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**Seeing Red: American Foreign Policy
Towards Vietnam and the Khmer Rouge, 1975 to 1982**

Brenda Fewster

**A Thesis
in
The Department
of
History**

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
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Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

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ABSTRACT**Seeing Red: American Foreign Policy
Towards Vietnam and the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1982****Brenda Fewster**

Between 1979 and 1982 the US supported the Khmer Rouge in the refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border, in the Security Council of the United Nations, and in behind-closed-doors discussions seeking to ensure a place for the Khmer Rouge (as an armed force) in a coalition government. The US supported the Khmer Rouge as a result of a confluence of strategic, trade, and oil interests in and around the South China Sea. In sharp contrast to the diplomatic, financial, and political support the US gave the Khmer Rouge between 1979 and 1982, Washington had made remarkable and promising strides towards providing aid, and establishing trade and diplomatic relations with Vietnam between 1975 and 1978. During this time, a constellation of pro-Vietnam American business interests, Christian- and Jewish-based organizations, and peace advocates backed liberal Congressional proponents of US-Vietnamese rapprochement. Success appeared imminent on two important occasions between 1975 and 1978, but prospects for US-Vietnamese rapprochement were quashed by January 1979 when Vietnamese forces invaded and occupied Cambodia, and the US normalized relations with China. Washington had before it two compelling geopolitical poles—Peking and Hanoi. In choosing Peking, Washington sidelined Peking's enemy, Hanoi, and to this end, supported Hanoi's other enemy, the Khmer Rouge.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|------------------|---|
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| AFSC | American Friends Service Committee |
| ANZUS | Australia, New Zealand, and the United States |
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| CGDK | Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea |
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency |
| COMECON | Council for Mutual Economic Aid |
| CRS | Catholic Relief Services |
| CWS | Church World Services |
| DK | Democratic Kampuchea |
| ECAFE | United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East |
| EEC | European Economic Community |
| EIU | Economist Intelligence Unit |
| FEER | Far Eastern Economic Review |
| FUNCINPEC | Front uni national pour un Cambodge indépendant, neutre, pacifique et coopératif (National Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia) |
| GNP | Gross National Product |
| ICK | International Conference on Kampuchea |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| IRS | Internal Revenue Service |
| KPNLF | Khmer People's National Liberation Front |
| KR | Khmer Rouge |
| MIA | Missing in Action |
| NAM | Non-Aligned Movement |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NCR | National Catholic Reporter |
| NSC | National Security Council |
| OPEC | Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries |
| POW | Prisoner of War |
| PRC | People's Republic of China |
| PRK | People's Republic of Kampuchea |
| SALT | Strategic Arms Limitation Talks |
| SIPRI | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNIBRO | United Nations Border Relief Operation |
| UNICEF | United Nation's Children's Fund |
| UNTAC | United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| USCC | United States Catholic Conference |
| WB | World Bank |
| WFP | World Food Program |
| WTO | Warsaw Treaty Organization |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On 25 December 1978, Vietnam launched an attack on Kratie in the Northeastern region of Kampuchea and, only two weeks later, proceeded to capture Phnom Penh. The invasion was carried out by the forces of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and only nominally by the indigenous Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation. It would take another four months to root out Khmer Rouge guerillas, their arms caches, and the food reserves they had hidden in the mountains west of Phnom Penh. Having already effected the deaths of approximately 1.7 to 3 million Cambodians, from a population of 7 to 8 million people, the Khmer Rouge were not quite finished. While retreating, they stole whatever draught animals and rice they could and destroyed much of what they could not take—thus plunging the country into a famine that would last for three more years.

Within two weeks of Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, the main Khmer Rouge forces fled to the Thai-Cambodian border. The international community condemned the invasion and imposed crippling diplomatic and economic sanctions on Vietnam. From 1979 to 1993, a Khmer Rouge representative was accorded Cambodia's seat in the United Nations, confirming the genocidal regime of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) as a member of the largest diplomatic federation of states on this planet. The United States decisively contributed to the Khmer Rouge's physical survival by injecting hundreds of millions of dollars in aid into Khmer Rouge-controlled camps on the Thai-Cambodian border. Why? In his Inaugural Address on 20 January 1977 President Jimmy Carter had declared: "Our

commitment to human rights must be absolute. . . . We will not behave in foreign places so as to violate our rules and standards here at home, for we know the trust which our Nation earns is essential to our strength.”¹ In April 1978, President Carter denounced the Khmer Rouge regime of Democratic Kampuchea as the worst violator of human rights in the world at that time.² Then why did the United States, a country which justifiably prides itself on its human rights and humanitarian principles, support known genocidists?

Thesis Structure

The structure of this thesis is divided into three sections: 1975 to 1979, 1979 to 1982, and an overview of the decade of the seventies emphasizing roles played by trade and oil in setting the context of international relations in Southeast Asia. In Part I of this thesis I focus on the domestic debate in the U.S. over US-Vietnamese rapprochement. America’s policy towards Vietnam was a matter of intense debate within Congress and the Executive Branch of the United States government. Emotions and geopolitical interests regarding Indochina were high at this time. Angst, criticism, and divisive recrimination over the Vietnam War plagued American political culture regarding Indochina, and Vietnam in particular. Likewise, Cold War anti-Soviet, anti-Communist, fears were triggered by the Communist sweep in Indochina in 1975. The role played by business,

¹ President Jimmy Carter, Inaugural Address, 20 January 1977, *Public Papers of the Presidents: Jimmy Carter 1977*, Book I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1977), 2.

² President Jimmy Carter, Statement by the President, “Human Rights Violations in Cambodia,” *Public Papers of the Presidents: Jimmy Carter 1978*, Book I (Washington: Government Printing Office), 767.

church-based groups, and public opinion in Congressional debates is considered within the context of three key policy issues: the lifting of the U.S. trade embargo against Vietnam, the normalization of US-Vietnamese relations, and foreign assistance appropriations for Vietnam. These policy issues were prompted by initiatives taken by Hanoi officials seeking to establish trade and diplomatic relations with the U.S.. Liberal, humanitarian, and business elements in the U.S., in turn, were eager to atone for the Vietnam War, to offer assistance, and to do business with Vietnam. In this discussion, I rely almost exclusively on primary materials.

In Part II of the thesis I examine the nature of the reactions to Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia by the U.S. and among other members of the international community. These reactions, which were overwhelmingly punitive towards Vietnam, featured diplomatic and economic sanctions, as well as support for Vietnam's enemy—the Khmer Rouge. Secondary sources, which form the basis of chapters two and three, include works by Ben Barber, Nayan Chanda, Grant Evans and Kelvin Rowley, Michael Haas, Ben Kiernan, and Robert O. Tilman. Each of these authors brings an international perspective to the discussion—particularly regarding the issues of foreign aid, the manipulation of smaller states by the superpowers, and Sino-American collusion. Haas emphasizes the use of Cambodia as “a pawn on a superpower chessboard.” Chanda, Evans and Rowley, and Tilman view Peking's leadership as vengefully anti-Vietnamese. Tilman stresses Peking's long history of maintaining close political ties with overseas Chinese and the potential threat this posed to their adopted countries. Evans and Rowley date Peking's designs to conquer Indochina and, eventually Southeast Asia, back to the 1954 Geneva Conference

on Indochina, when Peking turned its back on Hanoi. Shawcross and Kiernan criticize the U.S. and the UN for their misuse of humanitarian foreign aid. Barber states that refugee aid was used by the U.S. as a Cold War instrument in the struggle to contain Communism.

In part III, I focus on the core conflict between Cambodia and Vietnam, as well as the alignments and rivalries of the superpowers in Asia. Regional and superpower relations were marked by competing military and civilian interests and disputes over territory, oil, trade, vital seaway arteries, and questions of national and ethnic honour. On these issues, illuminating secondary sources include works by Nayan Chanda, Jaap Van Ginneken, Randall W. Hardy, Selig S. Harrison, Ben Kiernan, Thu-Huong Nguyen-Vo, and Sheldon W. Simon. Chanda highlights the centrality of the resource struggle at play asserting that in 1978 the Khmer-Vietnamese conflict was really over “the supposed oil-rich sea-bed off the Gulf of Thailand.” Ginneken points to the incalculable importance of the South China Sea for its much anticipated mammoth oil reserves, its vital seaway arteries, and as an “umbilical cord” between the region and the rest of the world. Ginneken and Hardy observe that both Vietnam and China relied on anticipated oil finds to pave the way to prosperity through modernization. Nguyen-Vo underscores Sino-American collusion and the centuries old ethnic hatred between Vietnam and China. Harrison’s contribution to the discussion concerns the origin of China’s oil diplomacy, notably, China’s need for oil technology and expertise since the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s and the subsequent exodus of Russian oil experts from China. Harrison also shows that China badly needed Japanese and American oil technology and expertise. Kiernan adds a unique dimension to the core conflict between Vietnam and Cambodia in his

analysis of the internal struggle for power within the Khmer Rouge. This struggle culminated at the end of 1976 with the victory of Pol Pot under whose leadership the ultra-nationalist and racist Khmer Rouge simultaneously committed genocide and carried out acts of aggression against its three neighbours—Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam.

Seeing Red

The phrase, “Seeing Red,” encapsulates the main themes and actors of this story in six ways. First, the expression, “seeing red,” denotes a state of anger. In the Third Indochina Conflict, anger was the dominant emotion characterizing Khmer-Vietnamese relations, Sino-Vietnamese relations, Sino-Soviet relations, and Congressional debates between conservatives and liberals on Capitol Hill. Second, red denotes left-of-centre ideology on the political spectrum. Here it provides a reference to the debates and rivalries among Communist regimes in the People’s Republic of China, the Soviet Union, Cambodia, and Vietnam over who was truly “red”. It also refers to the centrality of the Cold War ethos in the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s. Third, red in the title draws attention to, “the red, white and blue,” and highlights the influential role played by the U.S. in the Third Indochina Conflict. Fourth, “red” directly references the Khmer Rouge bringing it into the narrative as the US’s key anti-Vietnamese fighting force in Indochina. Fifth, as the colour of Catholic cardinals’ robes, red denotes the important role played by the Catholic Relief Services organization as well as the Quakers, Methodists and other American Christian denominations in America’s foreign policy in Southeast Asia. And sixth, as the colour of blood, red reminds U.S. of the enormous loss of life resulting from the genocide,

warfare, and persecution suffered by the Cambodian and Vietnamese people in the years considered in this thesis.

Sources

My analysis of why the U.S. supported the Khmer Rouge and opposed the Vietnamese in the period from 1979 to 1982, required that I begin by examining the roots of this policy in the four years prior to North Vietnam's victory in South Vietnam. To this end, I seek to illustrate how the domestic American proponents of the normalization of relations with Vietnam lost out to those who opposed a rapprochement with Vietnam in favour of closer relations with the People's Republic of China. Sources for that discussion include the *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, the memoirs of key American foreign policy makers, the *State Department Bulletin*, the *Congressional Record*, House and Senate Committee hearings, as well as analyses and data contained in the reports of the *Economist Intelligence Unit*, the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *Business Vietnam*, *Indochina Issues*, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's *Armaments and Disarmaments Yearbook*, the *National Catholic Reporter*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *World Oil*.

Part I

US-Vietnamese Rapprochement: 1975-1979

CHAPTER 2

CONGRESS BATTLES THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH: 1975-1976

The end of the Vietnam War came into sight with the signing of the Paris Peace Agreements on 27 January 1973. Divisive recrimination over the Vietnam War, and a bitter Congress seeking to reclaim lost powers from the Executive Branch, marked the next round of American foreign policy debates. In the wake of the Paris agreements, the U.S. continued to prop up Nguyen Van Thieu's anti-Communist government in South Vietnam until the North Vietnamese marched into Saigon on 30 April 1975. Two weeks earlier, the Khmer Rouge had toppled the US-backed Lon Nol government in Cambodia. By April, the revolutionary Communist *Pathet Lao* ("Lao Nation"), and who were aligned with the Viet Minh, seized power in Laos.

This chapter examines the issues, debates, and religious and political alignments in Washington throughout 1975 and 1976 regarding US-Vietnam rapprochement. Drawing upon the *National Catholic Reporter* (an independent Catholic weekly), the *New York Times*, and the U.S. *Congressional Record*, a factional map is constructed delineating the positions of Conservative and Liberal proponents by examining three policy issues: the U.S. trade embargo against Vietnam; normalization of US-Vietnam relations; and aid for Vietnam. Particular attention is paid to the cooperation and differences between various Congressmen, executive branch departments and legislative committees, and the relations between them and a host of church groups, business interests, and relief providers.

In the months leading up to, and following, the fall of Saigon, a great deal of interest in the future of US-Vietnam relations was generated by church-based groups, peace advocates, and business interests. Church and peace groups voiced strong criticisms of U.S. military involvement in Indochina. Big business, particularly oil companies and banks, lobbied for the government to lift the U.S. trade embargo against Vietnam. A heated debate occurred in Congress highlighting the split in the religious community over the relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam. Many of the debates in Congress were between those who emphasized American humanitarianism and American responsibility, and those who viewed Indochina's Communist governments as grave and evil threats to U.S. interests. International and domestic developments, public opinion polls, and Congressional debates veered favourably in the direction of normalizing relations with Vietnam and lifting the U.S. trade embargo. The movement toward rapprochement crescendoed in March 1976 when both the House of Representatives and the Senate agreed to lift the embargo.

Business Interests, Peace Advocates, and Church Groups Rally for Rapprochement with Vietnam, 1975

During the months leading up to North Vietnam's invasion of the South, Congressmen battled over the rights and wrongs of American actions in the Second Indochina War. These debates arose as a result of President Ford's request for money to provide military assistance to the governments of South Vietnam under Nguyen Van Thieu and of Cambodia under Lon Nol. On 29 January 1975, Representative Robert F. Drinan

(D-MA), along with eighteen coplaintiffs, responded with a lawsuit enjoining the United States from any further military action in Cambodia.³ On the same day, Senator Mark O. Hatfield (R-OR) characterized the U.S. Food for Peace programme as politicized and prostituted,⁴ explaining that “nearly half the available commodities were sent to support the war economies of Indochina rather than to avert famine in other areas of the world.” Because of this, said Hatfield, the Senate had imposed a limitation on political uses of food in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974.⁵ Democrat Senator Edward M. Kennedy (MA) reiterated Hatfield’s criticism adding that South Vietnam did not appear on the UN list of countries “most seriously affected” (MSA) by a current food shortage, and therefore did not qualify for assistance under the Food for Peace programme.⁶

³ Congress, House, Representative Robert F. Drinan (D) of Massachusetts, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (29 January 1975): 1687. The 18 coplaintiffs, most of whom were members of Congress, were: Ken Heckler, Benjamin S. Rosenthal, Donald M. Fraser, Don Edwards, Fortney Stark, Michael Harrington, Bella S. Abzug, Ronald V. Dellums, John F. Seiberling, Richard L. Ottinger, George Miller, Bob Carr, Herman Badillo, Henry Helstocki, Frederick W. Richmond, Edward R. Roybal, George E. Brown Jr., and Yvonne B. Burke. The six defendants were: President Gerald R. Ford, Secretary of Defence James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia John Gunther Dean, and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) William E. Colby.

⁴ “Public Law 480 (PL 480) started world food aid in June 1954 and is otherwise known as the ‘Food for Peace’ programme. Title I of Food for Peace covers bulk sales of American goods to governments often on credit or easy terms of repayment. Title II authorizes grants to relief providers (such as Catholic Relief Services, CARE and the UN World Food Program) to use on particular projects. *National Catholic Reporter* (10 October 1980), 4.

⁵ Congress, Senate, Senator Mark O. Hatfield (R) of Oregon, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (29 January 1975): 1757.

⁶ Congress, Senate, Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D) of Massachusetts, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (29 January 1975): 1759.

Congressional opponents of Ford's request for \$300 million in aid to South Vietnam introduced a spate of hostile statements into the *Congressional Record*. The American Association of University Professors criticized Ford's request for military assistance for South Vietnam through Representative Charles B. Rangel (D-NY), who entered its letter into the *Congressional Record*.⁷ Republican William V. Roth Jr. from Delaware called attention to a Gallup poll indicating that four out of five Americans opposed additional American assistance to South Vietnam.⁸ Religious leaders from the Jewish, Catholic and Protestant faiths denounced Ford's request for supplemental military aid for Vietnam and Cambodia in a letter sent to Mark Hatfield.⁹ Senator McGovern entered into the *Record* the testimony of Gareth Porter before the Senate Foreign

⁷ Congress, House, Representative Charles B. Rangel (D) of New York, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (14 March 1975): 6749.

⁸ Congress, Senate, Senator William V. Roth Jr. (R) of Delaware, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (18 March 1975): 7197.

⁹ Congress, Senate, Senator Mark O. Hatfield (R) of Oregon, 94th Cong., 1st sess. *Congressional Record* (19 March 1975): 7554. The partial list of signers, which includes liberal Catholics and Protestants and reformed Jews, was as follows: William Thompson, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church of the USA; Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton, Roman Catholic diocese of Detroit; Rabbi Balfour Brickner, Union of American Hebrew Congregations; Bishop Paul Moore, Episcopal Diocese of New York; Robert V. Moss, President of the United Church of Christ; Bishop Paul Washburn, President of the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church; George Webber, President of New York Theological Seminary; Marion de Velder, General Secretary of the Reformed Church of America; James A. Christison, Executive Secretary of National Ministries, American Baptist Church; Bishop Carroll T. Dozier, Roman Catholic Diocese of Memphis, Tenn.; Wallace Collett, Chairman, American Friends Service Committee; Joes K. Thompson, Executive Secretary, World Ministries, Church of the Brethren; Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President, Union of American Hebrew Congregations; Sister Mary Luke Tobin, Church Women United; Bishop Walter J. Schoenherr, Detroit; Robert McAfee Brown, Professor of Religious Studies, Stanford University; and, Don Luce, Executive Director, Clergy and Laity Concerned.

Relations Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance. Porter, co-director of the Indochina Resource Center in Washington, argued that Cambodia's Lon Nol government had no popular support and should not be supported by the U.S..¹⁰ Representative Bella Abzug appealed to the Ford administration by drawing upon the political will of the polity as expressed through public opinion polls. Said Abzug,

All the polls show that the American people in overwhelming numbers have reached the conclusion that American interests do not require the survival of either the Lon Nol or Thieu governments, yet the Ford administration, Department of State and Pentagon remain wedded to their mistaken policies of the past.¹¹

Just one week before the fall of South Vietnam, McGovern succinctly listed the costs to the American people for supporting South Vietnam.

The United States gave Mr. Thieu and his predecessors more than 55,000 American lives, more than 300,000 American casualties, and some \$150 billion in treasure—a figure which will grow to \$362 billion according to the 1973 U.S. statistical abstract when veterans benefits and department financing are added.¹²

Ford's sympathizers in Congress mobilized their defence around an anti-Communist call to arms and the need to assert national pride. Hatfield's March statement in Congress that "the Communists have spoken to the 'hearts and minds' of the people of

¹⁰ Congress, Senate, Senator George McGovern (D) of South Dakota, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (20 March 1975): 7902.

¹¹ Congress, House, Representative Bella Abzug (D) of New York, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (24 March 1975): 8439.

¹² Congress, Senate, Senator George McGovern (D) of South Dakota, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (23 April 1975): 11443.

Vietnam,”¹³ must have been anathema to Senator Barry Goldwater—one of the most ardent promulgators of the Cold War domino theory. Senator Barry Goldwater equated support for South Vietnam with stemming the fulfilment of the domino theory, which would introduce “one of the most dangerous things that has ever happened in the history of men.”¹⁴ Republican Burt L. Talcott supported Thieu’s South Vietnam on the grounds that the American purpose “was legitimate and based on treaties, commitments, and . . . national, Pacific, and international interests.”¹⁵ In April, Republican Robert F. Bauman introduced legislation condemning North Vietnam on the grounds that Communists everywhere were plotting world domination. In the following month, a host of fellow Republicans, and a number of Democrats, co-sponsored Senate Joint Resolution 69, stipulating that the U.S. would cut its contributions to the UN by 25 percent if the UN did not take every step possible to make Vietnam provide a full accounting of Americans missing in action (MIAs) in Vietnam within 6 months.¹⁶

Within one week of North Vietnam’s capture of South Vietnam on 30 April 1975, the United Nations Economic and Social Council passed a resolution calling upon all

¹³ Congress, Senate, Senator Mark O. Hatfield (R) of Oregon, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (10 March 1975): 5845.

¹⁴ Congress, Senate, Senator Barry Goldwater (R) of California, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (21 April 1975): 11026.

¹⁵ Congress, House, Representative Burt Talcott, (R) of California, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (25 March 1975): 8538.

¹⁶ Congress, House, Representative Robert F. Bauman (R) of Maryland, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (9 April 1975): 9525.

nations to assist North and South Vietnam. The U.S. did not oppose the resolution.¹⁷ American offshore oil exploration interests lost little time. Louis E. Saubolle, Vice-President and Asia representative of the Bank of America, visited Hanoi in July to talk business.¹⁸ Saubolle had already visited China three times in the previous three months¹⁹ while Mobil, Exxon, and Shell had already asked the U.S. government to resume oil exploration off the coast of South Vietnam.²⁰

A change of heart towards Vietnam was evidenced by September 1975 when the U.S. representative in the UN Security Council vetoed Vietnam's admission to the UN.²¹ The U.S. isolated itself in its stand against admitting Vietnam to the UN. The UN General Assembly followed up on the Security Council's veto by voting a resounding 123 to 0 in favour of asking the Security Council to reconsider.²²

Meanwhile, American business interests were clearly eager to engage in trade and other commercial adventures in Vietnam. In October, Congressman Jonathan Bingham (D-NY) entered into the *Congressional Record*, a list entitled "American Industrial and Commercial Firms in Vietnam," including members considered to have major investments

¹⁷ *New York Times*, 8 May 1975, 14.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19 July 1975, 3. Saubolle's visit was reported by the *New York Times* to have possibly been the first visit by a representative of an American bank to Hanoi since 1954 when North Vietnam had been established.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1 October 1975, 1.

²² *Ibid.*

there.²³ In November, Bingham entered into the *Record* letters from influential members of the business community who had written to him in support of the lifting of the embargo.²⁴ In the same month, the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, representing 230 businesses, including several oil companies, issued a position statement calling upon the American government to end the embargo.²⁵ Likewise, according to the *New York Times*, oil industry informants reported that the Exxon oil company, along with

²³ American Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam; American International Underwriters Vietnam Inc.; American Trading Co., Vietnam S.A.; Asia Design & Development Associates; Asian American Transportation; Bank of America* (7); Barclay & Co., Inc.; Berkins Wide World (VN) S.A.R.L.; Bristol-Myers Company International Division; Brownell Lane Engineering Co. (EN GINECO); Caltex (Asia) Limited* (2); Chase Manhattan Bank*(6); Connell Bros. Co. (VN) S.A.R.L.; Esso Eastern Inc.*(1) Vietnam/Cambodia Division; Etablissements Olympic; First National City Bank*(5); Foremost Dairies V.N.*(3); Getz Bros. & Co (Vietnam); IBM World Trade Corp.; International Consultant Services; International Personnel Services; Kirkwood Kaplan Russin & Vecchi; PAC-SEA Consultants Inc.; PAE International; Pan American Airways, Inc.; Pfizer S.A.R.L.; H.B. Schwinger and Co.; Sea-Land Service, Inc.; States Marine International Inc. (Isthmian Lines); summit Industrial Corp; Upjohn Overseas Company; Vietnam Tourist Bureau; VIMYTEX, S.A.; Associated Pacific Corp.; Merck Sharpe Dohme-Sterling Drug International; Etablissement Olympic Saigon; The Flying Tiger Line, Inc.; 3M Far East Ltd. Hong Kong. * Indicates firms with major investment. Numbers in parentheses denote relative importance of the firm as an investor. Congress, House, List titled, "American Industrial and Commercial Firms in Vietnam," 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (11 November 1975): 35990-35991.

²⁴ Congress, House, Representative Jonathan Bingham (D) of New York, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (11 November 1975): 35989. Louis E. Saubolle, Governor of the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, Louis E. Saubolle and William A. Rosenthal, Asian-Pacific Council of Commerce; American Chamber of Commerce in Japan; K. J. Adalbert, Chairman of the American Business Council; Steuart L. Pittman of Shaw, Pittman, Ports and Trowbridge; and McWilliams V. Bollman, Vice-President Amtraco Corp.

²⁵ *New York Times*, 31 December 1975, 3.

a consortium of independent oil companies, had been in contact with Vietnamese representatives.²⁶

Writing in 1991 about the ongoing U.S. trade embargo on Vietnam, James Fallows argued that the “real reason” for the embargo was simply because the U.S. lost the war.²⁷ It was not until Phnom Penh signed the UN Peace Plan in October 1991 that Washington relaxed its embargo. Fallows charged that the embargo was “senseless” and punitively singled out Vietnam. The embargo, says Fallows, operated in two ways to effectively stymie Vietnamese efforts to reconstruct their country. First, the U.S. government prohibited Americans from “buying, selling to, investing, or otherwise having anything to do with Vietnam.”²⁸ And second, Washington pressured the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the International Monetary Fund “to keep them, too, from dealing normally with Vietnam.”²⁹

While business moguls sought trade relations with the Vietnamese, certain American-based religious organizations found their relief efforts intended for North Vietnam obstructed by the U.S. Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). In July 1975, the Treasury Department’s Division of Foreign Assets Control prohibited a coalition of humanitarian groups known as Friendshipment from sending humanitarian supplies destined for Vietnam. The Treasury Department halted the delivery

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ James Fallows, “Shut Out,” *The Atlantic* (March 1991): 48.

²⁸ Ibid., 42.

²⁹ Ibid., 44.

based on the claim that the supplies constituted economic, not humanitarian, aid. In June, the IRS had denied an application to the American Friends Service Committee for a license to send aid to Vietnam. The IRS ruled that contributions to the Bach Mai Hospital Emergency Relief Fund were no longer tax deductible. Equipment such as tents, canvases, fish nets, and certain agricultural equipment were deemed economic aid.³⁰ The Treasury and Commerce Departments, functioning under the direction of the State Department, appeared to be unaware the Vietnam War was over. As Representative Jonathan Bingham sarcastically quipped,

Mr. Speaker, the Defence Department must have neglected to tell the State Department that the Vietnam war is over. State, on behalf of U.S. all, is still fighting—not a military war, but an economic one.

The U.S. embargo of Vietnam which, at State Department direction, the Treasury and Commerce Department imposed in April and May, consists of two elements: A freeze on all Vietnamese assets held by American banks or other commercial institutions subject to American law, and a ban on all U.S. exports to Vietnam. The asset freeze is based upon the Trading With the Enemy Act, and the export controls upon the Export Administration Act of 1969.³¹

In response to the Treasury Department's refusal to grant permission for the Friendshipment to Hanoi, Wallace T. Collett, Chairman of the Friends' board of directors, publicly declared he would risk breaking the law and proceed to ship the \$325,000 worth of supplies. The Treasury Department backed down halfway, agreeing to allow the

³⁰ Ibid., 29 July 1975, 32.

³¹ Congress, House, Representative Jonathan Bingham (D) of New York, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (11 November 1975): 35989.

shipment of medical and school supplies.³² Three months later, in October, a number of major contributors to Friendshipment launched another campaign to assist North and South Vietnam. Amongst the most notable of these members were Church World Services (CWS—a large Protestant relief agency), the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC—otherwise known as the Quakers), and the Bach Mai Hospital Relief Fund.³³ The Methodist Church also joined the fray, serving notice in November that it planned to send two shipments through Friendshipment.³⁴

A split in the Ford administration on the issue of aid was tied inextricably to the issue of American troops missing in action (MIA) in Southeast Asia. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger believed economic aid, provided through private organizations, was permissible, whereas President Gerald Ford assumed a hard line on the issue, insisting that economic aid be prohibited.³⁵ Kissinger espoused the belief that the U.S. should respond favourably to “gestures of good will” from the communist governments in Indochina if they advanced efforts to account for American MIAs in Southeast Asia.³⁶ More

³² *New York Times*, 29 July 1975, 32.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3 October 1975, 4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3 November 1975, 5. On 22 December 1975, a shipment left New York destined for Hanoi. The items sent were provided by Church World Service, the American Friends Service Committee, Clergy and Laity Concerned, the Bach Mai Hospital Fund, the Mennonite Central Committee, and the United Methodist Committee. Congress, Senate, Senator Mark O. Hatfield (R) of Oregon, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (15 December 1975): 40434.

³⁵ *New York Times*, 29 July 1975, 32.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 25 November 1975, 5.

specifically, in November, Kissinger stated that the American government was allowing the good will gesture of permitting church and humanitarian groups to export more liberally to Vietnam, because of Hanoi's recent release of nine Americans who had been captured in South Vietnam in March.³⁷ The march toward US-Vietnam cooperation continued. Republican Senators Hatfield and Packwood, and Democrat Senator McGovern, introduced S. 2607—a bill to repeal the trade embargo against North and South Vietnam, stating that lifting the trade embargo would help the U.S. gain a full accounting of MIAs in Vietnam.³⁸ At this time, the North Vietnamese Ambassador to the U.S. told a group of congressmen that Vietnam was returning three bodies, and that Vietnam looked forward to the normalization of relations with the U.S..³⁹

The pro- and anti-US-Vietnam rapprochement camps in Congress continued to clash as 1975 came to a close . Bingham introduced HR 11249 (a bill to limit the imposition of trade embargoes) jointly to the Committees on International Relations and Ways and Means.⁴⁰ An identical bill was introduced in the Senate by Senators Mark O. Hatfield and Senator Adlai E. Stevenson (D-IL). Their passage was opposed by the (Republican-supported) National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in

³⁷ Ibid., 15 November 1975, 9.

³⁸ Congress, Senate, Senator Mark O. Hatfield (R) of Oregon, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (3 November 1975): 45667.

³⁹ *New York Times*, 25 November 1975, 5 .

⁴⁰ Congress, House, Representative Jonathan Bingham (D) of New York, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (18 December 1975): 41837.

Southeast Asia.⁴¹ In mid-December, Hatfield launched one more attack against the administration. This time, he targeted the links between the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Catholic Church. In a letter to William Colby, Director of the CIA, Hatfield informed Colby that he was willing to introduce legislation which “would legally bar any operational connections between the CIA and the churches.” Colby was apparently nonplussed at the time. He replied to Hatfield that “in many countries of the world representatives of the clergy, foreign and local, play a significant role and can be of assistance to the United States through the CIA with no reflection upon their integrity nor their mission.”⁴²

⁴¹ *New York Times*, 31 December 1975, 3. The National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia was incorporated in the District of Columbia on 28 May 1970. The “soul purpose” of the National League of Families, a product of the Nixon Kissinger administration, has been “to obtain the release of all prisoners, the fullest possible accounting for the missing and repatriation of all recoverable remains of those who died serving” the US during the Vietnam War. “Within three weeks of its incorporation the National League received its IRS tax-exempt status as a ‘nonpartisan, humanitarian’ organization, free long-distance WATS telephone service provided by the White House, and office space donated by the Reserve Officers Association. . . . Almost all its principal organizers and activists were wives or parents of career officers, not draftees (mainly because the vast majority of missing and captured men were flight officers), and the politics of the organization were dominated by their outlook, especially during the war. Receiving in its early years direct and indirect material support from the White House, the Department of Defence, and the Republican National Committee, the League . . . would have dramatically shifting relations with the government until it became, in the 1980s, the main official liaison between the Department of Defence and the American public on all POW/MIA matters, a function it still serves today.” H. Bruce Franklin, “The POW/MIA Myth,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (December 1991): 61.

⁴² Congress, Senate, Senator Mark O. Hatfield (R) of Oregon, 94th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (15 December 1975): 40434.

Church-Based Groups and Aid, 1975-1976

Critics of the American involvement in Vietnam, and the propping up of the Thieu regime in the South, had cause to query the role of the Catholic Church and its close cooperation with the American military presence there.⁴³ A confidential report, written by Father Piero Gheddo, detailing the nature of the Catholic church in South Vietnam, was submitted to Monsignor Achille Silvestrini, Vatican undersecretary of the Council for the Church's Public Affairs. The report depicted a church of wealth and privilege legitimizing

⁴³ The following excerpt, taken from former CBS broadcaster Walter Cronkite's speech to the World Federalist Association (WFA) constitutes a contemporary example of relevant themes to this discussion. The speech was delivered at the United Nations in New York on 19 October 1999, where Mr. Cronkite was awarded the WFA's Norman Cousins Global Governance Award. Cronkite spoke simply and eloquently about the need to avert the ongoing global drift toward chaos and violence. To this end, Cronkite called for a democratic federal world government and enforceable world law. The U.S. must pay its UN dues (without imposing crippling restrictions), ratify a host of treaties dealing with human security and human rights, and comply with efforts to democratize decision-making processes in the UN's General Assembly and Security Council. Cronkite blamed reactionary Christian extremism, political opportunism, and right wing ideology, together with right wing members of Senate and anti-United Nations proponents in Congress, for the United States' failure to ratify important treaties and pay UN dues. The themes of political ideology, American foreign policy, and the role of the Church in the life of Congressional politics are deeply and inextricably intertwined in the workings of the American government, says Cronkite. "Even as with the American rejection of the League of Nations, our failure to live up to our obligations to the United Nations is led by a handful of wilful senators who choose to pursue their narrow, selfish, political objectives at the cost of our nation's conscience. . . . They pander to and are supported by the Christian coalition and the rest of the religious right wing. Their leader, Pat Robertson, has written that we should have a world government but only when the Messiah arrives. Any attempt to achieve world order before that time must be the work of the devil. This small but well organized group has intimidated the Republican Party and the Clinton administration. It has attached each of our presidents since [Franklin D. Roosevelt] for supporting the United Nations. Robertson explains that these presidents were and are the unwitting agents of Lucifer." *Washington Times*, 3 December 1999, A2.

a corrupt government and overseeing a people profoundly impoverished and devastated by war.⁴⁴

The link between the Catholic Church and South Vietnam ran deep dating back to the formation of South Vietnam. According to Franciscan Chaplain Evan Greco, “The past history of Catholic-Communist incompatibility goes back to the massacre of large numbers of Catholics during the Tet offensive and before.”⁴⁵ In June 1954, Emperor Bao Dai appointed Ngo Dinh Diem prime minister of the State of Vietnam. Diem had grown up a would-be Catholic priest whose political development reinforced his ardent anti-communist convictions. After an attempt on his life in 1950, Diem travelled to the US where he spent two years at Catholic seminaries in New York and New Jersey and “met with such prominent American figures as Justice William O. Douglas, Senators John F. Kennedy and Mike Mansfield, and Francis Cardinal Spellman, his greatest American supporter.”⁴⁶

The Church had been deeply intertwined with the American military since the CIA’s Colonel Edward Lansdale used psychological warfare techniques to stamp North Vietnamese Catholics into flight to South Vietnam in 1954. Gheddo’s report explained how the church constituted an important underpinning of American influence in South Vietnam and that most of the bishops defended the Thieu regime uncritically “as being the

⁴⁴ Sharlene Shoemaker, “Report Urges Catholics to Back Away from Thieu,” *National Catholic Reporter* 11, 3 (8 November 1974): 4.

⁴⁵ “Refugees Bring Religion into Camp Pendleton,” *National Catholic Reporter* 11, 31 (6 June 1975): 4

⁴⁶ Spencer C. Tucker, *Vietnam, Warfare and History* (London: University College London Press, 1999), 81.

last barrier against Communism.”⁴⁷ Gheddo depicted the Church as the key institution propping up the Thieu regime.

... the church is the only social organization which really functions and which counts (aside from the army) ...

... if it were not for the church, South Vietnam would have fallen a long time ago ...⁴⁸

Religious organizations split over the issue of U.S. policy in Vietnam. Some groups lobbied criticism against the U.S. government for its involvement in Vietnam. Other church-based groups provided humanitarian relief to peoples in Southeast Asia while a small number of these made a business out of providing relief using grants from the American government to do so. Amongst the most prominent critics of American involvement in Vietnam was the American Friends Service Committee. In 1975, the Friends prepared a scathing indictment castigating the American government. “There is no peace. The war goes on. American bombs are still dropped from American airplanes on

⁴⁷ Shoemaker, “Report Urges Catholics,” 4. As an aside, the Catholic presence in the U.S. Congress constituted the most prevalent religious force. In the 95th Congress (1977), sat 129 Catholics—the highest number ever represented in Congress. Catholics in Congress were followed by 80 United Methodists, 64 Episcopalians, and 60 Presbyterians. “More Catholics in U.S. Congress,” *National Catholic Reporter* 13, 8 (10 December 1976): 2. In its account of the number of Catholics in Congress, the *National Catholic Reporter* omits the number of Jews, Baptists and Lutherans. The number of Democrats and Republicans, in the Senate and the House, throughout the 94th and 95th congresses was as follows: 94th Congress, 1st session, 60 Democrats and 37 Republicans in the Senate and 289 Democrats and 145 Republicans in the House; 94th Congress, 2nd session, 61 Democrats and 37 Republicans in the Senate and 289 Democrats and 144 Republicans in the House; 95th Congress, 1st session, 61 Democrats and 38 Republican in the Senate and 289 Democrats and 143 Republicans in the House; 95th Congress, 2nd session, 61 Democrats and 38 Republicans in the Senate and 287 Democrats and 146 Republicans in the House.

⁴⁸ Shoemaker, “Report Urges Catholics,” 4.

Vietnamese targets.”⁴⁹ The Friends’ sympathetic stance regarding Communist Vietnam earned the ire of one Cold War Democrat, from Georgia, Representative Larry MacDonald. In sinister-sounding language, MacDonald pointed out in the House of Representatives that the American Friends Service Committee was “not under the control of the Religious Society of Friends.” Furthermore, said McDonald, the AFSC was “fronting for several groups active in the U.S. support apparatus for the Vietnamese Communists in seeking funds for its program of material assistance to the Communist conquerors of Vietnam.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ “Thirty-Six Accuse U.S. of Violating Peace Agreement,” *National Catholic Reporter* 11, 11 (10 January 1975): 6.

⁵⁰ Congress, House, Representative Larry McDonald (D) of Georgia, 94th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* (19 February 1976): 3949. McDonald aptly discussed the Communist connections of Friendship’s “principle organizer,” Cora Weiss. McDonald lists Friendship’s sponsors in the *Congressional Record*. “The Friendship fund appeal lists an odd variety of sponsors. The sponsors range from the Cuban-backed Marxist-Leninists of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party-RSP-and the National Interim Committee for a Mass Party of the people-through the Communist Party’s Bach Mai Hospital Relief Funds, Inc. to the militant revolutionary pacifists of the War Resisters League. Other sponsors include disarmament lobbyists who follow the line of the Soviet’s World Peace Council including SANE and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom-WILPF. Another sponsor is the Inter-Religious Foundation for Communist Organization-IFCO—a Ford Foundation project which in the past has provided funding for African Marxist guerrilla movements. And a large number of other sponsors were formerly members of the People’s Coalition for Peace and Justice and its predecessors. The Friendshipment list of its sponsors for an upcoming shipment is provided by McDonald, as follows: Ad Hoc Coalition for a New Foreign Policy (formerly the Coalition to Stop Funding the War); Another Mother for Peace (AMP); American Friends Service Committee (AFSC); Bach Mai Hospital Relief Fund, Inc.; Church World Service (Fund for Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Indochina); Clergy and Laity Concerned (CALC); Committee of Responsibility; Disciples Peace Fellowship; Episcopal of Reconciliation (EOR); Friends of Indochina Organizing Committee (described by its national staff member, Carol Clifford, as ‘a newly formed group working to build a broad and activist friendship association’); Health-PAC; Indochina Mobile Education Project (IMEP); Indochina Resource Center (IRC); International Children’s Fund; Inter-Religious

The Methodists also agitated vigorously against the Ford administration's Vietnam policy. Opposing Ford's proposed \$522 million supplemental appropriation to Vietnam and Cambodia, the World Division of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries resolved to "support the efforts of Congress to decrease economic and military aid to the Thieu government in Vietnam and the Lon Nol government in Cambodia recognizing that U.S. aid is a primary factor in preventing a political solution to these conflicts."⁵¹ Senator George McGovern concurred. Appearing before an audience at an Assembly to Save the Peace at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, McGovern referred to President Ford's demand for \$300 million "to prop up General Thieu" for the rest of the year, as "horrifying."⁵² McGovern's address was greeted with cheers and a standing ovation. Speaking at an earlier workshop, Representative Bella Abzug told the group that, "it was

Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO); Medical Aid for Indochina; Mennonite Central Committee; The Thomas Merton Center; National Council for Churches, Division of Church and Society; and the National Council for Universal and Unconditional Amnesty (NCUUA), a coalition of leftist and 'religious' groups organizing amnesty for draft dodgers and deserters. NCUUA includes many of the groups supporting the Friendship program; National Interim Committee for a Mass Party of the People (NIC); New York Women's Union; People to People Program, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP); SANE; S.O.S. Vietnam, International Committee; Union of Vietnamese in the U.S.; United Methodist Church, Board of Global Ministries—Women's Division, World Division; Bishops' Call for Peace and Self-Determination of Peoples, United Methodist Church. Vietnamese-American Reconciliation Center; Vietnam Resource Center; War Resisters League (WRL); Women Strike for Peace; and, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

⁵¹ "Methodists Hit Indochina Aid," *National Catholic Reporter* 11, 18 (28 February 1975): 20.

⁵² Sharlene Shoemaker, "Demonstrators Oppose Increased Military Aid," *National Catholic Reporter* 11, 15 (7 February 1975): 1.

public pressure, not Nixon, that brought the troops home and it will be public pressure now, not Ford, that will get U.S. out of Asian skies and our ships out of bombing range.”⁵³

At the close of 1975, major religious groups joined together to issue a statement calling for the U.S. to embark on reconciliation and reconstruction vis-à-vis Vietnam. The statement, titled “Reconciliation and Reconstruction of Postwar Indochina,” was issued by the Interreligious Committee of General Secretaries composed of the chief executive Officers of the U.S. Catholic Conference, the National Council of Churches, and the Synagogue Council of America.⁵⁴ Departing from the critical orientation of their clerical colleagues stood two international relief agencies, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Protestant-based group, World Vision Incorporated. These agencies received 95 percent of their Southeast Asia operating funds from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).⁵⁵ Throughout 1976, major religious denominations mobilized on the issue of the U.S. and Vietnam. Midway through the year, Congressman Ronald V. Dellums presented a pastoral letter to the House calling for the U.S. to recognize and help reconstruct Vietnam, and for the government to grant amnesty to all war resisters. A list of Christian and Jewish signatories of the letter was added to the *Record*.⁵⁶

⁵³ Shoemaker, “Demonstrators,” 1.

⁵⁴ Congress, Senate, Senator Mark O. Hatfield (R) of Oregon, 94th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* (18 December 1975): 41577.

⁵⁵ Richard L. Raske, “CIA Funded, Manipulated Missionaries,” *National Catholic Reporter* 11, 36 (1 August 1975): 16.

⁵⁶ Congress, House, Representative, Ronald V. Dellums, 94th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* (16 June 1976): 18782-18783. The signers were: Bishop James Armstrong, Methodist, The Dakotas; John C. Bennett, President Emeritus, Union

Accounting for MIAs Shapes the Debate in 1976

By 1976, church groups became increasingly frustrated by moves made by the Ford administration blocking church aid to Vietnam. Church members retaliated by continuing loud protests against the U.S. role in Vietnam. Meanwhile, both the critics and protagonists of US-Vietnamese rapprochement seized upon the issue of accounting for Americans missing-in-action to buttress their positions.

Theological Seminary; Rev. Daniel J. Berrigan, S.J.; Peggy Billings, Women's Division, United Methodist Church; Eugene Carson Blake, Former General Secretary, World Council of Churches; Malcolm Boyd, Episcopal Priest & Author; Rabbi Balfour Brickner, Union of American Hebrew Congregations; Rev. John Pairman Brown, Ecumenical Peace Institute, San Francisco; Dr. Robert McAfee Brown, Union Theological Seminary; Bishop John H. Burt, Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Ohio; Rev. William Sloane Coffin, Jr.; Wallace T. Collett, Chairman of the Board, American Friends Service Committee; Dr. Harvey Cox, Professor, Harvard Divinity School; John J. Dougherty, Auxiliary Bishop of Newark; Martin L. Deppe, United Methodist Pastor, Chicago, Board of Directors CALC; Lloyd A. Duren, Pastor, St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Brooklyn; Rev. Richard Fernandez, Institute for World Order, Inc.; H. Lamar Gible, Peace and International Affairs Consultant, World Ministries Commission, Church of the Brethren General Board; Jim Gittings, Presbyterian Editor, *A.D. Magazine*; Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, Archdiocese of Detroit; Donald Harrington, Minister, The Community Church of New York; Rabbi Charles D. Lippman, Pearl River, N.Y.; Don Luce, Director, Clergy and Laity Concerned; Rev. Paul Mayer, Theologian; Rt. Rev. Paul Moore, Jr., Episcopal Bishop of Diocese of N.Y.; Rev. Robert V. Moss, President, Unite Church of Christ; Rev. Jack Mendelsohn, Unitarian Church of Chicago; Dr. Paul McLeary, Director, Church World Service; Vern Prehein, Asia Director, Mennonite Central Committee; Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President, Union of American Hebrew Congregations.; Michael A. Robinson, Rabbi, Temple Israel of Northern Westchester, N.Y, Chairman, Committee on Justice & Peace, Central Conference of American Rabbis; Bishop Walter J. Schoenherr, Auxiliary Bishop Archdiocese of Detroit; A. Finley Schaef, minister, Park Slope United Methodist Church, Brooklyn, N.Y.; Joel K. Thompson, Assoc. Gen.Sec., Gen. Board, Church of the Brethren; Donald W. Shriver, President, Union Theological Seminary, New York; Dr. Dorothee Solle, Professor, Union Theological Seminary; Eugene L. Stockwell, Assoc. General Secretary for Overseas Ministries, National Council of Churches; Sister Mary Luke Tobin, Church Women United; Dr. George Webber, President, New York Theological Seminary; Dr. Charles West, Professor of Christian Ethics, Princeton Theological Seminary; Rabbi Arnold Wolf, Hillel Foundation, Yale University; Dr. Robert Nelson West, President Unitarian-Universalist Association.

The issues of aid and accounting for MIAs were inextricably wedded to one another. Explicitly tying aid for Vietnam to Hanoi's cooperation on the MIA and POW issues, the State Department approved licenses worth \$850,000 in food and medical supplies in response to Hanoi's release of 49 American citizens from Vietnam. These licenses were issued to the Mennonite Central Committee and Church World Services.⁵⁷ Republican Representative Robert Bauman of Maryland opposed this linkage on the grounds that it constituted "blackmail." In March 1976, Bauman proposed an amendment to delete language from a bill permitting trade between the U.S. and Vietnam. Bauman succinctly expressed his objections in terms of his anti-Communist sentiments, blackmail on Vietnam's part, and the profoundly emotional nature of the debate.

Mr. Chairman, I regret quite frankly that this provision allowing trade with Vietnam, appears in this legislation at all. It gives me no great joy to offer an amendment to strike it out because of the purpose which it seeks, information about Americans missing in action. Nevertheless, I think that all of U.S. should be fully aware that in section 415, which I propose to strike entirely from the bill, we are being asked to engage in a game of international blackmail. With the United States paying that blackmail to the Communist government of Vietnam, I am saddened by the manner in which this language appears because, quite frankly, it involves a very emotional issue. This section of the bill gives as a quid pro quo a renewal of trade with Vietnam in return for a possible full accounting of those missing in action and the prisoners of war whom the Vietnamese may have held.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *New York Times*, 9 August 1976, 26.

⁵⁸ Congress, House, Representative Robert E. Bauman (R) of Maryland, 94th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* (3 March 1976): 5230.

Bauman's amendment was defeated by a vote of 185 in favour and 233 against, giving the green light to the President to lift the trade embargo against Vietnam in exchange for information on American MIAs. Both House and Senate had straddled hurdles blocking trade and had come to an agreement which would have permitted nonstrategic trade between the two countries. But, in the eleventh hour, a presidential veto halted what appeared to be an imminent lifting of the embargo. Representative Bingham summarized this near success to his colleagues in the House of Representatives as follows.

In the last Congress, along with 21 cosponsors, I introduced legislation to lift the embargo on nonstrategic trade with Vietnam. A bill was unanimously reported out of subcommittee after 3 days of hearings, approved by the Committee on International Relations, as amended, as section 415 of the International Security Assistance Act of 1976, approved by the House and adopted in conference. *Only a presidential veto prevented enactment of the legislation.* [my emphasis]⁵⁹

One month later, in December, one of the most vocal proponents of establishing ties with Vietnam, Senator Mike Mansfield, appeared on NBC's "Meet the Press." Mike Mansfield, a Democrat who had held the post of Senate majority leader for the last sixteen years, advocated establishing ties with the governments in Cambodia and Vietnam as the only way to learn the fate of the unaccounted for young men.⁶⁰ Mansfield's influence in Senate was enormous and his efforts to extract the U.S. from Indochina had been one of

⁵⁹ Congress, House, Representative Jonathan Bingham (D) of New York, 95th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (2 February 1977): 3396.

⁶⁰ *New York Times*, 13 December 1976, 11 .

his deepest and most abiding concerns. On the occasion of Mansfield's leaving political life, the *Christian Science Monitor* described Michael Joseph Mansfield as having been one of the two most influential men in Congress for a decade and a half. Mansfield was a "prime mover and shaper on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. . . ." ⁶¹ According to the *Monitor's* account of his feelings at retirement, after twenty-four years in the Senate, Mansfield reported that he felt sorriest about the war in Southeast Asia. "Tragedy. Costly in men and treasure. Costly in prestige. Utterly unnecessary." ⁶²

Part of the cost of the Vietnam War was, and would continue to be, up to \$100 million spent annually trying to account for MIAs. Each year from 1975 to 1995, the U.S. government has spent between \$55 and \$100 million in search of MIAs. ⁶³ Presidential vulnerability to the politics of the Vietnam War continued to be a powerful electoral consideration. Says political scientist Allan E. Goodman, "The last thing a troubled president needs in running for re-election is to face charges that he abandoned the

⁶¹ The *Christian Science Monitor* article was entered into the *Congressional Record*. Congress, House, 94th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* (17 June 1976): 18929. The *Monitor* article went on to describe Mansfield history of "self-reliance" as follows: "He grew up like an orphan after his widowed, Irish immigrant father, a New York hotel porter, shipped him off to Great Falls, Montana, to live with an aunt. But young Mansfield ran away from home at 14, joined the Navy, went back later to Butte as a mucker (shoveler) mining copper until he met a teacher named Maureen Hayes. He had only gone through the eighth grade: she refused to marry him unless he got himself an education. He took on high school and college simultaneously; she taught him, cashed in her life insurance to put him through Montana State University. He got his BA, then MA there, went on to teach Far Eastern history at MSU before his 10-year term in the House." Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Allan E. Goodman, "Dateline Hanoi: Recognition at Last," *Foreign Policy* 100 (Fall 1995): 149.

MIAs and rushed to complete trade agreements that allowed the Vietnamese favourable import terms, thus causing more American workers to lose jobs.”⁶⁴ The conflicted nature of domestic politics determining foreign policy in regards to Vietnam, and the ongoing price each President of the United States has had to pay on the issue of MIAs and POWs, is stated concisely by Goodman.

The United States has had a long history of conducting extensive relations with its adversaries in the aftermath of both hot and cold wars. Since the 1980s, though, its policy on the pace of normalization has been shaped primarily by domestic constituencies. The U.S. State, Defence and Commerce Departments recommended rapprochement with Hanoi well before any president believed that any adverse domestic political risks could be contained.⁶⁵

The State Department continued to spotlight the matter of MIAs as a counterweight to any moves toward rapprochement with Vietnam. In November 1976, Frank A. Sieverts, deputy coordinator for prisoners-of-war (POWs) and MIAs in the office of the Deputy Secretary of State, explained why the U.S. had again vetoed Vietnam’s bid for UN membership. Again, the U.S. stood alone in the Security Council against the fourteen other votes approving Vietnam’s application. “Accounting for the missing in action,” said Sieverts,” was a matter of such emotional magnitude that it transcended all other issues involving Vietnam.”⁶⁶ When Ford directed the U.S. delegate to veto

⁶⁴ Ibid., 148.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 146.

⁶⁶ *New York Times*, 21 November 1976, 9.

Vietnam's admission to the UN in September 1976,⁶⁷ the Security Council decided to delay the vote until after the U.S. presidential elections scheduled for 2 November.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, even though it engaged in its first talks on the question of normalization of relations, on 11 November 1976, the U.S. followed up by again vetoing Vietnam's bid.⁶⁹ Senator George McGovern responded to the veto by sending a letter to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld saying the American veto made the U.S. look "weak and ridiculous."⁷⁰ McGovern landed a particularly weighty blow when he suggested that the US's reliance on insisting on more information on MIAs was a contrived issue. "Was it not a fact," asked McGovern, "that the Defence Department has information based on intelligence sources and interrogation of other combat personnel that the MIAs in Vietnam aerial combat were actually killed in action?"⁷¹

The MIA issue had long been given prominence by the administration. The principle group demanding a full accounting, The National League of Families of Missing in Action in Southeast Asia, was accustomed to a privileged position with ready access to high officials in the Pentagon, the State Department, and the White House—each of which

⁶⁷ Ibid., 14 September 1976, 1.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 15 September 1976, 1.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 13 November 1976, 6.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 30 November 1976, 27.

⁷¹ Ibid.

delegated officials to deal specifically with MIA queries.⁷² Indicators abound as to the emotive grip the MIA issue held over the American political psyche.

Only one flag other than the Star-Spangled Banner has ever flown over the White House. There on one day ever since 1982 has fluttered the black-and-white POW/MIA flag, designed and distributed by the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia.

... This banner thus displays to the world our nations's faith in the flag's central image, the silhouette of a handsome American prisoner of war, his head slightly bowed to reveal behind him the ominous shape of a guard tower. A strand of barbed wire cuts across just below his firm chin. Underneath runs the motto "YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN."

Each year since 1982 the U.S. government has officially declared it is operating "on the assumption that at least some Americans are still held captive."⁷³

One sad irony behind the MIA issue was that the Vietnam War claimed the smallest percentage of unaccounted-for combatants in American history.

... the proportion of unaccounted for Americans to the total killed in action is far smaller for the Vietnam War than for any previous war in the nations's history—even though this was its longest war, included protracted "secret" wars in Laos and Cambodia whose very existence was denied by the U.S. government, and ended with every battlefield in the possession of the enemy. For the Second World War, after which the United States was free to explore every battlefield, the 78,750 still unaccounted for represent 19.4 percent of the total 405,399 killed. For the Korean War, more than 15 percent of the dead are still unaccounted for.

⁷² Ibid., 21 November 1976, 9.

⁷³ Franklin, "The POW/MIA Myth," 45.

In contrast, the unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War constitute less than four percent of the 58,152 killed.⁷⁴

President Ford's to-be-successor, Jimmy Carter, heightened the MIA issue to even greater prominence by wielding the MIA issue as an emotive political weapon declaring that the Ford administration's inability to achieve a full accounting of MIAs was one of that administration's most embarrassing failures.⁷⁵ Carter, evidently, believed that his administration would resolve the question of accounting for MIAs in Southeast Asia.

Conclusion

A factional map based on "pro-Vietnam" and "anti-Vietnam" camps in the Executive and Legislative branches of the U.S. government throughout 1975 and 1976 yields two distinct clusters of political thought and foreign policy objectives. Democrats were more likely to have been critical of the American involvement in the Vietnam War. On post-war issues, the supporters of this camp were more likely to promote the lifting of the U.S. trade embargo against Vietnam; the provision of aid to Hanoi to help Vietnam rebuild its infrastructure and economy; and, the normalization of US-Vietnam relations. The Republicans were more likely to oppose these moves denouncing communism on Cold War ideological grounds and insisting on a full accounting of MIAs in Indochina before proceeding with closer US-Vietnam relations.

⁷⁴ **Ibid., 47.**

⁷⁵ ***New York Times*, 10 November 1976, 10.**

The Legislative Branch showed itself to be more pro-Vietnam than the Executive Branch. Within Congress, the Senate tended to act more sympathetically toward Vietnam than did the House of Representatives. Outside interest groups and alliances constituted important buttresses to the two Vietnam camps. Banks, trade interests and oil companies lobbied the U.S. government through sympathetic Congressmen to lift the U.S. trade embargo. Peace advocates and left-of-centre Church groups were given a voice in Congress on issues of aid. Right wing members of Congress one would normally expect to support measures intended to expand American trade and investment overseas were strongly opposed by a second group of equally anti-communist pro-business Congressmen who strongly favoured normalizing relations with Vietnam in order to establish American trade and investment in communist Vietnam. Equally significant were the exceptions to these general rules. There were the Democrats who took up the Cold War cudgel against the communists with virulence as did Democrat Larry MacDonald. On the Republican side, Mark Hatfield was one of the staunchest supporters in all of Congress of lifting the trade embargo. With the end of the Ford administration, 'round one' of what to do about postwar Vietnam came to a close. A 'flip flop' in the positions of the Congress and the Executive Branch would take place during the presidency of Jimmy Carter.

CHAPTER 3

THE EXECUTIVE BATTLES CONGRESS: 1977-1978

Jimmy Carter stepped into the Oval Office in the White House with the belief that he would be the president who would resolve the issue of accounting for the young men missing in action in Southeast Asia. To do this, Carter knew he would have to normalize relations with Vietnam and lift the trade embargo. By the end of 1978, the breakthrough appeared to be imminent. The *New York Times* reported in October 1978 that negotiations between the United States and Vietnam had “reached the point where the principle subjects being discussed [were] a timetable and ways and means of proceeding toward a normal relationship.”⁷⁶ The *New York Times* simultaneously reported that the U.S. and China were in the process of establishing full diplomatic relations and this “at a time when Peking and Hanoi [were] engaged in increasingly bitter hostility, [making] a formal rapprochement between the United States and Vietnam . . . a delicate matter.”⁷⁷

Carter Builds Momentum

From the outset of his presidency, Jimmy Carter was determined to resolve the issue of accounting for those Americans missing in action in Vietnam. Carter had signalled his intention indirectly in November 1976 when he referred to the Ford administration’s

⁷⁶ *New York Times*, 26 October 1978, 80.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

failure to gain a complete accounting of MIAs as one of that administration's most embarrassing failures. Carter followed up by pursuing a long list of actions bringing the U.S. closer to Vietnam.

Carter kicked off his presidency with a step toward easing some of the divisive recrimination of the Vietnam War, the pardoning of all war resisters.⁷⁸ Detractors voiced their opposition immediately introducing Senate Resolution 18 in which Democrat James B. Allen of Alabama, Republican Jesse Helms of North Carolina, and Democrat Harry F. Byrd of West Virginia, proposed to "express the sense of the Senate in opposition to a general Presidential pardon of Vietnam era draft evaders" ⁷⁹ Concomitantly, Senator Byrd submitted a bill (Senate Resolution 41) to the Committee on Foreign Relations requiring "specific congressional authorization of any expenditure for the purpose of providing direct or indirect assistance of any kind to or for the Socialist Republic of Vietnam" ⁸⁰ Meanwhile, Representative Bingham continued his efforts to have the U.S. lift the trade embargo against Vietnam by appealing to American strategic interests and humanitarian traditions. "We are the only country," said Bingham, "that continues to embargo trade with Vietnam. This anachronistic and vindictive policy is contrary to our

⁷⁸ Ibid., 16 February 1977, 29

⁷⁹ Congress, Senate, Senator James B. Allen (D) of Alabama, 95th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (10 January 1977): 455.

⁸⁰ Congress, Senate, Senator Harry S. Byrd (Independent-Democrat) of West Virginia, 95th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (10 January 1977): 573.

best traditions, hampers normalization of relations, denies leverage in Southwest Asian politics and increases the very reliance of the Vietnamese on the Russians”⁸¹

Carter pressed on with rapprochement. In March 1977, he announced the lifting of travel restrictions to Vietnam and Cambodia (as well as to North Korea and Cuba).⁸² Carter pinned his hopes on the visit of a U.S. delegation to Hanoi to lay the foundation for talks on normalization.⁸³ According to United Press International, Carter had said he wanted former Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield to lead the mission. Given Mansfield’s public declarations favouring establishing relations with Vietnam as the surest way of learning the fate of unaccounted for Americans, Carter’s intentions were clear. In fact, Carter’s parting words to the delegation explicitly stated that though there might be no final accounting of MIAs, the commission’s work could provide the foundation needed to normalize relations.⁸⁴ Indeed, the commission’s report upon its return, and Carter’s evaluation of its report, were glowing. Carter concluded that the Vietnamese were acting in good faith and the commission’s work was “superb.”⁸⁵ The report further stated that

⁸¹ Congress, House, Representative Jonathan Bingham (D) of New York, 95th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (2 February 1977): 3396.

⁸² *New York Times*, 8 March 1977, 9.

⁸³ The five members of the delegation were Marian Wright Edelman, director of the Children’s Defence Fund; Charles W. Yost; G.V. Montgomery, Democrat from Mississippi; Mike Mansfield; and Leonard Woodcock. Led by Leonard Woodcock, president of the United Auto Workers union, the formation of the five-member team was prompted by a Senate resolution calling upon the President to set up a commission to pursue the issue of accounting for MIAs.

⁸⁴ *New York Times*, 13 March 1977, 8.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 24 March 1977, 13.

the Vietnamese “seemed prepared to de-emphasize references to the aid as coming from the U.S. obligation as per the Paris agreement,” and that the Vietnamese “understood our domestic political constraints on this issue.”⁸⁶ New York Representative Richard L. Ottinger (D) praised Carter’s sending of the delegation describing it as possessing the potential to achieve as a win-win result. Ottinger linked American corporate interest in Vietnamese oil and trade with accounting for American MIAs and Vietnam’s need for American technology and American money.

The Vietnamese appear to be interested in the resumption of trade and the availability of U.S. capital and technology for joint ventures in the development of their country. This Vietnamese interest appears to be reciprocated by corporations in this country, as suggested by the occasional reports that U.S. oil companies have sought, or begun preliminary discussions with the Vietnamese regarding the abandoned oil fields in the South China Sea. This presents a unique opportunity for a settlement in which we could get much needed oil and the accounting we seek, while the Vietnamese could get hard currency they need for their country from the sale of oil.⁸⁷

The battle within Congress continued. Anti-Communist invective continued to be hurled at supporters of rapprochement with Vietnam. Georgia Representative McDonald (D) charged that Communist sympathizers within the U.S. formed the basis of grassroots support for U.S. diplomatic ties to Vietnam.

The U.S. supporters of the Vietcong, Khmer Rouge and Pathet Lao opened a campaign in support of U.S. diplomatic recognition and provision of technical aid to the new

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Congress, House, Representative Richard L. Ottinger (D) of New York, 95th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (2 March 1977): 5972.

Communist regimes in Southeast Asia virtually as the last American helicopter left Saigon. From the old Communist Party, U.S.A., dominated anti-Vietnam coalition called the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice–PCPJ, several overlapping coalitions were formed to target special issues such as amnesty for deserters and draft dodgers–National Council for Universal and Unconditional Amnesty, Recognition of and Aid to Communist Vietnam–Friendship, and Promotion of U.S. Disarmament, Abandonment of Overseas Bases and Defence Commitments and a Policy of Nonintervention Against Soviet-bloc Aggression–Coalition for a New Foreign and Peace Policy.⁸⁸

In spite of the anti-Communist rhetoric in Congress, US-Vietnamese relations continued to improve. In May, the first of three rounds of normalization talks that year were held to discuss establishing diplomatic relations. Along with direct negotiations with Hanoi, the U.S. pledged not to bar Vietnam's admission to the UN⁸⁹—a promise it kept.⁹⁰ Vietnam responded by saying it would press on with the task of accounting for American MIAs. A representative of the Vietnamese government explained that Vietnam would refrain from using the words “war reparations,” and would refer instead to “contributions.” Vietnam also backed away from demands for \$3.5 billion in aid, requesting instead a list of goods worth \$1 billion.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Congress, House, Representative Larry McDonald (D) of Georgia, 95th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (22 March 1977): 8644. McDonald includes four pages of names of individuals and groups pushing for US-Vietnam relations and having Communist roots or connections.

⁸⁹ *New York Times*, 5 May 1977, 1.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 20 July 1977, 5.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 5 May 1977, 12.

Having made a substantial number of diplomatic overtures toward Vietnam, Carter braced himself for the political battle at home. The battles within Congress, particularly the House of Representatives, were fought largely over appropriations bills—that is, whether or not to allow indirect aid to Vietnam through such multinational lending institutions as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

**Slamming the Door on the President and the State Department:
The House Says No to Aid for Vietnam**

By May 1977, Carter's initiatives on rapprochement had built up momentum. Travel restrictions to Vietnam had been lifted, the U.S. had not blocked Vietnam's last bid for admission to the UN, Washington refrained from trying to prohibit the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) from sending delegations to Vietnam, and the State Department had pledged to lift the trade embargo once US-Vietnam relations were normalized. But, as the State Department closed its first rounds of normalization talks with Vietnam, the House suddenly buttressed its stance against aid for Vietnam.

Washington, May 5—The State Department pledged today once again that the United States would not offer any economic aid to Vietnam. The policy was affirmed after the House of Representatives, in a surprise move last night, *voted to prohibit even the discussion of assistance to Hanoi* [my emphasis].

The vote, 266 to 131, on an amendment to a bill authorizing operating funds for the State Department, did not change the existing legal situation. Previous legislation already bars aid to Vietnam. However the practical effect of

the amendment may be to make talks on normalization more difficult.

The Vietnam issue came up in the House of Representatives yesterday after John M. Ashbrook, Republican of Ohio, a conservative, heard on the evening television news that Vietnam said the United States owed it more than \$4.5 billion. This angered him, Mr. Ashbrook told an unruly House that had been kept into an evening session.

With the State Department authorization bill then on the floor, Mr. Ashbrook offered an amendment that said none of the funds authorized "shall be used for the purpose of negotiating reparations, aid, or any other form of payment to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam."⁹²

Not only was the State Department barred from giving aid to Vietnam, it was also prohibited from even discussing the question of assistance. Senator Robert Dole followed suit. Leading the charge, Dole introduced an amendment (House Resolution 5652) to prohibit economic aid to specified countries. The Omnibus Multilateral Development Institutions Act of 1977 stipulated that U.S. representatives to the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, other multinational lending institutions, would have to vote against requests for economic assistance from Cambodia, Laos, or Vietnam. Should these institutions proceed by aiding these countries, the U.S. would cut its contributions to the institution in question by an equal amount.⁹³ Meanwhile, Brzezinski was in Peking commiserating with Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping over China's and the US's parallel

⁹² Ibid., 6 May 1977, 1/6.

⁹³ Congress, Senate, Senator Robert Dole (R) of Kansas, 95th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (19 May 1977): 15625.

interests and war on hegemonism. The hegemonists remained un-named, but were clearly understood to be the Soviet Union and Vietnam.⁹⁴

A pitched battle over appropriations ensued. Over the next six months, from May to October, the Senate and Carter squared off against the House of Representatives. The second of three rounds of talks in 1977 was held in June. Vietnam provided information on twenty war dead for which the U.S. expressed its appreciation.⁹⁵ Yet again, foreign aid became the focus of conservative attention. On 23 June 1977, the House voted in favour of the Young amendment prohibiting either direct or indirect aid to Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and four other countries.⁹⁶ This vote was followed up by 339 Democrats and Republicans voting in favour of the Wolff amendment legislating that U.S. funds could not be used, directly or indirectly, as reparations to Vietnam.⁹⁷ A bill put forth by Robert Dole in the Senate also sought to prohibit aid to Vietnam by the World Bank and other multinational banks.⁹⁸ The World Bank hit back. In a letter sent to Secretary of the Treasury W. Michael Blumenthal, dated 5 July 1977, World Bank president Robert

⁹⁴ House, Committee on International Relations, *Americans Missing in Action in Southeast Asia: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs (Part 2)*, Report of Peace Through Law presented by Jonathan Bingham et al, 95th Cong., 2nd sess., 9 August and 13 September 1978, 115.

⁹⁵ *New York Times*, 4 June 1977, 1.

⁹⁶ Congress, House, Representative Virginia Smith (R) of Nebraska, 95th Cong., 1st sess. *Congressional Record* (18 October 1977): 34097.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *New York Times*, 26 June 1977, 5.

McNamara said the World Bank would reject U.S. aid if it imposed any restrictions on the use of the contributions.⁹⁹

The Carter administration regained ground in the Senate by mid-July, when the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance eliminated the House-approved ban on indirect loans to Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Mozambique, Uganda, Angola, and Cuba.¹⁰⁰

Public support for humanitarian aid to Vietnam appeared to be high at this time. According to a NYT-CBS News Survey, although 70 percent of the American people were opposed to direct aid, 49 percent favoured giving industrial or farm equipment, and 66 percent agreed with sending food and medical supplies to Vietnam.¹⁰¹ Shortly thereafter, on 5 August 1977, the Senate voted 40 to 27 for the final passage of a \$7.1 billion foreign aid bill which had removed the ban on loans to Vietnam by international lending institutions, and restored a 5 percent cut imposed by House.¹⁰² Apparently Senator Dole was not aware of the NYT-CBS News survey. Dole objected to the bill stating that he did not know “any taxpayer who [wanted] money to go to Vietnam.”¹⁰³ Representative

⁹⁹ Ibid., 15 July 1977, 19.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 15 July 1977, 19.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 29 July 1977, 22. The results were based on telephone interviews carried out from the 19th to the 25th of July, with 1,447 adult men and women around the U.S.. The degree of accuracy of the survey was given as 95 percent certainty with only a 3 percent variance if all adults had been surveyed.

¹⁰² Ibid., 6 August 1977, 3.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 6 August 1977, 3. Washington’s Overseas Development Council, a private, nonprofit foundation concerned with aid to the developing nations, made an in-depth

Robert Dornan had also objected to the bill bringing an interesting perspective to the discourse. According to Dornan, if the U.S. did not first fulfill its obligation to account for its MIAs, the next generation of Americans would appear “smaller” and “impotent” in the international arena. Said Dornan, one of the most right-wing members of the House,

And when a sensitive and bright generation must recognize itself instinctively as being made into something much smaller than it ought be, how dare we expect from them a better judgement for ourselves, our nation? . . . Such timidity, such pathetically inconsistent defence of human rights must ultimately leave a government impotent in the international arena.¹⁰⁴

Two House-Senate Conference reports dealing with foreign assistance ensued as a result of the stalemate over appropriations between the House and the Senate. The original conference report was filed on 26 September 1977. House conferees remained opposed to ten amendments to the Foreign Assistance Act. The President made significant assurances to the House on its concerns. The Foreign Assistance Appropriations bill was sent back to the conference committee. An agreement was struck on the amendments in

survey. It found more than two-thirds of the U.S. people supported aid that directly benefited the Third World poor, such as medicine, food and education. A majority of those interviewed also said they were not interested in a *quid pro quo* from the developing countries in the form of economic advantages for U.S. corporations or banks; people in the U.S. saw their aid as necessary for humanitarian reasons exclusively. Nevertheless, the World Bank and IMF required poor countries to give economic advantages to U.S. banks and corporations. In the survey, more than 91 percent said “too much of our foreign assistance is kept by the leaders of poor countries and does not get to the people,” a fear amply justified to judge by the new elite of development planners in the Third World. *National Catholic Reporter*, 8 February 1980, 18.

¹⁰⁴ Congress, House, Representative Robert K. Dornan (R) of California, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1977, 27109.

question, and a new conference report was issued on 12 October 1977.¹⁰⁵ The House had bowed to the Executive Branch on foreign policy objectives.

Carter's intervention at this juncture was a desperate bid to stave off a victory by the critics of aid for Vietnam. Carter sent a letter to Representative Gillis W. Long stating that he would instruct U.S. representatives to multinational lending institutions to vote against loans to Vietnam.¹⁰⁶ In effect, Carter's letter was a calculated gamble in which he would direct American representatives to oppose loans to Vietnam once these lending institutions had already secured American money in their coffers. In a vote of 229 to 195, the House eliminated the amendment that would have prohibited giving money to those multinational lending institutions providing loans to Vietnam.¹⁰⁷ With the passage of the conference report, Representative Ashbrook reacted forcefully, stating that the liberals had won and Communists would receive the American taxpayers' money.¹⁰⁸

As 1977 came to a close, things were looking up for Vietnam. The U.S. had lifted its veto on Vietnam's admission to the UN, and the UN subsequently approved postwar

¹⁰⁵ Congress, House, Representative Gillis W. Long (D) of Louisiana, speaking on Conference Report 7797—For Assistance and Related Programs Appropriations Act 1978, 95th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (18 October 1977): 34092. Democrat Tom Harkin of Iowa had opposed giving money to the World Bank and other lending institutions on the grounds that they lend more to repressive regimes than to the poor countries for the benefit of the poor. Congress, House, Representative Tom Harkin (D) of Iowa, 95th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (18 October 1977): 34100.

¹⁰⁶ Congress, House, Representative Gillis W. Long (D) of Louisiana, 95th Cong., 1st sess. *Congressional Record* (18 October 1977): 34092.

¹⁰⁷ *New York Times*, 23 October 1977, IV/2.

¹⁰⁸ Congress, House, Representative O. Ashbrook (R) of Ohio, 95th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (4 November 1977): 37391.

aid. By November, Vietnam had established diplomatic ties with almost all the industrialized countries of Europe (except for Denmark, Norway and Austria), and had ties with more than eighty countries overall.¹⁰⁹ Finally, in December, Vietnam and the U.S. embarked on their third round of normalization talks for 1977.

More Dips in the Road to Normalization

In 1978, Congress spasmodically opposed the White House, citing the need to battle the Communists abroad and to reclaim Congressional prerogatives and powers from the Executive Branch back home. More specifically, President Carter found himself sparring repeatedly with the House of Representatives. As Hanoi inched closer to Washington, Peking found an abiding ally in Brzezinski as it attempted to torpedo Vietnam's bid to normalize relations with the U.S.. A number of small gestures emanating from the U.S. continued the movement toward rapprochement with Vietnam. In early January 1978, the Treasury Department authorized American Vietnamese to send money to relatives in Vietnam via banks in Paris and Hong Kong.¹¹⁰ On another front, Secretary of Defence Cyrus R. Vance said he favoured admitting all Vietnamese "boat people" rescued at sea who had no other country to go to.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ *New York Times*, 4 November 1977, 33.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15 January 1978, 4.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 15 March 1978, 3. Vance (who had said the U.S. erred in intervening in Vietnam), met with opposition from Attorney General Griffin B. Bell and the Justice Department.

By May, however, prospects for Vietnam were clearly disaggregating. Signs of escalating conflict between China and Vietnam continued to mount. Peking issued a veiled threat to Vietnam over its maltreatment of Vietnam's ethnic Chinese, who were fleeing Vietnam in the thousands each month.¹¹² China's criticism of Vietnam's human rights abuses was, at best, disingenuous given the fact that China had been the Khmer Rouge's primary backer throughout the genocide. By July, China escalated its feud with Vietnam to ever greater heights when it terminated all economic aid projects to Vietnam bringing to a close \$10 billion worth of aid given to Vietnam over the past 20 years.¹¹³

As Vietnamese-Chinese relations plummeted, the issue of lifting the U.S. trade embargo against Vietnam loomed before President Carter. Issued by executive order in September 1975, Carter was faced with either renewing or cancelling the embargo. Prominent business interests were still hopeful that the President would lift the embargo. Big business remained hopeful. The Hong Kong branch of the First National City Bank compiled an 88-page coloured guidebook on how to conduct trade with Vietnam.¹¹⁴ Michael Emmons, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, believed that lifting the embargo would serve U.S. self-interests since "the U.S. trade

¹¹² Ibid., 2 May 1978, 6. By May 1979, the U.S. would admit 25,000 more refugees under the President's "parole" authority. This would bring the total number of refugees received in the U.S. since the fall of Saigon in 1975, to 197,000. *New York Times*, 24 July 1978, 16.

¹¹³ Ibid., 4 July 1978, 1.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 17 March 1977, A16.

embargo on Vietnam punished American business and not Hanoi.”¹¹⁵

Faltering progress toward rapprochement was made in the latter half of 1978. Once more House efforts to ban the indirect use of foreign aid through international lending institutions, for Cambodia and Vietnam, were fended off. An amendment put forth by Representative C. W. Bill Young was narrowly defeated by a vote of 203 to 198.¹¹⁶ Three days after the vote, Prime Minister of Vietnam Pham Van Dong told an American delegation visiting Hanoi that his government sought not only normalization of relations, but “friendship” as well between the two nations.¹¹⁷ In August, the delegation handed over the remains of eleven Americans upon its return from Hanoi.¹¹⁸ With the month of September, came passage of the \$9.2 billion foreign aid bill in the Senate. The senate had once again succeeded in refusing to ban indirect aid to Vietnam.¹¹⁹

In spite of these promising signs of imminent success in achieving closer relations between the U.S. and Vietnam, Vietnam was on the verge of disaster and was set for war. China had swooped down on American businessmen, seducing them with the prospect of billions of dollars in business ventures to further China’s modernization programme. Meanwhile, normalization of relations appealed to the Cold War minded in

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 24 July 1978, 1.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 4 August 1978, 26.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 8 August 1978, 3.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 23 September 1978, 3.

Washington—particularly Zbigniew Brzezinski¹²⁰ and the members of National Security Council. On the ground in Indochina, Vietnam was faced with an influx of 150,000 Cambodian refugees escaping the Khmer Rouge. Vietnam was simultaneously fighting the Khmer Rouge on its Western border, knowing that China also had at least 16,000 troops in Cambodia along with MIG-15s, tanks and other military equipment.¹²¹

Domestic Church Groups Battle Foreign Aid Policy—and Each Other

Two sharply divided camps emerged amongst the private voluntary organizations which provided aid to Vietnam and Cambodia. On one side was Catholic Relief Services, and on the other side was Friendshipment and Oxfam. Catholic Relief Services was heavily funded by the American government whereas the others were not. Likewise, whereas representatives of Friendshipment and Oxfam were severe in their criticisms of American foreign aid policy, CRS remained silent.

Catholic Relief Services clearly relied heavily upon federal tax monies for its overseas relief expenses as well as for its administrative expenses.¹²² According to the

¹²⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski was the son of a prominent pre-communist era Polish diplomat. Brzezinski grew up surrounded by the understandable anti-Russian sentiments of Polish diplomats in exile and understood viscerally the dangers of betrayals which the Russians inflicted on the Poles throughout their history. His suspicion of communism and Russian expansionism was bred into his bones and played a major role in shaping his advice to President Carter and in encouraging his differences with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance.

¹²¹ Ibid., 1 December 1978, 26.

¹²² CRS was founded in 1943 by U.S. bishops who wished to find homes for European refugees after the war. “CRS Responses: From Office, Field,” editorial, *National Catholic Reporter* 16, 9 (21 December 1979): 16.

National Catholic Reporter, a left-of-centre independent Catholic weekly newspaper, CRS raised only \$7.3 million of its \$21 million administrative expenses in 1977. The rest was paid for by the U.S. government. More than 65 percent of CRS' total \$240 million budget was paid for by the taxpayers.¹²³ In 1978, 71 percent of CRS' \$252 million budget was provided by taxpayers.¹²⁴ CRS was tied particularly closely to the American government in its services rendered in Vietnam where government sources paid for a massive 94 percent of CRS funding in 1979.¹²⁵ Within the U.S. itself, CRS settled more than half of the 200,000 Indochinese refugees between 1975 and 1979.¹²⁶

Two other stigma plagued the CRS: its close ties with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and CRS's internal problems. Government officials initially denied the existence of CIA-Catholic Church connections. Once these ties were exposed, CIA officials admitted to them but stated that such ties did not erode the integrity of the Church. John J. Gilligan, the new director of the Agency for International Development (AID), described the links between the Church, the CIA, and U.S. foreign policy in an interview with the *National Catholic Reporter*. Gilligan explained that AID was now

¹²³ William Reddig, "Agency Mirrors U.S. Global Aims," *National Catholic Reporter* 14, 12 (13 January 1978): 1.

¹²⁴ Mark Winiarski, "CRS: Image vs Reality III: Government Pays CRS Overhead," *National Catholic Reporter* 15, 44 (12 October 1979): 7.

¹²⁵ William Reddig, "Broderick: 'CRS Can Survive Without U.S. Government Funds'," *National Catholic Reporter* 14, 16 (10 February 1978): 1.

¹²⁶ Patricia Lefevre, "'Second Holocaust':" In Geneva and Bangkok, Nations, Churches Try to Solve Refugee Plight," *National Catholic Reporter* 15, 37 (10 August 1979): 22.

swept clean of its CIA agents but that earlier AID had served as a training ground for the CIA, thus allowing those agents access to target countries.

At one time, many AID field offices were infiltrated from top to bottom with CIA people. . . . It was pretty well known in the agency who they were and what they were up to. . . . The administration in here said OK. You (CIA) pay their salaries. I don't care what you do. So they would send people over here, clearly identify them as CIA people that they wanted in Laos, or Cambodia or Chile, or someplace else. And AID would place them. . . . The idea was to plant operatives in every kind of activity we had overseas, government, volunteer, religious—every kind.¹²⁷

The *National Catholic Reporter* article described CRS as the “advance guard” for AID and the U.S. programs, “often providing the butter, or peanut oil, when guns [were] also coming.”¹²⁸ “It’s hard,” said John G. Sommer, author of *Beyond Charity*, “to find a country where CRS does not line up with AID.”¹²⁹

CRS’s internal problems were inextricably linked to its highly compromising links to the American government. According to a report in the *NCR*, “Internally, employees and consultants had warned management of many problems including political naivete, lack of direction, lack of criteria to judge programs, and failure to heed advice of those working

¹²⁷ “AID Says, ‘Spies Gone’,” *National Catholic Reporter* 14, 2 (13 January 1978): 4.

¹²⁸ Ibid. Senator Hatfield, had petitioned the Director of the CIA in 1975, William Colby, to “legally bar any connections between the CIA and the Churches.” Ibid..

¹²⁹ Ibid. See Appendix 6, “Where CRS and AID are Big Together”

in the Third World.”¹³⁰ *NCR* also reported on CRS’s ties to repressive regimes and the need for the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) to “reel in” the CRS.

Publicly, CRS officials insist the agency, which employs some 970 persons around the world, is apolitical. But those same officials have made the church appear to be on the side of repressive regimes—in Chile, Peru and Indonesia, for example—while denying aid to groups which struggle for change.

Publicly, Bishop Edwin Broderick, CRS executive director, acknowledges that the U.S. Catholic Conference, which legally “owns” the separate CRS corporation, is “reeling in the agency”—keeping closer check, requiring more frequent consultation. Privately, USCC executives acknowledge that CRS has “bad problems,” is a “runaway agency” and has failed to consult with USCC staff on important issues, such as foreign politics and refugee services.¹³¹

Unlike CRS, Friendshipment was privately funded and extremely critical of American involvement in Indochina. Apart from the letters of criticism regarding American foreign aid and foreign policy which Friendshipment sent to sympathetic congressmen, Friendshipment’s contributing members listed many church-based groups critical of the government. One alignment of aid providers was particularly telling. Two of the members of a four-person delegation which visited Saigon in 1977 were Don Luce and Ron Ridenhour. Luce, executive director of Clergy and Laity Concerned, had authored articles for the *NCR* chronicling CIA connections with clergy in repressive regimes. Ridenhour had initiated the investigation on My Lai which had led to disclosures

¹³⁰ Mark Winiarski, “CRS: Image vs Reality I: Morale, Funding Woes Hit Catholic Relief,” *National Catholic Reporter* 15, 42 (28 September 1979): 18.

¹³¹ Winiarski, “CRS: Image vs Reality I,” 1, 18.

of the massacre. The other two members represented groups strongly advocating peaceful relations with Vietnam. Martha Winnacker was co-director of the Indochina Resource Centre in Berkley, California, and Pat Patterson was the executive director for Indochina of the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church.¹³² The group was in Vietnam to break ground for a 100-bed hospital at the site of the 1968 My Lai massacre.

Members of Oxfam and of various Methodist groups maintained a consistent record of criticizing American foreign aid and the CRS. The associate general secretary of the United Methodist Committee on Relief, Reverend J. Harry Haines, “expressed concern in 1979 that “refugees from Indochina constituted approximately 6 percent of the world’s total exiles, yet they were commanding 90% of the world attention.”¹³³ Oxfam-America officials hurled criticism against the State Department for its refusal to help a coalition of groups spearheaded by Oxfam.¹³⁴ Oxfam’s then director of development, Bob Hohler, charged the State Department’s refusal as due to the fact that those who work for Oxfam were not “company boys,” and therefore “not reliable” agents of Western policy.¹³⁵

Church World Services ran into problems with the US government when it shipped 10,000 tons of wheat, much of it donated by American farmers, to Vietnam in April 1978.

¹³² Don Luce, “Viet Bishop Tells Visitor CRS Can Aid via Hanoi, *National Catholic Reporter* 13, 30 (20 May 1977): 1.

¹³³ “Asian Refugees ‘Only 6 Per Cent’,” *National Catholic Reporter* 15, 37 (10 August 1979): 23.

¹³⁴ Oxfam is a Britain-based coalition.

¹³⁵ Mark Winiarski and Stephanie Russell, “Oxfam Attacks U.S. Aid Stance,” *National Catholic Reporter* 16, 6(30 November 1979): 1.

CWS received the export license for the shipment, but was rejected for government assistance to pay the \$800,000 in shipping costs. The request had been rejected by the State Department because of Congress' express opposition to providing direct aid to Vietnam.¹³⁶ Church World Service seized this opportunity to criticize the Carter administration for not normalizing relations with Vietnam.¹³⁷ Reverend McKinley Coffman of Church World Services believed that winning Chinese contracts was "at the heart of [the US's] non-recognition stance."¹³⁸

Church-based critics of foreign policy paid particular attention to AID, the World Bank and CRS. The Institute for Food and Development Policy charged that U.S. foreign aid undermined popular local movements in favour of the elites in repressive states. The Institute, founded in 1979, was an independent research and education forum funded by some familiar critics of U.S. foreign policy and aid. Contributors included the Columbia Foundation, Oxfam-America, Church of the Brethren, the Maryknoll Fathers, and the United Methodist Church.¹³⁹ The Institute grouped the World Bank, AID and CRS "as agents of multinational corporations, U.S. military strategic interests and 'existing elites' in the Third World which accept 'trickle down' economic ideas."¹⁴⁰ Institute member David

¹³⁶ *New York Times*, 4 April 1978, 6.

¹³⁷ Stephanie Russell, "U.S. Hits at Vietnam Through Aid," *National Catholic Reporter* 15, 37 (10 August 1979): 21..

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Bill Kenkelen, "'Divert Food Dollars to Pay Debts'—Kinley," *National Catholic Reporter* 16, 44 (10 October 1980): 5.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

Kinley said that Oxfam-America, World Neighbors, and the Mennonite Central Committee refuse U.S. government funds, preferring to “root themselves in the problems of the rural poor.”¹⁴¹ Tony Jackson, food aid consultant to Oxfam, lambasted U.S. foreign aid, saying that more than half of the \$2 billion spent annually in world food aid contributed by the U.S. should be “scrapped because of widespread waste, corruption and a distortion of what relief aid is intended for.”¹⁴² The Food for Peace programme, said Jackson, simply helped the rich get richer.¹⁴³

Liberal critics of foreign policy and foreign aid found sympathizers in both the House and the Senate in the persons of Henry S. Reuss, Thomas R. Harkin, Edward Kennedy, and Mark Hatfield. The centrality of the International Monetary Fund, in American foreign policy, received these congressmen’s critical attention. The *National Catholic Reporter* reported some of these Congressmen’s criticisms:

“The record of the International Monetary Fund’s intervention in the developing countries is well known,” says House Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs Committee Chairman Henry S. Reuss (D-Wis.); “The end of timid democracies and more repression.” Reuss worries that the Washington-based fund (the IMF), which is universally recognized as a creature of the United States, is damaging U.S. relations with other countries. . . . His colleague Thomas R. Harkin (D-Iowa) agrees: “Money and the IMF are one of the most important questions in our foreign policy, particularly if you are at all concerned about the inequalities of the world. The question we have to face is

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 20.

¹⁴² Arthur Jones, “‘World Food Aid Plans Fail to Answer Need of Poor’.” *National Catholic Reporter* 16, 44 (10 October 1980): 1.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

whether the world would be better off without the IMF. If you look at what is going on in the Third World, maybe the answer is yes." . . . In the Senate, critics include Edward Kennedy (D-Mass) and Mark Hatfield (R-Ore), who are concerned that the fund's stiff conditions for loans "concentrate hardships among the poorest people in the borrowing countries." The only multilateral bank that is not under congressional scrutiny or subject to human rights considerations, the IMF has escaped controls by insisting they would destroy its credibility as a technical institution without political bias.¹⁴⁴

The *NCR*'s commentary of American foreign aid policy extended to criticizing the World Bank for placing business above humanitarian interests. Aid, it turns out, is not just about foreign policy and humanitarianism. "Development is a lucrative multi-billion dollar business." So said Carol Stitt, business relations adviser for the World Bank.¹⁴⁵ According to the *NCR*, Stitt described a U.S. Treasury Department study which showed that for every \$1 invested in the World Bank by the government, "\$2.50 returned to the U.S. economy through U.S. corporations, which obtain contracts for bank-sponsored projects."¹⁴⁶ The World Bank, explained a report in the *NCR*, got its loans on excellent terms since the money was backed by Treasury notes. Of the US's \$8.4 billion subscription to the World Bank, only 10 percent was paid in cash, with the remaining money considered as "callable capital." The relevance of these facts, as explained in the *NCR*, was that if the World Bank ever got into trouble, it could "call on the Treasury to

¹⁴⁴ Penny Lernoux, "'IMF Fronts for Banks: US-Third World Ties Damages,' Say Critics," *National Catholic Reporter* 16, 44 (1 February 1980): 1.

¹⁴⁵ Penny Lernoux, "McNamara's Bank: 'Very Well Paid 'poor' counters'," *National Catholic Reporter* 16, 15 (8 February, 1980): 19.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

bail it out with the remaining 90 percent of the promised money. Thus in the last quarter of 1979 the bank was able to borrow Swiss Francs at five per cent interest to relend to the developing countries at 7.0 percent, the difference going to support the 'aristocracy of development.'¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

The years 1977 and 1978 were promising ones for American-Vietnamese rapprochement marked as they were by a State Department eager to normalize relations and a president who clearly wanted to account for Americans missing in action in Southeast Asia. The route to achieving a full accounting of MIAs rested on rapprochement with Vietnam. Those who sought rapprochement with Vietnam promoted the position that normalizing relations with Vietnam was the surest way of accounting for MIAs. Likewise, opponents of rapprochement thought it unconscienceable for the US to normalize relations with Vietnam before a complete accounting of MIAs was achieved.

A coherent alignment of American business and humanitarian interests worked parallel to one another. American businessmen and bankers lobbied sympathetic Congressmen to lift the trade embargo. Church-based groups sought to 'heal the wounds of war' and worked vigorously to procure aid for Vietnam. A struggle to secure foreign assistance appropriations for Vietnam was fought between the House and the Senate, terminating with the House ultimately bowing to the Senate and the administration's pro-

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

aid objectives. Pro-aid members of Congress drawing upon the results of public opinion surveys in the debates showed Americans favoured humanitarian aid for Vietnam.

The primary ideological weapon wielded by the Congressional opponents of rapprochement was the stated threat to U.S. interests from the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. This emotive domestic issue was reinforced with the moral imperative of gaining as complete an accounting as possible regarding the fate of American MIAs before lifting the trade embargo. American honour, it was also argued by conservatives, was at stake. Nothing in the public record permits us to determine to what degree these arguments were simply part of a smoke-screen behind which lurked Republic partisan hostility to a Democratic President, but the possibility exists.

Hopes for the fragile prospects of a US-Vietnam normalization of relations were virtually quashed by a confluence of international events in January 1979. In that month, the U.S. normalized relations with Vietnam's adversary, the People's Republic of China. Concurrently, the conflagration between Vietnam and Cambodia flared up in an all-out invasion and subsequent occupation of Cambodia by Vietnam. This provided more than enough condemnatory material for Vietnam's critics to block U.S. cooperation with Vietnam. And finally, Vietnam's brutal expulsion of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Chinese ("boat people") provided more than enough ammunition to those opposing lifting the U.S. trade embargo against Vietnam and normalizing relations.

CHAPTER 4

HANOI'S POLICY OF EQUIDISTANCE BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW

In this chapter attention turns to the debate in Washington over rapprochement with the Vietnamese from 1977 to 1979. As of 1977, the wall between China and the U.S., on the one hand, and Vietnam and the Soviet Union, on the other hand, still contained openings. China continued to provide aid to Vietnam, and the U.S. was still trading with the Soviet Union and exporting oil industry-related technology. But the openings to better Vietnamese-US relations were forced shut by Peking in 1978. Projecting confidence about its oil-producing potential and ability to attract enough foreign investment to modernize, China's leadership courted the U.S. and waged a name-calling diplomatic war against the Soviet Union. Washington, in turn, courted Peking with an eye to China as an enormous market and as a check on Soviet influence in Asia. The Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge continued its onslaught on Vietnam's border, draining Vietnam's already war devastated people and depleting their resources.

The Peking-Washington Duet

With the growing normalization of relations between China and the U.S. in the early 1970s, the U.S. not only tilted toward China, but against the Soviet Union, and allowed itself to be used as a sounding board for Deng's aggressive anti-Soviet foreign policy. Peking, wrote Robert G. Sutter, set on a course of new pressure tactics very soon

after National Security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski visited China in May 1978. Peking, wrote Sutter, appeared to deliberately map out a “collision course”

with Hanoi from May to July [1978] falsely representing Vietnamese refusal to cooperate on the issue of releasing persecuted ethnic Chinese as well as terminating assistance to Vietnam, and then closing the border to ethnic-Chinese from Vietnam (in contradiction to earlier statements regarding Peking’s efforts to have ethnic-Chinese return to China).¹⁴⁸

Improved relations between China and the U.S. in the latter half of 1978 included an agreement on the transfer of U.S. technology and knowledge to China, a reversal of past opposition to the sale of arms to China by other Western powers, a communique on December 15th expressing the mutual American and Chinese desire to fight hegemonism, and the intention to normalize relations as of 1 January 1979. When Deng visited the U.S. in January 1979, he made it clear to Vance and Carter that China would soon attack Vietnam in order to teach it a lesson for invading Cambodia. Knowing that the American government could not officially endorse such aggression, Carter prepared a letter for Deng describing how the U.S. would respond publicly. Brzezinski explained that Washington “could not collude formally with the Chinese in sponsoring what was tantamount to overt military aggression. At the same time, the letter did not lock the United States into a position which could generate later pressures to condemn China in the UN.”¹⁴⁹ In *Khmer-*

¹⁴⁸ Robert G. Sutter, “China’s Strategy Toward Vietnam and Its Implications for the United States,” in David W.P. Elliot., ed., *The Third Indochina Conflict* (Boulder, Colorado: West View Press, 1981), 179.

¹⁴⁹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1983), 410.

Viet Relations, author Thu-Huong Nguyen-Vo aptly describes Sino-US relations in terms of “discreet collusion” through “tacit” American support for China’s 1979 planned attack on the Vietnamese northern border. Nguyen-Vo comments that “Deng’s verbal attacks on Vietnam while he was in the United States had certainly produced the appearance of discreet collusion.”¹⁵⁰ Nguyen-Vo asserts that while the U.S. was publicly announcing “serious concerns” over a Chinese attack on Vietnam, and making statements claiming non-involvement, its actions contradicted its statements. Sending two aircraft carriers, the *Constellation* and the *Midway*, bearing a complement of 160 planes to a point one-day’s cruising distance from Vietnam, Nguyen-Vo makes the analogy of the U.S. “playing the role of the schoolyard big guy, holding back the others so a tough friend could beat up unruly kids.”¹⁵¹ That Washington also waited for Deng to complete his visit to Japan and then return to China, before lamely announcing that it did not endorse Deng’s stated intention to attack Vietnam, hardly constituted ringing disapproval. Washington’s support for China’s anti-Vietnamese, anti-Soviet Union foreign policy was overt, and Washington was not merely being led by Peking in 1979 (see “He’s Got a Real Firm Handshake,” Figure 1). Washington took a direct and supporting role. Brzezinski himself later took credit for having concocted the idea of persuading the Thai foreign minister to cooperate fully with China. Brzezinski claims that he pressed the Thai foreign minister to cooperate

¹⁵⁰ Thu-Huong Nguyen-Vo, *Khmer-Viet Relations and the Third Indochinese Conflict* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company), 137.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 139.

with China and to aid the rebuilding of the Khmer Rouge when the minister visited Washington in the spring of 1979. Brzezinski said:

I encouraged the Chinese to support Pol Pot. I encouraged the Thai to help the D.K. . . . The question was how to help the Cambodian people. Pol Pot was an abomination. We could never support him but China could.¹⁵²

Vietnam's Policy of Equidistance and the Chimera of US-Vietnamese Rapprochement

Cold War logic in Washington and Peking dictated that Hanoi was a mere puppet of Moscow's. This assumption overlooked Vietnam's historical reluctance to rely on any one power. The Vietnamese remembered how the Soviets buckled in the mid-1950s and failed to provide adequate diplomatic support to enforce the implementation of the Geneva Accords. More recently, they felt betrayed by the Soviet Union when Moscow received President Nixon for a detente summit meeting while the U.S. bombed north Vietnam and mined Haiphong harbor.¹⁵³

Berating Vietnam, Cold War logicians in Peking and Washington failed to acknowledge Vietnam's wartime devastation, Chinese pressure tactics, American stalling on the normalization issue, and the reluctance with which Vietnam moved toward the Soviet Union. As early as 1973 the U.S. and Vietnam could have reached a combined post-war aid and trade agreement. According to Porter, Hanoi conducted itself at the United States-North Vietnam Joint Economic Commission with the "utmost seriousness."

¹⁵² Quoted by Elizabeth Becker, *When the War was Over: Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution* (New York: Public Affairs, 1998), 435.

¹⁵³ Bingham et al, *Peace Through Law, Americans Missing in Action*, 114.

Close to a final agreement, Kissinger abruptly terminated the talks in July. The agreement would have committed the U.S. to providing aid while Vietnam would have been obligated to buy 85 percent of the goods financed by the U.S. from American sources. The U.S. would also have become Vietnam's chief supplier of technology and spare parts.¹⁵⁴ Two years later, the strain in U.S.-Vietnamese relations was exacerbated when, in April 1975, North Vietnamese troops marched into Saigon, bringing about a premature unification of the country. Later that year, China decided not to grant any new aid money to Vietnam. Vietnam knew that henceforth it would become far more dependent on the Soviet Union for funds to nourish its plan for the five years covering 1976 to 1980. Between 1976 and 1980, Chinese aid money amounted to at least \$500 million. During the same period the Soviets were to give \$3 billion out of a total of \$4.2 billion from all socialist countries.¹⁵⁵

So long as Hanoi predicated diplomatic relations on the provision of postwar reconstruction aid by the United States, negotiations flagged. Reconstruction aid was tantamount to a confession of war guilt and was therefore out of the question for Washington. Hanoi may have been emboldened by the fact that in 1976 Congress had been willing to lift the trade embargo against Vietnam in order to improve prospects of Vietnamese cooperation on accounting for MIAs. Passed by Congress, Ford vetoed Congress' decision to lift the embargo. In March 1977, Hanoi made concessions to the visiting U.S. Presidential Commission led by Leonard Woodcock. "It dropped allusions to

¹⁵⁴ Gareth Porter, "Vietnam's Soviet Alliance: A Challenge to U.S. Policy," *Indochina Issues* 6 (May 1980): 2.

¹⁵⁵ Bingham et al, *Peace Through Law, Americans Missing in Action*, 113.

any American legal or moral obligation to Vietnam and promised full cooperation in returning the bodies of American soldiers missing in action. . . ."¹⁵⁶ Hopes were high at a meeting in May 1977 when Vietnam's Prime Minister Phan Van Dong unguardedly admitted to being "very enthusiastic" about the possibility of normalization of relations with the U.S.. Porter adds that Dong could not have been aware of the fact "that key Congressional figures would quietly veto a behind-the-scenes Carter administration proposal for humanitarian assistance."¹⁵⁷ Also in May 1977, Vietnam joined COMECON's International Investment Bank, but continued to hold out against joining COMECON itself.¹⁵⁸ Subsequently, on 30 May, Carter authorized quiet negotiations between the U.S. and Vietnam.¹⁵⁹ Upon issuing his first major policy declaration as Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance reiterated Washington's position on the issue of the US's rejection of aid payments to Vietnam (as had been promised by President Richard Milhous Nixon's administration), stating that the U.S. could not "accept an interpretation of the past that imposes unfounded obligations" on the U.S..¹⁶⁰ Political developments continued to

¹⁵⁶ Derek Davies. "Carter's Neglect, Moscow's Victory," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (2 February 1979): 18. Davies further comments that the MIA issue appeared to have been "deliberately blown up into a major political issue in the U.S., possibly as a device to postpone meaningful negotiations."

¹⁵⁷ Porter, "Vietnam's Soviet Alliance," 2.

¹⁵⁸ COMECON is the acronym for the Council for Mutual Economic Aid and was the Eastern bloc's equivalent of the Common Market.

¹⁵⁹ Porter "Vietnam's Soviet Alliance," 3.

¹⁶⁰ "Vance: U.S. to Seek Full Normalization of Ties With China," *The Washington Post*, 30 June 1977, A13.

unfold. In July, Vietnam signed a 25-year friendship treaty with Laos and, two months later, in September, Vietnam responded to Cambodia's escalating border attacks with a Soviet-backed counter-attack. By December, when the third and last Paris meeting of 1977 took place between American and Vietnamese officials, diplomats in Hanoi understood the futility of demanding reconstruction aid given the political culture and mood in Washington. Realism and enthusiasm tempered Vietnamese expectations.

With efforts to normalize relations with the U.S. stymied, ongoing border attacks by the Khmer Rouge, and still no aid from either the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank, Hanoi pulled off its velvet gloves. In March 1978 it closed in on Vietnam's ethnic Chinese, targeting 30,000 private businesses in Cholon–Ho Chi Minh City's Chinatown.¹⁶¹ All capitalist activities were forbidden and properties appropriated—"duly triggering off the massive exodus of Vietnamese Chinese from Vietnam."¹⁶² In May, Brzezinski made his trip to Peking and in the following month the Vietnamese Political Bureau decided on three crucial policies: first, to join COMECON—which Vietnam did in the same month; second, to sign a treaty of friendship with the Soviets—which it did in November; and third, to wage a military offensive against

¹⁶¹ By July, the flow of refugees—more than 70 percent of whom were ethnic Chinese—increased, averaging 3,000 to 4,000 a month. K. Das, "Refugees: Rocking Asean's [i.e. ASEAN's] Boat," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (15 June 1979): 21.

¹⁶² Davies, 20.

Pol Pot to bring down the DK regime—which Hanoi launched in December.¹⁶³ In July, China announced the immediate termination of all its aid programs to Vietnam.¹⁶⁴

“Quiet negotiations” took place in July between Robert Oakey, Richard Holbrooke’s senior deputy, and Ambassador Ha Van Lau, the Vietnamese permanent representative to the UN, but they were subsequently terminated by Washington when Hanoi lamentably made the talks public in August.¹⁶⁵ Hanoi’s desire to maintain a policy of equidistance between itself and Washington and Moscow may have helped shore up its hopes for normalization, but its strategy recognized the volatility of small power alliances with superpowers. Prime Minister Dong explained Hanoi’s hopes and skepticism to an American delegation in August 1978. “Whenever in our four-thousand-year history Vietnam had been dependent on one large friend, it has been a disaster for U.S..”¹⁶⁶ Vietnam’s Secretary of State Thach and Assistant Secretary Holbrooke met in New York at the end of September for what seemed to be a prelude to a normalization agreement. Thach waited a month for the U.S. to resume negotiations. Another meeting did not transpire and Thach was ordered to Moscow to finalize treaty negotiations with the Soviets.¹⁶⁷ The Moscow-Hanoi friendship alliance was signed in November. Under the

¹⁶³ Ibid..

¹⁶⁴ Elizabeth Becker, “The Chinese Invasion of Vietnam: Changing Alliances,” *Indochina Issues*, 6 (March 1979): 6.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid..

¹⁶⁶ Porter, “Vietnam’s Soviet Alliance,” 3.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 4.

weak terms of the treaty, should either country be threatened, the two parties would merely committed to consult one another. The treaty was put to a test when the Chinese launched their attack on Vietnam in February 1979. The world waited anxiously to see what the Soviet Union would do. Moscow, very decidedly, did not intervene militarily.

ASEAN, too, had wanted the U.S. to normalize relations with Vietnam. During visits to Thailand and Malaysia in late 1978, Porter discovered that officials in those two countries “could not understand why the United States had failed to establish relations with Vietnam.”¹⁶⁸ The view of one Thai journalist, Pansak Vinyarant, says Porter, was that the greatest prospects for resolving the conflict lay in the U.S. granting diplomatic recognition and providing aid to Vietnam, and encouraging China and the Soviet Union to let ASEAN resolve its own affairs.¹⁶⁹

China’s vitriolic opposition to US-Vietnam rapprochement led to some distortions of reality. Contrary to Peking’s rhetoric regarding the Soviet Union’s already having a naval base in Vietnam, it was not until China’s attack on Vietnam in February-March 1979 that evidence of serious Soviet-Vietnamese military cooperation developed. Signs of extensive military activity began to surface only in March which, raised the question of the potential for a permanent Soviet base facility in Vietnam.

In early March several ships dropped anchor at the Vietnamese port of Danang. After staying for a week, the ships returned to Vladivostok, but it was the beginning of regular port calls by Soviet ships.

¹⁶⁸ “Indochina in Crisis: Dilemma for U.S. Policy: A Conference Report,” *Indochina Issues* 7 (June 1980): 7.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

In mid-April two big Soviet Tupelov 95-D “Bear” electronic intelligence planes flew into Danang and carried out reconnaissance missions over Kampuchea, the Gulf of Thailand and the South China Sea. Then, in early May, U.S. spy satellites photographed a Soviet Foxtrot submarine sailing in and out of Cam Ranh Bay for the first time, indicating that it might become a stopover point for changing crews and resupplying submarines between Vladivostok and the Indian Ocean. Meanwhile, the Soviets were completing construction of naval and air communications facilities in Danang.¹⁷⁰

Fearing this Soviet presence jeopardized the military balance in East Asia, Japan and the U.S. responded. Japanese Prime Minister Ohira warned Hanoi that if the Soviets established permanent bases, Japanese aid to Vietnam would be in question. The American warning to Hanoi in early March was much more ambiguous stating that the U.S. would take unspecified counteractions. In a speech delivered to the Council on Foreign Relations on 2 April 1979, Holbrooke said that on the U.S. governments’ list of objectives in Indochina, reducing the Soviet presence in Vietnam was second only to ending the human tragedy in Kampuchea.¹⁷¹ The slant of Holbrooke’s speech was harshly critical of Vietnam. Suggesting that Hanoi was the primary culprit, Holbrooke placed the onus of blame on Vietnam—failing to acknowledge China’s role in escalating tensions.

¹⁷⁰ Porter, “Vietnam’s Soviet Alliance,” 1.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

Imposed in May 1975, the U.S. applied its Trading with the Enemy Act to Vietnam prohibiting not only trade and investment with Vietnam, but also banning the transfer of oil related technology from the U.S. to Vietnam.¹⁷² Writing for *Indochina Issues* in August 1979, Michael Morrow observed that multinational corporate executives wanted nothing to do with Vietnam for fear of jeopardizing their deals with China. In May 1979, reported Morrow, “major U.S. banks and oil companies passed up the chance to participate in our trip to Vietnam simply because it was felt that openings to China would be threatened.”¹⁷³ Japan’s Eximbank and Japanese commercial banks stopped financing trade with Vietnam for the same reason.

The U.S. and Vietnam were locked in a stalemate. The evidence of the Vietnamese government’s behaviour strongly suggests, and American policy confirms, that Hanoi has always withheld information about Americans missing in action in Vietnam. A small country in size, wealth, and population, Vietnam’s post-war strategic weapon against the U.S. was not armaments or superpower backing, but information about these young men. North Vietnam not only won the war, but it got to keep American servicemen’s remains,

¹⁷² The Trading With the Enemy Act was enacted in 1917 as an “anti-German tool.” It was next applied in 1964 to North Vietnam and then extended to all of Vietnam in 1975 upon reunification of North and South Vietnam. The Act was further buttressed in 1979 after Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia. “For ten years the United States insisted that Vietnam withdraw its occupying forces. In the opinion of most foreign governments, Vietnam did exactly that late in 1989—as Secretary of State James Baker officially acknowledged last summer. Baker acknowledged the withdrawal, however, less as an occasion for U.S.-Vietnamese rapprochement than as evidence that the hard-line policy was working: because of American implacability, the Vietnamese had finally given in.” Fallows, “Shut Out,” 44, 46.

¹⁷³ Michael Morrow, “Vietnam’s Embargoed Economy: In the U.S. Interest?” *Indochina Issues* 3 (August 1979): 2.

creating angst among Americans at large, and the families of the unaccounted for men in particular. The Vietnamese, who had lost over one and a half million persons in the war, and whose country was devastated by American carpet bombing, held onto their one powerful psychological weapon—the bones and personal effects of American soldiers. Their actions constitute a macabre kind of hostage-taking. Not allowing a people to take care of their dead can be a torment which prohibits closure and the healing process stemming from loss and grief. From the American's leadership point of view, this impasse could serve a purpose. The U.S. could not un-lose the war, but a President who could bring home American remains or any surviving POWs would gain status as a tragic kind of political hero, striking one of the deepest emotional chords possible in the American body politic.

Conclusion

Vietnam refused to take sides with China, or the Soviet Union, or the U.S.. In response, China applied pressure tactics against Vietnam and backed Vietnam's enemy, the Khmer Rouge. Vietnam sought to normalize relations but the U.S. snubbed Vietnam as an enemy of China and a satellite of the Soviet Union. The U.S. painted Vietnam as an aspiring small hegemonist, conspiring with the Soviet Union and turning its back on the West. This was simply not true. The Soviet Union did not intervene militarily when China attacked Vietnam's northern border in February 1979. Vietnam turned to the Soviet Union reluctantly and as a last resort while the Soviet Union, in return, fulfilled its pledge to assist Vietnam—but very cautiously. Curiously though, while tacitly siding with

Peking's anti-Vietnamese policy, and forestalling normalization with Vietnam, the U.S. government showed sustained and discreet interest in Vietnam.

In Washington there was considerable interest and agitation amongst members of Congress to lift the trade embargo. Pro-Vietnam trade advocates developed amongst those who had business links to the former South Vietnam, those who believed it to be the humanitarian thing to do, and among those who saw the resumption of trade as the only way to get Vietnam to account for American soldiers missing in action. These interests, however, were outmatched by the greater pull of the rich Chinese market, the spectre of a punitive Peking policy of punishing those who did business with Vietnam, and the desire of President Carter and Brzezinski to keep an armed Khmer Rouge in place, pressuring Vietnam and the Soviet Union. Furthermore, a strong anti-Vietnamese component, seeking revenge, affected U.S. foreign policy. The families who had unaccounted for loved ones constituted a small, but powerful, voice. And finally, the old Cold War warlords kept the anti-Vietnam fires burning and obstructed the development of good relations with Vietnam.

Part II

Punishing Vietnam, Supporting the Khmer Rouge: 1979-1982

CHAPTER 5

PUNISHING VIETNAM

... increasingly the United Nations has become a club of sovereign states that protects its members from interference in their sovereign affairs. . . . At its most ridiculous, we find the United States and other Western powers supporting the seating of representatives of the murderous Khmer Rouge instead of the ruling Vietnamese-backed government because American foreign policy requires the nonrecognition of the fruits of the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea. . . . The United Nations, once a body that condemned the practice of genocide, is rapidly becoming one that condones it. Any hope for the prevention of such killings in the future need to be placed elsewhere.¹⁷⁴

The international outcry against Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea, from the United Nations, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN),¹⁷⁵ and the member countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), was nearly unanimous. ASEAN insisted on the inviolability of the principle of territorial sovereignty, supported the Khmer Rouge's retention of the Cambodian seat in the UN, and called for the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea. Soviet-bloc demands to seat a member of the People's Revolutionary Council of Kampuchea at the UN, in place of a Khmer Rouge representative

¹⁷⁴ Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 12.

¹⁷⁵ Established in 1967 under the Bangkok Declaration, ASEAN's formal purpose was to promote economic and social cooperation—but its greatest successes were in the areas of regional political cooperation, conflict management, and diplomatic unity. The member countries of ASEAN during the period covered in this study were Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

from Democratic Kampuchea, were all effectively blocked by an internationally-supported ASEAN-led diplomatic counter-attack. That Vietnam had stopped a genocide in progress was ignored by the international community. Diplomatic, economic and military sanctions were immediately levied –effectively isolating Cambodia and Vietnam. This economic isolation was particularly devastating for Cambodia given the destruction the Khmer Rouge had left in its wake.

International Diplomacy: The United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the United States

Within days of Vietnam's occupation of Phnom Penh on 7 January 1979, the UN Security Council was called into session. Pleading on behalf of the Khmer Rouge, Prince Sihanouk, the former monarch of Cambodia, charged Vietnam with flagrant aggression and requested intervention by UN forces. The request was denied. Instead, the Council deadlocked over a resolution denouncing the invasion and demanding Vietnam's withdrawal from Cambodia. Exercising its great power prerogative, the Soviet Union vetoed the resolution.

Michael Haas, author of *Genocide by Proxy*, aptly criticizes the majority of the Security Council's members, pointing out that not only had Hanoi rid the world of an Asian Hitler, but that Hanoi was defending itself after Laos, the People's Republic of China, and the UN failed to respond to Vietnam's pleas for mediation following Khmer Rouge attacks on Vietnam.¹⁷⁶ Nayan Chanda, an Indochina expert and the Washington

¹⁷⁶ Michael Haas, *Genocide by Proxy: Cambodian Pawn on a Superpower Chessboard* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 34.

Bureau chief of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, calls attention to the apparent contradiction exhibited by UN members who condemned Khmer Rouge atrocities yet nevertheless upheld the seating of its representatives at the UN. Chanda emphasizes that the UN's actions proved highly favourable to Chinese designs, noting that "continued UN recognition of Democratic Kampuchea meant the diplomatic isolation of Vietnam and gave China a favourable climate in which to wage its campaign to punish the Vietnamese and attempt to reverse Hanoi's military victory."¹⁷⁷ In a report delivered by the group Peace Through Law to members of Congress, Congressmen Jonathan Bingham (D-N.Y.), Paul N. McCloskey, Jr. (R-Calif), and Anthony Beilsenson (D-Calif) expressed a similar view in pointing out China's anti-Soviet strategy and desire to stir up Khmer-Vietnamese hostilities.

Chinese policy of support for [Pol Pot's] Cambodia appears to be a part of its overall anti-Soviet strategy in the Far East: to isolate Vietnam in Southeast Asia while, at the same time, encouraging Cambodia and Thailand to normalize relations; to encourage the U.S. to maintain its bases in Thailand (which the Vietnamese opposed) despite Thai opposition; and to cement ties with ASEAN states. Clearly, polarization between Vietnam and Cambodia serves Chinese interests.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Nayan Chanda, *Brother Enemy: The War After the War* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 378.

¹⁷⁸ House, Committee on International Relations, *Americans Missing in Action in Southeast Asia: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs (Part 2)*, Report of Peace Through Law presented by Jonathan Bingham et al, 95th Cong., 2nd sess., 9 August and 13 September 1978, 112.

The UN's diplomatic position was mirrored in its aid policy which, except for the provision of emergency aid during the famine years of 1979-1981, refused to acknowledge the Vietnamese-backed government in Cambodia. Concurring with Haas' view of the UN's political bias, Cambodian specialist Ben Kiernan concurs with Haas' criticism of the political bias which permeated the UN Security Council:

Through the 1980s [, he writes,] the United Nations Development Program accumulated funds earmarked for Cambodia, reaching as much as \$110 million by 1991, but UNDP spent none of it. For over a decade, other UN agencies sent massive aid to the Khmer Rouge camps in Thailand. China sent them arms. Britain provided military assistance to allies of the Khmer Rouge, including training in the destruction of Cambodian civilian targets.¹⁷⁹

Divided and less belligerent towards Vietnam, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)—which included in its membership Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia¹⁸⁰—acted contrary to the wishes of the United States. At the NAM Summit meeting in September 1979, representatives from 44 countries¹⁸¹, out of a total NAM membership of 88 countries, spoke on the issue of to whom to allot the Cambodian seat, ending with some 50 countries supporting a neutralist position and a minority of about 19 countries

¹⁷⁹ "Introduction," Ben Kiernan, ed., *Genocide and Democracy in Cambodia: The Khmer Rouge, the United Nations and the International Community*, edited and with an introduction by Ben Kiernan, Monograph Series 41, Yale University Southeast Asia Studies (New Haven: Yale University, 1993), 19.

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Chanda, "Sihanouk, The Unwanted Saviour," *The Far Eastern Economic Review* (7 September 1979): 8. The *Review* is published weekly in Hong Kong.

¹⁸¹ Robert Manning, "After the Sound and the Fury," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (21 September 1979): 10.

supporting Pol Pot outright.¹⁸² The Vietnamese delegate, Premier Pham Van Dong, reminded NAM delegates of the fact that Pol Pot and NAM had ignored Vietnam's efforts to resolve the Vietnamese-Cambodia issue through a negotiated settlement in February 1978. Dong went on to point out that at the July 1978 Non-Aligned foreign ministers' meeting in Belgrade, a Vietnamese resolution requesting that both sides negotiate through the non-aligned movement was rejected on the advice of Sri Lanka and Yugoslavia.

Remaining split over their opposition to seating the delegates from the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) or Democratic Kampuchea, the NAM's Cambodia seat remained vacant.¹⁸³ Though Cuba was in a minority position in supporting the PRK, Fidel Castro exercised his right as chairperson of the conference to declare the Cambodian seat empty. Neither Khieu Samphan, who was in Havana to represent Democratic Kampuchea, nor Hun Sen, who was there as the delegate for the PRK, was allowed to enter the conference hall. A political declaration emerged from the conference which sought a de-escalation of tension in Cambodia, the withdrawal of foreign troops, cessation of external coercion and subversion, peace talks, and an affirmation of the right of all states in the region to preserve their independence and territorial integrity.¹⁸⁴ According to Haas,

¹⁸² Manning, "The Havana Bomb," 12.

¹⁸³ Robert Manning, "Hanoi Takes a New Swing," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (15 September 1979): 13.

¹⁸⁴ Haas, *Genocide by Proxy*, 111.

Hanoi's later offer to withdraw troops, if China and Thailand would agree to stop aiding the forces of Pol Pot, was a response to this declaration .¹⁸⁵

Supporting the seating of the Khmer Rouge delegates at the United Nations proved to be a veritable conundrum for American foreign policy makers. Human rights were pitted against American economic and strategic interests abroad. When push came to shove, American economic and geostrategic interests prevailed. The U.S. Alternate Representative to the United Nations for Special Political Affairs, Richard Petree, explained the basis of the American vote before the UN General Assembly on 21 September 1979, as follows:

My government supports, on technical grounds, the recommendation of the Credentials Committee to accept the credentials of the representative of the Democratic Kampuchean authorities. In the absence of a superior claim, the General Assembly should seat the representatives of the government whose credentials were accepted by the previous General Assembly.

The Heng Samrin regime, installed and maintained by Vietnam through its military invasion and continuing occupation of Kampuchea, does not present such a superior claim. . . .

However, I wish to make it absolutely clear that our position on the technical question of credentials in no way implies any degree of support or recognition of the Pol Pot regime itself or approval of its atrocious practices.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Statement by Richard Petree, U.S. Alternate Representative to the United Nations for Special Affairs before the UN General Assembly, September 21, 1979, in *American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1977-1980* (Washington, D.C. Government Printing Office, 1983), 1045-46.

The American technical argument was challenged by observers at the time. In an October 1979 *Far Eastern Economic Review* (FEER) commentary, an anonymous author challenged it based on the precedent set in Uganda and Tanzania. When Tanzanian forces invaded Uganda in April 1978, overthrowing Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, President Nyerere's candidate was installed as head of state to "almost unanimous international applause."¹⁸⁷ Britain, the U.S. and China quickly accorded recognition to the new government, barely questioning its legality.¹⁸⁸

Commenting on the American rejection of lofty human rights sentiments in favour of "technical grounds," anti-Vietnam war activist and scholar Gareth Porter argued that the U.S. had other options than to support DK credentials in the UN, and that U.S. support for the Pol Pot regime hardened Vietnam's position on Cambodia. On the issue of the DK representative's legitimacy, Porter also cited the "parallel case" of Uganda:

Neither the United States nor the United Nations had even criticized the Tanzanian military ouster of Idi Amin's regime in neighbouring Uganda, much less supported the seating of the ousted Amin's representatives. Moreover, the "superior claim" argument assumes that the Pol Pot regime still has a reasonable claim to represent Kampuchea after its January 1979 ouster. But by every conceivable measure, it had no such claim.¹⁸⁹

Contrary to its stated justification, the U.S. was not observing the normally observed criterion for judging the validity of a claimant's diplomatic credentials: that is to

¹⁸⁷ "Comment," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 5 October 1979, 14.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Gareth Porter, "Kampuchea's UN Seat: Cutting the Pol Pot Connection," *Indochina Issues*, No. 8 (July 1980): 3.

say, the degree of the government's control over its population and its territory.

According to a State Department source, Pol Pot's forces controlled approximately 100,000 persons, or two percent, of Kampuchea's population. Recognizing a regime with control over so few persons and so little territory is morally and legally justifiable in international law only if that regime is known to be supported by the majority of the population. But, as the State Department repeatedly observed throughout 1979, the vast majority of the Khmer people hated and feared the Khmer Rouge.¹⁹⁰

The U.S. could have rejected the credentials of both the delegate for Democratic Kampuchea and the Heng Samrin government, and left the seat vacant, as the Non-Aligned Movement had done. Porter summarizes the State Department's three reasons for not accepting the empty seat formula. First, that leaving the seat vacant would have "established the substantial success of aggression."¹⁹¹ Second, that "all the press coverage treated the open seat formula in Havana as a Vietnamese victory."¹⁹² And third, that not voting for the DK credentials would have meant breaking with the US's closest friends and allies in Asia and moving towards Moscow, Havana, and Hanoi.¹⁹³ The problem with these rationalizations is that a vacant seat need not have meant a *de facto* victory for Vietnam. Porter argued that it was ASEAN that insisted a vacant seat signified a Vietnamese victory:

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid., 5.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

If the vacant seat was regarded as a Vietnamese victory, it was only because the ASEAN states had made the seating of Pol Pot the main issue. Had they taken the position of Prince Norodom Sihanouk and other non-Communist Khmer leaders that neither Pol Pot nor Heng Samrin regimes can claim legitimacy, a vacant seat would not have been a Vietnamese victory. ASEAN's rejection of the vacant seat, however, reflected its strategy of bolstering the Khmer Rouge forces as a political-military instrument for denying the Vietnamese and the Heng Samrin government secure control of Kampuchea.¹⁹⁴

ASEAN Diplomacy and Disunity

From the outset, ASEAN's reaction to Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea was united, but ambivalent, dominated by concern over Soviet expansionism, potential instability due to a large ethnic Chinese population in the region, and tempered by sympathy for Vietnam's security concerns. Two days after the invasion, ASEAN's Standing Committee chairman, Indonesia's Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, announced that ASEAN deplored "the current escalation and enlargement of the conflict between these two states [i.e. Vietnam and Cambodia] in Indochina" and expressed "grave concern over the implications of this development and its impact on the peace, security and stability in Southeast Asia."¹⁹⁵ The statement was noteworthy for its indirect tone and for being neither anti-Vietnamese nor anti-Soviet. Three days later an emergency meeting of

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Statement by the Indonesian Foreign Minister as Chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee on "Escalation of the Armed Conflict between Vietnam and Kampuchea," Jakarta, 9 January 1979, cited in Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Political Affairs, *Documents on the Kampuchean Problem 1979-1985* (Bangkok, 1985), 73.

ASEAN's Foreign Ministers was held in Bangkok. Deploring Vietnam's armed intervention against a sovereign country, ASEAN "called for the immediate and total withdrawal of foreign forces from Kampuchean territory."¹⁹⁶

ASEAN's concern over the threat to the peace, security, and stability of the region triggered by Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia was renewed and inextricably tied to the question of refugees flowing out of Vietnam, as well as Cambodia. On 13 January 1979, the foreign ministers of ASEAN issued a joint statement declaring "grave concern" over the influx of "refugees and displaced persons or illegal immigrants from Indochina" into ASEAN countries.¹⁹⁷ The Vietnamese refugee problem facing ASEAN members was again discussed at the end of June 1979 at ASEAN's annual ministerial meeting in Bali, and then a month later at a UN conference in Geneva. The refugees from Vietnam were primarily ethnic-Chinese. A number of the Association's countries feared adding more ethnic-Chinese to their populations and increasing the potential risk of Chinese-supported Communist insurgencies. And so, not only did the leaders of ASEAN fear Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia and its armed presence on the Thai-Cambodia border, but they

¹⁹⁶ ASEAN, Foreign Ministers, Joint statement "On the Current Political Development in the South East Asian Region," Bangkok, 12 January 1979, cited in Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Political Affairs, *Documents on the Kampuchea Problem 1979-1985* (Bangkok, 1985), 74.

¹⁹⁷ ASEAN, "Joint Press Statement, Special Meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers on Indochina Refugees," Bangkok, 13 January 1979, *Documents on the Kampuchean Problem*, 75.

also feared the new influx into their countries of Vietnamese ethnic Chinese.¹⁹⁸ Author

Robert O. Tilman describes the historical basis for concern, as follows:

From the beginning of the Republican era (1911) until recently official Chinese policy has been to maintain close political ties with the overseas Chinese. . . . The PRC has also maintained political ties with Maoist revolutionary parties throughout Southeast Asia, some but not all of which have been dominated by indigenous Chinese leadership.¹⁹⁹

Washington reacted to Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia by reiterating its commitment to Thai security in a statement issued on 7 February 1979 during Thai Premier Kriangsak's visit to Washington. President Carter personally pledged to "speed up deliveries of war planes, weapons and ammunition to Thailand in response to the Vietnamese-Cambodian fighting."²⁰⁰ Indeed, U.S. military sales to Thailand quadrupled from \$100 million in 1978 to \$400 million in 1979.²⁰¹ Also meeting with the House International Relations Committee during his visit, Kriangsak sidestepped questions

¹⁹⁸ Vietnam's targeting of its ethnic Chinese population was described in *Business Week* in June 1978 as follows: In the North, Chinese fishermen and small traders have had their boats taken away and their property expropriated. In the South, rice mill owners, cottage industry manufacturers, traders, and black marketers, many of them Chinese, have lost their livelihoods. . . . China claims more than 100,000 have fled the northern areas of North Vietnam. The area is inhabited by a Chinese group called the Nung, from whom were recruited the most effective anti-Communist fighting units during the struggle for control of the country. And the 2 million Chinese who live in the South, particularly in Cholon, the commercial satellite of Saigon, are terrified. "How the Hanoi-Peking Face-Off Endangers the U.S.," *Business Week* (19 June 1978): 52.

¹⁹⁹ Robert O. Tilman, *Southeast Asia and the Enemy Beyond: ASEAN Perceptions of External Threats* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987), 86.

²⁰⁰ *Facts on File*, 9 February 1979, 84.

²⁰¹ Ronald Tyler, "Avoiding a Shotgun Wedding," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (21 March 1980): 34.

regarding the delivery of Chinese arms to Cambodian forces via Thailand. When specifically asked about Deng Xiaoping's description of Thailand "as the only possible route for Chinese supplies to Cambodia's forces," Kriangsak avoided answering by commenting that it was "not for Teng or anyone else to speak for Thailand. . . ." ²⁰²

Kriangsak evidently did not wish to advertise Thai support for the Khmer Rouge, as was Deng's inclination. One month after this visit, Vietnam's communist party's paper, *Nhan Dan*, delivered a stinging retort to the members of ASEAN (and to Thailand in particular) for its past role in the U.S. war of aggression against Indochina. One editorial pointed out ASEAN complicity, aptly citing the American use of Thai territory as a military launching pad for attacks against Indochina as well as anti-Communist Thai troops in Laos, a small Philippine military presence in South Vietnam, and Singapore's "moral support against the communists." ²⁰³

ASEAN's primary concern was to resolve the Cambodia-Vietnam conflict and it sought to do this via a comprehensive political settlement that would include the Khmer Rouge. In post-meeting dialogues at the ASEAN annual ministerial meeting in June 1979, Japan's Foreign Minister, Sunao Sonoda, and his U.S. counterpart, Cyrus Vance, indicated interest in an international conference to seek a political settlement. Vehemently opposing the idea, China sought only the withdrawal of Vietnam, while Vietnam refused, stating that

²⁰² *Facts on File*, 9 February 1979, 84.

²⁰³ "Peking Learns its Own Lesson," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (30 March 1979): 13-14.

the situation was irreversible.²⁰⁴ As Chinese, American, and ASEAN support for the Khmer Rouge became more and more diplomatically untenable, the forces supporting the KR realized that a broad-based resistance group was necessary in order not to lose the support of the international community. An informal Khmer Rouge-Thai-Sino-American alliance was set in motion. Thai Prime Minister General Prem Tinsulanond, during a visit to China in October 1980, seems to have accepted the idea of a coalition arrangement in which the influence of the Khmer Rouge would appear diluted.²⁰⁵ In February 1981, Singapore's Second Deputy Prime Minister, Sinnathamby Rajaratnam, met in Washington with U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig. At this meeting, Rajaratnam announced that "ASEAN's immediate objective . . . [was] to create a third force consisting of a united front of all anti-Vietnamese and anti-Heng Samrin resistance groups with the object of making clear to the government in Hanoi that opposition to its occupation of Kampuchea would continue."²⁰⁶ Working actively to promote a coalition, an ASEAN special envoy, Indonesian diplomat Anwar Sany, met with Sihanouk in Pyongyang, entreating him to head an anti-Heng Samrin coalition. Sany's visit was followed by the ambassadors of Democratic Kampuchea and China urging the Prince to join, but these initial attempts failed. Sihanouk placed conditions on his joining which were unacceptable to the Khmer

²⁰⁴ Michael Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of South-East Asia* (London: Routledge, 1989), 104.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

Rouge—particularly his insistence that the Khmer Rouge disarm, along with other Khmer factions, once Vietnamese troops had withdrawn.²⁰⁷

ASEAN's persistence in seeking a political solution which would stabilize the region was cogently expressed at the 1981 United Nations-sponsored International Conference on Kampuchea (ICK). Seventy-eight UN member countries attended while the Soviet Union, Vietnam, and Laos stayed away. Held in New York, the conference was originally convened to find a comprehensive political solution. A month before the ICK, Singapore's Foreign Minister, Suppiah Dhanabalan, set out the basis of a political settlement of the Kampuchean problem. His position, which was partially endorsed in the final communique, clearly outlined the terms for such an agreement. The conference communique underscored the primacy placed by ASEAN on measures aimed at reducing anxieties over threats to the security of regional states. The ASEAN states declared that:

There can be no solution to the Kampuchean problem without the following elements: withdrawal of Vietnamese forces, a UN force to maintain law and order, disarming of all Kampuchean factions and free UN supervised elections in which all Kampuchean factions, including the Heng Samrin faction, can participate. There can also be no solution to the Kampuchea problem if the legitimate security interests of ASEAN and Vietnam are not safeguarded. A solution must, therefore, incorporate a guarantee that Kampuchea will not pose a threat to its neighbours. Such a guarantee must involve Kampuchea's immediate neighbours as well as the

²⁰⁷ In his sympathetic treatment of Sihanouk, Chanda adds the following: "Responding to a letter from Khieu Samphan on August 21, 1979, offering to him the presidency of the front, Sihanouk wrote: 'The new front and the new political programme presented by the Khmer Rouge are incontestably a new deception. Only idiots and imbeciles will fall into the trap of your new delusions'." Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, 455, fn. 33.

external powers who are indirect parties to the present conflict.²⁰⁸

Until a settlement was achieved, ASEAN interests converged with those of China and the U.S. on the issues of Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea, Khmer Rouge retention of the UN Cambodian seat, and the formation of a coalition council. Discussions concerning disarming the Khmer Rouge, following a Vietnamese withdrawal, gave rise to a very telling point of divergence between Singapore and China. Reporter Nayan Chanda poignantly describes a clash between Singapore's Tommy Koh, and China's ambassador to the UN, Lin Qing, at the 1981 International Conference on Kampuchea.

At a working group meeting on July 15 Singapore ambassador to the United Nations Tommy Koh, representing ASEAN, found himself in an acrimonious encounter with China's ambassador, Lin Qing, in the presence of forty observers, including American diplomats. Flustered by Lin quoting international law to defend the Khmer Rouge, Koh, himself a former dean of the Faculty of Law in Singapore University, raised his voice: 'I know at least as much of international law as you do Mr. Ambassador, but law does not apply to this barbarous bunch.' He then proceeded to detail their horrendous record of four years. Some of the Cambodians in the room began to sob.²⁰⁹

ASEAN had drafted a declaration for the conference which was surprisingly sympathetic to Vietnam. Drawn up principally by Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, the draft

²⁰⁸ Statement by Mr. S. Dhanabalan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Singapore, at the opening ceremony of the ASEAN ministerial meeting, Manila, on 17 June 1981, Singapore, Ministry of Culture, Information Division, Press Release No. 09-1/81/06/17, 5.

²⁰⁹ Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, 388. At the time of publication of *Brother Enemy* Chanda had spent 15 years following events in Indochina having interviewed many key protagonists and foreign observers.

expressed an ASEAN consensus that China's strategy of bleeding Vietnam was counterproductive to the group's interests since a weakened Vietnam, and a restored pro-Chinese Khmer Rouge, would threaten the regional balance.²¹⁰ Chinese and Khmer Rouge opposition to the draft was intense and little of the original proposal was incorporated into the final declaration of the conference. According to historian R. Nagi, prior to the conference the U.S. had lent the proposals their full support, but remained silent at the conference in the face of Chinese opposition.²¹¹ Proposals for aid to war-ravaged Vietnam, the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops, and the disarming of the Khmer Rouge were deleted.²¹² The ASEAN leaders fought particularly hard, but unsuccessfully, for the disarming of all Khmer factions and the formation of an interim government until United Nations-sponsored elections could be held. Neither China nor the U.S. would accept a proposal that included either of these points.

The formation of a coalition required the participation of Prince Sihanouk. But Sihanouk wanted nothing to do with the Khmer Rouge. Not only had Sihanouk repeatedly rejected China's request that he accept the leadership of a coalition including the Khmer Rouge, but he also called for the expulsion of Democratic Kampuchea from the UN. Sihanouk had also briefly defected to the U.S. while attending a UN meeting in New York in January 1979, but the U.S. encouraged him to remain an active player by accepting an

²¹⁰ Ibid., 387.

²¹¹ R. Nagi, *Big Powers and South-East Asian Security* (New Delhi: Lancers Books, 1986), 139.

²¹² Ibid., 139.

offer to reside in Beijing. Chanda reported in September 1979 that Sihanouk had condemned Pol Pot and Heng Samrin and accused China of helping Pol Pot's forces to bring about the extermination of the Khmer race.²¹³

ASEAN and the U.S. persistently exerted pressure on Sihanouk to join the coalition. ASEAN spent eight months in negotiations and threatened to cut off supplies to one of the coalition's intended members, Son Sann's Paris-based Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF). A non-communist party, the KPNLF was "working to bring the disparate military factions of the old Khmer Serei . . . under a unified command."²¹⁴ Son Sann held noteworthy links to Sihanouk and to the Khmer Rouge. Sann had served as economic adviser to, and as Prime Minister under, Sihanouk.²¹⁵ Sann's connections with the KR were familial extending to the uppermost reaches of the KR regime. The KPNLF front's vice-president was Chhean Vam, whose wife was the sister of Thiourn Prasit, the permanent Khmer Rouge representative at the UN and was "known to have had a hand in the movement of international food aid across the border into the Phnom Milai mountain

²¹³ Chanda, "Sihanouk, The Unwanted Saviour," 8.

²¹⁴ The Khmer Serei were anti-communist insurgents who had been operating along the Thai-Cambodia border since 1975. Chanda, "Sihanouk, the Unwanted Saviour," 10. Sann voluntarily went into exile in Paris in 1971 where he spent the next four years trying to put together a viable third force to oppose the then president of Cambodia, Lon Nol. In August 1979 Sann left Paris for Bangkok to consolidate his several thousand resistance troops made up of "Heng Samrin deserters, former Lon Nol soldiers, Kampuchean nationalists and a heavy sprinkling of one-time Khmer Rouge soldiers who defected at the time of the April 1977 purges. . .". John McBeth, "A Third Force in the Jungle, *Far Eastern Economic Review* (12 October 1979): 10.

²¹⁵ Chanda, "Sihanouk, the Unwanted Saviour," 10.

stronghold south of the Thai district town of Aranyaprathet.”²¹⁶ Most of the KPNLF’s arms can be linked to the Chinese and included Chinese-manufactured AK-47 assault rifles, tripod-mounted machine guns based on the Soviet M49 Goryunov design (a drum-fed light gun resembling the Soviet-made M53 Degtyarov), B40 and B41 rocket grenade launchers, and Chinese 60mm mortars.²¹⁷ According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, intelligence sources informed the *Review* that “most of the weapons were part of the huge arms shipments the Chinese pumped into Kampuchea in the period before the invasion.”²¹⁸ China was not the only supplier of arms to Khmer resistance fighters. Washington sent arms to the so-called “non-communist alliance” composed of Sann’s KPNLF and what would become Sihanouk’s rebel forces.²¹⁹

Both ASEAN and the U.S. made it clear to Son Sann that they would not provide assistance to a guerilla movement, but would to a legal government.²²⁰ On 22 June 1982, Prince Sihanouk, as head of the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC), Son Sann of the KPNLF, and Khieu Samphan of the Khmer Rouge, signed a coalition agreement in Kuala Lumpur establishing the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK). With Polpotist Khieu

²¹⁶ McBeth, “Awaiting the Next Round,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (9 November 1979): 41-42.

²¹⁷ McBeth, “A Third Force,” 10.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 8.

²¹⁹ Goodman, Peter S, “U.S. Represses its Cambodia Memories,” *The Washington Post*, 24 January 1999, 19.

²²⁰ Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, 391.

Samphan as vice-president and foreign minister of the CGDK, the Khmer Rouge continued to occupy the Cambodian seat at the United Nations. International legitimacy was conveniently bequeathed to the genocidists by virtue of the CGDK's non-communist elements and Prince Sihanouk's presidency. From 1982 onward, Vietnam ceased challenging the DK's credentials at the UN. The U.S. and ASEAN followed up by developing an economic and military aid programme for the non-communist factions in the CGDK.²²¹ Two years after the formation of the CGDK, Sihanouk threatened to leave the coalition declaring that, "Before Cambodia's independence I had only one master—France—but after losing the independence again I have to deal with eight."²²² These eight masters were presumably the Khmer Rouge, the U.S., China, and the five member states of ASEAN.

In spite of ASEAN's success in achieving diplomatic unity regarding the Cambodia conflict, ASEAN suffered from a serious tear in its ranks dividing Indonesia and Malaysia, on the one hand, and Thailand and Singapore, on the other. With a premium placed on unity, ASEAN members deferred to the wishes of Thailand—the frontline state. Thai fears of Vietnamese expansionism dated back to the pre-colonial era followed by fear of Vietnamese communist ideology. In January 1979, the nightmare of Vietnamese expansion materialized concretely on Thailand's eastern flank when Vietnamese tanks rolled into Phnom Penh. Thailand also worried about Malaysia and looked to the Malay-Muslim minority in southern Thailand with trepidation fearing separatist agitation and

²²¹ Ibid., 392.

²²² Ibid., 394.

possible dismemberment of Thailand.²²³ Singapore posed a threat to Thailand as well in terms of economic competition, exploitation, and domination.²²⁴ Singapore, in turn, having seceded from Malaysia in 1965, felt vulnerable in the face of the much more populous Malay state led by Premier Mahathir Mohammed of Malaysia--a staunchly anti-Chinese demagogue, whose designs on Singapore were no secret. Likewise, Jakarta distrusted Peking for its allegedly subversive role in the 1965 uprising by Indonesian communists. Jakarta also sympathized with Hanoi's nationalist struggles and defiance of Peking.

Indonesia and Malaysia made repeated attempts to contain the Cambodia conflict to the immediate region hoping, in particular, to keep China out. Meeting at a seaside resort in Kuantan, Malaysia on 27 March 1980, President Suharto of Indonesia and Prime Minister Hussein Onn of Malaysia, sought to encapsulate the Cambodia problem by calling for the cessation of outside aid to Khmer resistance factions--to be followed by neutralization of Cambodia.²²⁵ At this meeting, "the Soviet Union and China were named, and the call to these countries to leave Vietnam alone was blunt."²²⁶ Presumably, ASEAN would be far more willing to deal with a Hanoi rid of superpower influence. Dubbed the Kuantan Formula, the proposal was rejected by ASEAN's two pro-China countries,

²²³ Muthiah Alagappa, *The National Security of Developing States: Lessons from Thailand* (Dover, Massachusetts: Auburn House Publishing Company, 1987), 100.

²²⁴ Alagappa, 100.

²²⁵ Haas, *Genocide by Proxy*, 168-69 and 175.

²²⁶ K. Das, "The Kuantan Principle," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (4 April 1980): 12.

Thailand and Singapore. In another bid to circumvent outside interference, Indonesia's General Benny Murdani, then chief of intelligence, made two discreet trips to Hanoi (1980 and 1982) seeking a conciliatory approach to the Cambodian problem while conveying his understanding of Hanoi's legitimate defence concerns.²²⁷

American Diplomacy, the Cold War, and China

The decision-makers in Washington had strategic motives for supporting the Khmer Rouge. As stated by the U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, Morton Abramowitz, the Khmer Rouge was "the only efficient military force fighting the Vietnamese."²²⁸ Fighting the Vietnamese was, in turn, consonant with Washington's policy of emphasizing Sino-American parallel interests that included anti-Sovietism and concern over the extension of the Soviet Union's reach into Indochina and the rest of Southeast Asia, via Vietnam. In spite of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's drive for evenhanded diplomacy towards China and the Soviet Union, Brzezinski's anti-Soviet policy, as shall be seen, prevailed. The potential of enormous trade, and manufacturing and oil business prospects with China, coincided with parallel strategic interests—cementing a Sino-American bond.

At the level of superpower politics, Chinese and American anti-Soviet strategic interests merged in 1978, leading to the normalization of Sino-American relations on 1 January 1979. Peking's preoccupation with the Soviet threat was made clear in July 1978

²²⁷ Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, 393.

²²⁸ As recounted by Nayan Chanda in an interview with Sihanouk, "Phnom Penh Beckons a Prince for All Seasons" *Far Eastern Economic Review* (18 April 1980): 10.

when the U.S. government sent a delegation on a fact-finding mission to the People's Republic of China. In the ensuing report, *A New Realism*, the Chinese concern over the Soviet Union was described as pervasive in the observation that at "all levels of discussion on foreign affairs, the need to meet and resist what was termed 'Soviet Expansionism' was the common theme"²²⁹ Appended to this report was a "PRC 'Defence White Paper'" written by a senior People's Liberation Army official, Hsu Hsiang-chien. The article described Soviet military efforts to encircle China assisted by a rabidly anti-Chinese Vietnam. The Soviets were portrayed as attempting to outflank Europe and subdue the West European countries. The article was also designed to set off alarm bells in Washington by invoking an emotive image of Vietnam as a "Cuba in the East." Castigating the U.S. for its weakened role in Asia, the policy study warned of the "direct military threat" the Soviet Union's strategic, naval, troop, and nuclear build-up posed to China.

In Southeast Asia, it [i.e. the Soviet Union] has encouraged and aided that Vietnamese authority which pursues regional hegemonism to provoke incidents everywhere, launch armed aggression against Kampuchea and serve as a Cuba in the East.

The Soviet Union has stationed a million troops along the Sino-Soviet border areas and in Mongolia, has deployed offensive strategic weapons there, has greatly strengthened the power of its Pacific Fleet, frequently holds large-scale military exercises with the intention of invading China and has plotted to perform "surgical nuclear

²²⁹ House, Committee on International Relations, Report presented by the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, *"A New Realism": Fact-finding Mission to the People's Republic of China, July 3-13, 1978*, 95th Cong., 2nd sess., December 1978, 14.

operations” on China, posing a direct military threat to China.²³⁰

Writing in 1999, former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger retrospectively commented on the importance of shared Sino-American concerns over the Soviet threat as well as other overriding American foreign policy concerns in bringing about the culmination of the Sino-American rapprochement in 1978. China, reports Kissinger, was threatened by 42 Soviet divisions along its border, leaving Peking eager to break out of its self-imposed isolation. Cognizant of this, Washington in 1971 (when the U.S. and China first talked) had been keen to act, motivated by its own objectives.

The United States’ goals were to prevent a Soviet attack on China, to isolate the Soviet Union, to achieve the freedom of manoeuvre to end the Vietnam War and overcome its legacy, and to avoid military conflict over Taiwan.²³¹

Washington backed up its stated solidarity with Peking with defence dollars and defence technology. According to the August 1978 issue of *Electronic Warfare/Defence Electronics*, Brzezinski offered the Chinese the benefits of the “ears and eyes of the

²³⁰ Ibid., study paper appendix in, Hsu Hsiang-chien, “PRC ‘Defence White Paper,’” 115-16. “The role of the U.S.,” says this author, “is weakening and the Soviet Union is becoming more dangerous. In order to outflank Europe and subdue the West European countries without attacking them, it has made desperate efforts to contend for the Middle East, Africa and the Gulf area, seize important strategic positions, seek domination of the sea, foster and aid pro-Soviet forces, subvert sovereign states and rob energy resources,” 115. “The Vietnamese authorities’ rabid anti-China activities have seriously eroded Sino-Vietnamese relations, the Soviet Union has popped up from behind the scenes to fabricate lies, slander China and blatantly engage in incitement and agitations, fully revealing its sinister intention of encircling China in all possible ways while intruding into Southeast Asia, an area long-coveted by the Soviet Union,” 117.

²³¹ Henry A. Kissinger, “Talking with Mao: An Exchange,” *New York Review of Books* (18 March 1999): 56.

West.”²³² The same magazine reported in January 1979 that the United States had struck an agreement with China to set up signal intelligence stations along its shared border with the Soviet Union. This was confirmed in 1981 in *The New York Times* and in reports carried by the major American networks.²³³

Linkage of the Sino-American alliance to coercive anti-Sovietism was consistently denied by President Carter, but that was precisely the message his National Security Affairs adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, intended for Moscow. A year before normalization, Brzezinski was asked by a journalist what he thought of the conflict between Cambodia and Vietnam. Brzezinski answered, “I find it very interesting, primarily as the first case of a proxy war between China and the Soviet Union.”²³⁴ Keeping in mind Brzezinski’s anti-Sovietism, an implicit suggestion emerges that the U.S. would stand behind Peking (therefore the Khmer Rouge) in opposition to Hanoi and Moscow. Brzezinski’s motives were linked to his concerns for China’s security. In his memoirs, Brzezinski emphasizes the threat posed to China and Southeast Asia by the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. “We knew from previous conversations with the Chinese that they were gravely concerned over the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia seeing it as a Soviet-sponsored aggression designed to strengthen Vietnam as a base for Soviet operations in Southeast Asia.”²³⁵

²³² Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, 444, fn 23.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Department of Defence, replies by Z. Brzezinski, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, to questions asked on CBS’s “Face the Nation,” 8 January 1978, cited in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 1104.

²³⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 409.

Like Brzezinski, Carter also viewed China as crucial to American foreign policy and dismissed Hanoi as a puppet of Soviet foreign policy.

The China move was of paramount importance, so after a few weeks of assessment I decided to postpone the Vietnam effort until after we had concluded our agreement in Peking. Later, when the government in Hanoi decided to invade Kampuchea (Cambodia) and also began to take on the trappings of a Soviet puppet, we did not want to pursue the idea (i.e. of following up on Vietnam's friendly overtures to the U.S.).²³⁶

At a 12 April 1980 press conference, Carter strongly buttressed Brzezinski's position when amplifying his view that Vietnam was acting as a Soviet surrogate when it invaded Cambodia and declaring:

The Soviets have shown a consistent inclination to extend their own influence, through violence, into other areas of the world. They've done this primarily through surrogates. In Vietnam now, they are encouraging the Vietnamese to invade and to subjugate and to destroy the fabric of the nation of Kampuchea.²³⁷

Friendship with China, said Carter, was "a means to promote peace."²³⁸ But the history of China's involvement in the Vietnam War was never one of promoting peace in Vietnam, says Donald S. Zagoria in *Vietnam Triangle*. Writing in 1967, Zagoria asserted that China's objective in Indochina and the Vietnam War was to promote a prolonged war of attrition. "China has consistently sought to use the war less to reunify Vietnam under

²³⁶ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1995), 199.

²³⁷ President Jimmy Carter, interview with the Press, "Soviet Aggression and Detente," 13 April 1980, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter 1981*, Book I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1981), 674.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 200.

Ho . . . than to embarrass the Soviet Union, to weaken the United States, and to prevent expansion of the Soviet-American détente.”²³⁹ China, according to Zagoria, was using the Vietnam card.

In his memoirs, former Secretary of State (1977-1980) Cyrus Vance claims that the U.S. supported the seating of a Khmer Rouge representative in the UN’s Cambodia seat largely because of ASEAN. The “battle lines,” said Vance were being drawn up testing friendships and alliances all over the world. “On one side were the Vietnamese, the Soviet Union and its allies, Cuba, and a few other countries. On the other side were China and, most important to U.S., the five countries that form the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).”²⁴⁰ Vance’s statement, emphasizing the primacy of ASEAN’s wishes in determining U.S. actions, overlooks other observations which indicate that China stood uppermost in U.S. foreign policy considerations.

Vance acknowledges in his memoirs that the Khmer Rouge regime was one of the most barbaric in history and, with much hand-wringing, explains that the pro-Khmer Rouge decision was necessary in light of national interests. In the following excerpt, Vance shows his concern was really much broader than his respect for ASEAN:

²³⁹ Donald S. Zagoria, *Vietnam Triangle: Moscow, Peking, Hanoi* (New York: Pegasus, 1967), 29.

²⁴⁰ Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America’s Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 124. Sihanouk also reported this as the stated American reason for supporting Democratic Kampuchea. “The Americans told me very clearly that, if they do not vote for the Khmer Rouge, the allies may drop them.” Sihanouk, however, reverses the causal direction of who influences whom. “If others see the U.S. is voting for the Khmer Rouge they are obliged to vote for them.” Norodom Sihanouk in interview with Nayan Chanda, “Prince for All Seasons,” 10.

Days before the final vote, I had come to the conclusion that, unpleasant as it was to contemplate voting, even implicitly, for the Khmer Rouge, we could not afford the far-reaching consequences of a vote that would isolate U.S. from all of ASEAN, Japan, China, our ANZUS treaty partners, and most of our European allies, and put U.S. in a *losing* minority with Moscow, Hanoi, and Havana. . . . We made the only decision consistent with our overall national interests. . . .²⁴¹

In the above excerpt Vance unconvincingly depicted the U.S. as the reluctant follower of the lead position taken by Washington's Asian and European friends. No doubt supporting the Khmer Rouge was unpalatable. Reticent U.S. support for the Khmer Rouge in the UN is described by Chanda as a result of succumbing to pressure from China and ASEAN.

In the fall of 1980 the new U.S. secretary of state, Edmund Muskie, was keen to follow departing secretary Vance's advice and abstain in the UN vote for Pol Pot's credentials. But eventually, under tremendous pressure from China, from American ambassadors in ASEAN capitals, and, of course, from Brzezinski, Muskie agreed to a U.S. vote in favour of Democratic Kampuchea."²⁴²

While the U.S. was the primary behind-the-scenes backer of Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea, it was clearly a problematic position driven by geopolitical considerations: U.S. Vice-President Walter Mondale broached the possibility of a compromise solution in Cambodia to the Chinese while visiting Peking in the fall of 1979. His approach "was

²⁴¹ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 127. ANZUS is the acronym for Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.

²⁴² Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, 382.

brusquely brushed aside as politically impractical.”²⁴³ Mondale was further warned that US-Vietnamese normalisation would encourage aggression.²⁴⁴ Japanese Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira fared no better. Ohira returned to Japan on 9 December 1979 after a five-day trip to China never having discussed his peace proposal. Ohira found Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping so vehemently opposed to a political solution to the Cambodia problem that the peace proposal, which had been drawn up by the Foreign Ministry, “stayed in [Ohira’s] pocket.”²⁴⁵

There is no doubt that Vance and other U.S. officials felt they had dirtied their hands by voting to seat the Khmer Rouge. “As Robert Rosenstock, the U.S. representative to the UN Credentials Committee, rose from his seat after voting to seat the DK, someone grabbed his hand and congratulated him. ‘I looked up and saw it was Ieng Sary,’ Rosenstock told a writer. ‘I felt like washing my hand.’”²⁴⁶ Chanda goes on to cite a 1981 State Department circular forbidding U.S. officials from shaking hands with the Khmer Rouge.²⁴⁷ As unsavoury as it was for the U.S. to link itself with the Khmer Rouge, admitted one U.S. senior official, “The choice was between moral principles and

²⁴³ “Comment,” 14.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Nayan Chanda, “Japan’s Kampuchea Diplomacy,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (21 December 1979): 8.

²⁴⁶ Porter, “Kampuchea’s UN Seat,” 1.

²⁴⁷ Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, 454.

international law. The scale weighed in favour of law because that also served our security interests.”²⁴⁸

Conclusion

The international outcry against Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia was nearly unanimous. Embargoed, condemned, and treated as a pariah state, Vietnam sought aid and diplomatic support from the Soviet Union. Vietnam was condemned for having violated the sanctity of the borders of a sovereign state in the international system. That Vietnam had stopped a genocide in progress was not acknowledged. That Pol Pot had rejected Hanoi’s proposals for a cease-fire and a mutual pullback zone, and that the UN had refused to act on Hanoi’s appeals to act on its complaint of Khmer Rouge attacks were also ignored.

ASEAN, the U.S., and China had all sought the formation of a Khmer Rouge-led coalition with nominal non-communist members whose inclusion conveyed political legitimacy to the former genocidists. The crucial difference between China and the U.S., on the one hand, and ASEAN, on the other hand, was that ASEAN’s aims, the protection of territorial sovereignty and the regional balance of power, required a political settlement and the eventual disarming of the Khmer Rouge. Conversely, China and the U.S. insisted that the Khmer Rouge should retain its arms, even once a political settlement was achieved, in case a battle-proven and aggressive anti-Vietnamese military force was needed in the future.

²⁴⁸

Ibid., 377.

In the international arena, the Cambodian line in the sand was drawn. Vietnam and the Soviet Union were pitted against China, the U.S., ASEAN and the majority of the UN's members. Although the UN had earmarked money for Cambodia in the UNDP budget, it spent none of it on Cambodia. For 13 years after the genocide, a Khmer Rouge representative occupied the UN Cambodia seat. In 1979 and 1980, China and the U.S. ensured that the Khmer Rouge were fed and re-armed in the Thai-Cambodian camps. The U.S. made the case for DK's credentials at the UN on "technical grounds." Claiming to respect the primacy of ASEAN's wishes and the desire for peace and stability in Southeast Asia, Washington stonewalled any negotiated settlements proffered by ASEAN members and Vietnam which involved disarming the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge-backed coalition council provided an alternative to the recognition of a Vietnamese-backed Cambodian government. And so long as the Khmer Rouge survived as a viable military force in the region, China and the U.S. had a lever they could use against Vietnam and the Soviet Union on the ground in Indochina and in the corridors of international diplomacy.

CHAPTER 6

FEEDING THE KHMER ROUGE

During the Cold War, refugee aid became a government instrument in the struggle to contain communism. Anyone fleeing or opposing communism was likely to win Western asylum and aid. The United States liked to cloak at least some of its military aid to anticommunist insurgents as assistance to refugees.

Ben Barber, "Feeding Refugees, or War?"²⁴⁹

In 1979 and 1980 the United States insured that, under the benign and humanitarian banner of refugee assistance, the militants of the Khmer Rouge and their families were given safe havens and provided with food and medical supplies on the Thai-Cambodian frontier. American leaders conflated death and suffering arising from the Khmer Rouge regime with the refugee problem at hand. Responsibility for all the suffering of the Khmer people was shifted onto the backs of the Vietnamese. The well-established fact of mass death under Pol Pot and the fresh reports about suffering refugees issuing

²⁴⁹ Ben Barber, "Feeding Refugees or War?", *Foreign Affairs* 76, 4 (July/August 1997): 9. Barber also drives home the abuse of humanitarian aid by insurgents. "Legally speaking, says Barber drawing upon 1995 figures, "a refugee is one who crosses an international border to escape persecution, warfare, or other severe problems. There were 15 million refugees in the world in 1995, according to the U.S. Committee for Refugees, but 20 million internally displaced persons—refugees within their own countries. Both groups are now eligible for humanitarian refugee aid, and thus vulnerable to manipulation by insurgents who would skim that aid." (p. 9) Ben Barber has worked as a State Department correspondent for *The Washington Times*, and has also reported for the *London Observer*, *USA Today*, *Newsday*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*. In 1991 he directed a study for the Refugee Policy Group of the UN plan to repatriate over 300,000 Cambodian refugees.

from journalists as well as Catholic, Quaker, and nondenominational aid groups, coincided with contemporaneous American political and strategic interests.²⁵⁰

Two foreign policy objectives were served by the refugee crisis. First, now that any famine in Cambodia could be blamed on Vietnam, the legitimization of the diplomatic isolation of Hanoi was reinforced. And second, the Khmer Rouge was saved and resuscitated by making it the beneficiary of some of the hundreds of millions of humanitarian aid dollars that were readily authorized by the American Congress to save what were believed to be up to 750,000 Khmer refugees in the border camps by the end of 1979.²⁵¹

Resuscitation of the Khmer Rouge was accomplished on Thai territory with Thai logistical support. According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review's* correspondent in Bangkok, Richard Nations, Bangkok and Washington had already agreed that the Khmer Rouge was the only viable anti-Vietnamese force capable of reversing Vietnam's domination of Cambodia. Bangkok's open-door refugee policy was designed "to provide a political base among the Khmers in Thailand" in order to develop a third force of anti-communist Khmers to be used in a negotiated settlement.²⁵² The Japanese supported the resuscitation of the Khmer Rouge at arms-length by contributing monetarily to the UN

²⁵⁰ William Shawcross, *The Quality of Mercy: Cambodia, Holocaust and Modern Conscience* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 191.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 227.

²⁵² Richard Nations, "Removing a Block on the Road to Hanoi," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (4 April 1980): 10-11.

refugee assistance programme. Arms were also supplied, under the covert auspices of a secret Working Group comprised of Western and Asian collaborators.²⁵³

Within the first year of Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, Thai policy towards Khmer refugees arriving at the border underwent a dramatic turnaround from blocking and expelling refugees to accepting them and planning for an even larger influx. This change can be traced back to a new direction in American foreign policy flowing from Washington's concerns over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Thai consternation over the prospects of the consolidation of Vietnamese military and political power in Cambodia. Other events such as the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the U.S. and the PRC on 1 January 1979 and the PRC's limited invasion of Vietnam from 17 February to 9 March 1979 only reinforced the growing anti-Vietnamese thrust of U.S. policy in the region. Facing armed Vietnamese on its eastern border was yet another instance of history repeating itself in a continuation, from ancient times, of wars on Cambodian soil between Vietnamese and Siamese forces. Siam (Thailand) and Vietnam have spent centuries carving up Cambodia—a process the French abruptly curtailed upon establishing Cambodia as a French protectorate in 1863.

²⁵³ According to Haas, a covert network of Western and Asian nations worked together. "Weapons sold to Thailand were resold to the Cambodian resistance with money provided by the PRC. Covert American aid was administered by a Working Group set up in 1981 consisting of the defence and foreign ministers of Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand plus senior U.S. State Department officials. Weapons made in Singapore and Taiwan under Belgian and U.S. license went into the hands of Pol Pot's allies who resold them for profit." Haas, *Genocide by Proxy*, 84.

The Political and Strategic Uses of Cambodia's and Vietnam's Refugees

Creating and trafficking in refugees served the varied political and strategic motives of Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese and American officials. In 1975 Hanoi embarked upon a campaign of repression and discrimination against Vietnam's ethnic Chinese in the south leading to the phenomenon which became known as the "Boat People."²⁵⁴ This was the beginning of what would become the exodus of 1.5 million ethnic Chinese from Vietnam. A second wave of ethnic Chinese fleeing Vietnam was triggered as Sino-Vietnamese relations deteriorated in 1978. Vietnam was carrying out a massive program of deadly "resettlement" schemes and economic oppression of its ethnic Chinese population. In a move clearly targeting the economic life of the ethnic Chinese population, the government

²⁵⁴ The term "Boat People" has come to be associated with this period in Indochina's, and particularly Vietnam's, history of refugee outflow. "The term Boat People has been associated exclusively with more than 1.5 million refugees who fled from Vietnam in the wake of the Communist seizure of power in the southern half of the country in April 1975. Initially, the exodus was composed of indigenous Vietnamese linked in some way with the defeated Saigon administration who had reason to fear the retribution of the revolutionary government. They left in small boats and undertook perilous journeys across the South China Sea, braving the elements and pirates to make landfall in particular in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. . . . The composition of the Boat People changed over the years, however. For example, as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam applied economic dogma in agriculture and directed urban dwellers to the new economic zones in the countryside in the late 1970s, Boat People came to be driven by a determination to seek a better life, often to join relatives in the United States and Australia. Then in the late 1970s, with a marked deterioration in Sino-Vietnamese relations which was expressed in discrimination against the Chinese community, Vietnamese of ethnic Chinese identity increasingly made up the flow of Boat People coming from both north and south of the country. That flow was aggravated with Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in December 1978 and the People's Republic of China's retaliatory military intervention in Vietnam in February 1979." Michael Leifer, *Dictionary of the Modern Politics of South-East Asia* (London: Routledge, 1995): 63.

of Vietnam abolished all private trading in Saigon in May 1978.²⁵⁵ Two months earlier, the Vietnamese government had closed all stores belonging to the ethnic Chinese in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon). This coincided with the period of the highest numbers of refugees fleeing Vietnam since 1975. Record numbers were reached in April and proved to be even higher in May.²⁵⁶ Vietnam's directive ordering Chinese residents from Ho Chi Minh City to uninhabited areas of the countryside was part of a massive "resettlement" programme. The intention of this programme was to resettle 10 million people, one-fifth of the population, in the next 20 years.²⁵⁷ Many of these were Vietnamese Catholics arising from the one million who had migrated South in 1954 after the first Indochina war, seeking to get away from the Communists in the North.²⁵⁸ A second refugee exodus was created concomitantly with Vietnam's invasion and occupation of Cambodia as Cambodians fled their homes and headed for Thailand, seeking refuge from civil war and famine.

More than any other first-asylum country in Asia, Thailand provided refuge to fleeing Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians. In the first half of 1979, Thailand provided sanctuary to 147,000 people out of an estimated total of 219,000 Indochinese refugees.²⁵⁹ But many refugees had also been turned back, including some 65,000 in the

²⁵⁵ *New York Times*, 2 May 1978, 3.

²⁵⁶ *New York Times*, 28 May 1978, 1.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 31 May 1978, 4.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ *Facts on File*, 25 May 1979, 379.

month of May 1979 alone, according to Thai military officials.²⁶⁰ Another 30,000 Cambodians were turned back in the first week of June 1979 while 30,000 others, who were under the control of Khmer Rouge forces, remained in Thailand, south of Aryanprathet.²⁶¹ A report in the *National Catholic Reporter* cites the number of forcefully repatriated refugees between 8 and 11 June at 42,000. "In Thailand," says the NCR, a missionary and several bus drivers witnessed Thai soldiers repatriate at gunpoint 42,000 Kampuchians over the Thai-Kampuchean border Land mines, planted just off the designated crossing route, blew up those who tried to reenter Thailand."²⁶²

The Thai government's impetus for the rejection of these refugees and the mass expulsions of some already in Thailand probably rested on Thailand's ethnically-based, geopolitical logic. Clear evidence at the time, according to some Thai officials, showed that a depopulated Cambodia was being repopulated by colonising Vietnamese who would people the potentially rich ricelands of Cambodia and "shift the historic balance in Indochina against Thailand."²⁶³

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 15 June 1979, 436.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 435. According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review* there were 27,000 Khmer Rouge in Ban Laem, a Thai hamlet only "a stone's throw" from the border, and another 13,000 in Trat. John McBeth, "Toughing It Out in Thailand," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (22 June 1979), 20. An article in the *National Catholic Reporter* also refers to the fact that Thailand both sheltered and forcefully repatriated fleeing Cambodian refugees. *National Catholic Reporter*, 10 August 1979, 22.

²⁶² *National Catholic Reporter*, 10 August 1979, 21.

²⁶³ Richard Nations, "The Reality of Repatriation," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (29 June 1979), 23.

Thais say they already have evidence that Vietnamese skilled labour has moved into Kompong Som to get the country's only deep-water port running again. . . . Border areas near Vietnam depopulated by the Khmer Rouge, particularly in the Parrot's Beak area, are apparently being resettled by people from Vietnam. Many of the new settlers, the Thais report, are Khmer Krom (ethnic Khmers born in Vietnam) or Kampuchean refugees who fled the Khmer Rouge to Vietnam. But there is a substantial element of ethnic Vietnamese settling the fallow ricefields of Kampuchea, Thai intelligence indicates, and this is the disquieting development.²⁶⁴

Thai officials believed that commanding officers in Cambodia's Heng Samrin government, operating under directions from Hanoi, were carrying out a deliberate policy of pushing out groups of designated undesirables from Cambodia. These three groups were the remnants of Pol Pot's army, uncooperative Khmer civilians, and ethnic Chinese.²⁶⁵ So long as the refugees arriving at the Thai border were primarily Khmer Rouge forces and anti-Vietnamese Khmer civilians, Thai border guards welcomed them. Said Nations, "it was not until the organized expulsion of ethnic Chinese that it appeared the Thai Supreme Command was galvanized into instituting a systematic policy of forcible repatriation."²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid..

A 1979 Hanoi publication described the undesirable nature of the Hoa²⁶⁷ immigrants whom the Thai officials appear to have been targeting.²⁶⁸ Peking, said Hanoi, through numerous organizations, was provoking nationalist Chinese sentiment among Vietnam's Hoa people. Furthermore, Vietnamese officials charged, the Hoa were making counterfeit money²⁶⁹, were practising speculation, and were raising prices of goods in order to

undermine the Government plan for stabilization and development of the economy in South Viet Nam. . . . Peking used the Hoa people a tool to create unrest in Viet Nam, politically, economically and socially, as they had done in other countries of South-East Asia and South Asia.²⁷⁰

China's reason for stirring up ethnic hatred, explained Hanoi's propagandists, was part of Peking's larger hegemonist design.

²⁶⁷ The Hoa were ethnic Chinese. By 1977 Vietnam was home to over 1.5 million Hoa.

²⁶⁸ According to an official Vietnamese publication, "Most of the Vietnamese emigrants were rich businessmen, officers who had lived on the U.S. imperialists and Saigon puppet regime, the Hoa who had been enticed or coerced into leaving the country and others who had got habits of the U.S.-style consumer society and could not endure the difficulties caused by the imperialist war of aggression and the sabotage work by the Chinese expansionists." Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Truth About Vietnam-China Relations Over the Last Thirty Years* (Hanoi, 1979), 65.

²⁶⁹ A communist security officer in Saigon told newsmen that equipment for making counterfeit money had been discovered in a Catholic church in Saigon. *National Catholic Reporter*, 27 February 1976).

²⁷⁰ Hanoi, *The Truth*, 57. The organizations cited as opposing the Vietnamese government are the "Chinese Residents' Union for Peace", "Progressive Chinese Union", "Chinese Residents Association for National Salvation", "Marxist-Leninist Youth League", "Association of Patriotic Chinese School Pupils", "United Front of Chinese Residents" etc..., set up and commanded by Peking...". Ibid. 57.

All the actions taken by Peking rulers, from their betrayal of Viet Nam at the 1954 Geneva Conference and their taking advantage of the Vietnamese people's resistance against the U.S. aggressors to their setting up of the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary genocidal regime, their armed invasion of Viet Nam and their threats of aggression against Laos sprang from . . . their design to conquer Viet Nam and the whole of Indochina, using it as a spring-board for advancing towards South-East Asia and gradually realizing their global strategy.²⁷¹

Hanoi's fears over China's use of the Hoa as a fifth column against Vietnam were reinvigorated on 4 January 1978 when China's *The Daily* spoke of overseas Chinese as "part of the Chinese nation ... with their destiny closely linked with that of the motherland," and Beijing's intent to "work energetically among them ... to form a broad patriotic united front" to combat "hegemonism."²⁷² One month later, on 5 February, the Vietnamese Communist Party Central Committee made two important strategic decisions. The first was to topple the Pol Pot regime, and the second was to crush the power of the Hoa oligarchy in the south by attacking 'bourgeois trade' in Saigon and Cholon.²⁷³ Bishop Edwin B. Broderick, executive director of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), shared Thailand's fifth column concerns and said so in an interview with the *National Catholic Reporter*. Said Broderick, "We have to be very sensitive to the wishes of the Thai

²⁷¹ Hanoi, *The Truth*, 83-84.

²⁷² Grant Evans and Kelvin Rowley, *Red Brotherhood at War: Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos since 1975* (London: Verso, 1990), 50-51.

²⁷³ Ibid., 51.

government.” “Are these people honestly trying to seek a haven with the Thai people, or are they infiltrators and fifth columnists beginning another incursion?”²⁷⁴

The recurring issues of what to do with ethnic Chinese refugees and of the Khmer Rouge control of the camps were connected. The Thais deemed the Khmer Rouge better camp administrators than the “Chinese commercial bourgeoisie,” who “soon provoked racial tension [at Camp Sa Kaeo] and had to be separated from the rest of the refugees.”²⁷⁵ Chanda also reported at the time that the Vietnamese were deliberately expelling their ethnic Chinese population which was why, in May 1979, Hanoi accepted the UNHCR’s seven-point programme for the orderly departure of refugees²⁷⁶—a plan which France and the U.S. promoted and worked on with Vietnam.²⁷⁷ Humanitarian American support for the departure programme in the form of naval patrols searching for and picking up refugees allowed for an increased American naval presence in the South China Sea.²⁷⁸ Finally, on 25 June 1979, Washington publicly declared that it would “urgently consider” providing food to those in Thai border camps and in Cambodia.²⁷⁹ Bangkok’s refugee

²⁷⁴ *National Catholic Reporter*, 10 February 1978, 4.

²⁷⁵ Richard Nations, “Battle for the Hearts and Stomachs,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, (7 December 1979): 16.

²⁷⁶ Nayan Chanda, “They are Caught between Two Fires,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (27 July 1979): 19.

²⁷⁷ Richard Nations, “Hanoi’s Test of Civilisation,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (3 August 1979): 19.

²⁷⁸ Nations, “Hanoi’s Test,” 19.

²⁷⁹ Elizabeth Becker, “Finally Facing the Facts,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (20 July 1979): 39.

border policy dictating which and how many refugees could enter was guided by a number of immediate and long term priorities. The tactical imperative of having an anti-Vietnamese fighting force on the ground, at the Thai-Cambodia border, dictated a refugee policy geared to giving sanctuary to Khmer Rouge troops. The number of legitimate refugees allowed to enter was limited by at least two considerations. One, Bangkok did not want an influx of ethnic Chinese into the camps. And two, Thai concern that the Vietnamese-backed Heng Samrin government was expelling Cambodians from key agricultural areas, to replace them with Vietnamese workers, which posed a longer term threat to Thailand's security. Thus, it was in Thailand's interest to operate a highly selective refugee immigration policy at the Cambodian border.

The Shifting Winds of Geopolitical Interests: US-Thai Relations and Thai Refugee Policy, 1979 and 1980

Thailand and the U.S. shared an interest in maintaining the Khmer Rouge in the camps and promoting international support to do so by invoking images of impending Khmer extinction if humanitarian aid were not immediately given. This harmony of interests began veering apart and then split with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. Refugees once again became the fodder of international relations. Thailand's earlier restrictive policy towards refugees was reversed as the spectre of a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan drew closer and as Washington appeared to take a more conciliatory position towards Vietnam, seeking to lessen its dependence on the USSR. Bangkok threw its doors open to a wider array and a greater number of refugees. By

February 1980, Thai domestic politics came into line with American interests when Thai Premier Kriangsak was replaced by a more accommodating premier who endorsed Washington's new objectives regarding Vietnam.

American interest in the border camps shot up dramatically in August 1979. From 4 to 9 August, a nine-member U.S. House of Representatives delegation visited Indochinese refugee camps in Hong Kong, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia. The delegation also met with Vietnamese officials in Hanoi—ostensibly to discuss how to help refugees.²⁸⁰ Upon his return on 11 August, the leader of the delegation, Benjamin Rosenthal (D-N.Y.), said that greater assistance could be given to refugees if relations between the U.S. and Vietnam were normalized.²⁸¹ There was clearly an effort underway in Washington to soften the American body politic's view of the Vietnamese. When questioned in August about the burden to the U.S. of providing sanctuary to some 220,000 Vietnamese refugees, President Jimmy Carter responded with an emotional appeal. "Let me remind you," answered Carter, "that the United States is a country of immigrants. We are a country of immigrants. . . ."²⁸²

A concomitant open-arms policy towards refugees was being played out in Thailand at the same time when, at the end of August 1979, Thai Premier Kriangsak offered the use of Thai territory and facilities for the shipment of humanitarian supplies to

²⁸⁰ *Facts on File*, 17 August 1979, 607.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² *Facts on File*, 24 August 1979, 622.

Cambodia.²⁸³ US-Thai policy continued to follow suit. On 19 October, Kriangsak announced a reversal of Bangkok's closed-door policy stating that Cambodian (as well as Laotian and Vietnamese) refugees would not be turned away.²⁸⁴ Evidently, this also met with Peking's approval. The following day the Chinese promised Thailand up to a million tons of Shengli crude oil in the following year and an undisclosed amount of diesel oil.²⁸⁵ Three days after this, President Carter pledged \$70 million worth of emergency food aid to Thailand.²⁸⁶

Urgency was injected into the question of emergency aid for Cambodians by Washington when the First Lady herself, Rosalyn Carter, toured Thai refugee camps from 8 to 10 November 1979.²⁸⁷ British critic William Shawcross baldly depicts Rosalyn's Carter's tour as an insensitive photo opportunity and a political move calculated to garner sympathy for the plight of refugees from the American public.

One of Mrs. Carter's aides kept screaming at Mark Malloch Brown, the UNHCR man in charge of the camp [Sa Kaeo], "Create a photo opportunity. Create a photo opportunity." Exasperated at his failure to do so, the aide dragged a priest from Catholic Relief Services away from a dying child. The

²⁸³ Ibid., 14 September 1979, 684.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 26 October 1979, 811.

²⁸⁵ Richard Nations, "Walking the Tightrope Again," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (2 November 1979): 12.

²⁸⁶ *Facts on File*, 26 October 1979, 811.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 16 November 1979, 863.

First Lady was then alone with the helpless infant, and she and the press had their chance.²⁸⁸

Bangkok stepped up its open door policy with the opening of the Khao I-Dang camp. (See Appendix 2, Map 1, "In Search of Sanctuary") Thailand's plan to expand refugee holding facilities, announced by Premier Kriangsak on 19 November, consisted of a large camp at Khao I-Dang, and four smaller camps. With a capacity of 200,000 refugees, Khao I-Dang could have turned into the world's largest refugee camp.²⁸⁹ Another four smaller camps holding 40,000 people each were also part of the Thai Supreme Command's blueprint for clearing the border area. The new plans were ostensibly designed to move refugees out of harms way as Vietnamese forces prepared for an incursion into Thai territory. Critics commented at the time that the new plan was designed to provide the Khmer Rouge with support in the rear for medical supplies and sanctuary. Rebel Khmer Serei sources feared the new camp would undermine its political base.²⁹⁰ Some observers argued that,

... the real political purpose of the camps—a new phase in the surreptitious cooperation between the Khmer Rouge and the Thai military—[had] in a way been exposed. Kriangsak's announcement [of the new refugee centres] came shortly after Vietnamese forces took Phnom Malai, dislodging 60,000 Khmer Rouge combatants and civilian followers from a stronghold 35 km south of Aranyaprathet, which had been secured since last April.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ Shawcross, 189-90.

²⁸⁹ Nations, "Battle," 14.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 14-15.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 15.

Washington quietly supported the holding centres with the American ambassador “discreetly” promoting the new centres while China openly welcomed the development.²⁹²

Thailand faced another threat to its security with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 and subsequent realignments in global politics. Up until this point, Thailand counted on U.S. backing and looked to the Khmer Rouge, and an anti-communist Cambodian third force, to fend off the Vietnamese threat at its border. Vietnam, for its part, was backed by the Soviet Union and had occupied Cambodia, where it had installed a puppet regime. This geopolitical constellation was threatened by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the possibility of Washington softening its policy on Cambodia. Thai officials feared that the U.S. would make concessions to induce Vietnam to deny the Soviet Navy access to Vietnam’s excellent Danang and Cam Ranh Bay naval facilities, and Kompong Som in Cambodia. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Richard Holbrooke emphasized the importance of the Indian Ocean to Prime Minister Chomanan Kriangsak during his visit to Bangkok on 13 February 1980. Holbrooke and the new Commander-in Chief of U.S. Forces in the Pacific, Admiral Robert J. Long, “underlined American anxiety that the Soviets were securing growing access to Vietnamese port facilities in Cam Ranh Bay and Danang, and that it was of paramount importance to the U.S. and its allies that Washington adopt a policy to reverse this trend.”²⁹³ Such a policy clashed dramatically with Kriangsak’s objectives. While

²⁹² Ibid., 16.

²⁹³ Nations, “Removing a Block on the Road to Hanoi,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (4 April 1980): 11.

Kriangsak had never objected in principle to improved US-Vietnam relations, Kriangsak was unwavering in his insistence on a total withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia with a view to restoring Cambodia as the buffer between Thailand and Vietnam.²⁹⁴

Shortly after Holbrooke's visit, Washington told Bangkok that Thailand should throw its support behind Son Sann, who would try to consolidate control of all the anti-communist forces along the Thai-Cambodian border. This grouping was the hoped-for third force which the U.S. sought to install in power in Cambodia as part of a negotiated settlement. Such a coalition might court favour with Hanoi by agreeing to a partial, not a total, withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia, thus confounding Thailand's goal of ridding Cambodia of all Vietnamese troops.²⁹⁵ The cabinet of the new Prime Minister, Prem Tinsulanond, which came to power in February 1980, was favoured by the U.S. as a government more accommodating to American policy objectives towards Vietnam, than Kriangsak's. Though Kriangsak had initiated a policy of reconciliation with Vietnam and Laos, he had reversed this policy in response to Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia in 1979. According to Nations, Kriangsak believed that the more immediate threat to Thailand was not military invasion, but political intimidation and that "encouraged by American appeasement, Hanoi's overbearing posture in the region would force Asean to buckle at the knees."²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 9.

International Relief Providers Protest Aid for the Khmer Rouge: UNICEF and the Red Cross Withdraw

Evidence of Khmer Rouge control over the border camps, and the relief goods delivered to them, was reported in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* as early as 1979 and could not have escaped Washington's attention. Richard Holbrooke gave *Review* reporting his seal of approval for its accuracy and speed in November when he commented on the "enormous proportions" of the humanitarian problems in Thailand. "As you know," Holbrooke commented in an interview, "and as all your readers know, . . . you recorded it probably earlier and more accurately than most other publications."²⁹⁷ According to an August 1979 *Review* article, Western sources believed there were 35,000 armed KR in Western Cambodia and another 15,000 operating independently in the northeastern province of Kratie.²⁹⁸ As early as September 1979, the *Review* was reporting on Thai and Chinese efforts to supply KR combatants in Western Cambodia with food and medical supplies. The Thai military itself assisted in deliveries into KR-controlled areas of Western Cambodia, noting that Peking did not want the intervention of international aid officials as they might have redirected aid to the Vietnamese.²⁹⁹ In the same issue of the *Review*, Chanda summarized international complicity in support for the Khmer Rouge. Wrote

²⁹⁷ "Interview: Richard Holbrooke on the Problems of Southeast Asia," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (16 November 1979): 14.

²⁹⁸ John McBeth, "The World as Judge," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (31 August 1979): 9.

²⁹⁹ Richard Nations, "The Rules of Malnutrition," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (7 September 1979): 10.

Chanda, “the *de jure* status of the hated [KR] regime and continuation of armed resistance inside Kampuchea [were] the only two weapons they [i.e. Peking and the leaders of ASEAN] [had] in opposing Hanoi’s domination of the country [Cambodia].”³⁰⁰

In a major study of relief efforts carried out on the Thai-Cambodian border in 1979 and 1980, authors Linda Mason and Roger Brown attest to how rapidly the physical health of the Khmer Rouge improved thanks to American aid and Thai logistical support.³⁰¹ Initially funding the bulk of the Thai-Cambodia relief operation, Washington pressured the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to supply the Khmer Rouge. Thanks to the food and medicine delivered by the Joint Mission (i.e. the ICRC and UNICEF), the Khmer Rouge were resuscitated and fielded a force 30,000 strong.³⁰²

A major problem for the U.S. was that “the relief organizations considered supporting the Khmer Rouge guerrillas inconsistent with their humanitarian goal.”³⁰³ The refusal of the relief providers to feed troops was acknowledged by Washington from the outset. Richard Holbrooke commented in September 1979 that the ICRC and UNICEF

³⁰⁰ Chanda, “Sihanouk, the Unwanted Saviour,” 9.

³⁰¹ Personal politics and ambition in the UN were also at play. Kurt Waldheim, say Mason and Brown, knew his handling of the Khmer Rouge refugee problem would bear on his political future in the UN “One high official stated bluntly, ‘By aiding the Khmer Rouge, Waldheim was buying himself votes in the next election for Secretary General.’” Linda Mason and Roger Brown, *Rice, Rivalry and Politics: Managing Cambodian Relief*, Foreword by Rudy von Bernuth (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 135.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

would “in no way contribute to the war effort of either of the belligerents.”³⁰⁴ But there was no doubt as to who controlled the distribution of food in the Khmer Rouge camps. “The entire procedure,” say Mason and Brown, “was controlled and monitored by the Khmer Rouge leaders.” If rice became scarce, the Khmer Rouge soldiers were given priority over civilian refugees.³⁰⁵

The ICRC was the first to voice its objections. In an internal document, covering the period from 7 to 13 January 1980, the ICRC reported that despite its “incessant efforts” to educate Khmer Rouge commanders that the food supplied for relief purposes was not intended for Khmer Rouge soldiers, its distribution criteria were not being respected.³⁰⁶ A turning point for both the ICRC and UNICEF occurred at a Weekly Food Coordination Meeting on 28 April 1980. The meeting was attended by representatives of UNICEF, the ICRC, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).³⁰⁷ The ICRC and UNICEF officially served notice of their

³⁰⁴ Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Statement by Richard Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 27 September, 1979, cited in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 1049-50.

³⁰⁵ Mason and Brown, 138.

³⁰⁶ ICRC internal document, 7-13 January 1980, cited in Mason and Brown, 140.

³⁰⁷ The ICRC/UNICEF Joint Mission was established in September 1979. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was responsible for the Joint Mission as well as for all services for new Cambodian Refugees in Thailand. Before that, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) was already cooperating with the Royal Thai Army and the U.S. Embassy sending relief supplies to the border in June. In July 1979, the WFP re-routed 1,000 tons of rice (intended for its ongoing Thai programmes) to Khmer Rouge border refugees. The World Food Programme was a relief organization which had been operating in Thailand long before the Khmer refugee crisis. Its director, Abdel Nabi, had

organizations' shared desire to extract themselves from supplying the Khmer Rouge.³⁰⁸

Word of this reached Secretary of State Cyrus Vance via cable from the U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, Morton Abramowitz. Warning that the ICRC in particular was on the verge of pulling out, the director of Task Force 80, the arm of the Thai military responsible for coordinating the border relief operation, formally requested the WFP to replace the Joint Mission. WFP Project Officer Julien Lefevre refused saying he had not received authorization from the WFP office in Bangkok to assume the role of the Joint Mission's program.³⁰⁹ With the Vietnamese incursions into Thailand in June, the Joint Mission relief operations in the Khmer Serei and Khmer Rouge camps were stopped. In retaliation, the Thais halted all airlifts and shipments of relief goods from Bangkok intended for Phnom Penh. "Infuriated," say Mason and Brown, the "Thais kept the ban on Joint Mission deliveries to Phnom Penh in place and made it clear that the ban was linked to the interruption of aid to the Khmer Rouge."³¹⁰

Upon facing the prospect that the Khmer Rouge would starve, the U.S. picked up the propaganda weapon so thoughtfully provided by Thailand: it mobilized public opinion at home and internationally to save the Khmer from famine, papering over the fact that its

a good relationship with the Thai government, say Mason and Brown (141).

³⁰⁸ "Some 30,000 people are at present being fed by ICRC/UNICEF in these Khmer Rouge areas. But we would like to discontinue distributions, as there are substantial military elements in the encampments, and the constitutions of both ICRC and UNICEF forbid the giving of aid to armed elements." *Minutes of Food Coordination Meeting*, 28 April 1980, cited in Mason and Brown, 144.

³⁰⁹ Mason and Brown, 146-47.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 153.

first priority was resumed food deliveries to the Khmer Rouge. While UNICEF understandably sent an SOS message to New York in June 1980 warning that Cambodians would starve to death unless Thailand resumed food delivery to Phnom Penh, the U.S. worked behind the scenes to insure that the Khmer Rouge obtained food at the Thai border.³¹¹ Publically, U.S. officials portrayed the survival of the Khmer refugees in the Thai camps as vital to the Khmer race. But American and Thai officials did nothing to separate Khmer Rouge fighters from the civilians who lived in camps under their control, the one measure which would have allowed the ICRC and UNICEF to resume their feeding operations on the border. In evading that responsibility for political reasons, the U.S. and Thailand contributed a precedent which would engender future failures in humanitarian missions to Angola, Bosnia, Somalia, and Rwanda. In July 1980, the coordinator of the Joint Mission's activities in Thailand and Cambodia, Sir Robert Jackson, met with major donor embassies in Bangkok. Jackson stressed "the importance of the opinion of the UN's Legal Bureau that agencies could not simply ignore the fact that

³¹¹ "The UNICEF Bangkok office immediately contacted its headquarters in New York and requested that the UNICEF Executive Director, James Grant, attempt to remove the blockade from his end by dealing with the Thai mission to the UN. Knowing the influence the U.S. had with the Thais, Knud Christensen [Director of UNICEF operations in Thailand] approached Abramowitz and asked him to intervene with the Thais. Abramowitz moved quickly. He arranged for one of the U.S. Embassy officials to meet with Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs Sitthi during the ASEAN conference in Kuala Lumpur on June 26 to discuss lifting the blockade. On June 26 Frank Loy, director of the Khmer Working Group in the State Department, sent a cable to the Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke while Loy was on a diplomatic trip overseas, recommending that Secretary of State Vance should attempt to get the blockade lifted." Mason and Brown, 153.

combatants were obtaining international relief--‘This makes the supply of relief not only morally unjustifiable but legally untenable.’”³¹²

The US’s fall-back plan depended on World Relief—a small American-based Christian relief and development organization well-known amongst relief organizations in Thailand. Mason and Brown emphasize the US’s “behind the scenes” role and quote the Director of the Kampuchean Emergency Group in the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, Lionel Rosenblatt, as saying that it could not appear as though the Embassy were “brokering” the World Relief proposal to replace the Joint Mission.³¹³ The U.S. and Thailand shared a strong desire to support the Khmer Rouge behind the veil of an internationally-known relief organization.

Back in Washington, U.S. officials were comparing the refugee problem to the Holocaust—a powerful metaphor denoting the importance and urgency of the issue. Men such as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Richard Holbrooke, Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher, and the President himself, delivered passionate emotive speeches on behalf of Khmer refugees. “Constant evocation of the Holocaust,” says Shawcross, could leave no one complacent.³¹⁴ A Senatorial mission report presented in October 1979 dramatically reported that, “Inside Cambodia today, and in refugee camps located in Thailand near the Cambodian border, hundreds of thousands of Cambodians face death by starvation and disease. The survival of the Khmer race is in

³¹² Shawcross, 346.

³¹³ World Relief internal document, 16 July 1980, cited in Mason and Brown, 159.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 192.

jeopardy.”³¹⁵ Notably left out of this humanitarian appeal was the role played by the Khmer Rouge in bringing Cambodians to the brink of extinction—and the fact that well over a million people died under the Khmer Rouge as a result of executions, starvation, overwork, and disease. Nor was there any mention that the Khmer Rouge forces had destroyed much of what they could not take when fleeing Cambodia.

The border relief operation was held out as the cornerstone of the future of the Khmer people, according to the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs, Victor Palmieri. In his statement before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in March 1980, Palmieri stated that “the key to the survival of the Khmer people may well have been the border feeding operations in Thailand.” Similar to the position of the ICRC and UNICEF, Palmieri forthrightly blamed armed Khmer factions for controlling the border settlements and for making it “difficult” for the “international organizations to create controls insuring an equitable distribution of food within the settlements.”³¹⁶

Once saving Khmer refugees was made a diplomatic priority, it was backed up by financial sponsorship and dramatic humanitarian parlance. Reporting near the end of March 1980, Palmieri cited a figure of \$206 million dollars spent by the U.S. between

³¹⁵ Senatorial Humanitarian Mission to Southeast Asia, report of 26 October 1979, cited in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 942.

³¹⁶ Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, statement by Victor Palmieri, U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs, 24 March 1980, cited in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 948.

October 1979 and March 1980.³¹⁷ The humanitarian imperative to save the Khmer—an impulse which was voiced, but not acted upon while the genocide of 1975-1978 was in progress—was passionately sounded by Secretary of State Edmund Muskie. Invoking the weighty bar of history as the future arbiter of foreign policy, Muskie beseeched an ASEAN audience in light of the “chilling prospect of an entire people” facing destruction:

. . . [the] international lifeline to the Kampuchean people must be continued. The Vietnamese and the authorities in Phnom Penh must permit those supplies to reach all Kampucheans in need. History will judge harshly those who fail to respond to this staggering human tragedy.³¹⁸

Muskie’s comprehensive call for *all* Kampucheans to receive supplies would, of course, ensure that the Khmer Rouge troops were fed.³¹⁹

By August 1980, the ICRC withdrew from all border feeding of Khmer Rouge and Khmer Serei cadres. UNICEF alone fed the Khmer Rouge. In spite of attempts to provide women only with rations, the Khmer Rouge continued to receive relief delivered by the Royal Thai Army.³²⁰ By October, UNICEF abandoned its efforts to supply women only. UN food and Chinese arms, says William Shawcross, continued to flow to the

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Statement by Edmund Muskie, Secretary of State, on the broadening of ties to ASEAN, before the Foreign Ministers Conference, Kuala Lumpur, 28 June 1980, cited in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 936.

³¹⁹ The U.S. was not alone. Japan proved to be a useful ally agreeing to underwrite 50 percent of the budget of the Indochinese assistance programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees, and International Law, statement by Cyrus Vance, Secretary of State, 31 July 1979, cited in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 939.

³²⁰ Shawcross, 352.

border camps up until 1982. At that time, the United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNIBRO) replaced UNICEF in the central northwest sector of the border around Aranyaprathet and supplied all of the border areas by 1983. The WFP had not disappeared, explains Shawcross, for WFP was at the “heart” of UNIBRO.³²¹

Humanitarian aid for the Khmer Rouge did not cease in 1982 with the formation of the CGDK. Having visited all the Cambodian camps along the Thai border several times between 1982 and 1991, U.S. State Department correspondent for the *Washington Times* Ben Barber witnessed firsthand the “unholy alliance” between refugee aid and Vietnamese resistance fighting. During the day, says Barber, relief agencies delivered food and medical supplies. “But at night fighters returned to the camps to rest, eat the food and use the medical supplies the agencies had provided, sleep with their wives, visit with their children, and recruit well-fed young refugees.”³²²

Conclusion

Feeding some 30,000 Khmer Rouge combatants and their families was pivotal to Thai and American designs to maintain a viable indigenous anti-Vietnamese fighting force at the ready. For the Thais, restoring Cambodia as a buffer between itself and Vietnam was crucial. The U.S. supported the Khmer Rouge troops because they were an anti-Vietnamese and anti-Soviet. Shielded under the guise of refugees, a network of UN, Thai, and American officials worked together to aid the Khmer Rouge. Khmer Rouge forces

³²¹ Ibid., 353.

³²² Ben Barber, “Feeding Refugees, or War?”, 9.

were given sanctuary in UN-sponsored camps on the Thai-Cambodian border where they were supplied by international relief agencies, funded largely by the U.S. and Japan.

Refugees bore the brunt of the varied motives and policies of the many players involved. First and foremost, the Khmer Rouge reaped the humanitarian aid earmarked for legitimate refugees. Thailand's refugee policy fluctuated according to two sets of imperatives. First, meeting the requirement of the Khmer Rouge to sustain their survival and tactical position along the Thai-Cambodia border. And second, accommodating the exigencies of American foreign policy towards Vietnam in light of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. With a well fed heavily armed Khmer Rouge guerilla army deployed on Cambodia's western border, the Vietnamese refused to withdraw from Cambodia and to deny the Soviet Navy access to its ports. This, in turn, provided the proponents of Washington's punitive anti-Vietnamese foreign policy with the excuse to condemn Vietnam, continue the trade embargo, oppose US-Vietnam rapprochement, and obstruct Vietnamese efforts to seek aid and trade from the International Monetary Funds and from other countries.

Part III

Trade, Oil, and Troubled Waters: The 1970s

CHAPTER 7

THE CORE CONFLICT: VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA

The latter half of the 1970s in South East Asia was marked by a confluence of offshore oil discoveries, much oil speculation, armed attacks, regional communist victories, and superpower jockeying behind the regional players of ASEAN and Indochina. Postwar Vietnam was in trouble. Wartime devastation was enormous and drought in 1976 and 1977 caused a severe shortfall in rice production. Vietnam's desire for a peaceful frontier by 1977 was born of necessity, and its hopes that offshore oil would be found and generate hard currency were particularly important to its development programme.

Hanoi's Hopes for Offshore Oil

In 1973 President Thieu of South Vietnam commissioned Geophysical Services International of Houston to carry out a seismic survey north of the Spratly Islands. Peking reacted on 11 January 1974, warning the Vietnamese that both the Spratlys and the Paracels fell under Chinese sovereignty. (See Appendix 3, Map 2, "South-East Asia from 1980 until 1995") Saigon responded with a brief and dismissive reiteration of its historical rights.³²³ Nine days after the warning, Chinese forces captured Duncan Island along with

³²³ Jaap Van Ginneken, *The Third Indochina War: The Conflicts between China, Vietnam and Cambodia*, trans. David Smith (Amsterdam, Ginneken), 67.

others in the archipelago. Fighting broke out during which the Chinese sank many Vietnamese ships and killed approximately fifty Vietnamese.³²⁴

Oil prospects fuelled political prospects. Two discoveries in 1974 by Shell Oil heightened Vietnamese expectations. One discovery was made off of the island of Con Dao, in August, and an even more important find was made in October, some 200 miles from the port of Vung Tau, near Saigon.³²⁵ These discoveries promised prosperity. Prime Minister Thieu lit a flame with oil from the find in honour of the dead. "Sadness suddenly yields to pride in being on the threshold of national prosperity," were the solemn words of the official press bureau two weeks after the discovery. Several weeks later, Vietnam's Minister of Trade and Industry, Nguyen Duc Cuong, linked the oil discovery and prosperity with the ability to borrow money when he said, "In a few more months, our oil prospects will be clear to everyone and we will have no difficulty in borrowing money."³²⁶ With the beginning of 1975 came even larger discoveries of oil, leading an official South Vietnamese journal to predict that it was within reason to expect hundreds of millions of dollars in oil revenues annually and as much as a billion a year in the 1980s.³²⁷ American oil prospecting off the shores of South Vietnam came to an abrupt end with North Vietnam's premature march on the South.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ginneken, 68.

³²⁶ Randall Hardy, *China's Oil Future: A Case of Modest Expectations* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978), 211.

³²⁷ Ginneken, 68.

The time line of events at this juncture is noteworthy for the confluence of oil finds and irredentist claims and conflicts in the region. It was clear by the beginning of 1975 that substantial oil finds were being made in the waters off South Vietnam. Within months of the North's takeover of the South, a national oil and gas agency was set up and the French Compagnie Générale de Géophysique was invited to perform seismic surveys along the south coast, where the Thieu regime had already started drilling. Reunification of the country took place in 1976 and the next year Vietnam granted its first oil concession. The vacuum left by the withdrawal of American oil companies in 1975 was filled by a number of foreign oil exploration companies. Norwegian technicians began conduction surveys in five offshore blocks in which traces of oil and natural gas had been found by Mobil and Shell.³²⁸ Hanoi also signed contracts with Italy's ENI, France's Elf-Aquitaine, Germany's Deminex, Canada's Bow Valley, and a number of Indian and Algerian oil companies.

Like China, Vietnam hoped to fuel its modernization plans with its own oil and attract foreign investment. Nevertheless, Vietnam was still heavily dependent on the USSR for energy. In 1980 the Soviets were supplying the Vietnamese with 80 percent of its oil.³²⁹ The August 1980 issue of *World Oil* reported that three companies, Deminex, AGIP and Bow Valley, had all drilled dry holes.³³⁰ The promised black gold boom had not

³²⁸ Nayan Chanda, "Vietnam Welcomes a Prospector," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 21 April 1978, 76-77.

³²⁹ Economist Intelligence Unit, *World Outlook 1982*, 167.

³³⁰ "The Focus is Offshore," *World Oil* (15 August 1980): 271. Prospects for oil at offshore Vietnam sites continued to be buoyed up until 1995. *Business Vietnam* reported in May of that year that Vietnam's National Assembly had approved a \$1.3 billion dollar refinery to be built in Quang Ngai Province. Oil production from offshore sites was

panned out. By 1982, the Economist Intelligence Unit was reporting that the search for offshore oil and gas slowed down because Western consortia had failed to find commercial deposits since 1975.³³¹

Oil Lust and Ethnic Hatred: Vietnam and the Khmer Rouge

The scramble for oil was clearly a priority for the Cambodian and Vietnamese leadership. On 4 May 1975 Kampuchean forces invaded Vietnam's Phu Quoc and Tho Chu islands. This was only weeks after the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) overthrew the Lon Nol government, and days after North Vietnamese communists took over Saigon. And so, on the heels of two neighbour governments being toppled, each by communists, territorial disputes erupted. Vietnamese forces drove the Khmer Rouge away from their islands. The Communist Party secretary, Pol Pot, insincerely apologized, pleading the troops' ignorance of local geography.³³² The islands in question were important because of their strategic proximity to the Kampuchean port of Kompong Son (Sihanoukville), which had been built in the 1950s with the express purpose of freeing Cambodia from its dependence on Vietnam's port of Saigon. Attempting to occupy the

expected to triple within five years. "Balance Defies Logic," *Business Vietnam*, May 1995. By September 1996 *Business Vietnam* was reporting that ten years and \$150 million later, Shell had abandoned its exploration in May of that year. "Oil Companies Rethink Vietnam," *Business Vietnam*, September 1996. The South China Sea in general was proving to be a disappointment to oil prospectors. By April 1997 the closing of Amoco's office in Hanoi was described as the latest in a series of pullouts. "Oil Business in Vietnam is on the Skids," *Business Vietnam*, April 1997.

³³¹ Ibid., 168.

³³² "The Border Dispute on the Seas," *Southeast Asia Chronicle*, no. 64 (1978): 39.

new port in 1956, the US-backed South Vietnamese Diem government had demanded that Phnom Penh relinquish claims to nearby islands over which it had always exercised control. But Phnom Penh could not jeopardize its control over the port of Kompong Son for, as described by Sihanouk in the spring of 1960, “the loss of the islands and the territorial waters surrounding them would lead to the stifling of the port of Sihanoukville . . . and very soon to the end of . . . [Cambodia’s] independence.”³³³

While the Khmer Rouge was busy attacking Vietnamese territory soon after taking power, the Vietnamese were preoccupied elsewhere. According to the *Peking Review*, in 1975 the Hanoi regime took advantage of the liberation of South Vietnam to invade and occupy six of China’s Nansha Islands and lay formal claims to Nansha and Hsisha islands (the Spratlys and the Paracels). The *Peking Review* observed that these claims were still “a major subject of dispute in Sino-Vietnamese relations.”³³⁴

An attempt was made to settle the territorial dispute exactly one year after Kampuchea’s initial onslaught against Phu Quoc. From 4 to 18 May 1976, representatives from the communist parties of Kampuchea and Vietnam met to negotiate, but without success. Their attempts broke down because of Vietnamese intransigence, touched off by the prospect of oil in the contested area. Said Chanda,

A study of Khmer and Vietnamese statements since the open rupture, clearly shows the importance of the territorial sea question in bringing about the break. According to Phnom Penh, the last attempt at negotiation in May 1976 broke

³³³ “The Border Dispute on the Seas,” p. 39.

³³⁴ “Offshore Claims Complicate Chinese, Vietnamese Talks,” *Oil and Gas Journal* (23 April 1979): 23.

down because the Vietnamese side (believed to be led by Vice-Foreign Minister Phan Hien) tried to redraw the "frontier of Kampuchea-Vietnam, particularly the maritime frontier, introducing plans of annexation of a big part of the seas of Kampucha." . . . in 1974, the Nguyen-Van Thieu government threatened action when a French and American oil consortium under license from Cambodia started drilling for oil in the sea 60 kilometres southwest of Puolo Wai island. The threat worked and the drilling was stopped.³³⁵

With the intensification of fighting along the land borders in 1977, talks were adjourned "temporarily," but were never to be reconvened. Pol Pot forced the issue in August with the publication of Democratic Kampuchea's official pictorial magazine *Democratic Kampuchea Advances*. In this issue, a map of Kampuchea demarcated its borders according to the French Brevié Line drawn up by the governor-general of Indochina in 1939 (Appendix 4, Map 3, "Sketch-Map of the Brevié Line"). This line begins at the point where southern Vietnam (then Cochin China) touches Cambodia, angles off into the Gulf of Thailand, and skirts around Phu Quoc. Brevié had placed Phu Quoc island on the side of Cochinchina. This, apparently was acceptable to the Kampuchean government as it also meant that Cambodia could lay claim to waters east of the line which the Vietnamese were in the process of contesting with Thailand. The Brevié line, argued Hanoi in 1978, "demarcated the administrative and the police zones of the islands; . . . [and was] not interpretable in any way as the sea border between the two countries."³³⁶

³³⁵ Chanda, "All at Sea," 23.

³³⁶ *Kampuchea*, "Dossier I" (Hanoi: Vietnam Courier, 1978), 130.

Writing in 1978, Nayan Chanda made the point that the conflict in that year between Cambodia and Vietnam was really over the sea borders. "Although the armies of Cambodia and Vietnam are now facing each other across the rice paddies, rubber plantations and jungles of their land border, the most crucial and intractable bone of contention would seem to be the territorial waters and supposedly oil-rich sea-bed off the Gulf of Thailand."³³⁷ On the heels of Vietnam's capture of Phnom Penh, China launched its attack on Vietnam. In the aftermath of the February 1979 Chinese attack on Vietnam's northernmost province, an article in *Indochina Issues* agreed that the major dispute between China and Vietnam was not over land, but over maritime borders.³³⁸ Complicating the dispute, the Soviet Union lent its weight to Vietnam, said the *Peking Review*, by backing Vietnamese claims to the Spratly and Paracel islands, whereas before 1975, the Soviets recognized China's claims to them.³³⁹

The fight for oil and borders was fuelled by intense nationalism and racialism. Shortly before the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime, a document published by the Cambodian Foreign Ministry titled, *Livre noire: Faits et preuves des actes d'agression et d'annexion du Vietnam contre le Kampuchea*, bitterly and provocatively referred to the Vietnamese as *youn*, meaning savage.³⁴⁰ The true nature of the Vietnamese, explained the

³³⁷ Nayan Chanda, "All at Sea Over the Deeper Issue," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (3 Feb 1978): 23.

³³⁸ "The Boundary Dispute," *Indochina Issues*, no. 1 (March 1979): 5.

³³⁹ "Offshore claims complicate....," *Oil and Gas Journal* (23 April, 1979) 28.

³⁴⁰ Nayan Chanda, "The 'Black Book' of Hatred," *Far Easter Economic Review* (19 January 1979): 19.

Livre Noire, was that of aggressive expansionists. "Be it the epoch of the feudals, French colonialists, American imperialists, or Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese have not changed their true nature—that is their nature of aggressing, annexing and swallowing territory of other countries."³⁴¹

Vietnam Squares Off with the Khmer Rouge

With little reprieve from the Vietnam War, Hanoi faced the spectre of a vehemently anti-Vietnamese, Chinese-backed, aggressor on its western flank. (See Appendix 5, Map 4, "Cambodia since 1979") "Kampuchea," explained Ben Kiernan in 1980, "was deeply riven by political strife, from which the Pol Pot group emerged supreme only at the end of the year [1976]."³⁴² Consolidating his anti-Vietnamese faction, Pol Pot set out to rid himself of those whom he deemed as having Vietnamese minds in Khmer bodies. Wrote Kiernan,

Beginning around early 1977, a vast series of purges was launched. Leading communists . . . were executed. But even more frequently, throughout three-quarters of the country and right down to the village level, the revolutionary cadres in place were dismissed and in most cases executed, sometimes along with their families. Their replacements were newly arrived cadres from the Southwest Zone, which had become the stronghold of the Pol Pot group since victory in 1975.³⁴³

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ben Kiernan, "New Light on the Origins of the Vietnam-Kampuchea Conflict," *Bulletin of Concerned Scholars* 12 (October-December 1980): 62.

³⁴³ Ibid.

As of 1977 Pol Pot was busy directing a genocidal regime, carrying out across-the-board internal party purges, and coordinating attacks on three of his neighbours—Laos, Vietnam and Thailand. Cambodia's attacks across the Vietnamese border were by far the most aggressive. Attacks on Vietnam began around the time the internal purges were taking place. Finally, in the period from December 1977 to January 1978, Vietnam launched a counter-offensive. Upon withdrawing, Hanoi offered a mutual pullback of five kilometres on either side of the border, and an international supervisory body to prevent further border aggressions.³⁴⁴ Pol Pot refused. Vietnam's motivations were hardly altruistic. Writing in 1980, Chanda emphasized Vietnam's expansionist motivations, asserting that "one of the principle factors behind Hanoi's conflict with the Pol Pot regime" was Cambodia's refusal to accept a "special friendship" with Vietnam, meaning, "accepting Vietnam's dominance."³⁴⁵ Having carved out large chunks of Cambodia over the centuries, Vietnam had provoked intense Khmer nationalism and anti-Vietnamese sentiment. France's construction of colonial Indochina reinforced the notion and structure of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia as a single unit. By the time of the third Indochinese conflict, Vietnamese communists inherited the view of "Indochinese unity in the form of a single bloc" and believed that historical law dictated that survival depended on a Vietnamese-led resistance.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ *Far Eastern Economic Review* (17 February 1978): 10-11.

³⁴⁵ Nayan Chanda, "Vietnam uber alles," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (20 June 1980): 28.

³⁴⁶ Nguyen-Vo, 149.

Beyond military unity, Hanoi also sought economic integration of Indochina based on Vietnamese ideas about the coordination and effective distribution of labour and land.³⁴⁷

Following the 1977 signing of the Lao-Vietnamese treaty,

all the Lao and Cambodian provinces were coupled with sister provinces in Vietnam. Vietnamese advisers, technical experts, and doctors from the provinces were dispatched to sister provinces in Laos and Cambodia to help in small projects and to build a special Indochinese bond.³⁴⁸

The 1979 Vietnamese take-over of Cambodia was followed in 1983 by the establishment of a Vietnam–Laos–Cambodia Joint Economic Committee whose mandate it was to accelerate economic cooperation with Hanoi at the helm.³⁴⁹ A directive from the Vietnamese-backed Cambodian council of ministers in 1982 stated that Vietnamese who

³⁴⁷ Chanda wrote of “*de facto*” Vietnamese domination of Laos and Kampuchea in 1980. Noting the Communist Party of Vietnam’s party theoretical monthly, *Tan Chi Cong San*, Chanda cites one of Hanoi’s chief economic planners for his emphasis on the integration of land and labour. “Our country is now much different from before. Extending from Lung Cu in the northern province of Ha Tuyen to Ca Mau cape in the souther province of Minh Hai, with the sea to the east, with large rivers and high mountains and closely united with Kampuchea and Laos, our country has created a strong position on the Indochina peninsula. Our more than 50 million people, together with the fraternal Kampuchean and Lao peoples, now possess a different strength.” Nayan Chanda, “Vietnam uber alles,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (20 June 1980): 29. In 1977, the population statistics for the three countries of Indochina were as follows: Cambodia (Kampuchea), 8,610,000; Lao People’s Democratic Republic, 3,460,000; and Vietnam, 47,870,000. George E. Delury, ed., *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1979* (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, Inc., 1979), 551, 554, 593.

³⁴⁸ Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, 375.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

had arrived in Cambodia since 1979 should remain since they contributed to the rehabilitation and development of the economy.³⁵⁰

Had Pol Pot accepted Vietnam's offer for peace, his regime, says Kiernan, "would most likely have survived."³⁵¹ A number of decisive factors converged which fed Pol Pot's ability to reject peace offers. Accepting Hanoi's proposal "would also have meant the abandonment of policies towards Vietnam that had become clear enough over the previous year. But with Chinese backing, a desire to reconquer the Mekong Delta from Vietnam, and internal instability within Kampuchea's ruling communist party, the Pol Pot group was not prepared to abandon those policies. . . ." ³⁵²

During the Lon Nol years (1970-1975), Pol Pot's faction in the Communist Party of Cambodia had already decided to cooperate with China against Vietnam once the war against the Lon Nol regime was over. This was the opinion of a group of Congressmen in 1978 who believed Peking supported the Khmer Rouge as the frontline centrepiece of Peking's anti-Vietnamese campaign. "Henceforth, Cambodia would take a distant and unfriendly stance toward Vietnam and would turn to China for material aid to carry out

³⁵⁰ Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, 376, citing *Policy of the People's Republic of Kampuchea with Regard to Vietnamese Residents*, Phnom Penh, September 1983, 12. Chanda continues in a footnote (454, fn 20) as follows: "In June 1983 Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach told his Australian counterpart, Bill Hayden, that Vietnamese settlement in Cambodia would not exceed five hundred thousand but indicated that because many of the original residents have since died, some of their friends and relatives could now take their place. Author's interview with Bill Hayden, 27 June, 1983, Hongkong."

³⁵¹ Kiernan, "New Light," 65 .

³⁵² Ibid.

this policy, which included using unilateral force on territorial issues.”³⁵³ The same group of Congressmen cited Peking’s alarm over the fact that the Soviet Union was also supplying arms to the North Vietnamese during the Vietnam War. This worried China as it could translate into excessive Soviet influence in the event of a diplomatic settlement of the war. Although Peking was also supplying arms to Vietnam’s communists, presumably to help them, Peking’s primary motivation was to keep the fighting going in order to avoid a diplomatic settlement. The same group of Congressmen in 1978 believed China was willing to sacrifice an unlimited number of North Vietnamese to meet this objective.

Throughout the war, the Chinese apparently were concerned about the potential consequences of a Vietnamese military victory. They opposed a Vietnamese diplomatic settlement early in the war out of fear that the Soviet Union would have a strong influence on the settlement. Many diplomatic observers in the 1965-68 period commented correctly that the “Chinese are willing to fight until the last Vietnamese.”³⁵⁴

In addition to geopolitical concerns and strategic considerations such as existed between China and Vietnam, there was, as historian Thu-Huong Nguyen-Vo puts it, an “elusive dimension of attitudes, perceptions and emotions.” Nguyen-Vo elevates the cultural and historical dimension of the conflict to a level equal to that of “real strategic considerations.” Chanda cites one Thai diplomat’s recollection of Deng Xiaoping’s hostile attitude towards the Vietnamese: “His hatred was visceral. He spat forcefully into his

³⁵³ Bingham et al, *Peace Through Law, Americans Missing in Action*, 112.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 108-09.

spittoon and called the Vietnamese ‘dogs’.”³⁵⁵ In August 1978 one Peking official described the Vietnamese to Chanda as having a “black heart” for not showing any gratitude for the \$20 billion of Chinese aid given during the Vietnam War.³⁵⁶ Deng routinely referred to the Vietnamese as “ungrateful,” “arrogant” and “insolent,” and characterized the Vietnamese in a November 1978 press conference as the “hooligans of the East.”³⁵⁷

Hanoi correctly understood that China viewed Vietnam as a mere adjunct of the Soviet Union. In June 1978, *Business Week* made two observations which were far more astute than the statements delivered for public consumption by the shapers of foreign policy in Washington and Peking: First, that the “escalation of propaganda and implied threats by Peking against the Vietnamese regime have created a crisis for Hanoi;” and second, that “Maintaining a balance between Moscow and Peking has always been a fundamental tenet of the Vietnamese Communists.”³⁵⁸

Conclusion

The contest between Cambodia and Vietnam over maritime borders (and the strategically useful islands they embraced) intensified in 1977 once Pol Pot consolidated the grip of his anti-Vietnamese faction over Cambodia’s Communist Party. With China

³⁵⁵ Nguyen-Vo, 133.

³⁵⁶ Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, 260.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 261.

³⁵⁸ “How the Hanoi-Peking Face-Off Endangers the U.S.,” 52..

and the U.S. backing the Khmer Rouge, a regional conflict ballooned into the Third Indochina Conflict—a conflict inextricably linked to strategic maritime arteries, vital trade routes, and oil interests in the region. The primary dispute in Indochina was over sovereignty in the South China Sea—particularly the Spratly and Paracel Islands. China and Vietnam both wanted to reap the rewards of controlling these areas. China’s tactical weapon against Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge, was a problematic weapon because of the Khmer Rouge’s genocidal history, but it was strategically placed and effective nonetheless. U.S. trade and commercial interests in the region lay with Japan, ASEAN, and China. American trade with these three powers was enormous, vital, and growing. Despite the fact that the U.S. maintained military facilities in the Philippines and Thailand, it worried about the establishment of naval facilities by the Soviets in Vietnam. Already on the ground and at sea, American oil companies also continued to increase the number of their concessions in East Asia’s Pacific waters. Washington supported these embryonic initiatives as an alternative to spiralling oil prices, which would develop if the Middle Eastern oil suppliers ever decided to take full advantage of their stranglehold on oil consumed in Western countries. Oil politics were never far below the surface of relations between the U.S., China, and the Soviet Union, as the next chapter will show.

CHAPTER 8

THE SUPERPOWERS: THE U.S., CHINA, AND THE SOVIET UNION

Trade and oil influenced much of the political thinking shaping United States relations with the Khmer Rouge in the first years following the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1979. Oil, trade, and strategic interests were competed for in the contested waters lapping against the shores of Vietnam, China, Cambodia, and the member countries of ASEAN throughout the decade leading up to the Third Indochina conflict. Control of the region's waterways was of vital importance because of their military value and their importance as arteries of trade. Equally important was the ocean's importance as an untapped warehouse of oil. American trade with ASEAN, China, and Japan, were vital to the U.S.. A constellation of tactical considerations and oil interests informed decision-making in Peking, Tokyo, and Washington. Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and the Khmer Rouge were weighed in the balance according to their respective utility in the larger interests of the superpowers. The lucrative trade and technology exchange between Peking, Tokyo and Washington left Moscow on the sidelines plagued by prospects of dwindling oil production capacity. Lacking the trade and oil alliances of its adversaries, Moscow's strategy relied more heavily on striking out militarily and diplomatically.

The US/Asia-Pacific Trade Quadrangle: The U.S., China, Japan, and ASEAN

The 1970s marked a watershed era in the world economy. A worldwide recession, inflation, dramatic increases in OPEC oil prices, and an unprecedented level of world trade

with China and the Soviet Union occurred in this decade. In spite of the Cold War, the U.S. remained diplomatically and gainfully engaged with the Soviet Union in trade and in disarmament negotiations. The SALT (1972) and SALT-II negotiations (1974) proceeded, the U.S. exported a massive 25 percent of its wheat crop to the USSR, and large corporations such as Pepsi-Cola and the Chase Manhattan Bank began operations in the USSR. Even though in April 1975 triumphant Vietcong and North Vietnamese soldiers marched into Saigon, and Communist insurgents took power in Cambodia and Laos, the U.S. maintained its trade ties with the Soviets and American exports to the USSR reached \$2.3 billion.³⁵⁹ The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) criticized exaggerated accounts of the Soviet military build-up during these years. Contrary to “doomsday” projections from Western powers about the decline in their naval capabilities, said SIPRI, there appeared to be an equilibrium in the naval forces of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. “It is more appropriate to say that an approximate equilibrium—to use an expression from the SALT lexicon—exists as far as the numbers of ships are concerned when the reliance on, and importance of, the sea-lines of communication of the two alliances are taken into account.”³⁶⁰

³⁵⁹ Thomas Paterson, Garry Clifford, and Kenneth Hagan, *American Foreign Relations: A History Since 1895*, 4th ed., vol. 2 (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1995), 435.

³⁶⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *World Armaments and Disarmament, SIPRI Yearbook*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979), 370. The “questionable” truth value of NATO reports regarding Soviet military strength is also described in the Yearbook. “Many political commentators in NATO countries now treat as ‘known facts’ the following propositions about Soviet military expenditure—propositions which NATO military spokesman have been intensively repeating. The first proposition is that Soviet military expenditure now exceeds that of the United States. The second is that military

China's legendary market potential, its need for foreign investments, services and technology, and its enormous oil reserves were highly alluring to American business interests. China was also an opportune strategic weapon against Vietnam and the Soviet Union. For the anti-Soviet minded in the U.S. National Security Council, and those still smarting from the loss of the Vietnam War, China's vituperative and aggressive policy toward Vietnam may have had a vicarious cathartic appeal. China, starting to build up its navy, planned to pay for modernisation through its highly advertized oil producing potential. Japan, possessing little oil and little military force was important to China as a country with trade and investment capital, goods, and technology. The Khmer Rouge was China's military tool in Indochina, useful for the harassment of Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

China

Trade between China and the U.S. in the 1970s oscillated. The improvement in bilateral relations between the U.S. and China between 1972 and 1974 was reflected in the rapid increase in trade. During the next two years trade plummeted as a consequence of earthquakes in China, a fall in China's agricultural imports, a large bilateral trade deficit,

expenditure takes a much larger share than it used to of Soviet gross national product, and that share is a very high one. The third proposition is that Soviet military expenditure has, over a long period, been rising in real terms by at least 3 per cent a year, while military expenditure in NATO countries has not been rising at all. These propositions have been extensively and successfully used in the campaign to persuade NATO governments to plan increases in their own military spending. These three propositions are not 'known facts'; they are highly questionable." SIPRI, *World Armaments*, 28.

and leadership disputes and purges in Peking.³⁶¹ China was back trading goods worth large sums by 1977. Its largest trading partner by-far was Japan. In 1977 alone China received almost \$2 billion worth of material from Japan. In the same year, U.S. exports to China were a “meager” \$171 million. By the next year, 1978, U.S. exports to China soared to over \$1 billion.³⁶² By 1979 the Washington-based National Council for US-China Trade estimated that two-way trade could triple by 1981.³⁶³ Speaking in 1980, Carter spoke glowingly of the expanding ties between the U.S. and China.

Our economic ties, like our cooperation in science and technology, grow broader and closer every day. Trade between the United States and China this year will be nearly four times what it was 2 years ago. China will buy some \$3 billion worth of American goods. That means jobs for American workers and opportunities for American businesses. And it means help for China’s efforts to modernize and to develop her economy.³⁶⁴

From the 1950s to 1978, China’s economy was geared to military production.

Consumerism was suppressed in a massive effort to turn China into “a major producer of

³⁶¹ Congress, Foreign Affairs and National Defence Division, *China-U.S. Relations*, Issue Brief IB76053 by Robert Sutter, 20 July 1976, CRS-7. In Department of State. *American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1977-1980*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983.

³⁶² The \$1 billion is quoted as a CIA estimate whereas the U.S.-China Trade Council put the figure at exceeding \$800 million. “China: Big Market Opens,” 6.

³⁶³ Ibid., 6.

³⁶⁴ U.S., remarks by President Carter and the Vice Premier Bo of the People’s Republic of China at the Signing of four agreements, Washington, D.C., 17 September 1980, in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 1014. See *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, 22 September 1980, 1772-1774.

tanks, artillery, submarines, warplanes, and other weaponry.”³⁶⁵ By the time Deng Xiaoping became vice-premier of the PRC, he inherited a large arsenal of aging Soviet-designed military hardware and a country grossly underdeveloped in the areas of industry, science and technology. Seeking to be a first-rank power by the year 2000, China’s “New Long March” policy emphasized industrial development.³⁶⁶ Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Li Hsien-rien estimated the need for capital investment at \$600 billion from 1979 to 1985,³⁶⁷ for which tens of billions of dollars in U.S. foreign credits would be required.³⁶⁸

The opportunity in China appealed to the American business community, which anticipated that at least \$200 billion of the needed \$600 billion would be allocated by China to the acquisition of plants, equipment, technology and services from abroad.³⁶⁹ Japan had already signed a \$20 billion trade agreement with China covering the next eight years and West Germany, England, and the U.S. had already struck billion dollar commercial agreements with China. By 1985, said one chemical and engineering journal in

³⁶⁵ James H. Nolt, “US-China Security Relations,” *Foreign Policy in Review*, Interhemispheric Resource Center <ircalb@swep.com>, Southeast Asia Discussion List <SEASIA-LIST@MSU.EDU>, [8 April 1999].

³⁶⁶ One hundred and twenty projects were planned as the backbone of modernization. These included plans for 10 new steel plants, 9 nonferrous metal complexes, 10 new oil and gas fields, 8 coal bases, 30 electric power stations, 5 harbors and 6 trunk railroads. Bob Tippee, “China Expanding Purchases of Oil Equipment, Technology,” *Oil and Gas Journal* (12 February 1979): 38.

³⁶⁷ *New York Times*, 28 January 1979, 53.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

1979, “China’s total trade could hit \$80-85 bil/yr, with the U.S. holding a 20% share” with total two-way China-US trade having already topped \$1 billion in 1978.³⁷⁰

China’s oil production yields began to fizzle by the early 1980s. The Economist Intelligence Unit reported in 1982 that China’s “main error” in planning was that in 1978 Peking believed that petroleum production would rapidly increase from 2 million barrels per day to 4 million. The result was that the coal industry was neglected, too much emphasis was placed on energy intensive heavy industry, and actual revenues from petroleum exports were less than the anticipated amounts.³⁷¹ In 1983 the EIU reported that the Chinese leadership recognized “in mid-1981 that it had gone too far in the retrenchment of investment spending and heavy industrial output,” but it was already too late to prevent the pendulum from swinging back .³⁷²

Japan

China’s need for foreign oil technology was central to its trade with Japan. Japan’s own oil needs, in turn, buttressed China’s aggressive foreign policy against the Soviet Union. In 1974, Japan imported 88 percent of its oil and was dependent on the Middle East for 77 percent of these imports.³⁷³ Middle Eastern oil flowed to Japan primarily

³⁷⁰ “China: Big Market Opens for U.S. Chemicals,” in *Chemical and Engineering News* (1 January 1979): 7.

³⁷¹ Ibid., *World Outlook 1982*, 145-45.

³⁷² Economist Intelligence Unit, *World Outlook 1983*, 145.

³⁷³ Selig S. Harrison, *China, Oil and Asia: Conflict Ahead?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 147.

through the Malacca and Lombok Straits making these straits and the South China Sea critical life lines of Japan's economic survival.³⁷⁴ For China, Japan was a source of much needed materials and technology—a vacuum which had to be filled since Russian technical expertise and material aid had been withdrawn. With the Sino-Soviet split in 1960, the departure of Russian oil specialists from China precipitated a crisis.³⁷⁵ China needed Japanese machinery, steel, construction, and oil industry materials.³⁷⁶ China's oil exports to Japan increased almost tenfold between 1973 and 1976. Former regional assistant in the U.S. Department of Energy Randall Hardy says China's energy policy drove its foreign policy. China, says Hardy, used its oil to try to countermand the development of Soviet-Japanese relations, and stymie oil exploitation in the Soviet Union, hoping that good Sino-Japanese relations would preclude Japanese exploitation of Siberian oil.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁴ George Lauriat, "Asia's Rapidly Changing Role in the Oil World," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (26 January 1979): 37.

³⁷⁵ Tatsu Kambara, "The Petroleum Industry in China," *China Quarterly* (October-December 1974): 703. China also imported Russian oil to the degree of more than \$1 billion U.S. between 1950 and 1968. *Ibid.*, 702.

³⁷⁶ "The importance of oil in the overall pattern of Sino-Japanese trade was dramatized by the rapid rise in Chinese oil exports from 4.3 percent of the total value of Chinese exports to Japan during 1973 . . . to 41.3 percent in 1976. The potential beneficiaries of expanded Sino-Japanese trade—and thus the most active proponents of increased oil imports from China—include the powerful machinery, steel and construction industries as well as oil-related industries seeking to link up directly with Chinese oil development. Machinery and equipment exports jumped from 17.9 percent of total Japanese exports to China in 1973 . . . to 31 percent in the first nine months of 1975. Harrison, *China, Oil and Asia*, 155.

³⁷⁷ Hardy, *China's Oil Future*, 73-74. Randall W. Hardy was assistant to the regional representative, Region X (Seattle), of the U.S. Department of Energy. He was previously special assistant to the administrator, Federal Energy Administration, in the areas of energy conservation and resource development, oil price and allocation regulations, and domestic

The importance of lucrative trade relations with Asian powers was cogently and repeatedly expressed by the policy shapers in Washington. At a news conference in Tokyo on 1 February 1977, Vice-President Walter Mondale spoke of the interdependence of the economies of the U.S. and the countries “across the Pacific.” “Of our allies and old friends,” said Mondale, “*none* [my emphasis] is more important than Japan.”³⁷⁸ Discussing the well-being of “the less developed countries in the region,” and “world economic equilibrium,” Mondale exhorted his audience with a call for the U.S. and Japan to “proceed in close consultation.” One year later, Secretary of Defence Harold Brown addressed the Los Angeles World Affairs Council on 20 February, emphatically reiterating the shared economic and strategic interests of the U.S. and Japan.

Economically, our Asian trade grows by leaps and bounds. Last year it reached \$60 billion. Japan, the third largest economy in the world, is the major element in that trade. Keeping Japan a stable political and economic part of the coalition that so much sustains what order and progress the world now offers is a very high priority in U.S. policy.³⁷⁹

Within the context of viewing the Soviet Union as, “of course,” the US’s “most difficult national security problem,” Brown referred to the state of “essential equivalence” wherein “neither nation enjoys a military or political advantage over the other from its

and international energy policy.

³⁷⁸ Mondale, Tokyo, 1 February 1977, 912.

³⁷⁹ House, Committee on International Relations, *Foreign Assistance Legislation, Fiscal Year 1979 (Part I)*, address by Harold Brown, Secretary of Defence before the Los Angeles World Affairs Council,” 20 February 1978, 95th Cong., 2nd sess., 74-78, cited in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 916.

strategic forces.”³⁸⁰ Uncertain of Soviet intentions, Brown described the US’s objective of maintaining a strategic balance. Tying together American protective good will towards Japan, Japan’s outstanding economic performance, and Japan’s “purely defensive capabilities,” Brown situated the US-Japanese security relationship as “fundamental” to the US’s position in Asia. National Security Affairs Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski also viewed Japan as “vital” to America’s global objectives, referring to the two countries as “mutually dependent.” Pointing out that as the US’s largest overseas trading partner, trade between the U.S. and Japan exceeded \$29 billion in 1977. “No relationship in our foreign policy,” said Brzezinski, was “more important.”³⁸¹ Holbrooke commented on this in 1978, translating trade statistics into jobs for Americans.³⁸²

Japan’s importance to the U.S. was not limited to trade. Its stand against the Soviet Union, its broadening ties to Europe, and its sacrifices on behalf of American

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Address by Z. Brzezinski, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs before the Japan Society, New York, 27 April, 1978, in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 1027. See House press release, 27 April 1978, in Department of State *Bulletin*, June 1978, 1-4

³⁸² “The Department of Commerce estimates that every billion dollars of U.S. exports translates directly into 30,000 American jobs. One out of every three agricultural sector jobs is now export-directed. In the manufacturing sector, one out of every seven jobs is export-related. Thus, our exports to Japan alone in 1977—which totalled \$10.5 billion—provided direct employment for 315,000 Americans. Our total exports to all of Asia in 1977 of \$20.9 billion provided jobs for about 627,000 Americans. But even these figures do not tell the whole story. The Department of Labor estimates that for every job directly involved in the production of items for export, another job is created in an allied or supporting industry.” Address by Richard Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, before the Western Governors Conference, Honolulu, 16 June 1978, in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 920.

foreign policy objectives, wed the U.S. and Japan in their shared interests. Holbrooke welded these three themes together in his address to the Japan Society in 1980.

Japan has stood second to none in rejecting Soviet aggression. It joined the Olympic boycott . . . It has maintained economic sanctions. . . It has provided massive new aid to Pakistan and Turkey . . .

Japan accepted a cutoff of over 10% in its crucial oil shipments when it refused to pay higher prices demanded by Iran, thus aiding significantly in halting the spiralling price of petroleum. And also with regard to Iran, . . . Japan has been second to none in its support for our efforts there, as well.

Japan has greatly expanded its policy-level contacts with Europe, working closely with the European Community, as well as the United States³⁸³

Japan's role in the Indochina conflict, financially and diplomatically mirrored, American efforts, too, said Holbrooke.

The relationship with ASEAN has deepened, and Japan has worked very closely with those nations, providing massive refugee assistance—second only to the United States—and playing a front-line role in the UN vote on Kampuchean credentials.³⁸⁴

Based on the repeated statements made by Washington decision-makers, the most important foreign country, the cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy, was not China, but rather Japan. The ornate public displays hailing the normalization of Sino-American relations were appropriate given mutual business and oil interests, and the shared anti-Soviet posturing of these two superpowers. Japan's economic might and trade value to

³⁸³ Address by Richard Holbrooke, Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, before the Japan Society, New York, 21 November 1980, in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 1038-39.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 1039.

the U.S., and cooperation with the US on Vietnam and Cambodia, were clearly central to U.S. foreign policy, while an alliance with China held the additional advantage that China acted as a drain on Soviet forces along their shared border and as check on Soviet expansionism in the region.

ASEAN

Regional economic integration was growing as Japan, in particular, was increasing trade with the rest of Asia. Richard Holbrooke, in his address before the Western Governors Conference in June 1978, spoke of the impressive economic changes stating that the “face of Asia has changed, and the U.S. role must change as well.”³⁸⁵ Holbrooke described these impressive changes using aggregate monetary and population statistics.

Our two-way trade with ASEAN in 1977 was over \$10 billion. When that is added to our approximately \$15 billion in trade with Hong Kong, Korea, and Taiwan, the total is almost as large as our trade with Japan. These countries—whose combined population totals 300 million (more than South America) have achieved between 6% and 11% annual growth in GNP over the last 6 years. It is now the only group of countries in the world within which real GNP's are doubling every 7-12 years.³⁸⁶

As America's fifth largest trading partner, ASEAN's importance to the U.S. lay in its energy resources and other raw materials. Up to ten percent of the US's crude oil

³⁸⁵ Holbrooke speaking in Honolulu, June 1978, in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 921.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 920.

imports, and an even greater percentage of rubber, tin, cocoa, bauxite, and other raw materials came from member countries of ASEAN.³⁸⁷

The two ASEAN members who were most sympathetic to Vietnam and the Soviet Union, Malaysia and Indonesia, happened to be the two largest Southeast Asian oil producers and also happened to be in competition with China for penetration of the American West Coast and the Japanese markets.³⁸⁸ For example, in 1977, 48 percent of Indonesia's crude oil exports went to Japan and another 37 percent went to the U.S..³⁸⁹ The U.S. also had a special relationship, based on oil, with Singapore. Devoid of its own oil production, Singapore refiners represented the "trump card in the movement of oil"³⁹⁰ and were the primary source of oil products in the region. Singapore's refineries were controlled by major oil companies such as BP, Shell, Exxon and Caltex.³⁹¹ For its part, the U.S. relied on the Gulf for 30 percent of its oil supplies, while the European Economic Community received a massive 65 percent of its oil from the Gulf.³⁹² Although the Soviet Union was the world's largest oil producer in 1979, and a major exporter of oil to the

³⁸⁷ Address by Cyrus Vance, Secretary of State, before the Asia Society, New York, 29 June 1977, in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 913. See Department of State, press release 313, in Department of State, *Bulletin*, 1 August 1977, 141-45.

³⁸⁸ Lauriat, "Asia's Oil World," 37.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 38.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 41.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Rodney Tasker, "Facing Moscow's Pincer Movement," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (9 May 1980): 21.

Eastern European bloc, the American Central Intelligence Agency anticipated that by the mid-1980s Soviet oil production would drop to the point where the Soviet Union would become a net importer, thus loosening the Soviet grip on the Eastern bloc.³⁹³

Concomitant with good trade relations and the desire for peace and stability was the provision by the U.S. of armaments to friendly trade and oil producing states.

According to the 1979 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's *World Armaments and Disarmament* yearbook, the U.S. was the second largest provider of arms to the Far East—especially South Korea, Taiwan and Indonesia—and provided arms to all the members of ASEAN.³⁹⁴ SIPRI also noted a steep build-up of naval vessels in Third World countries seeking to bolster their naval capabilities with particular emphasis on Fast Patrol Boats (FPBs). An important stimulus to this interest in FPBs was the increased exploitation of sea-bed resources. The Far East was highlighted by SIPRI as one of those areas building up its naval forces, and Indonesia in particular was singled out for its “development of light naval forces for protection of extended interests at sea”³⁹⁵

The Big Powers Manoeuvre Into Position

The U.S. had much to be concerned about across the Pacific.³⁹⁶ During the years of “the

³⁹³ Tasker, “Moscow’s Pincer Movement,” 25.

³⁹⁴ SIPRI, 177, 214, 226, 232, 234, 238.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 376.

³⁹⁶ Dutch historian Jaap Van Ginneken provides a concise map of the importance of the waterways in the region. “The South China Sea and the groups of islands are of exceptional strategic importance, not only because of the huge supplies of oil present in the

killing fields” in Cambodia and following Vietnam’s capture of Phnom Penh, irredentist claims proved to be flashpoints of regional conflict. Author Sheldon W. Simon highlights four key factors behind the American strategic interest in ASEAN autonomy as they related to irredentist claims to maritime borders in the region.

(1) ASEAN is seen as part of a forward defence line against any attack across the Pacific. (2) Its position astride the waterways linking the Indian Ocean, South China Sea, and Pacific Ocean is vital to the flow of Japanese commerce. (3) The five contain a rich reservoir of raw materials and constitute a growing market for U.S. investment. And (4) the five are determined to keep the strategic Malacca, Lombok, and Makassar straits open for international trade.³⁹⁷

This may have been what Richard Holbrooke had in mind when speaking before the Women’s National Democratic Club in 1980. In his address Holbrooke referred to the members of ASEAN as the five nations around which the U.S. had “built U.S. policy in

zone, but also because of the civil and military shipping traffic. It is one of the busiest seas in the world. It leads into the Straits of Malacca, which in turn lead to the Middle East, Africa and Europe. It runs into the Bashi Channel and the Straits of Taiwan, which give access to the East China Sea, Japan, Korea, Manchuria and Siberia. It is certainly the umbilical cord tying the latter countries to the rest of the world. It also links the most important ports on the Chinese continent with the narrows that lead between the archipelagos of Indonesia and the Philippines through to the Pacific Ocean and to Australia, New Zealand and eventually the United States. Finally, the disputed Paracels and the Spratly Islands are less than two hundred miles apart, with the result that whoever possesses them (or even a part of them) will have control over the through traffic, either by making environmental demands (with regard to tanker traffic especially) or by closing the area for military convoys.” Ginneken, *The Third Indochina War*, 79.

³⁹⁷ Sheldon W. Simon, *The ASEAN States and Regional Security*, Hoover International Studies (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1982), 5.

Southeast Asia since 1977.”³⁹⁸ Holbrooke made a direct link between security and oil concerns in the region.

With the agreement of the Philippine Government, and with full regard for Philippine sovereignty, we are committed to maintaining the two important U.S. bases in the Philippines. This will enhance our ability to project U.S. military strength into Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, and East Africa and to protect Pacific and Indian Ocean shipping lanes over which 90% of Middle Eastern oil is transported.³⁹⁹

Vice-President Mondale provided substantive statistical data to reinforce the degree of importance attributed to American-Pacific/East Asian relations and shared economic interests. Approximately one-quarter of all American trade, explained Mondale in 1977, was with East Asia and the Pacific—accounting for \$22 billion in sales in the previous year alone. Trade with this region in the past five years surpassed that with any other region—including the European community.⁴⁰⁰

Links between trade, politics, and military interests were fundamental to the policy of *détente*. An Economist Intelligence Unit report in 1980 predicted that China would be “moving closer to the NATO bloc, for, apart from military and political considerations,

³⁹⁸ Address by Richard Holbrooke, Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, before the Women’s National Democratic Club, Washington, D.C., 27 March 1980, in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 925.

³⁹⁹ Holbrooke, 16 June 1978, in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 921.

⁴⁰⁰ Statement by Vice-President Walter Mondale at a News Conference, Tokyo, 1 February 1977, in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy*, 911.

closer links with the developed Western nations are vital for modernisation.”⁴⁰¹ While U.S. policy was driven by a strong desire to inhibit Soviet access to the region, says Tilman in his analysis of external threats to ASEAN’s security, trade with Asia was the compelling factor in American foreign policy in the region. Japan, in particular, was of primary importance as the US’s second largest trading partner. By 1980, trade with the countries of the Pacific Basin surpassed trade with Western Europe. This, says Tilman, has been both “a cause and effect” of “a redirection of American global thinking.”⁴⁰²

During the 1970s the promise of enormous oil reserves in Asian waters added compellingly to Chinese, ASEAN, Cambodian, Vietnamese, and American interest in the South China Sea. In 1970, the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (UNECAFE) produced a report resulting from the research performed by American, Japanese, Taiwanese, and South Koreans technicians in the China Sea. The findings were glowing and stated that the sea-bed in the most shallow areas between Japan and Taiwan could contain reserves of oil and gas even greater than those of the Persian Gulf.⁴⁰³ Subsequent to such reports, disputes over water and islands resurfaced after having been dormant for many years. The Philippines government in 1975 first laid claim to an area it referred to as the Kalayaan Islands between the Spratlys and the Island of Palawan, where it had authorized drilling for oil since 1976. China’s exploration of the Paracels has been

⁴⁰¹ Economist Intelligence Unit, *World Outlook 1980* (London: The Economist Intelligence Ltd., February 1980), 128.

⁴⁰² Tilman, 128.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

documented since at least June 1978, when it began drilling on the most important of the Paracels, Woody Island.⁴⁰⁴ Malaysia became involved in the dispute in 1979. Already in control of three of the Spratlys, it laid claim to the whole chain based on the argument that they were part of its continental shelf and therefore fell under the Law of the Sea Convention.⁴⁰⁵

Good news on Asia's oil prospects continued to flow in as the 1970s came to a close. In 1979, a *World Oil* article titled "Good News in Asia Pacific" reported that the region ranked "as one of the world's most attractive, relatively unexploited hydrocarbon provinces."⁴⁰⁶ Leading the pack in offshore surveys and explorations were the American oil companies including those in the Phillips Group, Chevron Overseas Petroleum Inc., Texaco International Petroleum Co. (better known in Asia as Caltex), Exxon, Mobil, Atlantic Richfield Co., Santa Fe International, Amoco International Oil Co., Citco International Petroleum Co., Pennzoil Co., and Union Oil of California.⁴⁰⁷ The advantage the American companies held in the area was evidenced by American predominance in carrying out surveys in 1979 in the South China and Yellow Seas. Twenty-six of the 46

⁴⁰⁴ Ginneken 78.

⁴⁰⁵ No author, "Spratly Islands Dispute (SPRATLY Case)," <http://gurukul.ucc.american.edu/ted/SPRATLY.htm> [7 January 1999].

⁴⁰⁶ P. D. Gaffney and C.P. Moyes, "Good News in Asia Pacific: Prospects, Terms Attractive," *World Oil* (July 1979): 72. *World Oil* is published monthly by the Gulf Publishing Company, Houston, Texas.

⁴⁰⁷ "The Focus Is on China," *World Oil* (15 August) 1979, 225.

companies carrying out surveys were based in the U.S.. The other twenty companies originated in Europe, Canada, Sudan, the Middle East, South America and Australia.⁴⁰⁸

Until the papers of President Carter and the departments of the Executive Branch of the US government are available to scholars we cannot conclude with certainty that the interests of American oil companies in exploiting oil off the shore of China played a major role in determining American foreign policy towards Vietnam and Cambodia. However, it is already obvious from the evidence cited above that the possibility exists. Certainly this is a subject which will require more research in the future.

The Soviet Union Invades Afghanistan

While oil prospects boomed in 1979, the year proved to be politically disastrous for the Carter administration which faced the 1980 presidential campaign. In July, China and the Soviet Union agreed to hold talks on improving bilateral relations—a troubling development to the U.S. and to Vietnam.⁴⁰⁹ Two months later tensions flared between Moscow and Washington over Soviet troop deployment in Cuba⁴¹⁰ and, in November, the American people were stunned when Iranians took Americans hostage in the American embassy in Tehran. Closing the year on an ever-worsening note, the Soviet Union

⁴⁰⁸ “The Focus is Offshore,” *World Oil*, (15 August 1980): 261.

⁴⁰⁹ Nayan Chanda, “China’s Moscow Ploy Worries the Vietnamese,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (12 October 1979): 8.

⁴¹⁰ Miles Hanley, “The Tokens of Friendship,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (12 October 1979): 8.

invaded Afghanistan, ousting then President Hafizullah Amin and bringing Soviet troops to the borders of Iran and Pakistan. Four hundred miles from the Hormuz Strait, the bottleneck entrance to the Gulf, the Soviet Union was within reach of the sea artery through which 30 percent of U.S. oil supplies passed.⁴¹¹ With the taking of Americans as hostages in Tehran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and a naval build-up by American and Soviet forces in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, tensions in the Gulf increased markedly.

Moscow and Peking eyed one another across their shared 4,000 mile border. Forty-five Soviet divisions lined the Sino-Soviet frontier and 83 Chinese divisions stood ready to confront them.⁴¹² That the Soviet Union would invade China in an attempt to dominate 900 million people was actually less likely than the prospect that the Soviets would manoeuvre in Africa and the Middle East to strike at the life-blood of China and many other countries—that is, to cut off supplies of Gulf oil.⁴¹³ The fear of a Soviet threat to Gulf oil was publicly uttered by President Jimmy Carter in the wake of the invasion of Afghanistan. Said Carter in a televised address to the American people, the Soviet seizure

⁴¹¹ Rodney Tasker, "Facing Moscow's Pincer Movement," 21.

⁴¹² Russel Spurr, "Rumblings Along the Frontier," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (23 February 1979): 33.

⁴¹³ Author unnamed, "A Sino-Soviet Detente?", *Far Eastern Economic Review* (31 August 1979): 26.

of Afghanistan provided the Soviets with a “stepping stone to controlling . . . much of the world’s oil supplies.”⁴¹⁴

The Soviet Union’s explanations for its invasion of Afghanistan emphasized the Strait of Hormuz and the warm-water ports of the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean, according to the Communist Party daily *Pravda* (21 August 1979), had a direct bearing on the security of the Soviet Union.

The waters of the Indian Ocean, its shores, its insular territories are comparatively near to our country if one applies the radius of action of modern means of strategic attack. Besides, the only year-round sea route linking the European part of the USSR with the Soviet Far East runs through the Indian Ocean.⁴¹⁵

Soviet ability to project military power into regions from Africa to Asia included “extensive naval and air facilities at Eden in South Yemen, Umm Wasr in Iraq and in the East African state of Mozambique. . . . [The Soviet Union could] also avail itself of bunkering and repair facilities in India and Sri Lanka.”⁴¹⁶ The Soviet naval build-up in the Indian Ocean by May 1980 included at least 31 ships and an additional 15 warships and 16 support vessels spread from the Horn of Africa to the Gulf of Aden to the Red Sea.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁴ Stephen Barber, “Carter’s Rude Awakening,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (18 January 1980): 10.

⁴¹⁵ Quote in Ronald Tyler, “The Lure of Black Gold and Southern Seas,” *Far Eastern Economic Reviews* (9 May 1980): 26.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

Sharing only a tiny border with Afghanistan, China was not greatly perturbed by the possibility of a Soviet invasion from Afghanistan. The greater threat to China lay in the larger world arena rather than in border threats and minor regimes, according to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*:

The security of the Gulf, the Atlantic alliance and the East-West sea lanes are now considered much more important than the problems of minor regimes in the Third World—and the chief target of opposition, as before, will be the Soviet Union. What this means in practice is that Chinese aid and arms shipment will go increasingly to regimes which oppose Soviet or Cuban-backed aggression in the Third World—such as Somalia, Egypt, Zaire, Pakistan and the Khmer Rouge remnants in Kampuchea.⁴¹⁸

Conclusion

In view of the larger Soviet threat in the Indian Ocean and to U.S. access to Gulf oil in particular, Washington responded to the crises of 1979, towards Cambodia and Vietnam, with carrot and stick diplomacy. The carrot for Hanoi was the prospect of the normalization of relations between Washington and Hanoi, and subsequent direct economic aid from the U.S. and from the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank. In return, Vietnam would be expected to turn its back on the Soviet Union, denying it crucial access to former U.S. military bases at Cam Ranh Bay and Danang. The stick in American diplomacy was the Khmer Rouge which Washington supported openly—albeit apologetically—in the corridors of the UN, and covertly under the banner of humanitarian aid to Thai relief camps. Politically, the U.S. promoted the KR

⁴¹⁸ David Bonavia, "All Anti-Moscow Men are Brothers," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (22 February 1980): 37.

through ASEAN as a viable member of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea. The U.S. would know that its Cambodian policy had succeeded if Vietnam withdrew from Phnom Penh and broke its alliance with the USSR.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Recapitulation: Part I. 1975 to 1978

Part I examines Congressional debates regarding US-Vietnamese rapprochement in the four-year period leading up to U.S. support for the post-genocide era Khmer Rouge. Chapters two and three yield at least five insights into the complexities of the circumstances and issues at work in foreign policy decision-making towards Vietnam. One, between 1975 and 1978, intense debate in Washington produced crucial steps toward US-Vietnamese rapprochement: (a) a Congressional decision to lift the U.S. trade embargo in 1976 (blocked only by a presidential veto); (b) promising talks and other measures in 1977 and 1978, regarding US-Vietnamese normalization of relations; and (c) bills passed permitting foreign assistance appropriations for Vietnam. Two, as the U.S. and Vietnam moved towards normalization of relations in 1978, China vastly increased trade with the U.S. and dramatically intensified diplomatic efforts to normalize relations. Three, American church-based groups served contrasting functions: (a) as contracted relief providers serving foreign policy objectives of the Executive Branch in South Vietnam and the Thai-Cambodia border; and (b) as critics of American foreign policy and proponents of a humanitarian drive to 'heal the wounds of war.' Four, business interests, church groups, peace advocates, liberal Congressmen, and President Carter all shared a desire to promote

US-Vietnamese rapprochement. And five, the U.S. government and Congress were riven with internal splits over Cambodia.

Recapitulation: Part II. 1979 to 1982

From 1979 to 1982, the U.S. sustained the Khmer Rouge materially, diplomatically, and politically. It did so publicly and in a behind-the-scenes manner. Publicly, the U.S. purported to work to stem the extinction of the Khmer people. It did so by pumping hundreds of millions of dollars into humanitarian aid destined for refugee camps controlled by the Khmer Rouge. Diplomatically, it voted to keep DK's credentials in the UN—preferring representation for Cambodia by known genocidists rather than leaving Cambodia's seat empty. American government officials worked behind the scenes coercing other Khmer factions into forming a coalition government with the Khmer Rouge. The KR was not required to disarm when the CGDK was formed in 1982. Khmer Rouge top cadre member, Khieu Samphan, was designated vice-president and foreign minister of the CGDK, which was reluctantly and only nominally headed by Prince Sihanouk.

Recapitulation: Part III. The 1970s

By the end of 1978, Washington had compelling reasons to punish Vietnam, align with China, and support the Khmer Rouge. Coalescing international events had converged in a manner which sealed the fate of the promising but fragile prospects for US-Vietnamese rapprochement. Peking's wooing of Washington came to fruition in January

1979 when the U.S. and China normalized relations. The lure of billions of dollars in business ventures with a modernizing China boasting enormous oil reserves, and populated by some 900,000,000 people, countermanded the enticing yet smaller business prospects with China's enemy, Vietnam. In the space of one pivotal year, U.S. exports soared from \$171 million in 1977, to over \$1 billion in 1978. In 1980, the U.S. government estimated that trade would be almost quadruple that of two years earlier.

Any manner of support for the Khmer Rouge proved a conundrum for American government officials. Voting in favour of DK's credentials in the U.S. was explained on "technical" grounds. Expending hundreds of millions of dollars in aid destined for the Khmer Rouge was accomplished under the veil of apolitical humanitarian assistance. When relief providers objected to feeding armed combatants, U.S. officials worked through the UN to coax and pressure the continuance of supplies. Collusion with Peking—the KR's primary arms supplier—and blackmail tactics, successfully coerced CGDK's non-communist members to form a coalition government with the Khmer Rouge. Normalization of relations with China also appealed to the Cold War-minded in Washington who viewed a friendly China as an important counterweight to the Soviet Union. Likewise, those in Washington smarting over America's diminished national honour, since the loss of the Vietnam War, shared a dislike of Vietnam and the Soviet Union, with Peking. Other Asian powers were also vital to American trade interests. Japan was the US's largest overseas trading partner with two-way trade exceeding \$29 billion in 1977. In the same year, two-way trade between the U.S. and ASEAN was worth

more than \$10 billion. Hong Kong, Korea, and Taiwan combined added up to another \$15 billion in two-way trade with the U.S..

The desire for control of, and access to, the South China Sea surged in the 1970s as expectations of discovering offshore oil mounted. Reports from offshore oil exploration and geological surveys broadcasting the possibility of enormous oil reserves. Oil had the power to confer economic, political, and strategic advantage upon those who possessed, and those who influenced the extraction, production, sale, and transport of this black gold. Oil was key to fuelling the energy and revenue needs of China's and Vietnam's modernization plans. The control the Soviet Union wielded over Eastern Bloc countries had been partly owing to the inexpensive oil the Soviets provided to these countries. American supremacy in oil technology and hardware were crucial to China's oil producing plans. Irredentist claims over the Paracels and the Spratly Islands, situated between Vietnam and Cambodia, and between Vietnam and China, were bolstered by the prospects of the great oil potential of the sea around those islands. Heavy Japanese and American dependence on Gulf oil made the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 a grave threat to the U.S. and Japan. The U.S. also hungrily looked forward to alternative sources of oil in the aftermath of the OPEC oil crises of the early 1970s.

To summarize, American foreign policy was largely driven by geopolitical, trade, and oil interests as well as by the emotive issues surrounding the Cold War and the Vietnam War. More specifically, U.S. interests included: 1) the desire to maintain good relations with China and to throw the Soviet Union off balance; 2) pressure from member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—particularly the frontline

state–Thailand–which most feared Vietnamese expansionism; 3) American sensitivity over diminished national honour arising from having lost the Vietnam War; 4) a large American stake in trade and investment; 5) rivalries over oil prospects in the South China Sea; and, 6) anxiety over who would control crucial strategic civilian and military shipping routes spanning the South China Sea, the Malacca Straits, and the Indian Ocean.

Feeding the War or Refugees

Refugee aid funnelled to anti-communist Khmer Rouge insurgents was one among at least six cases cited by Barber in which humanitarian aid became an instrument of military aid programs serving geopolitical ends: (1) during the 1980s, U.S. and Saudi aid went to camps in Pakistan from which mujahideen fighters launched their attacks against Soviet troops; (2) in the 1970s and 1980s, aid nominally intended for nomadic Sahouri people in Tindouf, Algeria, was going to the POLISARIO guerrilla movement fighting Moroccan troops; (3) in the 1980s, aid intended for Tamil refugees in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu was going to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam group, which was fighting the government of Sri Lanka; (4) recent aid to refugee camps in southern Sudan has helped to sustain anti-government rebels; (5) since 1994, Hutu militiamen have controlled refugee camps intended as asylums for Rwandan Tutsis; and (6) from 1978 to 1991, the U.S. and other anti-communist nations supplied the three Cambodian guerrilla forces which were fighting the Vietnamese-backed government of Cambodia.⁴¹⁹ In

⁴¹⁹ Barber, "Feeding the Refugees, or War?", 9-10. The U.S. also signs the check for much of the aid dispersed. Barber cites 1995 figures as follows: "... the United States contributed \$383 million, the European Union \$295 million, and Japan \$151 million

Angola, Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda, as in Cambodia, United Nations officials knowingly provided aid to the perpetrators of mass death.⁴²⁰

The lesson to be derived from these experiences is that it is very difficult to attend to the needs of refugees when hostile forces remain at large and control relief-providers' dispensation of supplies and services to the non-combatants. Under such circumstances, the combatants use the supplies for their own resuscitation at the expense of legitimate refugees. Only armed humanitarian assistance can isolate the combatants from the non-combatants so that the aid really would go to those the UN is mandated to assist. Weiss and Collins, in their book, *Humanitarian Challenges and Intervention*, comment on the essential need for a transformed security environment compatible with delivering assistance:

Given limited resources and virtually unlimited demands for multilateral help, the most pressing and doable assignment in front of policymakers would appear to be the transformation of the security environment. This is also the arena where previous peacekeeping principles and some recent experience (especially in Rhodesia and El Salvador and perhaps in Namibia and Cambodia) are pertinent. Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of regular

toward refugee aid, followed by other countries." (p. 9)

⁴²⁰ Milton Leitenberg, "Humanitarian Assistance During War and Conflict," *The Journal of Conflict Studies* 18, 1 (Spring 1998): 146-147. Leitenberg was citing cases of UN providing aid to combatants as per the cases noted in the two books he was reviewing: Thomas G. Weiss and Cindy Collins, *Humanitarian Challenges and Intervention: World Politics and the Dilemmas of Help* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996); and, John Prendergast, *Frontline Diplomacy: Humanitarian Aid and Conflict in Africa* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reiner, 1996).

and irregular troops, although costly, are urgent assignments at the end or near-end of every armed conflict.⁴²¹

Human Rights Watch agrees with the observation that the UN fails to pay adequate attention to human rights and cites the cases of El Salvador, the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Iraq, and Cambodia. In the case of Cambodia, Khmer Rouge insurgency was overlooked in the blind pursuit of national elections because, comments Human Rights Watch, the elections became “a mechanism through which the international community could withdraw from Cambodia without losing face.”⁴²² At no point, says Human Rights Watch, did the UN Security Council consider formal exclusion of the Khmer Rouge from the process.⁴²³ Years of civil war at the hands of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia have borne out that the fact that a facade of Western style democratic elections can not produce peace or justice in that country.

⁴²¹ Thomas G. Collins and Cindy Collins, *Humanitarian Challenges and Intervention: World Politics and the Dilemmas of Help*, Dilemmas in World Politics (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 154-55.

⁴²² Human Rights Watch, *The Lost Agenda: Human Rights and U.N. Field Operations* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993), 50.

⁴²³ Ibid.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1

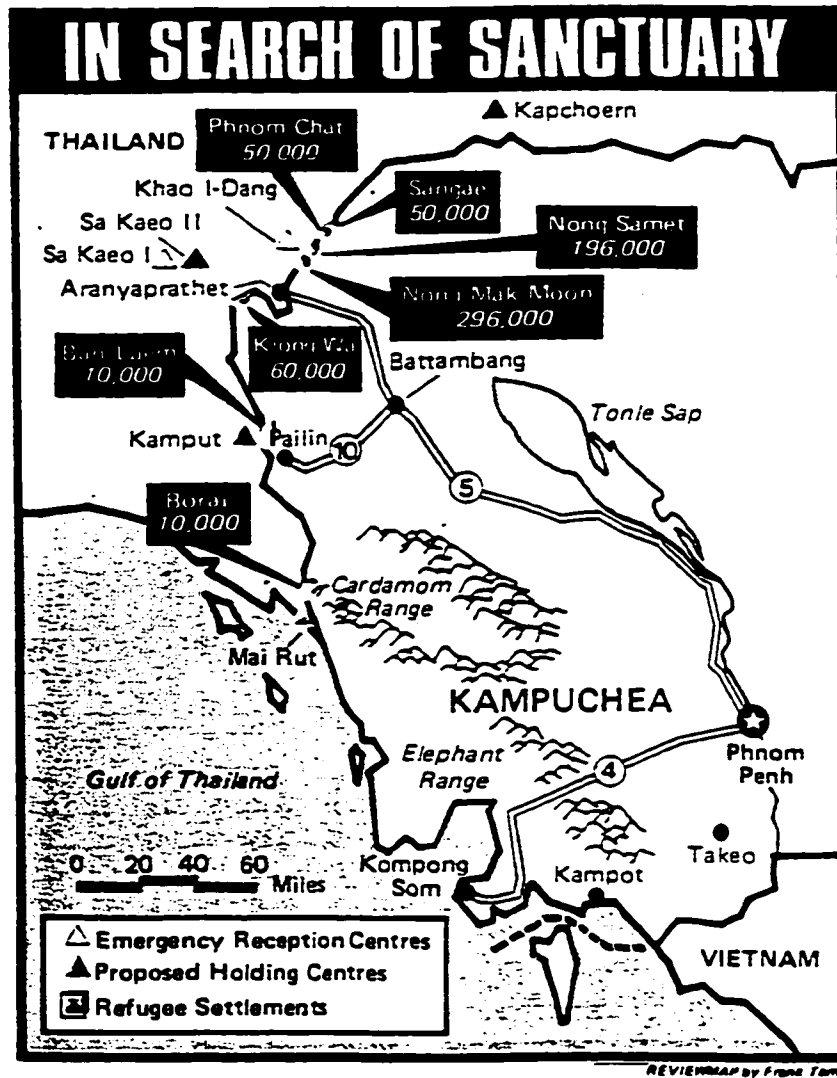
ILLUSTRATION 1. "HE'S GOT A REAL FIRM HANDSHAKE"



*Source: *The Washington Post*, 31 January 1979, A18.

APPENDIX 2

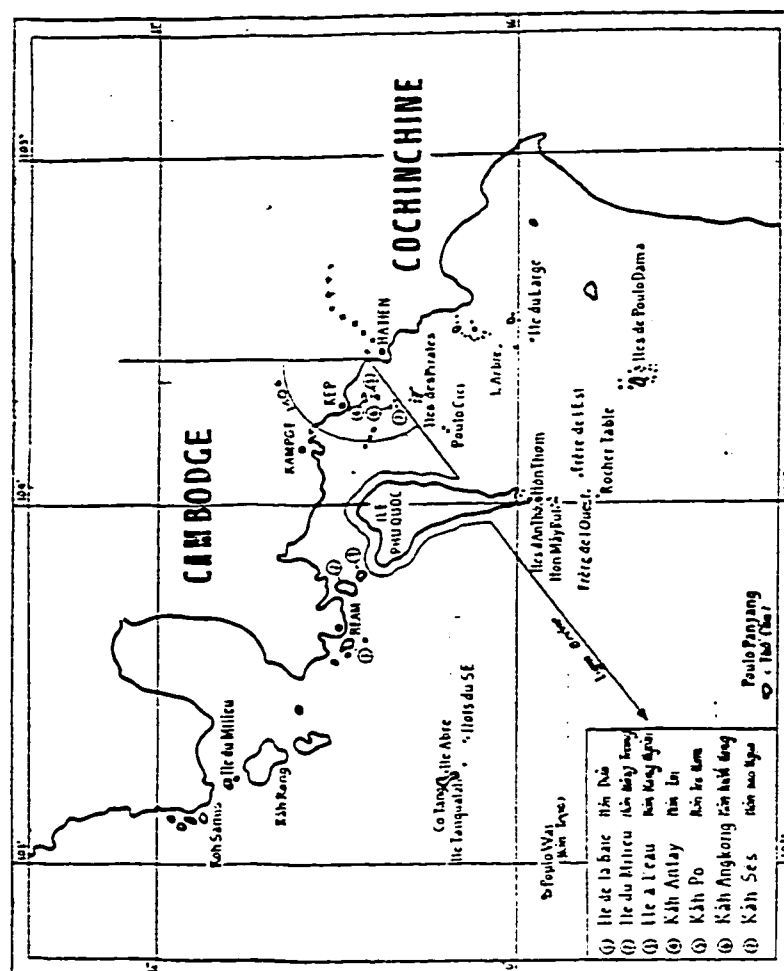
MAP 1. IN SEARCH OF SANCTUARY*



*Source: Richard Nations, "Battle for the Hearts and Stomach," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (7 December 1979): 14.

APPENDIX 4

MAP 3. SKETCH-MAP OF THE BREVIE LINE*

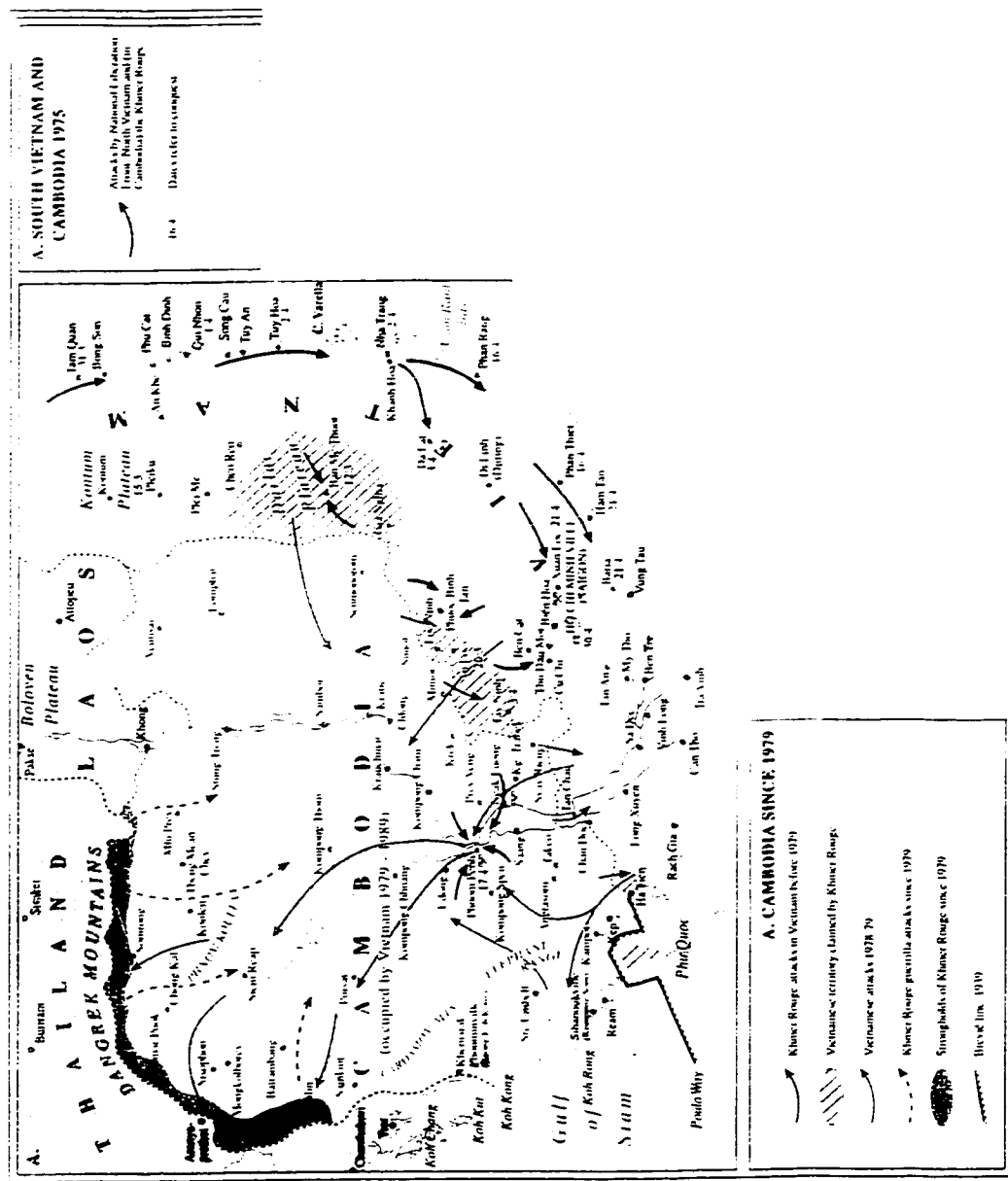


Sketch-map of the demarcation of administration and police zones with regard to the islands, according to Circular No. 867 API dated January 31, 1939 of Governor General J. BREVIE.

*Source: Vietnam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Truth*, 141.

APPENDIX 5

MAP 4. CAMBODIA SINCE 1979*



*Source: Pluvier, 63.

APPENDIX 6

TABLE 1. "WHERE CRS AND AID ARE BIG TOGETHER"

Fiscal 1977 in millions of dollars in total dollar assistance, military and economic.

AID figure is total dollar assistance, military and economic.

| <u>Country</u> | <u>Catholic Relief Services</u> | <u>AID</u> |
|----------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| Chile | \$ 9.3 | \$ 11.3 |
| Egypt | 8.9 | 700.0 |
| Ethiopia | 1.9 | 12.1 |
| Ghana | 6.2 | 4.3 |
| Haiti | 1.2 | 23.0 |
| Indonesia | 1.7 | 43.2 |
| Peru | 4.3 | 11.4 |
| Philippines | 11.4 | 44.3 |
| Sierra Leone | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Tanzania | 3.9 | 6.1 |
| Tunisia | 1.6 | 10.0 |
| Upper Volta | 2.6 | 3.4 |

*Source: *National Catholic Reporter*, 13 January 1978, 4.