

CONCLUSION

Ever since the Second World War the conflicts in the Indochinese peninsula have been part of the wider dissensions and antagonisms within the international system. In their regional aspect these conflicts show how ancestral enmities and cultural differences persist and are made worse by being subsumed under new political ideologies. The antagonisms in Indochina are therefore structurally more like those in the Middle East than like the regional troubles in Africa or Central America.

Because of the current climate of international affairs, Indochina has benefitted, as have other areas of conflict, from a lowering of tension and a spurt of optimism. From Nicaragua to Afghanistan, even in Angola, there have been amazingly successful attempts at mutual understanding as a result of the improved relations between Moscow and Washington. This has injected new hope into the situation in Indochina. Nonetheless, the number of actors involved in this conflict and its deep roots in historical antagonisms make it unlikely that there will be any swift solution to the problem.

The present situation is conducive to understanding, concessions and negotiations, but the interests of the various conflicting parties remain the same. To restore Cambodian society, which has been torn apart by fratricidal strife, or to reassure the refugees and persuade them to return to their own countries, presents a challenge which seems almost insurmountable despite the good intentions of Norodom Sihanouk or of the leaders in Phnom Penh. How can one imagine, despite the pressure from Moscow and the improvement in Sino-Soviet relations, that