



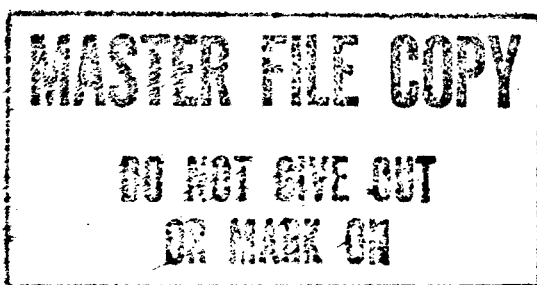
**Director of  
Central  
Intelligence**

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# Cambodia: Prospects for and Implications of a Diplomatic Breakthrough (c)

**Special National Intelligence Estimate**

*This Special National Intelligence Estimate represents  
the views of the Director of Central Intelligence  
with the advice and assistance of the  
US Intelligence Community.*



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September 1988

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**SNIE 57-88**

# **Cambodia: Prospects for and Implications of a Diplomatic Breakthrough (c)**

*Information available as of 25 August 1988 was used  
in the preparation of this Special National Intelligence Estimate.*

*The following intelligence organizations participated  
in the preparation of this Estimate:*

The Central Intelligence Agency  
The Defense Intelligence Agency  
The National Security Agency  
The Bureau of Intelligence and Research,  
Department of State

*also participating:*

The Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence,  
Department of the Army  
The Director of Naval Intelligence,  
Department of the Navy  
The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence,  
Department of the Air Force

*This Estimate was approved for publication by the  
National Foreign Intelligence Board.*

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~~September 1988~~

# Key Judgments

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Momentum toward a diplomatic breakthrough in Cambodia has grown in the past several months. While an agreement probably will not be achieved this year, we believe that one is highly likely by 1990.

The major factors fueling the momentum for change include:

- Vietnam, beset by severe economic difficulties and other pressures, recognizes that continued military occupation of Cambodia is not feasible; Hanoi hopes that an agreement will usher in a new era of international assistance, trade, and investment.<sup>1</sup>
- Cambodia's Prince Sihanouk, a key ingredient to any negotiated agreement, appears to be developing an increased sense of urgency to reach a settlement.
- Members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations are becoming more amenable to a diplomatic settlement that takes into account Hanoi's main interests.
- China has shown some flexibility in its position to avoid appearing obstructionist. However, it continues to demand a full withdrawal of Vietnamese troops and the dissolution of the People's Republic of Kampuchea.
- The Soviet Union is encouraging a settlement both to improve relations with China and to reduce the cost of its assistance to Vietnam. However, there is no evidence that it has taken drastic steps such as reducing aid to push Vietnam to be more flexible.

We think an agreement most likely will establish either an interim coalition government comprising all four Cambodian factions and headed

<sup>1</sup> *The Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research believes the Estimate overemphasizes the degree to which Hanoi's domestic economic problems and international isolation have induced greater flexibility on Cambodian policy and understates the importance of Vietnam's security concerns. Certainly Vietnam is eager to focus on its economic difficulties and gain access to the Western world, but the Assistant Secretary does not believe that Hanoi is operating primarily from weakness on the Cambodian front, that it may be prepared to make substantial concessions toward the Khmer Rouge to reach a political solution, or that its security interests in Indochina are no longer compelling. Its present approach represents a calculated risk that Sihanouk can be enticed to join the People's Republic of Kampuchea, that the PRK has a reasonable chance of dominating any new government, that in such circumstances ASEAN support for a continuing resistance will crumble, that regional and international attention can be focused on measures to isolate the Khmer Rouge, and that Vietnam's troops can be withdrawn and its isolation ended. Barring unforeseen political change in Hanoi, the Assistant Secretary considers remote at best the notion raised in the body of the Estimate that Vietnam might allow the Khmer Rouge to dominate a future Cambodian government.*

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by Prince Sihanouk, or one in which Sihanouk and the People's Republic of Kampuchea establish a provisional government without the Khmer Rouge. Any coalition will be inherently unstable and only the first step in returning peace and order to Cambodia.<sup>2</sup>

In any Cambodian agreement, Vietnam's principal concern will be to put into place a diplomatic, political, and security framework that minimizes the Khmer Rouge's influence and precludes its return to power following the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces:

- The Khmer Rouge poses the most serious obstacle to a settlement. We believe that the Khmer Rouge leadership remains intent on regaining sole power in Phnom Penh and that this determination also ensures that it will break at some point with the other Khmer factions.
- From Hanoi's perspective, a settlement must be premised on agreement by China, Thailand, and others to stop providing arms and safehaven to Cambodian resistance forces—especially the Khmer Rouge—and to exile a few of the top Khmer Rouge officials. Hanoi probably believes that, although these measures alone would not end the Khmer Rouge threat, they are critical to capping its growth potential and, over time, causing a steady decline in its influence.
- As a further guarantee, Hanoi hopes to stack the internal political odds against a resurgence of the Khmer Rouge. Vietnam wants to encourage a collaborative arrangement between its client, the People's Republic of Kampuchea, and Prince Sihanouk's resistance group that together would constitute the dominant force in postoccupation Cambodian politics.

If negotiations fail, we believe that Vietnam would withdraw most of its forces unilaterally by early 1990, banking on a moderately strengthened PRK, possibly joined in a de facto alliance with the non-Communist resistance against the Khmer Rouge. In any case, it is highly likely that Vietnam will keep a clandestine residual force in Cambodia.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *The Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research believes that the Khmer Rouge is unlikely to participate in any quadripartite settlement acceptable to Vietnam and the PRK. Thus, he believes that the formation of a quadripartite government is the least probable outcome and that the more likely scenarios, including a Sihanouk-PRK deal, will leave the Khmer Rouge in an active (though probably reduced) insurgency with continued Chinese support. Such a "new" Cambodian government would be dominated by the PRK and probably need Vietnamese assistance to remain viable.*

<sup>3</sup> *The Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research believes that Vietnam is prepared to reduce the number of its forces in Cambodia, but would not withdraw unconditionally by early 1990 if the Khmer Rouge remains a significant threat.*

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The limited capability of Sihanouk's troops and the fading fortunes of Son Sann's Khmer People's National Liberation Front forces dim the military prospects of the non-Communist resistance. This weakens Sihanouk's hand in negotiations and could put the non-Communists at risk if an agreement gets derailed. At present, they have no realistic prospect of competing with either the Khmer Rouge or PRK forces on the battlefield.

We believe the outlook for Cambodia in the first few years following any agreement will be highly uncertain. There will be a serious potential for civil war, fragmentation of the country, renewed foreign involvement, and a major resurgence by the Khmer Rouge.

The full international ramifications of any agreement cannot be known with any certainty, but we can outline some of the more important potential consequences. They include:

- Divisions within ASEAN could become more pronounced without the unifying influence of the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia.
- Vietnam's international isolation is likely to be eased, and its prospects for trade will be improved. However, a settlement will not be a panacea for Vietnam's domestic ills.
- If China's actions encourage a resolution and if it helps to control the Khmer Rouge, China's standing in the region is likely to be enhanced. However, China's standing could suffer if it is isolated with the Khmer Rouge or if it is perceived as blocking an agreement.
- Moscow will try to capitalize on a settlement to improve its relations—especially economic—with the ASEAN countries, and to weaken South-east Asian support for a US military presence in the region.
- An agreement could pave the way for a normalization of Sino-Soviet relations.
- An agreement could contribute to the resolution of the Cambodian refugee issue.

More directly, we can point to a number of important potential implications for the United States. Among these are:

- Khmer Rouge participation in a Cambodian government would make US support and assistance difficult to justify, while its exclusion from a settlement could strain US relations with Thailand and China.
- If negotiations break down, and Vietnam withdraws unilaterally, a number of US allies may accept Hanoi's client, the PRK, as a fait accompli in Cambodia.
- The non-Communists could be the biggest losers in a settlement. They will be militarily impotent and politically vulnerable after an agreement.
- A settlement could contribute to a reappraisal in the region of the respective roles of the United States, China, the USSR, Japan, and others, to the possible detriment of US interests.
- Thailand's relations with China have roots deep enough to outlive the Cambodia problem.

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**Glossary**

<b>ANS</b>	<i>Armee Nationale Sihanoukienne—the military arm of Prince Sihanouk's anti-Vietnamese resistance faction</i>	<b>KPNLF</b>	<i>Khmer People's National Liberation Front, led by Son Sann. Along with the ANS, makes up the non-Communist resistance.</i>
<b>ASEAN</b>	<i>Association of Southeast Asian Nations—Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Brunei</i>	<b>PAVN</b>	<i>People's Army of Vietnam</i>
<b>CGDK</b>	<i>Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, comprising the ANS, DK, and KPNLF</i>	<b>PRK</b>	<i>People's Republic of Kampuchea, the Vietnamese-controlled regime in Phnom Penh under the nominal direction of Heng Samrin</i>
<b>DK</b>	<i>Democratic Kampuchea—the Khmer Rouge</i>		

*In this Estimate, "Khmer" and "Cambodian" are used interchangeably to refer to the people of Cambodia.*

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# Discussion

Momentum toward a diplomatic breakthrough in Cambodia has grown in the past several months. The informal talks on Cambodia that took place in Indonesia in late July were another milestone in this process. The meetings involved the four Cambodian factions—the DK, PRK, KPNLF, and the ANS—Vietnam, Laos, and representatives from the ASEAN nations (see “Glossary”). Although there was little substantive progress on any of the key issues, it was agreed to form a committee to work toward another informal meeting, probably sometime next year. Also, Prince Sihanouk agreed to meet PRK Prime Minister Hun Sen for the third time in Paris in October or November (see figure 3 at the back of this paper, which describes the key participants in a settlement). These meetings will quite likely lead to other initiatives and discussions that could provide the framework for a diplomatic agreement. The success of these efforts, however, will depend largely on Vietnam’s willingness to withdraw its remaining forces and to enter into substantive negotiations. (S NF)

## Hanoi Wants a Settlement

**Initial Designs.** Hanoi’s initial objectives in invading Cambodia in December 1978 were to stop Khmer Rouge attacks on its borders and to overthrow the Pol Pot regime, which it had come to view as an instrument of Chinese hostility. Having successfully done so, it turned its attention toward:

- Mopping up the Khmer Rouge forces that had fled to the Thai border.
- Creating a puppet regime modeled after the Vietnamese party and Government that would, in time, be able to administer the country on its own.
- Withdrawing the majority of its forces once a situation has been stabilized.

In the months following Vietnam’s successful 1984-85 dry-season offensive, it became apparent that, although Hanoi could not destroy the resistance, it no longer was a serious threat to Vietnam’s strategic control of Cambodia. In August 1985, Vietnam announced a deadline of 1990 for withdrawing its troops from Cambodia (see inset “Cambodia Chronology”). (S NF)

## Cambodia Chronology

March 1970	Government of Prince Norodom Sihanouk is overthrown by Gen. Lon Nol.
April 1975	Lon Nol government overthrown by Communist Khmer Rouge.
December 1978	Vietnam invades Cambodia; Khmer Rouge Army disperses.
January 1979	People’s Republic of Kampuchea established in Phnom Penh by Vietnamese forces; Heng Samrin named president.
February 1979	China begins attacks along Vietnam’s northern border.
June 1982	Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) established with ASEAN support. This resistance coalition—a government in exile with very little real power—included Sihanouk (ANS) as president, Son Sann (KPNLF) as prime minister, and Khieu Samphan (DK) as vice president.
December 1987–January 1988	Sihanouk–Hun Sen talks.
July 1988	Jakarta informal meeting held.

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**Table 1**  
**People's Republic of Kampuchea Armed Forces**

	Nondivisional	Divisional	Provincial	Total
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,130</b>	<b>21,140</b>	<b>11,400</b>	<b>46,670<sup>a</sup></b>
General Staff	5,160			5,160
Military Zone 1	1,020	4,600	1,200	6,820
Military Zone 2	1,900		7,200	9,100
Military Zone 3	2,120	3,800	2,000	7,920
Military Zone 4	2,130	12,740	1,000	15,870
Naval	1,000			1,000
Air	800			800

the overall figures used in the Estimate are presented as a range.

**The PRK: A Weak Reed.** Hanoi's objective of establishing a viable puppet regime, however, has proved elusive. Vietnam's client in Phnom Penh is politically weak. It commands little loyalty from the Cambodian population, and its military and civilian officials frequently collaborate with the non-Communist resistance, particularly Prince Sihanouk's ANS. Vietnam has also failed in its attempt to build the PRK military into an effective fighting force; the PRK is not capable of taking on its primary responsibility for defense and internal security. The PRK's armed forces number about 44,000 to 48,000, but these troops are poorly led, are prone to desertion, and would be hard pressed to contain intensive and sustained attacks by the Khmer Rouge and other resistance forces without Vietnamese or international assistance. (See table 1 and figure 1 on PRK military deployments.) We believe that the PRK will not be ready to stand alone by 1990; Hanoi most likely understands this. <sup>4</sup> (S NF)

<sup>4</sup> The State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research believes there is insufficient reliable information on conditions in Cambodia to judge the strength of the PRK. It may be politically weak and have difficulty now in dealing with a determined Khmer Rouge campaign on the border, but it is the only Khmer faction with an administrative structure and, with prodding and training from the Vietnamese, its armed forces could improve. (S NF)

**Domestic and International Pressures.** At home, Vietnam's economy has been reduced to virtual paralysis, spawning widespread deprivation and a deep-seated malaise that has infected all levels of society (see inset on page 4). General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh has instituted a broad-based program of domestic reforms not unlike Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies—so far to little effect. The overall situation has actually deteriorated over the past two years. Linh and other senior officials concede that reforms will not have any discernible impact for at least four or five years. Although improvements in some sectors are possible in the short term, we find Linh's prognosis to be optimistic.

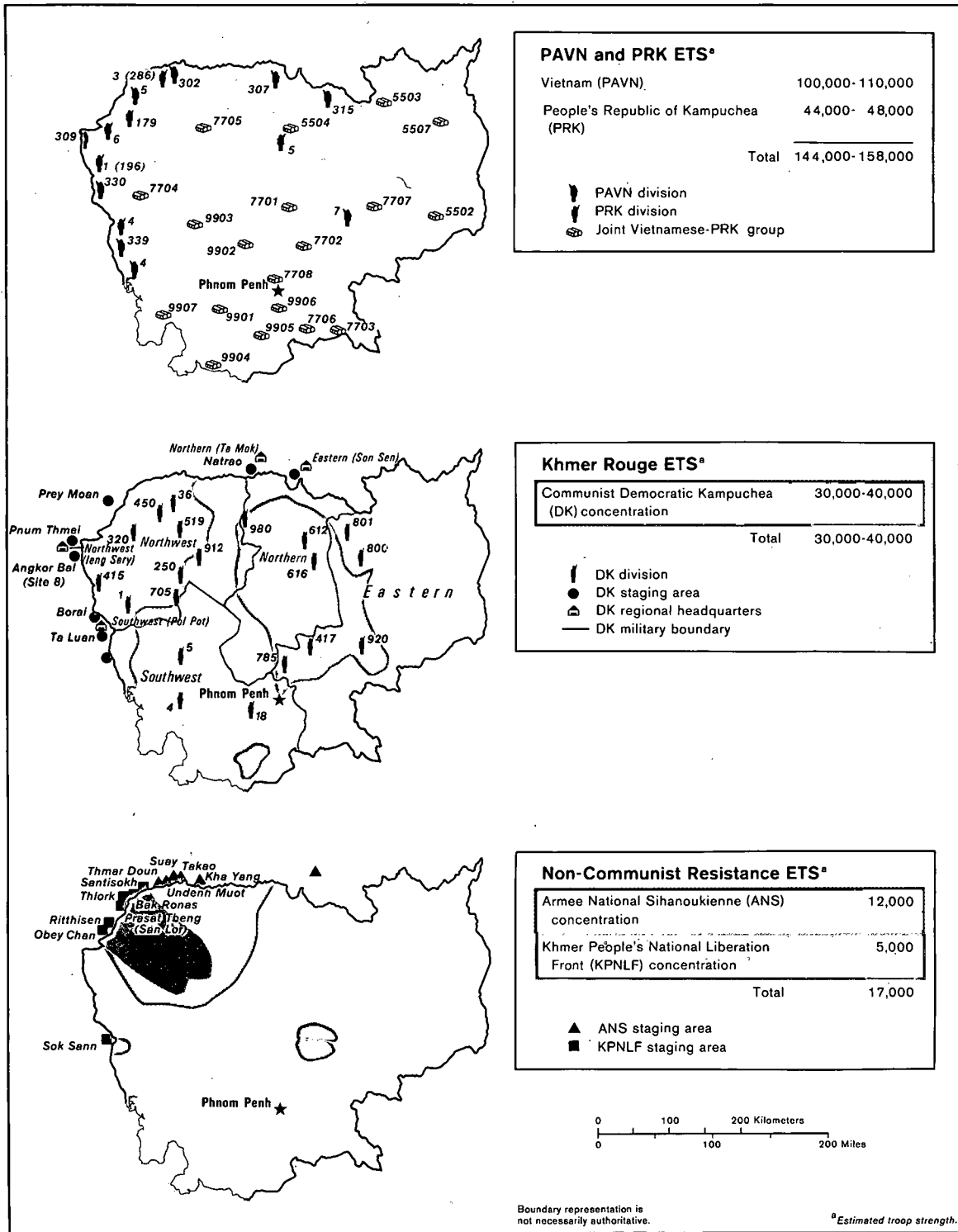
(S NF)

Hanoi's new leaders view the Cambodian conflict as a costly and counterproductive venture that is distracting attention and resources from urgent domestic problems and blocks meaningful access to the Western and Japanese aid, trade, investment, and technology it needs to forge a viable economic recovery and development strategy. Moreover, Hanoi is very aware of Gorbachev's public statements, including his February 1988 declaration, that the Afghan settlement could serve as a precedent for resolving other regional conflicts. (S NF)

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**Figure 1**  
**Disposition of Contending Forces in Cambodia, August 1988**



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**Cambodia: Economic Malaise**

*An absence of statistics makes it impossible to measure Cambodia's economic performance, but there are clear indications that nine years of war have taken a severe toll. Poverty is widespread—with most of the population at a subsistence level—and will not be alleviated soon, even with a settlement. The country lacks technological skills and its literacy rate has dropped to one of the lowest in the region. Diplomatic isolation from the West—outside the Soviet Bloc only India recognizes the Hanoi-installed government—has blocked the flow of aid and technology, further slowing Cambodia's economic development. (C NF)*

*Despite a fertile and underpopulated countryside, we estimate that Cambodia will experience a 150,000-metric-ton shortfall of rice this year, in part because the Vietnamese are confiscating significant amounts of rice either to feed occupying troops or to alleviate food shortages in Vietnam. Because Cambodia's war-driven economy is unable to meet consumer needs, Phnom Penh permits the smuggling of an estimated \$1 million per month of Thai and Western products into Cambodia, either through Kaoh Kong, an offshore island in the Gulf of Thailand, or through the port of Kampong Saom. (C NF)*

*Cambodia has allowed significant private participation in its domestic economy, encouraging private households to provide consumer services. Nevertheless, it continues to exercise direct control over the industrial sector, and its development strategy focuses on constructing inappropriately large industrial projects. The mix of private initiative alongside direct state control will probably remain a central feature of the economy regardless of the form taken by a postsettlement coalition government. (C NF)*

We believe that this mix of domestic and international pressures has caused Hanoi to reconsider its goal of imposing its own settlement on Cambodia. As a result, it is now seeking a diplomatic solution. Although Hanoi still believes that Cambodia and Laos must not be hostile toward Vietnam, and that Hanoi is entitled to some influence over their affairs, it recognizes that continued military occupation of its neighbors is not feasible. In any Cambodian agreement, Vietnam's principal concern will be to put into place a diplomatic, political, and security framework that minimizes Khmer Rouge influence and precludes its return to power following the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces. <sup>5</sup> (S NF)

From Hanoi's perspective, a settlement must be premised upon agreement by China, Thailand, and others to stop providing arms and safehaven to Cambodian resistance forces—especially the Khmer Rouge—and to exile a few of the top Khmer Rouge officials (see annex). Hanoi probably believes that, although these measures alone would not end the Khmer Rouge threat, they are critical to capping its growth potential and, over time, causing a steady decline in its influence. Moreover, Hanoi also probably calculates that no Cambodian government in the near future, including one dominated by the Khmer Rouge, is likely to pose a critical threat to its security interests. Even if the Khmer Rouge strikes out at Vietnam as it did between 1975 and 1978, Hanoi almost certainly feels confident of its ability to deal with such a threat. We believe once Vietnam completes its withdrawal, however, it would reintervene on a large scale in Cambodia only in extreme circumstances. Hanoi's new emphasis on economic development is heavily premised on international cooperation. <sup>6</sup> (S NF)

<sup>5</sup> The State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research believes that the pressures cited may have increased Hanoi's urgency in resolving the Cambodian problem, but that Vietnam still holds the objective of maintaining PRK dominance, although it will be prepared to accept some form of coalition with Sihanouk and other non-Communists. (S NF)

<sup>6</sup> The State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research doubts Hanoi would let a Khmer Rouge regime be reinstated in Phnom Penh, particularly one with continuing ties to Beijing. Hanoi's security interests will outweigh its concerns about international cooperation. (S NF)

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As a further guarantee, Hanoi hopes to stack the internal political odds against a resurgence of the Khmer Rouge. Vietnam wants to encourage a collaborative arrangement between its client, the PRK, and Prince Sihanouk's resistance group that together would constitute the dominant force in postoccupation Cambodian politics. Sihanouk, as well as Vietnamese and PRK officials, has alluded to the common ground among them that makes such an arrangement attractive and feasible. (S NF)

Despite discomfort with the Prince's egotism and unpredictability, Hanoi sees Sihanouk as a Khmer nationalist who—unlike the Khmer Rouge—harbors no inherent anti-Vietnamese bias. Moreover, both the PRK and Sihanouk view the Khmer Rouge—not Vietnam—as the greatest threat to Cambodia's survival.

[REDACTED] Both Vietnamese and Soviet diplomats have spoken approvingly of the already widespread collaboration between PRK and Sihanoukist troops—notwithstanding the negative impact it exerts on PRK discipline—because it bodes well for future cooperation. (S NF)

We believe Vietnam prefers to complete its withdrawal in the context of a broad political agreement that entails international guarantees and stringent diplomatic and military restrictions on the Khmer Rouge—a settlement that Hanoi believes would be more durable. At the same time, however, we believe Vietnam is prepared to withdraw its troops without an agreement. The increasingly credible prospect that it will do so has galvanized Prince Sihanouk, ASEAN, and others into accelerating diplomatic efforts that address, inter alia, Vietnam's concerns about the Khmer Rouge. (S NF)

**Vietnamese Troop Withdrawals.** Vietnamese forces in Cambodia, which numbered approximately 200,000 in early 1979, was reduced to about 120,000 to 130,000 by 1986. In late 1987, Vietnam withdrew up to 20,000 of its soldiers, leaving approximately 100,000 to 110,000 troops in Cambodia. (See table 2 and figure 2.) Hanoi recently announced that half of the 100,000 troops it claims are currently in country

would leave this year. We believe that a small lead element of several hundred troops from Vietnamese Headquarters in Phnom Penh pulled out in late June. Hanoi also announced in July that the troops remaining after this withdrawal—50,000 to 55,000 by our count—would be withdrawn by the end of March 1990. In our view, Hanoi is serious about ending its occupation of Cambodia, but at the same time it will leave behind a covert contingent of several thousand troops and intelligence operatives. We believe that some of the 300,000 or more Vietnamese civilians in Cambodia already have been integrated into PRK local militia units. In short, we believe that Vietnam will retain a residual presence sufficient to bolster local defense capabilities and to monitor the overall security situation, but not capable of mounting significant counterinsurgency operations. An important constraint on the size and nature of Vietnam's residual presence will be Hanoi's desire to avoid offering China reasons to challenge Vietnam's assertions that it has honored its withdrawal commitments.<sup>7</sup> (S NF)

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Tracking Hanoi's troop withdrawals has been difficult and monitoring future reductions is likely to be even more complex. In the past, Vietnam's highly publicized withdrawal ceremonies often involved troops discharged after completing a normal tour of duty who were then replaced surreptitiously by new recruits. Hanoi has shuffled subordinate units among commands and has used unit designations that complicate our strength assessments. In addition, the organization of Vietnamese infantry divisions is not standardized; manpower and equipment vary within and among units. About half of Vietnam's troops in Cambodia are assigned to joint Vietnamese-PRK groups. Information on the composition of these groups is limited, and the size of these units varies by region. The combination of infantry from both armies adds to the accounting problem. (S NF)

<sup>7</sup> The State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research does not believe that Hanoi has changed its withdrawal timetable, despite references to an earlier unilateral pullout. With one exception Hanoi has conditioned earlier withdrawal to an end to foreign support for the resistance, promising unconditional withdrawal only by the end of 1990. (S NF)

INR reserves judgment on the latest calculation of Vietnamese troop strengths in Cambodia because they differ significantly from previous Community estimates and should be analyzed further. (S NF)

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**Table 2**  
**PAVN Forces in Cambodia**

	Nondivisional	Divisional	Group	Total
<b>Total</b>	<b>39,010</b>	<b>51,570</b>	<b>10,210</b>	<b>100,790<sup>a</sup></b>
Front 719	7,020			7,020
Front 479	8,080	21,400	240	29,720
Front 579	3,580	10,460	3,550	17,590
Front 779	7,300	3,900	3,300	14,500
Front 979	5,630	15,810	3,120	24,560
Naval	4,700			4,700
Air	1,700			1,700
Marine	1,000			1,000

the overall figures used in the Estimate are presented as a range.

At present, Hanoi is scaling down the size of its units by not replacing troops that are being discharged and, in some cases, by withdrawing troops before their tour of duty is completed. Relatively few whole units are withdrawn intact, which further complicates our assessments. We will have a particularly hard time confirming the location and size of any Vietnamese contingents integrated into PRK units. (S NF)

#### **The Non-Communists: Ready or Not?**

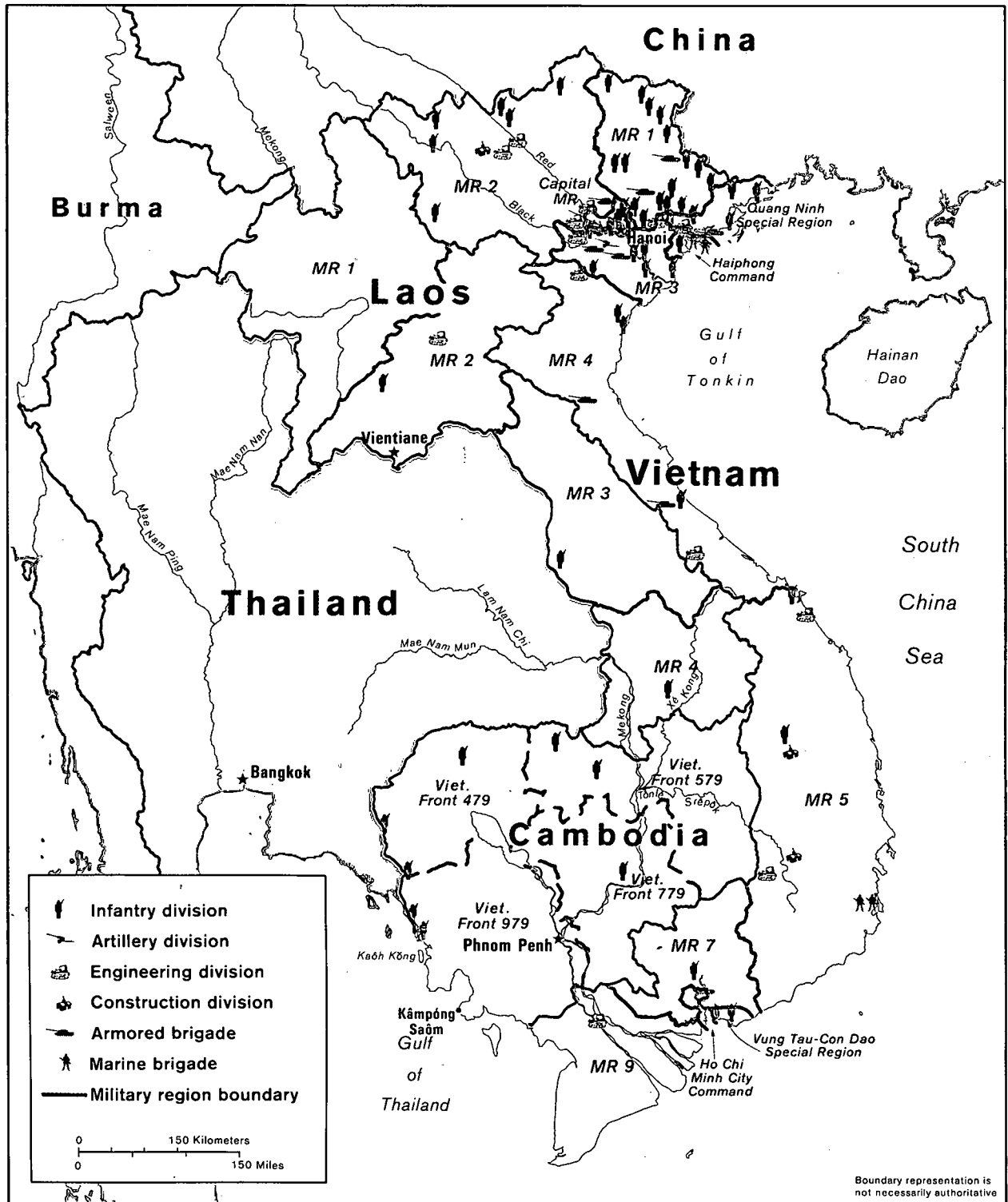
**The ANS: Growing, But a Long Way To Go.** Prince Sihanouk, who resigned in early July as president of the CGDK, is acting independently of the coalition in the search of a political solution. The Prince is motivated primarily by concern that:

- Time is limited to achieve a settlement that is acceptable to him.
- Thailand and China—the primary supporters of the anti-Vietnamese resistance—are motivated by political and security objectives that diverge in important respects from what he believes are Cambodia's best interests.

- The Khmer Rouge—now that Vietnamese troops are moving out—constitutes the most serious threat to Cambodia, and attention must be focused on preventing its return to power. (S NF)

Sihanouk's personal force, the ANS, has an estimated 12,000 armed troops—of which no more than 50 percent are operating inside Cambodia. The prospects are good that the ANS will grow to 15,000 before 1990. Recently, it has made some progress organizing politically inside Cambodia based on Sihanouk's charisma and his son Ranariddh's ability to keep factional tensions under control (see figure 1). A major constraint on the ANS's short-term growth prospects—shortages of supplies and weapons—will be eased this year by Singapore's decision to increase support for the group. Even with improved logistic support and modest growth, however, the ANS is unlikely either to become a formidable military force or to close the gap substantially in capabilities with the Khmer Rouge. (S NF)

Figure 2  
Vietnamese Ground Forces in Indochina, August 1988



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*The Sihanouk-Hun Sen Talks: Beginning of a Settlement?*

*Sihanouk held two meetings with Hun Sen, the Foreign Minister of the PRK, in late 1987 and early 1988. The two agreed that the Cambodian conflict should be settled politically by the Cambodian people themselves through negotiations "by all parties to the conflict." Specifically, the two agreed on a future multiparty government, the holding of elections under international supervision (not necessarily control), a neutral international stance for Cambodia, and an international conference to guarantee a settlement. (S NF)*

*The principal areas of disagreement included Sihanouk's demand for the dissolution of the PRK and the formation of a coalition government before holding elections, the establishment of an international peacekeeping force, and an early withdrawal timetable for Vietnamese troops. Hun Sen demanded the "dismantlement" of the Khmer Rouge, which Sihanouk opposed as unrealistic because China would not accept it. (S NF)*

*In July 1988, Sihanouk resigned as president of the Cambodian resistance coalition, but arranged to be present in Indonesia later in the month during an informal meeting among representatives of each of the four Khmer factions, Vietnam, Laos, and ASEAN. In a meeting with the four Khmer representatives held outside the framework of the larger informal meeting, the Prince modified his demand for dissolution of the PRK prior to elections. He proposed instead the creation of an interim government by expanding PRK administrative structures to include equal representation from all four factions. The new quadripartite government would be responsible for organizing elections. Citing both PRK and Khmer Rouge*

*opposition, Sihanouk also dropped mention of an international peacekeeping force, but allowed for an undefined security role for a proposed international control commission that would be charged primarily with supervising Vietnamese troop withdrawals and Cambodian elections. Vietnam, meanwhile, announced just before the Indonesia meeting that it had moved up its final troop withdrawal deadline from late 1990, to early 1990 provided that certain conditions are met. (S NF)*

*A statement approved by the participants in the informal meeting noted agreement that the two key issues in a diplomatic settlement, which are interlinked, are the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces and the prevention of the recurrence of genocidal policies and practices. The only concrete agreement emerging from the meeting was to establish a working group to discuss specific proposals and to report recommendations on a larger meeting by December. (S NF)*

*Sihanouk did not participate in the Indonesia meeting. His presence on the fringes, however, along with attendance at the meeting by Vietnamese, Khmer, and ASEAN representatives, marked the first time most of the principal players in the Cambodian conflict had addressed the key issues in a single venue. (S NF)*

*Despite the modest tangible results of the meeting and the reluctance of the Khmer Rouge to participate in the proceedings, the Indonesia meeting provided new impetus to diplomatic efforts, including a prospective third round of talks between Sihanouk and Hun Sen. (S NF)*



Sihanouk's international reputation and acceptability to all major players—despite the ANS's military shortcomings—make him an essential ingredient of any agreement. Hanoi and its PRK clients are willing to accept a coalition government headed by Sihanouk; so too are China, ASEAN, and the United States, although there are differences over the role he should play. His overall impact will depend on how much power he actually wields and the length of time he remains in office. (S NF)

**The KPNLF: Stumbling Into Insignificance.** Sihanouk's non-Communist coalition partner, Son Sann's Khmer People's National Liberation Front, has forfeited most of the leverage once available to it as a result of debilitating factional strife over the past three years. The persistent internal leadership problems paralyze KPNLF command and control, while the organization continues to suffer from supply shortages, steady erosion of morale and discipline, and widespread corruption. (S NF)

General Sak Sutsakhan, military commander of the KPNLF forces, has repeatedly attempted to reverse the downward spiral without success. Since last March, General Sak has attempted to implement critically needed reforms, including a greater display of personal leadership, reorganization of the Front, and the removal of several officers with questionable loyalty. The initiative is floundering—as have past attempts at reform—and it has provoked another round of infighting among senior officers whose loyalties are split between General Sak and President Son Sann. (S NF)

KPNLF military strength has dropped from a high of 15,000 in 1985 to fewer than 5,000 troops today (see figure 1). Unless leadership problems are resolved, it will not be a military factor, and its political significance will be greatly reduced. (S NF)

#### **The Khmer Rouge: Strengths and Potential Weaknesses**

The militarily most potent of the Cambodian factions, the Khmer Rouge, has a strength of 30,000 to 40,000, of which about half are inside Cambodia at any given time (see figure 1). Though these forces are no match for the Vietnamese, in the event of a Vietnamese withdrawal they will be a destabilizing factor. (S NF)

#### ***Has the Khmer Rouge Changed Its Stripes?***

*Although the Khmer Rouge has tried to improve its image in recent years by renouncing Communism and by lowering the profile of its most notorious leader, Pol Pot, we have no reason to believe that the Khmer Rouge has abandoned its quest for sole power in Cambodia or its radical ideology that led to the deaths of between 2 and 3 million Khmer in the late 1970s. The current leadership is virtually the same group that founded the brutal Democratic Kampuchea regime in 1975. Pol Pot, despite his ostensible retirement in 1985, still plays an integral role in Khmer Rouge military operations and his inner circle that includes Ta Mok, Ieng Sary, Son Sen, Nuon Chea, and point man Khieu Samphan is intact. While reporting from Khmer Rouge-controlled areas is sketchy, the bulk of evidence indicates that the Khmer Rouge is both totalitarian and oppressive. It has developed its support base inside Cambodia somewhat in recent years, but memories of its brutality are a major impediment to its ability to attract popular support. (S NF)*

The Khmer Rouge is focusing most of its efforts on an expanded political and psychological campaign to dismantle systematically the PRK administrative apparatus in rural areas and to replace it with one under Khmer Rouge control. In addition, the Khmer Rouge is stockpiling military equipment and supplies, while bringing increasing military pressure against PRK forces and non-Communist resistance factions. Several PRK border garrisons fell to Khmer Rouge attacks in June and July 1988, and their recent gains astride non-Communist infiltration corridors give the group the ability to cut off non-Communist supply lines. Khmer Rouge attacks against the non-Communist resistance apparently have increased since March. (S NF)

The recent Khmer Rouge attacks emphasize the group's military prowess and probably are intended to win political leverage as talks proceed toward finding

a diplomatic settlement. However, the aggressive policy also risks stiffening domestic and international opposition to the organization. (S NF)

We believe that the Khmer Rouge leadership remains intent on regaining sole power in Phnom Penh and that this determination almost ensures that it will break at some point with the other Khmer factions. The group appears to have two basic options over the near term:

- Participate in a formal agreement in order to achieve some legal standing that would allow it opportunities to undermine, from within, a post-Vietnamese-withdrawal government. This option probably would dictate relative military restraint on the part of the Khmer Rouge, at least until the Vietnamese completed their pullout.
- Attempt to sabotage the present negotiations or, failing that, break off entirely its own participation in them before a formal agreement. This would entail an openly hostile Khmer Rouge stance from the outset toward any government succeeding the present PRK regime. (S NF)

Despite the apparent disparity in strength between the Khmer Rouge and the other Khmer factions, its prospects for returning to power in postsettlement Cambodia are by no means ensured:

- It has been able to replace its combat losses in recent years, but not expand its size.
- There are reported problems of morale and discipline among some Khmer Rouge forces, and substantial numbers might desert if presented the opportunity.
- Its forces depend on China for combat materiel and other supplies and—despite vigorous stockpiling of late—would be significantly weakened over the longer term by a shutdown of this external support.
- Much of its domestic support derives from its association with Sihanouk and its efforts to force a Vietnamese withdrawal. It stands to lose the luxury of this legitimacy and support if it undermines an agreement or, in the extreme, if it engages in a

protracted guerrilla war against the new government.

Although there is no evidence of major power struggles within the organization, present difficulties over policy could prove divisive over the longer term. (S NF)

#### **The Roles of Thailand and ASEAN**

Thailand's role is crucial in any potential agreement because it is the conduit for Chinese supplies to the Khmer Rouge and is the provider of sanctuaries to the resistance forces. The ASEAN countries have thus far been united in their support for Thailand as the frontline state, though Indonesia and Malaysia, who are more concerned about China's regional influence than Vietnam's, have pushed for a negotiated settlement. Bangkok has thus far been adamant about Vietnam's total withdrawal from Cambodia and, until recently, has taken a highly skeptical view of Hanoi's intentions. However, Thailand has hailed Vietnam's announcement of troop withdrawals, and Foreign Minister Sitthi—a hard liner regarding Vietnam—held cordial talks with his Vietnamese counterpart, and has spoken much more optimistically about the prospects for progress on the Cambodia question. For the first time Bangkok also has displayed willingness to discuss ways of dealing with the Khmer Rouge issue. (S NF)

The Thai are nervous about Vietnamese intentions, however, and are unlikely to do anything regarding the Khmer Rouge unless there is reciprocal movement by Vietnam. Because the Khmer Rouge is the only major source of military pressure on Vietnam, Thai officials argue that Bangkok's ability to impose limitations on the guerrillas is an important bargaining chip that must not be played prematurely. Before cutting off aid to the Khmer Rouge, Bangkok would have to be convinced that the Vietnamese withdrawal will be completed and that Vietnam would be discouraged from returning to Cambodia. Thailand also wants to ensure that its role in an agreement does not unduly compromise Chinese interests or damage growing bilateral ties. (S NF)

ASEAN's overall influence will quite likely be relatively limited. It will have an important say in structuring the negotiations that lead to the shape of a new Cambodian regime but—apart from Thailand—is in

no position to take independent steps to meet either Vietnamese or international concerns for preventing a Khmer Rouge return to power. (S NF)

**Other Key Players: China and the Soviet Union**

China's major interest has been to contain Soviet and Vietnamese influence in the region. Beijing's strategy has been to maximize political and military pressure on Vietnam through a number of means: materiel supplies to the Khmer Rouge and the non-Communist resistance, military operations along Vietnam's northern frontier, strong support for Thailand's hardline position demanding Vietnamese withdrawal, and continued insistence that Moscow use its influence with Hanoi to effect a withdrawal of PAVN troops as a precondition for normalization of Sino-Soviet relations. China has used international condemnation of Vietnam's invasion to buttress its position but, as Vietnam withdraws, Beijing can no longer claim the moral high ground and risks being perceived as the chief obstacle to a settlement because of its support for the Khmer Rouge. Recognition of this danger apparently inspired China's 1 July Foreign Ministry statement that, though consistent with past positions, contained new elements addressing the Khmer Rouge problem. Chinese diplomats have indicated privately that their policy is evolving toward a more flexible stand. In spite of public denials, China has privately shown some willingness to give top Khmer Rouge leaders safehaven as part of a settlement and might be induced to cut off its logistic support for those left along the Thai-Cambodian border. While China will attempt to place major limitations on Vietnam's role in a postsettlement Cambodia, firm guarantees of a Vietnamese withdrawal will probably be sufficient for Beijing to sign on to a Cambodian accord. (S NF)

Gorbachev has stressed to the Vietnamese his interest in resolving the Cambodian conflict, to improve relations with China, reduce the cost of Soviet military assistance to Vietnam, and enhance Soviet prestige as a peacemaker. The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, in our view, has added some impetus to the existing momentum toward a Cambodian agreement. (S NF)

We have no evidence that the Soviets have taken drastic steps, such as reducing aid, to try to force Hanoi to seek a settlement, but residual nervousness

exists in Hanoi that Moscow could sell Hanoi's interests short for the sake of improved Sino-Soviet relations. Moscow should be able to pressure Hanoi up to a point without risking its military stake in Vietnam. Hanoi's dependence on Moscow goes far beyond just Soviet support on Cambodia. We believe that Vietnam's moves toward an agreement in Cambodia currently stem primarily from Hanoi's own interests, but Soviet pressure may have been instrumental in moving the process forward. Moscow's attempts to play up Vietnamese and Soviet flexibility on Cambodia—to deflect criticism of its economic and military support for the Vietnamese occupation—have also put pressure on Beijing to be more flexible to avoid appearing as obstructionist. (S NF)

The increased flexibility shown by both Moscow and Beijing produced a recent agreement to hold a round of discussions in Beijing that, for the first time, would focus exclusively on the Cambodia issue. While the ability of both sides to influence their respective allies has limitations, any joint approaches or reciprocal actions the two might agree on could profoundly affect the course of negotiations. (S NF)

**The Most Likely Outcomes**

The prospects for an agreement in Cambodia are better now than at any time in the past decade, and we believe one is highly likely by early 1990. We envision as the most likely outcomes either a coalition government comprised of all four Cambodian factions and headed by Prince Sihanouk, or one in which Sihanouk and the PRK establish a provisional government without the Khmer Rouge. (S NF)

**A Four-Party Coalition.** In a four-party coalition, the most important provisions—and ones most difficult to predict—would be those regarding the Khmer Rouge. At a minimum, we would expect Hanoi to demand that the most objectionable Khmer Rouge leaders, including Pol Pot and his inner circle, be exiled, and that China and Thailand cut off supplies to the group. Other guarantees that may apply range from disarming all Khmer Rouge forces, to establishing an international presence to lend stability to the coalition for

the first few years. The advantages of such an outcome include:

- Sihanouk has an opportunity to establish legitimate authority.
- All parties get something: Vietnam gets out of Cambodia in a face-saving manner; China and Thailand get a political settlement that includes Vietnamese withdrawal; the Cambodian resistance factions get to participate in the government.
- International acceptance and support probably can be achieved. (S NF)

Nevertheless, there are some potential liabilities in such an outcome, including:

- The Khmer Rouge has a good chance of subverting the coalition.
- Political instability will continue as the various factions contend for power.
- As the situation in Cambodia remains unstable, it will invite continuing external—Thai, Vietnamese, and Chinese—meddling. (S NF)

***Sihanouk and the PRK Come to Terms.*** If negotiations aimed at reconciling all four Cambodian factions break down, we believe an agreement between Sihanouk and the PRK is the most likely outcome.<sup>8</sup> We believe that Son Sann probably would play a supporting role in this scenario; Sihanouk probably would retain the backing of Western and ASEAN countries; and Vietnam would stay in the background to prop up the PRK faction. If the agreement held and the new government won international recognition, Thailand would be pressured to cut off aid and safehaven for the Khmer Rouge, though we believe that it would hesitate to do so. Likewise, we believe that Beijing would be unlikely to sacrifice improved relations with ASEAN, particularly Thailand, by refusing to compromise on agreement modalities and

<sup>8</sup> *The State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research believes that Sihanouk and Hun Sen are more likely to reach an accommodation before any substantive four-party negotiations occur, let alone reach agreement. The relationship that has developed between Bangkok and Beijing makes it unlikely that Bangkok would accept a solution the Chinese oppose.* (S NF)

becoming isolated with the Khmer Rouge. The chief advantages of such an outcome include:

- The Khmer Rouge will have to continue its struggle, without the cloak of legitimacy provided by its participation in an internationally approved government.
- Those countries that give material, political, and moral support to the coalition government are not tarnished by having to support the Khmer Rouge as well. (S NF)

The chief disadvantages of such an outcome include:

- The Khmer Rouge, though weakened, will feel compelled to resume an armed struggle against the coalition government.
- A wedge might be driven between China and Thailand on the one hand, and the rest of the ASEAN countries on the other, should Beijing and Bangkok continue to support the Khmer Rouge.
- Thailand will face a difficult problem both in handling the camps on its soil that are controlled by the Khmer Rouge, and in dealing with Chinese pressure to continue covert support for the group.
- Prospects for a Sino-Vietnamese and Sino-Soviet rapprochement could be damaged. (S NF)

#### **Less Likely Alternatives**

***The Vietnamese Withdraw Leaving the PRK in Phnom Penh.***<sup>9</sup> If all negotiations fail, Vietnam would withdraw unilaterally, banking on a moderately strengthened PRK, possibly joined in a de facto alliance with the non-Communist resistance, to contain the Khmer Rouge. This withdrawal would allow Vietnam to declare that it had met the international condition for the resumption of favorable economic and trade ties. Although most of the advantages in such an outcome would seem to flow to the Vietnamese, there are broader adverse implications:

- In effect, there would be no early end to the struggle inside Cambodia, and the chances of a Khmer Rouge return to power would improve.
- More than 250,000 Khmer refugees would remain in limbo in Thailand.

<sup>9</sup> Under any reasonable outcome in Cambodia, it is highly likely that Vietnam would find a way to keep a residual force in Cambodia. Hanoi would seek to protect its own security and to bolster the morale of the PRK share of whatever government runs the country. (S NF)

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- The PRK's international legitimacy probably would increase with the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops, and those countries that give support to the resistance would be vulnerable to charges of undermining regional stability.
- China's participation would be absent, and an opportunity for partial Sino-Vietnamese, as well as Sino-Soviet, rapprochement would be delayed. (S NF)

**Hanoi Suspends Its Withdrawal.** Although less likely, it is also possible that Hanoi could cut short its troop withdrawal if the Khmer Rouge were to make significant military gains over the next year or two. Under this scenario, Hanoi would maintain a substantial number of mainforce units east of the Mekong River. As a result of this outcome:

- There would be a de facto partition of Cambodia, with Vietnam controlling the eastern provinces and the Khmer factions battling west of the river. Prospects for an early diplomatic settlement involving genuine Khmer reconciliation would be dashed.
- Vietnam's hopes for dramatically increased economic and political intercourse with the West and Japan would be sidetracked, although some countries would continue to expand their contacts.
- Vietnamese relations with the Soviets could be strained, though Moscow probably would not reduce or cut off military and economic assistance in order to preserve its military facilities in Vietnam.
- Sino-Vietnamese relations would remain hostile; Cambodia and the Spratly Islands could be flashpoints for further military clashes.
- Thailand privately might accept a partition as long as Vietnam's forces remained distant and the Khmer refugees were repatriated. Overall ASEAN resolve to press Hanoi would continue to weaken despite Vietnam's violation of its pledge to withdraw. (S NF)

#### **Challenges and Uncertainties in a Postagreement Environment**

An agreement in itself will not solve Cambodia's problems, nor will it necessarily produce an acceptable long-term outcome. Any government in Phnom

Penh over the short term will be inherently unstable. For example:

- In a four-party coalition government, the two strongest components—at least in the beginning—will be rival Communist factions—the PRK and the Khmer Rouge—whose competition for supremacy could seriously threaten the non-Communist elements.
- In a government that excludes the Khmer Rouge, the non-Communists have few equities to bring to bear at the outset, and their long-term survival would depend heavily on their ability to avoid infighting and to build informal alliances. (S NF)

An agreement is also only the first step in returning peace and order to Cambodia. The new government will immediately face a number of serious challenges, including:

- Containing a resurgence of the Khmer Rouge, especially in the countryside. How will the new government counter the Khmer Rouge's grassroots organizing abilities?
- Defining Prince Sihanouk's role. Will he wield real power and influence? Will he be an effective ruler capable of unifying the country?
- Setting up and staffing the government. How will the power and positions be distributed?
- Formulating policy. How will policy decisions be made and implemented?
- Establishing a unified armed forces. How will existing forces be integrated and who will command them? (S NF)

Given these difficulties, we believe that the outlook for Cambodia in the first few years following any agreement will be highly uncertain. There will be a serious potential for civil war, fragmentation of the country, renewed foreign involvement, and a major resurgence by the Khmer Rouge. International oversight will be critical in detecting early signs of trouble and in preventing or alleviating the worst excesses that might otherwise occur. (S NF)

#### **International Ramifications**

The actual course of events in Cambodia over the next few years, particularly the outcome of any agreement, has significant international implications. The full

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ramifications cannot be known with any certainty, but we can outline some of the more important potential consequences. They include:

- *ASEAN.* Divisions within ASEAN could become more pronounced without the unifying influence of the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. The varying ASEAN reactions to the informal meetings held in Jakarta demonstrate how close to the surface intra-ASEAN tensions already have become. Indonesia, for example, will likely become more assertive in seeking to exercise leadership, particularly in expanding ties to Indochina. In addition, ASEAN increasingly will focus on economic issues and problems. Trade frictions are likely to arise as the member countries—who are already competing with each other—seek to expand their markets.
- *Vietnam.* Vietnam's international isolation is likely to be eased, and its prospects for trade will be improved. However, a settlement will not be a panacea for Vietnam's domestic ills.
- *China.* The consequences for China will depend on Beijing's role in an agreement. If Beijing's actions encourage a resolution and if China helps to control the Khmer Rouge, its standing in the region is likely to be enhanced. Beijing may also gain political capital by stressing that its continued political pressure on Hanoi and Moscow were instrumental in bringing about an agreement. However, China's standing could suffer if it is isolated with the Khmer Rouge or if it is perceived as blocking an agreement.
- *Soviet Union.* Moscow will try to capitalize on a settlement to improve its relations—especially economic—with the ASEAN countries. The credibility of Gorbachev's commitment to resolving regional conflicts would be enhanced.
- *Sino-Soviet Relations.* An agreement could pave the way for a normalization of Sino-Soviet relations.
- An agreement could contribute to the resolution of the Cambodian refugee problem.

#### **Implications for the United States**

US interests will be variously affected depending on the precise nature of the outcome in Cambodia.

Nevertheless, we can point in general terms to a number of important potential implications. Among these are:

- Khmer Rouge participation in a coalition government would make US support and assistance difficult to justify. It might make some gains, possibly substantial ones, that could alienate many Americans and prompt considerable criticism of US actions. Its exclusion from a settlement could strain US relations with Thailand and China. Beijing's unwillingness to cut off military assistance to its client could lead to serious frictions and confrontation. Thailand might well side with China, further exacerbating tensions.
- In the event negotiations break down, and Vietnam withdraws unilaterally, a number of US friends and allies might accept Hanoi's client, the PRK, as a fait accompli in Cambodia. Indonesia and Malaysia, for example, appear willing to accept the legitimacy of such a regime and recognize it after a Vietnamese withdrawal. Hanoi is also likely to break out of both its regional and international isolation in such an event. Washington would be forced to argue against PRK claims of legitimacy and would be subjected to criticism if it chose to continue providing support to the non-Communist resistance.
- The non-Communists could be the biggest losers in a settlement. They will be militarily impotent and politically vulnerable after an agreement. They might serve largely as window dressing for a regime dominated by Communists. Sihanouk himself, given his dearth of military forces and able civilian administrators, is likely to feel pressures to side with the PRK and even connive with Hanoi at times to maintain his leading role. Vietnam most likely hopes for such an outcome, and would undoubtedly gain much from such an arrangement. Only China and the Khmer Rouge are likely to object loudly. Washington could quickly become isolated and have its choices narrowed considerably.
- A settlement could contribute to a reappraisal in the region of the respective roles of the United States, China, the USSR, Japan, and others, to the possible detriment of US interests. Regional perceptions of a less threatening USSR could also alter attitudes

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toward Soviet involvement in the region—on such issues as the US bases in the Philippines and nuclear-free zones—in ways unfavorable to the United States. Although a political solution of the Cambodia problem would ease Thai concerns by removing a major source of regional instability, we believe Thailand would look to the United States to help deal with the uncertainties that a settlement would generate. The Thai would probably seek renewed and strengthened assurances of support from their US ally as well as increased military assistance to counter unease over any deals reached with the Vietnamese.

- Over the longer term, however, we believe Thailand's relations with China have roots deep enough to outlive the Cambodia problem. Bangkok probably would also work to shore up aspects of the China relationship unrelated to Cambodia—such as fledgling economic ties—to ensure Beijing's interest in continued cooperation.
- An active Japanese role in the settlement process will improve Tokyo's political image and increase its economic access to a postsettlement Indochina. The French also hope to expand their economic and political influence. (S NF)

# Annex

## Who Are the Khmer Rouge?

### **Pol Pot**

#### **Director, Academy of National Defense**

Pol Pot led the inner circle of Khmer Rouge leaders that ruled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979 and is considered to be principal director of the Khmer Rouge's genocidal regime. He no longer holds any prominent titles and keeps out of the public's view to decrease international criticism of Khmer Rouge activities. But, he remains the dominant Khmer Rouge military official. (S NF)

Pol Pot is a clever and capable revolutionary; he appears to be a blend of ideologue, fanatic, and opportunist. Widely considered an organizational expert rather than an intellectual, he has been willing to leave the limelight to others and to occupy himself with the work of organizing the party and war efforts. Pol Pot reportedly advocates the Khmer Rouge's absolute return to power with Prince Sihanouk as a figurehead. (C NF)

Pol Pot was born about 1925 in Kampong Thum Province. He received his early education in a Buddhist monastery and local technical schools. He went to France in 1949 to attend a vocational school, but his scholarship was cancelled because of his leftist political activities. Upon his return to Cambodia in 1953, Pol Pot moved to Phnom Penh to work as a teacher and journalist. Active in leftist journalist circles, his activities led the government to arrest him in 1956. By 1957, he apparently became a member of the directing committee of the Cambodian Communist Party (CCP), and in 1960, he was elected to the standing committee of the CCP's central committee. A year later he was elected deputy secretary of the party; in 1963, he was elevated to party secretary. (C NF)

From 1963 to 1975, Pol Pot spent most of his time in the Cambodian countryside where he served in a number of positions. He was the chairman of the military committee of the party central committee

from 1970 to at least 1976. In April 1976, he was elected prime minister, but later took a leave of absence and was not heard from until September 1977 when he was identified as secretary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea's central committee. After Vietnamese troops successfully invaded Cambodia and installed the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) regime in January 1979, Pol Pot fled the country. (C NF)

Since January 1979, Pol Pot has been located primarily along the Cambodian-Thai border where he has directed guerrilla operations against the PRK-Vietnamese forces. After Khieu Samphan replaced him as prime minister of Democratic Kampuchea in 1979, Pol Pot became chairman of the Supreme Commission and commander in chief of the National Army of Democratic Kampuchea. Pol Pot remained commander of the military forces until August 1985 when the supreme military council was abolished and he was appointed head of the Academy of National Defense. (C NF)

Pol Pot reportedly suffers from high blood pressure and malaria, but rumors of serious health problems are unsubstantiated. (C NF)

### **Khieu Samphan**

#### **Vice President, Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea**

Khieu Samphan serves as vice president of the anti-Vietnamese Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK). He also serves as the Khmer Rouge's foreign minister, although he shares control with Pol Pot and other leaders. (S NF)

Khieu has attempted to cultivate a moderate and pragmatic public image. He has acknowledged that the genocidal practices of the Khmer Rouge during 1975-79 were wrong, and maintains that the Khmer Rouge now supports a democratic government in Cambodia after Vietnam withdraws its troops. (S NF)



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Khieu was born on 27 July 1931. Some Cambodians and foreign officials have characterized him as impressive and intellectual. Others, however, say he is a man of only mediocre intelligence—quiet, passive, and definitely without leadership traits. (C NF)

Khieu received a doctorate in economics from the University of Paris in 1959, and some of the economic policies and programs enacted later by the Khmer Rouge appeared in theory in his doctoral dissertation. After his return to Cambodia, Khieu was elected to the National Assembly and appointed to the Cabinet in 1962. Five years later he fled Phnom Penh and joined the insurgency, having been publicly labeled as one of Cambodia's five top Communists. From 1967 until Democratic Kampuchea was established in 1976, he held a variety of posts with the Khmer Rouge forces, including that of commander in chief of the Cambodian People's National Liberation Armed Forces. He served as chairman of the Khmer Rouge's three-man State Presidium and as chief of state, largely a ceremonial role, during 1976-79. In August 1985, he reportedly replaced Pol Pot as formal head of the Khmer Rouge. (C NF)

**Ieng Sary**  
**Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs**

One of the most influential Khmer Rouge leaders, Sary heads the Khmer Rouge force headquartered in Thailand, south of Aranyaprathet along the Thai-Cambodian border, and serves as the Khmer Rouge's link to China. He was invited to Beijing earlier this year to discuss Chinese concerns over the lack of military progress made by the Khmer Rouge in the past nine years, but we do not know whether he actually attended these meetings. (S NF)

While the Khmer Rouge regime held power in Phnom Penh, Sary defended its official policies of self-reliance and self-imposed isolation. Since that time, in an effort to mollify critics of his government's past policies, Sary has admitted that excesses—especially human rights violations—did occur while his government ruled in Phnom Penh. He contends, however, that they were not organized by the Khmer Rouge leadership, but were a result of actions by rank-and-file Vietnamese infiltrators. (C NF)

Sary was born on 1 January 1930 in either the Cambodian province of Prey Veng, or more likely, Tay Ninh Province, South Vietnam. In the early 1950s he studied in France with Pol Pot and joined the Communist party there. After his return to Cambodia in the late 1950s, he became a teacher and continued his involvement in Communist activities. In 1963 he dropped from sight after one of Chief of State Sihanouk's more serious confrontations with the left. His subsequent activities are largely a mystery until 1971, when he appeared in Beijing as a special envoy from the "liberated" area of Cambodia. In this capacity, he accompanied Sihanouk on several trips abroad in 1972 and 1973. In November 1973 he returned to Cambodia where he became special adviser to the office of the deputy prime minister. In 1974 he visited North Vietnam, China, and the "liberated zones" of Laos and South Vietnam. Sary escaped from Phnom Penh before it was occupied by the Vietnamese in January 1979. (C NF)

**Son Sen**  
**Vice President of Democratic Kampuchea**  
**Supreme Commander, Democratic Kampuchea**  
**National Army**

Son Sen assumed his current position following the retirement of the notorious Pol Pot. Sen, who studied in Paris with Pol Pot in the 1950s, reportedly has close ties to him and served as overseer of the Khmer Rouge's security apparatus during Pol Pot's regime. Sen, who reportedly represents the "moderates" within the Khmer Rouge, has been its representative on the Coordinating Committee for National Defense under the CGDK since its inception in 1982. (C NF)

Sen, an experienced field commander, has been described by fellow CGDK members as an effective leader and is considered by Prince Sihanouk to be one of the best Cambodian military experts. He has met with Prince Sihanouk to discuss military strategy and to resolve problems between the two groups. Sen also

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supported other coalition leaders efforts to convince Sihanouk to reverse his resignation in June 1987 and again in February 1988. (C NF)

Born in South Vietnam about 1930, Sen received the equivalent of a bachelor's degree in education in Paris. After returning to Cambodia in 1956 he was a primary schoolteacher and political agitator until he went underground in 1963 to escape arrest. Along with many other Khmer Rouge officials, he was considered dead until he emerged in the early 1970s. From 1970 to 1975 Sen served as chief of the now defunct People's National Liberation Armed Forces of Cambodia, and as a Politburo member until the Communist Party of Kampuchea was dissolved in December 1981. He was secretary general of the Supreme Commission of the Democratic Kampuchean Army from December 1979 until it was abolished in August 1985. He also served as deputy prime minister in charge of national defense for the Khmer Rouge from August 1975 until his recent promotion. (C NF)

#### **Ta Mok**

##### **Vice Chairman, Chief of General Staff, National Army of Democratic Kampuchea**

Associated with Pol Pot since at least the early 1960s, Ta (Elder) Mok played a crucial role in consolidating Pol Pot's power in the regional commands during the purges of the 1970s. Although Mok's overall health has suffered from his loss of a leg in a landmine explosion in 1983, he continues to exert significant influence in Khmer Rouge affairs. (S NF)

According to several accounts, Mok is a capable, experienced military leader who elicits both fear and respect from his subordinates. Some foreign military officials describe him as a charismatic commander who is well known for spending considerable time with the troops. As a member of the Southwest Party Committee, he helped purge the Khmer Viet Minh during 1971-73. In 1973, Mok purged, and then succeeded the deputy secretary of the Southwest Region. He subsequently purged his predecessor's associates throughout 1974-75, and when the region was split in 1975, Mok was named secretary of the region that retained the Southwest name. From 1975 until 1979, Mok led purges of each of the East, West,

and Northwest Regions, and named himself secretary of each area. He was appointed to his current positions in December 1979, and continues to command Khmer Rouge forces in the Northern Region bordering Thailand. (S NF)

Mok, whose real name is Choeun, is in his late fifties or early sixties. The "Ta Mok" alias came from the Ta Mok Elementary School in Phnom Penh, where Mok has been a teacher. Mok has used several other aliases, including Chhit Choeun, Nguon Kang, Thieun Chhith, and Eaik Choeun. (C NF)

#### **Thiounn Prasith**

##### **Permanent Representative to the United Nations**

Thiounn Prasith has been a prominent spokesman for the Khmer Rouge. Prasith attributes Cambodia's ills to the Vietnamese, including the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge. He has tried to approach US officials to express appreciation for Washington's position concerning the Vietnamese invasion of his country. (S NF NC)

Prasith was born on 3 February 1930 into a family with palace ties. Like many Khmer Rouge members, he was educated in France. Deeply involved in underground activities in both France and Cambodia, he joined Prince Sihanouk's front organization when Sihanouk was ousted as Chief of State in 1970. Prasith was based in Beijing until the Communist victory in Cambodia in 1975. (C NF)

Prasith has three brothers who have also been associated with the Khmer Rouge. (C NF)

#### **Nuon Chea**

##### **Chairman, Standing Committee of the Democratic Kampuchean People's Representative Assembly**

Nuon Chea is one of the three top leaders of Democratic Kampuchea. A shadowy figure with close ties to Pol Pot, he is rumored to be one of the top contenders to succeed Pol Pot, but he has not been seen in several years. Since his 1979 ouster from Cambodia, Chea reportedly has been headquartered along the southern Thai-Cambodian border with Pol Pot. (S NF)

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Born about 1927, Chea is one of the few Khmer Rouge leaders with a higher education; he has been described as a hard liner on most issues. Chea studied law at Thammasat University in Bangkok in the early 1940s. At that time he joined the Communist Party of Thailand and later transferred to the Communist Party of Indochina. In 1955, Chea (then known as Long Reth) was responsible for organizing a national workers association; the effort ultimately failed because of alleged government repression. In 1960, Chea was elected deputy secretary general of the then new Communist Party of Cambodia. His prominence in the party was first acknowledged officially in March 1972, when he was identified as a vice chairman of the High Command of the National Liberation Armed Forces, and as chief of its political department. Chea became a member of the People's Representative Assembly when it was established in

March 1976. In September of that same year, Chea was named acting prime minister while Pol Pot was on leave for health reasons. In September 1977, he was named deputy secretary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea Central Committee and was Pol Pot's deputy. Chea was confirmed as Chairman of the Standing Committee of the People's Representative Assembly at a special congress in December 1979. (C NF)

Although Chea rarely travels outside of Cambodia, in June 1975, he traveled with Pol Pot and Foreign Minister Ieng Sary to Vietnam for border discussions. He also led a Khmer Rouge delegation to North Korea and China in September 1978. (C NF)

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