

CONFERENCE ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND CAMBODIA

Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia
30 June 1986 - 2 July 1986

Report of Workshop Group A

The following is the report presented to the Plenary Session of the Conference, by Workshop Group A. The Group consisted of the following members, all of whom endorsed the report:

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Group A decided from early on to examine the issues relevant to the theme of the conference in a systematic manner, without necessarily following the format suggested by the organisers.

To this end, a framework of analysis was adopted. The discussion was to focus, in turn, on four overlapping but different sets of questions as follows:

1. What is the present state of the Cambodia conflict?
2. Is what is called "process of peace" desirable? What is meant by "peace"?
3. How feasible is the "process of peace", given the prevailing realities as described in 1?
4. What are the feasible approaches and steps that can be taken to bring about the process of peace?

1. The present state of the Cambodia conflict

The Group believed that an accurate description of the prevailing realities was necessary, and the discussion both in the morning and afternoon sessions on 1 July was mainly concentrated on arriving at such a description. While naturally a rich diversity of ideas and perspectives was expressed during the course of the sessions, the Group in the end reached a fair amount of consensus of viewpoints concerning what is happening in the conflict.

Where the situation in Cambodia is concerned, it was felt that the use of the term "stalemate" may be misleading, for Vietnam has control over Cambodia. Or to be more precise, Vietnam's position in the country is not endangered by any challenges that the opposing coalition can muster; it has the strategic initiative in military terms and is in the process of developing institutional mechanisms for political control over the country. The resistance will continue to operate, perhaps at some points with a great deal of effectiveness, but it will not be able to interrupt this process in any significant way and indeed Vietnam may not even assign top priority to the task of completely eliminating the resistance forces in the near term, being more concerned with the task of consolidating military and political authority in key areas. It was recognised by the Group that such a process of consolidation, which is likely to increase the involvement of Cambodians over time, entails certain dilemmas for Hanoi: "Khmerisation" is necessary for long-term control and yet it may serve to loosen Vietnamese authority. Nevertheless, as things stand and as far as one knows, the political balance in Cambodia is likely to remain to Vietnam's advantage, as the evolution of the political structures in the country allows an increasing number of people to go about their daily affairs and correspondingly decreases the likelihood of their becoming politicised to the point of taking up arms for any party.

Where the resistance groups are concerned, this means that, although they may be able to increase their fighting forces (particularly the Khmer Rouge whose organisation, money, arms and food are clearly "attractive" assets), the scope for their so doing may be increasingly circumscribed.

Where the major powers involved directly or indirectly in the Cambodia conflict are concerned, the Group concluded that their prevailing policies are unlikely to change. The People's Republic of China (PRC) still wishes to see a system of "compliant states" on its border, and this means that it will persevere with the goal of preventing Vietnam from becoming the dominant power in Indochina (and Southeast Asia) and of minimising, if not eliminating, the Soviet Union's influence therein. To achieve this goal the PRC is likely to continue to exert military pressure on Vietnam both directly, by maintaining a large garrison on the Sino-Vietnamese border, and indirectly, by supplying the Cambodian resistance. The costs of the present policy for the PRC are low (Cambodia is a "tolerable conflict"), and any likelihood of policy changes is limited by the fact that there is a general tendency for commitments to beget commitments and the PRC may be caught in a predicament where continued support to the Khmer Rouge is driven more by political necessity, rather than strategic need.

The Soviet Union is also likely to persevere with its present policy towards Vietnam. The burden of providing support to Hanoi is heavy, but is mitigated by the availability of military, political and economic quid pro quo. Of crucial significance are the bases in Vietnam which not only give the Soviet Union valuable strategic assets, but also extend credence and legitimacy to its self-conceived status as a global power with a role to play in the affairs of Southeast Asia. The Soviets' support of Vietnam undoubtedly creates friction with the ASEAN states, with whom Moscow may prefer to have friendly relations, but this is most likely perceived to be an inevitable and acceptable cost. The bottom line is that for the Soviet Union Vietnam is, to borrow from Desmond Ball, a "suitable piece of real estate". As, under the conditions prevailing, Vietnam is likely to have to continue depending on the Soviet Union for military and economic support, the relationship between Hanoi and Moscow is unlikely to be changed in any substantive way.

The United States is also likely to persist with the present policy direction. Within the global framework of containing the Soviet Union, its major objectives where Southeast Asia is concerned are likely to be promotion of regional stability and preservation of security commitments to the Philippines and Thailand. To this end the U.S. will continue to maintain a strong military presence in the region, to provide military support to Thailand, to follow the initiatives taken by ASEAN, and to limit bilateral exchanges with Vietnam to the questions of MIAs. The unresolved question concerning the U.S. policy towards ASEAN is the degree to which Washington assigns priority to its relationship with Beijing: the experience in 1981 suggests that when push comes to shove, the U.S. may support the PRC at the expense of ASEAN.

Where the regional actors, namely ASEAN and Vietnam, are concerned, the Group felt that their respective policies towards Cambodia are likely to continue. However, the prospects for changes cannot be ruled out for a number of reasons. First of all, as a result of certain domestic political developments, Thailand may have a new set of leaders, if not a new premier, who are more prepared to explore new policy directions, and since Thailand's policy is the key determinant of ASEAN's Cambodia policy, such policy shifts on the part of Bangkok will have repercussions upon regional policy. Secondly, the growing convergence of viewpoints between the military and the foreign ministry may also mean that Indonesia will become more firmly committed to taking the "softer" line

towards Hanoi, or at least to giving a still more "creative" interpretation to its assigned role as the "interlocutor" between Vietnam and ASEAN. Thirdly, the continued economic depression may act as a stimulus for change in ASEAN's Cambodia policy, which was conceived 7-8 years ago in "better times". And lastly, leadership changes in Hanoi may generate pressures for a reappraisal, not only of the economic policies, but also by extending the policy towards the non-communist countries and Cambodia.

2. The Definition of Peace

The Group felt that it was desirable to define in more or less concrete terms the desirable outcome in the Cambodia conflict. After a fair amount of discussion it was concluded that the end-state or "peace" should consist of the following elements:

- elimination of violence in Cambodia, which should be the top priority;
- order in ASEAN (Thai) - Vietnamese relations;
- and more orderly relations between the PRC and Vietnam.

3. Elements of the Peace Process

Having defined what should be aimed for, the Group then attempted to identify the approaches and steps which are both necessary and feasible for bringing about peace. There was a consensus that in broad terms the approach should be conceived in terms of process, for given the complexity of the problem, no single round of negotiation or exchanges could resolve the conflict. Moreover, it was also felt that the approach should be a step-by-step one, aiming first at tension-reducing and confidence-building, then at introducing conflict-resolving measures.

However, identifying what should be done in concrete terms was a vastly challenging task. It was agreed that the key area to begin the process of peace is tension-reducing and confidence-building in various localities, particularly on the Thai-Cambodian border. But the Group very rapidly came up against the issue of the Khmer Rouge, which was indeed difficult to resolve. On the one hand, the logic of the peace process indicates that control over, if not elimination of, the Khmer Rouge is a sine qua non of such a process, but on the other hand the reality of the situation makes the operationalisation of that logic highly problematical. In other words it is one of those situations where logic and reality may not be congruent.

As a means of bridging this gap between logic and reality as best one can and also as a means of helping to bring about peace as previously defined, a proposal was made, identifying three overlapping but conceptually different stages for tension-reduction and conflict-resolution.

The first stage involves Vietnam's withdrawal of its own, as opposed to the PRK's, troops from areas adjacent to the Thai-Cambodian border, in the context of a cessation of external material support of the Khmer

Rouge. At this stage the objective is to reduce the tension existing between Thailand and Vietnam and at the same time to build up their confidence in each other. The key to the initiation and sustenance of this process is the recognition on the part of both Thailand and Vietnam that such a process does not diminish but serve the security interests of the two parties. Concurrent with this tension-reducing/confidence-building measure is the scheduling of a SEA regional conference which is to take place within one calendar year of the initiation of the first stage.

The second stage is the holding of a series of preparatory meetings between Thailand and Vietnam to work out the agenda to be discussed in the aforementioned conference. Supplementary, "catalytic" meetings, for example between Indonesia and Vietnam, may be held when deemed necessary and appropriate.

The third stage is the holding of the SEA regional conference. The SEA regional conference should include as agenda to be discussed and agreed upon such issues as Cambodian national reconciliation, self-determination and reconstruction, international supervision of the process of forging that reconciliation and self-determination, repatriation of refugees, and eventual Vietnamese military withdrawal from Cambodia. Should the conference fail to come to an agreement on any or all of these issues, another similar conference should be scheduled within one calendar year, in order to sustain the process of dialogue between the parties.

These measures, the Group believed, are necessary but not sufficient for bringing about peace in Cambodia. They must be supplemented and supported by other measures where appropriate. Central to the initiation and implementation of this proposal is Thailand's acceptance that its security interests are safeguarded and enhanced by this process.

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Report of Workshop Group B

The following is the report presented to the Plenary Session of the Conference, by Workshop Group B. The Group consisted of the following members, all of whom endorsed the report:

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A. Objectives

1. Survival of the Cambodia nation and restoration of its independence and sovereignty.
2. A neutral Cambodia.

B. Processes and Mechanisms

1. The agreement is to be worked out in a S-E Asian context.
2. A ceasefire among all parties to the conflict and a laying down of arms by all Khmer groups.
3. Vietnamese troop withdrawal to be carried out in stages. Simultaneous with points 2 and 3.
4. International peacekeeping/observer groups to supervise the ceasefire, the laying down of arms, and the troop withdrawal.
5. Arrangements for internationally supervised elections.
6. Pending the conduct and result of the elections, Cambodia's seat in the UN to be vacated.
7. Helping all the states in Indo-China be more fully integrated in the international economic system.
8. The normalisation of relations among all the parties to the problem.

C. Parameters and Concerns

The group considered the various concerns of the principal actors in the Cambodia/Kampuchea conflict. Some of these concerns also touch on the possible roles of the actors in the region.

Minimal concernsI. China

- a) An Indochina that is not controlled by Vietnam
- b) Vietnam not associated with a third power (USSR)
- c) A stable, invasion-free Thailand.

Factors to be considered:

- a) China is not necessarily urging the return of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge.
- b) Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge are expendable elements.

II. The USSR

- a) The Soviet Union has a role in S-E Asia.
- b) Access to bases and facilities in Vietnam.

Factors to be considered:

- a) Obligations under Treaty of Friendship with Vietnam.
- b) Party to Vietnam's operations in Cambodia/Kampuchea.
- c) Limit to Soviet leverage on Vietnam vis-a-vis Cambodia/Kampuchea.
- d) The USSR would not commit combat troops to a war in S-E Asia.
- e) Vietnam is an expendable factor in the calculus of the Soviet Union.

III. The United States

- a) The US has a role in S-E Asia.
- b) Access to bases and allies in the region.
- c) Limitation of Soviet military presence in the Asia-Pacific.

Factors to be considered:

- a) The US is unlikely to commit combat troops in a war on the Southeast Asian land-mass.
- b) It is willing to be involved in logistical military support.

IV. Japan

- a) Political and general stability in S-E Asia.
- b) Limitation of Soviet expansion in Asia-Pacific.

Factors to be considered:

- a) Japan is already a global economic power
- b) It would like a larger diplomatic and political role.

V. Western Europe

- a) Political and general stability in S-E Asia.

Factors to be considered

- a) Some European countries may be available as facilitators/mediators with regard to the Cambodia/Kampuchea conflict.

VI. India

- a) Political and general stability in S-E Asia.

Factors to be considered:

- a) It recognizes the PRK government in Phnom Penh.
- b) India's relations with China and links with the Soviet Union.
- c) It is chairman of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM)
- d) It can put forth the Vietnam position.

VII. Australia

- a) Peace and stability in the region.
- b) Limitation of the potential for superpower competition in the region.

Factors to be considered:

- a) Australia may be available as a facilitator/mediator in the Cambodia/Kampuchea conflict.
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VIII. VietnamMaximum concerns

- a) Retention of total control in Cambodia.

Minimum concerns

- a) A government in Cambodia/Kampuchea that is friendly to Vietnam.
- b) A guarantee of Vietnamese security.

Factors to be considered:

- a) The Vietnamese feel that they are the successors to the French empire in Indochina.
- b) Vietnam is not necessarily a Soviet client state.

IX. The Khmer groupsMaximum concern

A Cambodia/Kampuchea that is independent

Minimum concern

A Cambodia/Kampuchea that is independent but accepts a constrained neutrality.

Factors to be considered:

1) The National Khmers:

- a) Removal of the Vietnamese
- b) A nation that is theirs, neutral and whose security is guaranteed.

2) The Khmer Rouge:

- a) Removal of the Vietnamese
- b) A Khmer Rouge government in Phnom Penh.

3) The PRK:

- a) Retention of the government in Phnom Penh.
- b) Remaining on friendly terms with Vietnam.

X. ASEANMaximum concerns

- a) Peace, security and stability in the area.
- b) No country would like to see Vietnam in total control of Cambodia.

Minimum concerns:

- a) Withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia/Kampuchea.
- b) National self-determination of Cambodia/kamouchea.

Factors to be considered:

The maximum concerns have been expressed in the UNGA resolutions.

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Report of Workshop Group C

The following is the report presented to the Plenary Session of the Conference, by Workshop Group C. The following were members of the Group, and endorsed the report:

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1. Group C participants discussed intensively and extensively the issues involved in the Cambodian problem. Certain issues were identified as more important than others, in particular the following:
 - a) Vietnamese withdrawal
 - b) Cambodian self-determination
 - c) The Khmer Rouge role
 - d) Thailand's security
 - e) Vietnam's security
2. Clearly there were distinct differences of views concerning the definition and substance related to a resolution of each issue. For example, some of the participants took the view that Vietnamese total withdrawal meant a programme of phased withdrawal; some of the others took the view that phased withdrawal should be tied in with phased reduction of support for the Khmer Rouge. What is agreed, however, is that Vietnam should withdraw completely from Cambodia eventually.
3. Among the issues discussed, the question of Cambodian self-determination was regarded as the most vital and fundamental. The Group discussed the conditions for the achievement of Cambodian self-determination and related political arrangements. These include:
 - a) Vietnamese total military withdrawal from Cambodia
 - b) Establishment of a caretaker government
 - c) Political and security arrangements between the independent Cambodian government and its neighbours, principally Vietnam and Thailand.
4. Again, there were differences of views concerning the environment under which these conditions could be realised. For example, some felt that the caretaker government should be created as a result of co-optation so that all four Cambodian factions would have a role in the new government. The question arose as to which would be more feasible and practical: co-optation of the PRK by the CGDK, or co-optation of the CGDK of the PRK? However, it was felt that the caretaker government should prepare the way for elections to be held so that the Cambodians would choose their government themselves.
5. The Group recognized that aside from the South East Asian actors in the Cambodian problem, viz. the four Cambodian factions, ASEAN and the Indochinese states, there are major powers whose interests cannot be ignored. These include China, the Soviet Union, the U.S.A. and Japan.
6. The Group realizes that parties to the conflict should NEGOTIATE eventually to seek a solution to the Cambodian problem. However, as part of the pre-negotiation process, there should be intensive consultations. For example, parties who have an interest in the Cambodian problem should be consulted, and at an appropriate stage of negotiations be included as participants.

7. The Group noted that ASEAN and others had initiated various consultations and dialogues. For example, Malaysia and Indonesia and others have approached Vietnam, and there have been consultations in the capitals of major parties. But so far Vietnam has not accepted that there is a need to negotiate.
8. The Group expressed the view that the first step towards negotiations was to get the various parties together to discuss the Cambodian problem in order to express their views, interests, fears and concerns etc. There were various suggestions as to the identity of participants in the unofficial talks. For example, should it be:
 - a) All South East Asian states, viz. the ASEANS, the Indochinese, and the four Cambodian factions?
 - b) The above plus the major powers, viz. China, Soviet Union, the U.S.A. and Japan
 - c) Either (a) or (b) above, with the addition of others involved in the process, such as Australia.

Although the international conference might seem unwieldy, nevertheless it would allow for contact and discussion, and if necessary the creation of working groups to deal with specific issues.

9. The view of the Group on the Cambodia problem is that it is a major obstacle to the establishment of peace and security in South East Asia, if not the Asia/Pacific region. Therefore it is in the interests of concerned states in the region to seek a comprehensive political settlement to the Cambodia problem as soon as possible.