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# After the Invasion: Hanoi's View

An Intelligence Assessment

Secret

RP 79-1015-C

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Central  
Foreign  
Assessment  
Center



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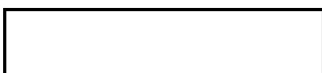
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**An Intelligence Assessment**

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**After the Invasion:**

**Hanoi's View** 

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Until recently, the world must have looked reasonably promising to Hanoi. A little more than a year ago, Hanoi's relations with its non-Communist Southeast Asian neighbors were improving and there was even movement in its relationship with the United States. Although aid from the West was not as great as had been hoped, a large package deal with the Japanese was nearing completion and foreign oil companies were anxious to exploit Vietnam's offshore resources. 


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name war—into aggressor, despite the brutal nature of the Phnom Penh regime. As time passed, it became increasingly clear that most of Pol Pot's forces had evaded the Vietnamese onslaught and regrouped as an effective guerrilla force. More ominously, Beijing began a major military buildup, 

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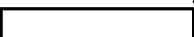


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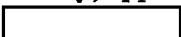
The one cloud on the horizon was Kampuchea, where the Pol Pot regime's raids across the border were proving both bloody and costly to the Vietnamese economy. After proposals for negotiations and a limited punitive strike failed to change Phnom Penh's behavior, Hanoi concluded in early summer that a military solution was its only option. Vietnam's relations with China, which had been deteriorating as the Vietnamese-Kampuchean conflict mounted, were substantially reordered when Hanoi signed the Friendship and Cooperation Treaty with Moscow in November. 

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In making their fateful decisions of the past several months, Vietnamese leaders may have anticipated heavy costs to Vietnam and somewhat less-than-optimum results. But Hanoi almost certainly did not foresee its present degree of difficulty. Indeed, at this juncture, Vietnam faces a set of very serious, interrelated problems:

- A prolonged and bitter war in Kampuchea, which Hanoi will have great difficulty in prosecuting or extracting itself from.
- A continuing state of high tension with China that could easily lead to a renewal of fighting.
- An increasingly dependent relationship with the Soviet Union, which provides some immediate benefits but has already brought demands for concessions that Hanoi is reluctant to grant and which limits opportunities to improve relations—and procure aid—elsewhere.
- An economy that was sorely taxed even before the invasion of Kampuchea and that can only hope to develop in peacetime. 

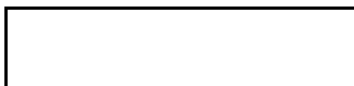
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Following the signing of the treaty, Vietnam's leaders rejected the cautious approach of slowly building a guerrilla force to topple Pol Pot in favor of a bold strike designed to quickly destroy all vestiges of the Pol Pot regime. Hanoi's invasion in late December proceeded very rapidly and, at least superficially, appeared to be devastatingly successful. 

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Since then, developments have been uniformly negative from Hanoi's point of view. With the invasion, Hanoi's international image was transformed from underdog—an impression it had sustained throughout the previous Viet-

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*Kampuchea*

The failure of Vietnam to deliver a knockout blow to Pol Pot has mired it in what seems certain to be a protracted and bloody guerrilla war. Its opposition is well organized, adequately armed, and highly motivated. The Vietnamese are overextended and plagued by morale and supply problems. Hanoi's puppet government in Phnom Penh is incapable of ruling and has failed to attract any significant international support. For a variety of reasons, the Vietnamese have been unable to capitalize on anti - Pol Pot sentiment in Kampuchea. Moreover, the longer they must remain in the country to shore up their puppet government, the more the traditionally anti-Vietnamese populace will regard them as an army of occupation. 

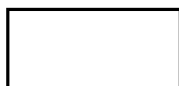
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Despite its difficult position, Vietnam is unlikely to abandon its long-term objectives in Kampuchea. Vietnam sees itself as the rightful heir to France's Indochina empire, and it has long been a fundamental foreign policy goal to bring Phnom Penh into the same "special relationship" Hanoi has with Vientiane—that is, de facto Vietnamese control. Hanoi has been strident—even moralistic—in justifying its actions in Kampuchea. While the latest reporting indicates Vietnam now realizes it is in for a tougher and longer struggle than it originally planned, the reporting also makes clear that Hanoi intends to maintain its equities there come what may. 

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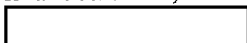
Militarily, Hanoi has some flexibility. It could choose to try to maintain its control over as much of Kampuchea as possible—a task that will drain badly needed manpower and resources and almost certainly result in higher casualties. Or, at some point, it could draw back some of its forces scattered about Kampuchea, consolidate its hold on the major towns in the central region, and establish firm control over the eastern portion of the country while it builds a

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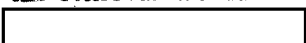


Kampuchean infrastructure to front, and perhaps eventually to fight, for Vietnamese interests. Retrenchment, however, would provide Pol Pot's forces with a totally secure sanctuary from which they could rebuild and eventually pose an even greater military threat. 

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Either option could be combined with a call for a coalition government in which all the interested parties would be represented but gerrymandered so that Hanoi's forces would dominate. Hanoi would then hope that such a government could attract the international support its present puppets lack. Hanoi apparently has extended feelers to Prince Sihanouk about heading such a coalition, but he has turned them aside. 

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Hanoi probably will have to bleed far more than it has so far before it seriously considers negotiating a genuinely neutral Kampuchean Government. It would be especially difficult for Hanoi at this time because it would appear that Hanoi was capitulating to Chinese pressure. A settlement in any case would be extremely hard to come by; Hanoi almost certainly would insist that Pol Pot not be part of a compromise government, a condition the Chinese could readily accept, but one that neither Hanoi nor Beijing may be able to bring about. As far as we can determine, Pol Pot remains the effective and unchallenged leader of the Kampuchean resistance and his removal would be difficult to engineer. 

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*China*

China's invasion raises the fundamental question for Hanoi of whether it can afford to go much longer without reaching some modus vivendi with China. Although China's troops have been withdrawn, they remain poised across the border for future incursions, their presence there underscoring the point that Vietnam cannot disregard Chinese interests with impunity nor

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fail to see the hardly subtle inference that Vietnam, in the last analysis, must acknowledge Chinese primacy in the region. This is not a new problem but an attitude Hanoi has faced and dealt with for hundreds of years in a constant struggle to assert its independence of Chinese suzerainty. [redacted]

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Vietnamese distrust and animosity toward China has been a continual underlying strain in the relationship of the countries, submerged for political reasons during the war but inevitably surfacing afterward as Hanoi began to more forcefully assert its national prerogatives. Signs of friction appeared quickly over competing claims to the Spratley and Paracel Islands and multiplied as Vietnam and China began to compete for influence in the region. [redacted]

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Rapprochement would involve trimming some basic foreign policy goals. Hanoi and Beijing are natural competitors for political influence in Southeast Asia, and the rivalry has come to a head in Kampuchea. Hanoi is determined to establish in effect, if not in name, an Indochina Federation. Beijing is just as committed to an independent Kampuchea that would help contain Vietnamese influence. Hanoi's close ties to Moscow add a special intensity to the rivalry, but it would have developed to some level even without Vietnam's tilt toward the USSR. Thus, emotions and politics have combined to produce a tension that may fluctuate but is unlikely to dissipate and that will always underlie—if not undercut—any modus vivendi. [redacted]

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For now, Hanoi may simply hope to reduce some of the tension in the relationship and with it the potential for another confrontation with China by entering into negotiations on the border problem. While talks seem likely to begin shortly, any negotiations are likely to be difficult and unproductive, at least at first, while Vietnam assesses anew the Chinese threat and its

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own position in Kampuchea. Initially Hanoi may have as its main goal simply to keep the talks going in the belief that China is less likely to resort to force while the negotiations continue. [redacted]

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*Soviet Union*

The Vietnamese-Soviet relationship is an uneasy one. Hanoi is suspicious of Soviet intentions in Vietnam and believes Moscow would be prepared to sacrifice key Vietnamese interests to advance Soviet ends. Hanoi began a tilt toward Moscow after the end of the Vietnamese war in 1975, because it believed the Soviets could better provide badly needed economic assistance. Hanoi moved even closer to the USSR as relations with China deteriorated, in the hope that the relationship would serve as a check on China. [redacted]

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Not only did the relationship fail to act as a deterrent to China, it greatly increased Chinese hostility and complicated Hanoi's relations with other countries. Many Western aid donors began reconsidering their pledges to Vietnam. Hanoi's carefully cultivated image of independence suffered greatly, both in Southeast Asia, where it was attempting to allay fears of creeping Soviet involvement in the region, and among nations of the Nonaligned Movement, where it was seeking support for its actions in Kampuchea and its position vis-a-vis China. Hanoi's chances of improving relations with the United States were also dealt a severe setback. [redacted]

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Finally, Hanoi may not be entirely pleased with the support it received from Moscow during its border war with China. [redacted]

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The Soviets have provided Hanoi with military equipment, and [redacted] they have sought an increased military presence in Vietnam in exchange, perhaps a naval base or a Soviet-run logistics facility. A decision to grant such a privilege would be most painful for Hanoi. It has stated repeatedly that it did not fight for 30 years to expel the French and Americans only to turn the country over to the Soviets. The increased Chinese threat, however, makes it difficult for Hanoi to reject Moscow out of hand, and the port calls now being made by Soviet naval ships on an ad hoc basis may represent a compromise. [redacted]

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If Moscow insists on more, Hanoi is sure to raise its price as well—most likely by calling for a Soviet statement that it will not tolerate another crossborder operation by China. The Soviets may well be hesitant to make such a commitment [redacted]

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Hanoi has few options other than Soviet support. It could conceivably attempt to improve relations with the West, particularly with France, which sympathized with Hanoi during the Chinese incursion; but the West offers less protection against China than do the Soviets. Vietnamese dependence on Soviet patronage is also likely to grow apace as a result of the cumulative strains on the economy caused by military needs, diminished Western aid, and bad weather. [redacted]

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*The Economy*

Vietnam has already paid a high price for its invasion of Kampuchea and the need to increase

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its defenses against China. Badly needed human and material resources have had to be diverted from Vietnam's faltering economic development program, and many Western aid donors either have cut, or are considering cutting back, their aid pledges. These costs can only mount in the months ahead. [redacted]

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The indirect costs to the economy of the present situation may be even greater and more important in the long run. [redacted]

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[redacted] Vietnam has little chance of becoming self-sufficient in food under prevailing conditions. [redacted]

The war has taxed Vietnam's already overburdened administrative system. [redacted]

[redacted] decisions important to the management of the economy are being delayed or made by less qualified personnel. [redacted]

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[redacted] Some of the slack will be picked up by Soviet aid, but as the war increases, Vietnamese aid requirements are likely to grow. [redacted]

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*Are Changes in the Offing?*

We know very little about how decisions are made in Vietnam, and Hanoi is very good at concealing debate. The problems Hanoi faces and the questionable decisions that have been made nevertheless suggest that political re-cremations and debate over future policy may be the order of the day in Hanoi. But, before prophesying leadership instability and dramatic policy reversals, a word of caution is in order. In the past, the fortunes of individual leaders have risen and fallen, but there have not been wholesale purges at the top. It is conceivable that hardliners on the Politburo, who seem to be the

principal architects of current policy, may lose some influence as a result of Hanoi's predicament, but it is important to remember that in the past Vietnamese leaders have shown remarkable unity in the wake of major policy blunders.

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Certainly, Hanoi has overextended itself and faces some pivotal decisions regarding Kampuchea, relations with China, and its reliance on

Moscow. But once again its history shows that Hanoi is prepared to persevere and make the necessary sacrifices when it believes its basic interests are involved. While some in Hanoi may be arguing for major changes, Vietnam's great national pride, its traditional hatred of China, and its own feelings of manifest destiny in Indochina are powerful factors working toward revision of present policies rather than dramatic reversals. [redacted]



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