

China and Cambodia

~~(C/NF)~~ In a regional context, Beijing views Vietnam's invasion and occupation of Cambodia--now in its tenth year--as both a threat to the peace and stability of Southeast Asia and as a challenge to China's perceived preeminence in that part of the world. From a geopolitical perspective, Beijing considers Moscow's support for Vietnam's presence in Cambodia as the most important of the three obstacles to normalized Sino-Soviet relations.

- o ~~(C/NF)~~ Chinese policy toward Cambodia is intended to achieve two principal objectives: the withdrawal of all Vietnamese forces from the country and the establishment of an independent, neutral, nonaligned government in Phnom Penh. This policy has consisted of exerting direct military pressure on Vietnam and providing military assistance to the Cambodian resistance forces, especially the Khmer Rouge.
- o ~~(C/NF)~~ In addition to using military means--both direct and indirect--to effect a settlement in Cambodia, Beijing has concurrently sought to bring political and diplomatic pressure to bear on Hanoi, its client regime in Phnom Penh--the Peoples Republic of Kampuchea (PRK)--and on Moscow. China has supported the yearly UN resolutions condemning Vietnamese actions in Cambodia and, with ASEAN, was instrumental in helping create the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK). An umbrella organization for the three resistance groups--the Khmer Rouge, the Khmer Peoples National Liberation Front (KPNLF) and Prince Sihanouk's FUNCINPEC--the CGDK currently holds the UN seat for Cambodia.

~~(C/NF)~~ Beijing's own latest proposal for a Cambodian settlement--subsequently rejected by both Hanoi and Phnom Penh--was contained in a 1 July Foreign Ministry statement. The four-part proposal reiterated China's longstanding position

that withdrawal of Vietnamese troops was "the key" to any settlement and repeated the call for a Sihanouk-led provisional coalition government.

- o ~~(C/NF)~~ The statement, however, introduced a significant new element by proposing that each faction's candidate for the coalition government, which would run the country during the withdrawal, be "acceptable" to all four factions, thereby giving the factions a means to exclude Pol Pot and some of the other more unsavory Khmer Rouge leaders.
- o ~~(C/NF)~~ The statement also appeared to address concerns about possible Khmer Rouge plans to seize power following a Vietnamese pullout by calling for a freeze on both force levels and military activity by all the factions and by prohibiting military forces from becoming involved in politics and interfering in the elections that would follow Vietnam's withdrawal.
- o ~~(C/NF)~~ It came at a time of increased diplomatic activity over Cambodia: one day after Vietnam announced the withdrawal of its command structure from Phnom Penh; just prior to a 4 July ASEAN foreign ministers meeting that discussed the Cambodian issue at length; two weeks before Secretary of State Shultz's visit to China; and, three weeks before the start of the Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM) which would bring together for the first time representatives of all four Cambodian factions as well as Vietnam.
- o ~~(S/NF)~~ In their discussions with Secretary Shultz, the Chinese elaborated further on their 1 July proposals and Beijing's overall policy toward Cambodia. The Chinese restated their belief that Prince Sihanouk was the only choice to lead a post-withdrawal Cambodian government. While agreeing that Pol Pot should not assume a leadership role in any future government, the Chinese insisted that no one faction should be excluded nor should any one faction dominate that government. The Chinese also restated their support for some type of international peacekeeping force to monitor the withdrawal, maintain the peace, and oversee the elections, but only if such a force was acceptable to all the factions.

