Cambodian occupation was only a pretext for isolating and punishing Vietnam. The question of American good faith on the MIA question did not come up in this context, but I am sure that many Vietnamese doubt any
American commitment of reciprocity on this issue as well. The main grounding for such suspicions is the course of U.S.-Vietnamese negotiations in the Fall of 1975, ably documented by Nayan Chanda in *Brother Enemy* (2), in which agreement was apparently reached and then blocked by normalization with China before the invasion of Cambodia and before the MIA issue had grown so large. One must admit that there have indeed been a series of "key roadblocks" in normalization, and even if the course of the relationship (or non-relationship) can be explained without impugning American integrity, a more suspicious interpretation is not implausible. Such discussions brought home the fact that Vietnam is not the only country with a credibility problem in regional issues.

Even with the abovementioned shadows on Vietnam's relations with Cambodia, China and the U.S., the mood of our discussions in Vietnam was hopeful, and the basic attitude toward future regional relations was flexible.

**Thailand**

The most striking feature of our discussions in Bangkok was the extent to which Sihanouk's negotiations with Hun Sen had already changed the parameters of Thai foreign policy toward Vietnam. Even the argument in favor of Thailand's pro-Chinese, anti-Vietnamese stalemate policy has been affected by this development. In the past, it was argued that "time is on our side," meaning that Vietnam would be weakened by the effort of occupation and would eventually have to yield to the resistance. Sihanouk's negotiations make this position untenable, and during our discussions the old phrase "time is on our side" was used only in the context of improving Thailand's relations with the Soviet Union and thereby putting indirect pressure in Vietnam.

Our military discussant was more blunt. For him, the negotiations meant that Vietnam had won and that Cambodia had become another Laos. Therefore, Thailand's military task was to secure its border with Cambodia. It was useless to continue to contest Vietnamese control over Indochina.

The most forward-looking attitude towards the Cambodian situation was represented by Dr. Sukhumbhand Paribatra of Chulalongkorn University. He was concerned about the long term effects of hostility with Vietnam on Thailand and on ASEAN more generally, and he was ready to question the uncritical alliance with, and dependence on, China that hostility with Vietnam had facilitated. Recent agreements

between Vietnam and Thailand regarding the creation of a partially demilitarized zone on the Cambodian border indicate that Sukhumthand's position is not merely an academic one; evidently there are acute tensions within Thailand's military and foreign policy with regards to Vietnam. Sihanouk's negotiations are a serious blow to the anti-Vietnamese faction because they undercut the feasibility of continued hostility. It is impossible for outsiders to prognosticate the course of Thai policy, but the apparent polarization creates the possibility that the Thai posture on the question of Cambodia and Vietnam could change suddenly with a realignment in the military and foreign policy elite.

China

China is more committed to an anti-Vietnamese foreign policy than Thailand and has less at stake in Southeast Asian regional politics, so it is not surprising that expert opinion there has responded less rapidly to recent changes. To be sure, the importance of Sihanouk's negotiations is admitted, but some appear to view this as simply a setback for China's policy which does not require a fundamental reconsideration. These analysts criticize Sihanouk for weakening the resistance with no corresponding concessions from Vietnam. They also maintain the position that the Vietnamese must withdraw from Cambodia before negotiations begin, and that the Khmer Rouge army should be a part of the coalition forces.

But there were also analysts who suggested a more flexible policy. Some said that since Sihanouk was a patriot and a skillful leader, China should accept whatever agreement is acceptable to him. Several said that they expected some agreement to result from the Sihanouk-Hun Sen talks, and many appeared to accept my argument that the talks spelled the effective end of the resistance coalition and would make a pro-Khmer Rouge position untenable. Given the constraints on disagreeing with current government policy in China, an impressive spectrum of opinion was revealed, ranging from somewhat more rigid than some current government signals to considerably more flexible than China's traditional posture.

It was obvious throughout my discussions in China that the Cambodian problem was only the tip of the iceberg for China's regional policy. There was little interest in actual conditions in Cambodia, and apparently no one knew anything about current conditions in Khmer Rouge border camps. Although one analyst made a spirited defense of the Khmer Rouge, it was clear that most of the others were not so enthusiastic.
There were two much more important concerns that lay behind the Cambodian issue and made Chinese policy less responsive to Cambodia-specific developments. The first was a visceral antipathy toward Vietnam. The Vietnamese are considered tricky, ungrateful petty Hegemonists with no sense of loyalty or shame. Vietnamese behavior toward China since 1975 is seen as a gratuitous slap in the face. As a result, there is considerable schadenfreude in punishing Vietnam through Cambodia. There can be no question that both sides have been deeply scarred by the last ten years and that mutual antipathies will continue to hobble the development of friendly relations.

The second concern was the Soviet-Vietnamese alliance. As one senior military analyst put it, “We don't care about the ethnic Chinese. We don't care about the Cambodians. We care about the Russians.” This statement may be somewhat extreme, but there is little doubt that the problem of a Vietnamese-Soviet alliance has driven Sino-Vietnamese relations since 1978, and indeed has played a major role since the Sino-Soviet split in the early '60s. Therefore the Sino-Soviet relationship and Chinese perceptions of Soviet strategic intentions in the Pacific play a major role in setting the policy context toward Cambodia and Vietnam. More flexible views on the Cambodian situation were often tied to reinterpretations of Soviet policy.

The linkage in Chinese policy between Cambodia and Vietnam and between Vietnam and the Soviet Union explains why Chinese policy appears to respond more sluggishly to developments in Cambodia. Cambodia is significant in its own right as a neighbor to both Vietnam and Thailand. The balance of forces there, and the capacity for hostile forces to project threats through Cambodia, have a reality for its neighbors that is not as vivid for China. On the other hand, China's posture toward Cambodia and (to a lesser extent) toward Vietnam is sensitive to big-power issues. As Gorbachev winds down Soviet involvement in Afghanistan and reduces forces on the Sino-Soviet border, the Cambodian problem remains as the last major stumbling block to normalized relations. This puts pressure on both the Soviet Union and China to facilitate a solution.

SIHANOUK AND ALTERNATIVE FUTURES FOR CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM

The discussions summarized above made it clear that a new phase of regional politics had begun in 1987, and that the key actor in the new developments was Prince Sihanouk. But no one appeared to think that Sihanouk had set in motion
a unilinear chain of consequences that would lead to a predictable future alignment. Of course, many of our interlocutors were convinced that they knew which way policy should go, but the diversity of such convictions merely confirmed our sense that the situation was in flux, but remained as complicated as before. In this section I will attempt to provide some structure to these ambiguities by discussing first the significance of Sihanouk's negotiations, then the possible paths that Cambodia might take, and finally the implications of this for Vietnam's regional future.

Significance of the Sihanouk Negotiations

Sihanouk is certainly the hero of the end of stalemate, and with any luck or cooperation he will have performed a historic service for his long-suffering people. He deserves the credit because he has taken a tremendous personal risk in embarking on negotiations and he has maneuvered with great adroitness among the various forces that are necessary for his cause. So far, he has sustained the cautious respect of such diverse interests as Vietnam and China by moving barely fast enough for the former and barely slow enough for the latter. Even his well-known inconsistency serves his purposes, since the publicity accorded his marching and counter-marching maintains a high media profile, which is one of his important assets.

Granting Sihanouk's personal commitment and current centrality in the negotiations, considerable credit for breaking out of stalemate is also due to the Vietnamese. Sihanouk broke away from the position of the resistance coalition in response to a Vietnamese proposal for negotiations made in the fall of 1986, and the negotiations have been sustained by considerable concessions on the part of Hun Sen and the Vietnamese.

More importantly, the roots of the post-stalemate situation go back to 1985. In that year Vietnam dispersed the Khmer Rouge camps remaining in Cambodia and established an all-season border defense. With this very significant victory in hand, Vietnam then made the well-known promise to withdraw its troops from Cambodia unilaterally by 1990 and intensified its efforts to achieve a negotiated end to the conflict. Perhaps this is giving too much credit to Vietnam, because Sihanouk would have been willing to cooperate much earlier had the Vietnamese been willing. In any case, the strategic change in the military situation coupled with greater flexibility on Vietnam's part were essential preconditions for the current situation. Although the announcement of the withdrawal by 1990 was greeted with great scepticism, it did set a timetable for settlement.
Regardless of shifts in the Vietnamese position, Sihanouk's initiative was necessary in order to move the Cambodian problem beyond its nine-year stalemate. His commitment to negotiation was already a watershed, because everyone knows that it is a step which would be difficult for him to retrace. A negotiated settlement in not inevitable, but it becomes more and more clearly the most likely outcome. Several major consequences flow from his decision.

First, the resistance coalition is finished. Its three components will remain, and the coalition was never more than a diplomatic umbrella, but Sihanouk held the umbrella and no one else can take it up. Even Sihanouk would find his stature much diminished if he broke off negotiations and went back to his old role. This is not to say that such international rituals as the fall vote in the United Nations General Assembly will be affected by the negotiations, but the rationale of continuing respect and support for the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) is shifting from support for the resistance to support for Sihanouk's negotiations. Sihanouk's leave of absence as president of the CGDK since May 1987 highlights the weakness of the coalition, and the repeated public requests for Sihanouk to resume his duties from the KPNLF and the Khmer Rouge indicate the incapacity of these groups to replace him. If Sihanouk came to a personal settlement with the Phnom Penh government and the Vietnamese which was unacceptable to his coalition partners the coalition would be in no position to regroup and exclude him. In other words, the coalition umbrella will appear to work only if there is no rain.

In a sense, the effective demise of the CGDK represents a political victory for Vietnam, but only in the context of Vietnam's military success in Cambodia and its generous offers toward Sihanouk. Vietnam's military success coupled with the promise of unilateral withdrawal have removed any real possibility of a resistance victory and have set a limit to the window open for negotiations. Even so, however, the military situation itself could not bring Sihanouk to negotiate, because the resistance bases are in Thailand beyond Vietnam's reach and his international support is solid. Vietnam's apparent willingness to make far-reaching concessions both to Sihanouk personally and with regards to the structure of a coalition government in Phnom Penh were essential inducements for negotiations.

Vietnam's concessions reflect a larger regional dimension of the Cambodian situation in which Vietnam has
failed. Vietnam has not been able to overcome international isolation through a military fait accompli, and in economic development it continues to fall behind Thailand and other Southeast Asian nations. Regardless of the merit of Vietnam's original invasion and occupation of Cambodia, one could say that until the negotiations began Cambodia represented a tactical victory but a strategic defeat for Vietnam.

Second, Sihanouk's move forces a wedge between the broad international base of support for the resistance which is based on legal objections to the Vietnamese presence and the much narrower anti-Vietnamese support enjoyed by the Khmer Rouge. It can be expected that Sihanouk would carry the support of most of the broader group into an agreement unless he grossly violated his own principles. As the trajectory of Sihanouk diverges from that of the Khmer Rouge, the international notoriety of the Khmer Rouge will reduce their support to those who are opposed to any agreement with Vietnam. In fact, not even all those who would prefer no agreement would continue to back the Khmer Rouge because they would have to weigh the advantage of supporting a long-term irritant to the Phnom Penh regime against the disadvantage of breaking step with more moderate and conciliatory forces who are currently allies. Therefore, even though one might project that support for the Khmer Rouge might continue from China and the anti-Vietnamese faction in Thailand, it is quite possible that even they might accede to a negotiated settlement unsatisfactory to the Khmer Rouge. As all Cambodian factions know from bitter experience, international support is not for ever.

Third, given the situational shift with regards to Cambodia and the complexity of regional interrelations, one should expect surprises. Given the nature of surprises it is hard to know which surprise to expect. However, it would be easy to imagine, for instance, an internal shift in Thailand's military and foreign policy leadership producing a decisive shift towards a post-confrontational posture toward Vietnam. Signs of this option have already occurred, most notably the limited border disengagement announced last December. But countervailing signs of continued hostility have also occurred, indicating a serious split in the leadership and the lack of a consolidated general leadership. An internal shift might put in place a more flexible policy toward Vietnam which may or may not be linked to a less dependent policy toward China.

China also is capable of surprising policy shifts, in part because of the greatly diminished prospects of its
support for the Khmer Rouge, and in larger part because of
pressure from the trend toward better relations with the
Soviet Union. The Soviet Union has publicly proclaimed its
willingness to discuss the Indochina situation, and Chinese
fears of Soviet encirclement have receded greatly since
1979. Given that China and the Soviet Union are the
ultimate backers of the major contenders in the Cambodian
conflict, a basic resolution could occur within the
communist world. China is in a position to make concessions
sufficient for a settlement, and the Soviet Union could
probably secure sufficient powers of attorney from the
Vietnamese if the Soviet Union agreed to abide by Vietnam's
minimum position.

Fourth, the negotiating process or even the agreement
itself could sow the seeds of future regional discord. If
the positive surprises mentioned above did happen at the
same time, then my initial prediction would be invalidated,
namely that peace would not break out soon. But it is far
more likely that if stalemate ends in a jumble of bilateral
agreements misunderstandings and perhaps new animosities
could be generated.

The problem is that the situation surrounding Cambodia
is quite complex and multi-dimensional, and bilateral
arrangements tend to maximise the interests of the parties
involved and to neglect third-party interests. If, for
instance, Thailand agreed to prevent Khmer Rouge border
attacks while China was still supporting the Khmer Rouge
position, China would be in a position of having to simply
accede to a decision made without its participation or to
dispute Thailand’s control over its own territory. Of
course, China would have the additional option of informally
encouraging the Khmer Rouge to make trouble for Thailand.
It should be remembered that until 1978 China supported the
insurgency of the Thai Communist Party, and it is currently
in military control of the Khmer Rouge. Another troublesome
case might be a Sino-Soviet accord which stopped Chinese
support for the Khmer Rouge but did not address Thailand’s
concerns for resettlement of refugees in Cambodia. Thailand
would then be left with a serious domestic problem and
little bargaining leverage.

The complicated nature of such interrelations and the
third party problems of bilateral arrangements imply that an
international conference would be the appropriate forum for
working out the details of the official end of stalemate.
The necessity of an international conference was part of
Vietnam’s original offer to Sihanouk in 1986 and part of
Sihanouk’s reply, so it is a premise of the current
negotiations. But the actual role and effectiveness of such
a conference is ambiguous; international conferences have
had at best a spotty record in Indochina. Bilateral
understandings could preempt the agenda. Decisions could be
made that could exceed the capacities of continuing
enforcement. Dissatisfied parties could undermine the
agreement. It is easy to see that an international
conference is necessary for resolving the Cambodian problem,
but it will not be easy to bring about a conference adequate
to the task.

Cambodia's Alternative Futures

The only thing that one can say for certain about
Cambodia's foreseeable future is that there is not one that
is foreseeable. The past cannot continue, and too much
remains to be decided. At most, we can project the likely
parameters within which Cambodia's trajectory might fall.
The two alternative futures to be described are not the only
two options, but are the ends of what appears to me to be
the current spectrum of options.

Cambodia as Poland

One end of the spectrum would be the consolidation of
Vietnamese hegemony over a Cambodia controlled by a
compliant native government. Until Sihanouk's negotiations
began this was the most likely option, and it certainly
remains a possible one. Since 1979 it has been defined by
Vietnam's military presence and control of Cambodia. If
Vietnamese troops were withdrawn, it would have to be
maintained by a government in Phnom Penh dependent on and
submissive to Vietnam's hegemony in Indochina.

Such regional hegemony is the major fear of Cambodians
like Sihanouk. It is based on both the history of
Vietnamese imperial expansion before the arrival of the
French and the behavior of Vietnam since 1979. Although the
claims of the "Vietnamization" of Cambodia in the 1980s
appear to be unfounded, it is clear that a significant
portion of Vietnam's leadership would like to remain in
control of Cambodia. The cost of hegemony is regional
isolation.

The justification for controlling Cambodia is national
security. Until the invasion Vietnam was vulnerable to
depredations in border areas (they claim to have lost more
civilian casualties to Khmer Rouge border attacks than
occurred during the entire war against the French) and, more
importantly, to a Cambodian-Chinese alliance. Since the
invasion the Khmer Rouge backed by China remains an active
threat, and the political-military vacuum that would be
created in Cambodia by a Vietnamese pullout is a longer term
concern. Gorbachev's withdrawal from Afghanistan is an unfair analogy; more apt but still too mild would be a Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe. It may be true that for some Vietnamese leaders national security necessarily involves controlling Cambodia; however, it must be admitted that as long as Cambodia can be a threat or the conduit of a threat to Vietnam their strong security interest there is understandable.

National security may be a policy aim that justifies any cost; clearly Vietnam has paid and continues to pay heavy costs for its control of Cambodia. The direct military cost is not primary. The Soviets displace much of that cost and the Vietnamese army lives cheaply. Far more important are the continued militarization of Vietnamese society and regional isolation. Moreover, hegemony is not without its internal risks. As Cambodian gratitude for the removal of Pol Pot turns into resentment of Vietnamese control, it discredits the pro-Vietnamese native government and creates nationalist, anti-Vietnamese pressures. If negotiations with Sihanouk break down such pressures may take a quantum leap.

Sihanouk is not likely to return to Phnom Penh to become part of a government subservient to Vietnam. But it is reasonable to expect that under some circumstances there would be strong pressures from Vietnam on a coalition government. The first condition would be if Sihanouk alone participated in the coalition and the KPNLF and the Khmer Rouge remained on the border. Then Phnom Penh would continue to share a major security concern with Vietnam. The second condition would be if Cambodia were not demilitarized. Then Cambodia would remain a hypothetical security threat, and Vietnam might meddle in Cambodian politics to support favorable groups and oppose unfavorable ones, and it might threaten an anti-Vietnamese regime.

If Cambodia remains a dependency of Vietnam, it will remain as it has been in the 1980s: even more isolated and poor than Vietnam itself, and a drain on the latter's resources. The Hun Sen government is unlikely to become an overbearing tyranny, but it will have difficulty maintaining loyalty. Cambodians who have emigrated will be unwelcome and unwilling to return, and the Cambodian national tragedy will continue.

Cambodia as Austria

The opposite end of Cambodia's spectrum of possibilities would be Cambodia as a truly independent country, making its own decisions, influenced but not controlled by Vietnam and Thailand. Given Vietnam's
military control and security interest in Cambodia, such an option requires the agreement of Vietnam, and this in turn implies that Vietnam's security concerns are met. On the other side, Thailand has security interests in Cambodia and it hosts the resistance groups and has great influence over Vietnam's regional isolation. As long as Cambodia can present a threat to either Vietnam or to Thailand they each have a national security interest in controlling its fate.

Demilitarization is, therefore, the key to Cambodia's autonomy.[3] In order to secure the indifference of Vietnam and Thailand to political developments in Cambodia, Cambodia cannot itself pose a military threat nor be the conduit of a military threat to its neighbors. Cambodian armed forces should be restricted to a national police force, and its relations with Vietnam and Thailand should be governed by arbitration agreements. An international peace-keeping force would probably be necessary in order to cover the transition from the current situation of war and occupation to a demilitarized one. Demilitarization should be guaranteed by an international agreement, but the most effective guarantee is that Cambodia, at one-tenth the size of its neighbors, has nothing to gain and much to lose through remilitarization.

Cambodia's location makes it either a buffer or a battlefield between Vietnam and Thailand, and it is to Cambodia's interest to become a buffer. Far from implying a subordination of Cambodian autonomy, demilitarization would create a political space in which Cambodia could determine its own future. Any other solution must rely on a balance of contending forces within a coalition, and such a balance is inherently unstable and invites outside manipulation. Guaranteed demilitarization is even more a guarantee to Cambodia than it is to Cambodia's neighbors.

It could be expected that an autonomous, demilitarized Cambodia would attract generous relief and development aid. Refugee resettlement would bring back human capital and would diversify and strengthen the societal structure. One might think that the return of resistance groups would lead to recriminations and hostilities, but it should be remembered that Cambodian factions are not based on ethnic groups and that almost every faction has cooperated with almost every other faction at some time. The current Vietnam-backed government in Phnom Penh is made up of

elements from all previous groups, especially the Khmer Rouge. Cambodia is not Lebanon.

The political economy of an autonomous Cambodia can be expected to be Western-oriented and structured, with strong ties to both Thailand and Vietnam. The failure of Pol Pot's fanatical socialism and the cautious moves of the current government leave a rather laissez faire approach as Cambodia's default setting for development. There is little socialist superstructure to dismantle. Even now the markets of Phnom Penh are wide open to Western goods. Moreover, even socialist countries like Vietnam are abandoning the centralized, closed approach to modernization. Indeed, as Vietnam's own internationally open modernization progresses, it can be expected that Ho Chi Minh City will exert an economic gravitational pull on Cambodia's economy able to compete with that of Bangkok.

In sum, for Cambodia much hangs in the balance in Sihanouk's negotiations. In the worst case scenario Cambodia would remain a satellite of Vietnam. Its development prospects would be grim. Its government would lack national legitimacy, and this could be a destabilizing factor in the long term. The worst case is still not as bad as what Cambodia experienced under Pol Pot, but it is certainly undesirable. In the best case Cambodia's twenty-year national nightmare would be over, and the country would have reasonably good prospects for prosperity. The key would be demilitarization, because that would eliminate security interests from Cambodia's relations with its more powerful neighbors.

Vietnam's Regional Future

The resolution of the Cambodian question is almost as momentous for Vietnam as it is for Cambodia itself. Vietnam has paid a heavy price for its occupation, and it would continue to pay a heavy price for maintaining hegemony over Cambodia. Vietnam's relations with China--its most significant external relationship--are, and will continue to be, deeply affected by what happens in Cambodia. Given its political situation, poverty, and demography, Vietnam has a hard road ahead under the best of circumstances. However, it has the human and natural resources to pursue internationally open modernization, and resolution of the Cambodian problem is the handle on the door.

The Cost of Indochinese Isolation

Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia secured Vietnamese control of Indochina, but at the price of regional isolation and hostility. Vietnamese Indochina is juxtaposed as a
hostile force to both China and to ASEAN. Inevitably, the isolation is beginning to break down at the margins. Vietnamese trade with Singapore and Thailand is rising. But this will not of itself change the strategic situation, nor will it remove the major economic effects of isolation.

Isolation has been very costly to the quality of life in Vietnam. Increase in production strains to keep up with increase in population, and vital goods are in short supply. Isolation has prolonged the hostilities resulting from the American war. It has preserved the militarization of society. It continues to limit options with regards to modernization. Ironically, Vietnam's military success makes it dependent on Soviet supplies and support.

The current increase in trade and contacts with Southeast Asia, Japan and other countries has softened the edges of isolation, but it is doubtful that isolation will simply fade away as countries accustom themselves to Vietnam's control of Indochina. For one thing, Vietnam is not so tempting a market as to cause wholesale defections. More importantly, however, Vietnam's control of Cambodia defines a serious strategic border problem for Thailand and confirms Sino-Vietnamese hostility. This basic conflict of interest is more important in isolating Vietnam than are specific boycotting measures.

The ending of Vietnamese isolation therefore depends on the creation of an autonomous, demilitarized Cambodia. This would buffer the Thai-Vietnamese relationship so that Thailand need not fear Vietnamese prosperity. By removing the threat to Thailand the threat to ASEAN is removed, and Vietnam's relations with the region could normalize.

Vietnam and China

Cambodia is also the key to Vietnamese security vis-a-vis China. Most obviously, occupation of Cambodia is the announced cause of continuing Chinese hostility and the roadblock of Sino-Soviet relations. From a regional perspective, occupied Cambodia is the magnet of Chinese military involvement in Southeast Asia and also the legitimation of such involvement. But a withdrawal that left Vietnam in control of Cambodia might not placate Chinese hostility. It is quite imaginable that China could normalize relations with the Soviet Union and still have as a policy objective in Southeast Asia the isolation of Vietnam. Even without the presence of Vietnamese troops, the basis of a Thai-Chinese alliance against Vietnam would remain.

With an autonomous Cambodia, China would face a set of
policy dilemmas. The first would be whether to support Sihanouk or the Khmer Rouge. This implies a deeper choice between its policy goals of opposing Vietnam and of supporting an independent Cambodia. The second choice would be whether to continue to define its Southeast Asian policy in terms of opposing Vietnam. The regional environment would be much less favorable for an anti-Vietnamese posture on China's part because the real Vietnamese threat to Southeast Asia would have been eliminated. Thus China would appear to be engaging in hegemonism of its own in persisting to isolate Vietnam. This could backfire, because Chinese hegemonism is a formidable prospect to Southeast Asia. China would therefore have sufficient grounds for rethinking its posture toward Vietnam.

Even if the Sino-Vietnamese relationship becomes non-hostile, it is not likely to become friendly. The serious threats each country perceived in 1979, that of the China-Khmer Rouge alliance and that of the Vietnamese-Soviet alliance, are now much reduced. But the scars of the last decade are very deep, and neither country is likely to feel forced toward friendship. Vietnamese modernization is unlikely to reorient toward China, and China has little to gain from Vietnam. But Vietnam's major concern with China is a security concern, and this concern would be much reduced by a demilitarized Cambodia.

The Strains of Modernization

Vietnam has high hopes for the benefits of lifting economic and political isolation. For this it is willing to put at risk its control over Cambodia. But the Southeast Asian region is not cohesive economically, and, as Robert Dernberger has described in his contribution to this symposium, the Vietnamese economy is in a dismal situation. What would be the effects for Vietnam of an internationally open modernization policy?

It could be anticipated that the South would attract investment because of its international connections and its skilled labor force. The desperate capital shortage should lead to favorable conditions for investment. What is true for the South is even more true for the ethnic Chinese concentrated in the districts of Ho Chi Minh City that formerly comprised Cholon. Even under conditions of isolation the ethnic Chinese and the South are doing relatively well, and with regards to international investment they are much nearer the door than the North. It seems plausible to imagine a high rate of growth, but from a very low starting point.

The problem with this scenario is that it promises
tensions between the North and the South and perhaps new tensions on issues relating to overseas Vietnamese and to ethnic Chinese. Currently the country is concerned about such basic issues as famine and so the prosperity of any part of the country is desirable. But it is hard to imagine the North simply watching and applauding if the southern economy takes off based on factors that are not present in the North. Since the North controls the national government, one would expect at a minimum some regionally redistributive policies.

One might also expect bureaucratic intervention and suspicion running counter to public commitments to openness. Some contrariness of aims was apparent in our visit, in that it was intended to encourage better political and eventually economic relations with the U.S., but our Vietnamese discussants labored under strict controls of contact with foreigners similar to China in 1981. This particular problem of isolating Vietnamese from foreign contacts will break down under the pressure of more foreign contacts, just as it did in China, but others may become more acute. Nevertheless, given the shattering experience of 1975 to the present, a reversal of decentralized, internationally open modernization is most unlikely.

Conclusion

Cambodia dominated our conversations in Southeast Asia because it stands at a critical juncture in its history and its fate influences the fate of the region as a whole. Most critical junctures are rather unpleasant times—wars and revolutions. This one has the optimistic color of negotiations, and it is particularly touching because it involves a great national leader and a long suffering people. It also promises to remove the major bone of contention from a region that would prefer peace. So far the negotiations have gone well, and hopes for a resolution of the Cambodian problem have risen.

However, it is in the nature of critical junctures that several outcomes are possible. The Vietnamese might demand too much of Sihanouk, or vice-versa. The situation might be sabotaged by forces on either side opposed to a negotiated solution. If the negotiations fail, the most likely outcome will be a Cambodia dependent on Vietnam within an isolated Indochina. Vietnam will remain trapped by its isolation and its vulnerability to China, and the rest of Southeast Asia, especially Thailand, will have to cope with the tensions of China and Vietnam.

Even if Sihanouk succeeds in his negotiations and
becomes part of a coalition government in Phnom Penh, a wide variety of possible outcomes can be imagined. If an international conference with broad global and regional participation endorses and guarantees the demilitarization of Cambodia and provides for refugee resettlement and development aid, a new era of prosperity could dawn for Cambodia, and the poison could be drained from regional relationships. If the major issues of stalemate are resolved through bilateral agreements at the expense of the interests of third parties, then the seeds of new conflicts could be imbedded in the solutions of old ones. Of course, form does not determine content: a good set of bilateral arrangements is better than a bad conference.

Vietnam as well as Cambodia deserves better than the present situation. They fought hard for national liberation, and yet a decade later they remain isolated, defensive and dependent on external support. The occupation of Cambodia solved a proximate security concern at the cost of creating a more general regional one. Since 1985 they have taken steps toward the peaceful resolution of the conflict, and a successful resolution could launch Vietnam into its long-postponed era of peaceful modernization.

Whatever the quality of the outcome, it is likely to help structure regional relations for the foreseeable future. Indochina's third war will probably be its last for a while, and so the form of its resolution will probably provide a lasting matrix which ensuing politics will assume as it alters the margins.