

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.

- o ~~(C/NF)~~ While the Chinese appear to be generally pleased with the outcome of their talks with Secretary Shultz, they are less than pleased with the outcome of the JIM. According to a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hanoi had succeeded in highlighting divisions within the resistance and ASEAN and was able to divert attention away from the issue of Vietnamese troop withdrawal and toward the Khmer Rouge. The Chinese view the JIM as a diplomatic victory for Hanoi and a setback for its Cambodian policy. Beijing is also concerned over Prince Sihanouk's continued harsh criticism of the Khmer Rouge and China's role as the group's principal patron. It is also concerned over the possibility that Sihanouk may negotiate a separate peace with the PRK when he meets with its leader Hun Sen in November. Sihanouk has hinted that he may be prepared to join with the PRK in a bipartite coalition government aimed at opposing the Khmer Rouge's return to power. Clearly unhappy about the shift in international attention from Vietnam to the Khmer Rouge, the Chinese reportedly have decided to speak out more frankly and forcefully on Cambodia than they have in the past.

~~(C/NF)~~ The Chinese have long considered Soviet support of Hanoi's invasion and occupation of Cambodia as the primary obstacle to normalized relations with Moscow. The Cambodian issue assumed an even greater importance following last year's token withdrawal of Soviet forces from Mongolia and Moscow's announcement that it intends to remove all its troops from Afghanistan.

- o ~~(C/NF)~~ Recently, while discussing the upcoming Sino-Soviet talks on Cambodia to be held in Beijing in late August, a Chinese Foreign Ministry official stated that the primary Chinese goal in the talks will be to urge the Soviet Union to use its influence to get Vietnam to withdraw its troops from Cambodia as quickly as possible, adding that if Moscow would agree to do so, a Sino-Soviet summit was possible. According to the official, concrete evidence of Soviet efforts would be a Vietnamese agreement to provide, as in the case of Afghanistan, a timetable for a rapid withdrawal of Vietnamese forces under international supervision.

- o ~~(C/NF)~~ In recent months, numerous senior Chinese leaders, including Premier Li Peng and Party General Secretary Zhao Ziyang, have stated that a settlement of the Cambodian conflict would pave the way for a summit meeting between Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping. Such a meeting would constitute a major step in reestablishing party-to-party ties and fully normalizing relations between the two countries.
- o ~~(C/NF)~~ While such an agreement might be the first step toward an eventual Sino-Soviet rapprochement, unless it is accompanied by or is incorporated into a much broader agreement that addresses Cambodia's postwithdrawal future, it will do little to resolve the Cambodian problem in the near term. Despite Chinese assurances that Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge will not return to power, the PRK, Vietnam, and now Prince Sihanouk oppose anything more than a nominal Khmer Rouge role in a new Cambodian government. On the other hand, China and the Khmer Rouge, as well as ASEAN, continue to support the establishment of a quadripartite coalition government under Sihanouk that includes the Khmer Rouge.

~~(C/NF)~~ Even if a compromise were to be reached on Cambodia, Sino-Vietnamese relations will likely remain strained as both countries will continue to vie for preeminence in Southeast Asia. A case in point is the South China Sea, where competing claims over the Spratly (Nansha) and Paracel (Xisha) archipelagos resulted this past year in hostilities between Chinese and Vietnamese naval forces and an increased military presence by both sides. Beijing has steadfastly refused Vietnamese requests to resolve this sovereignty issue through negotiations and has not excluded the possible use of military force.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CAMBODIA: BACKGROUND

July diplomatic activity included Chinese four points, ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting, Sihanouk's resignation, and the Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM).

- o Chinese four points showed flexibility, accepting imposition of "freeze" on Cambodian forces and possibility of excluding unacceptable leaders from a coalition.
- o ASEAN and US both strongly supported Prince Sihanouk in Bangkok, and pressed Vietnam to withdraw from Cambodia.
- o In his mid-July meetings in Beijing, Secretary Shultz emphasized need for guarantees against KR return to power. Chinese, including Deng, asserted that they too were against KR return to power, and fully supported Sihanouk.
- o Sihanouk resigned as Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) President to increase pressure on Khmer Rouge (KR) without sacrificing his personal role, as shown by his indirect JIM participation from nearby Jakarta.

Upcoming events include the Sino-Soviet Vice FM meeting (August 27), an ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting (September 2), the UNGA debate on the Cambodia resolution (October/early November), Sihanouk's visit to Washington (mid-October), Sihanouk's meeting with Hun Sen (November 5), and JIM working group report (December).

- o The Sino-Soviet meeting provides the KR and Vietnamese backers opportunity to focus on their remaining "obstacle;" major difference likely to be continued Chinese distrust of Vietnam's intentions compared to Soviet position that Vietnamese commitment to total withdrawal is already fact.
- o At UNGA, Sihanouk has increased chances of credentials challenge with calls to leave Cambodia's UN seat vacant, and may have weakened support for annual ASEAN resolution.
- o Sihanouk's proposed two-day visit to Washington between October 10-20 provides us opportunity to demonstrate strong support for the Prince.
- o Sihanouk/Hun Sen November meeting in Paris is likely to focus on a Sihanouk-PRK accommodation/two-party coalition, which the Prince has recently advocated.
- o JIM working group has mandate to review settlement options and report by December on holding another JIM-type meeting.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~DBGL. OADR~~