

On 3 July 1989, the ASEAN foreign ministers meeting in Brunei declared that a UN-monitored Vietnamese troop withdrawal, and subsequent elections, would have to be part of a comprehensive political settlement in Cambodia. A meeting between Hun Sen and Sihanouk, scheduled for 24 July 1989 in Paris, was expected to pave the way to a peace settlement. In an open letter on 11 July 1989, Prince Sihanouk called for US aid to strengthen his bargaining position against both Hun Sen and the Khmer Rouge. Representatives from Sihanouk's forces, Hun Sen's Government, the Khmer Rouge and Vietnam were scheduled to meet in Paris on 30 July 1989 for a conference aimed at producing a power-sharing agreement.

Clashes occurred repeatedly between Vietnamese and Chinese forces along their 400-mile border from 1988 through early 1989. Military actions also continued between the forces of Thailand and Laos, in their border dispute, which began in 1975.

Japan - Soviet Union

In spite of Soviet diplomatic initiatives in the Pacific, relations between Japan and the Soviet Union continue to be strained. Widely cited as the greatest obstacle to an improvement in relations is the territorial dispute over the four islands northeast of Hokkaido seized by the Soviets at the end of the Second World War and over which Japan claims sovereignty.

In December 1988, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze visited Tokyo (for the first time in almost three years) for a round of talks with Japanese Foreign Minister Sosuke Uno. Some of the issues discussed included economic cooperation between the two countries, regional security, the environment and the disputed territories. The only concrete result of the talks was an agreement in principle to establish a working group to continue talks on the territorial issue at the deputy foreign minister level.

East Timor

East Timor, a former Portuguese colony, declared its independence in 1975 but was subsequently invaded and occupied by Indonesian forces. Guerrilla forces, led by the FRETILIN (Frente Revolucionaria de Timor Leste Independente) have continued to resist the Indonesian occupation. The source of military aid (albeit, small) to the FRETILIN is unclear, but the supplies are believed to have reached the resistance movement via Malaysia. An estimated 200,000 out of a population of 688,000 have died over a period of ten years.

While this issue is the subject of debate in Portugal, the Indonesian media have been restricted by its Government from reporting on military activities in East Timor. There seems to be little chance of direct negotiation between the fighting parties. Several organizations, including the Canada-Asia Working Group, petitioned the UN Decolonization Committee in August 1988 to keep the issue of East Timor on the agenda of the UN General Assembly. In the fall of 1988, on the recommendation of the General Committee, the Forty-third Session of the General Assembly decided to include an item entitled "Question of Timor" in the provisional agenda of its Forty-fourth Session.