

The arduous path to a comprehensive peace settlement for Cambodia included a number of regional talks. In July 1988, an Indonesian and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)-led initiative pulled all interested parties (Kampuchean factions, the PRK and Vietnam) together for informal talks in Jakarta. These made little progress, however. In October 1988, further sessions of all parties were marked by deadlock, and a November 1988 Paris meeting of the Kampuchean factions also resulted in little progress. On 19 to 21 February 1989, with all parties present in Jakarta once again, the regional peace process stalled on the questions of verification of the proposed pullout of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia and the composition of an interim government prior to elections.

As a result of Soviet prodding and internal economic pressures, Vietnam declared in 1988 that its forces would be withdrawn from Cambodia no later than the end of 1990, regardless of the outcome of the peace talks. Other developments outside the formal regional peace process included the reaching of a broad agreement between China and Vietnam in January 1989 on an internationally supervised withdrawal of all Vietnamese forces from Cambodia by September 1989. This resulted from the first direct talks between the Vietnamese and the Chinese in more than nine years. In April 1989, Vietnam formally announced, amid international skepticism, that it would unconditionally withdraw all of its troops from Cambodia by September 1989.

On 1 May 1989, the Hun Sen Government announced changes to Kampuchea's Constitution, including the declaration of Buddhism as the state religion and the restoration of the country's official name to Cambodia for the first time since the Khmer Rouge regime of Pol Pot took power in 1975. These changes were in line with demands of the Sihanouk-led coalition.

The Sino-Soviet Summit held in Beijing in mid-May 1989 included discussions on the Cambodian problem, building upon previous statements issued by the two sides in February 1989. As recorded in the communiqué issued at the end of the Summit, the Soviet Union and China expressed a desire to prevent a civil war after the scheduled withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia. Both sides agreed that, as Vietnamese troops are withdrawn, all states concerned should gradually cut, and eventually halt, military aid to the Cambodian parties. They also agreed to support the holding of an international conference on the Cambodian problem. Regarding Cambodian internal politics, the Soviets maintained that the various problems, including the holding of general elections under international control and agreements between the parties, should be solved by the Cambodians themselves. The Chinese declared support for an interim four-party coalition government led by Prince Sihanouk during the transition period between the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops and the holding of an election. Finally, both sides agreed to respect the results of such an election.

For a brief period in May 1989, it was reported that a power-sharing agreement between Hun Sen and Sihanouk was within reach. Stumbling blocks toward such an agreement were reported to include fears, both internationally and in Indochina, of a Khmer Rouge takeover of the Sihanouk coalition, and an announcement on 30 May 1989 by US officials that the Bush Administration would launch a new covert military aid programme for the non-communist resistance in Cambodia. The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee blocked the latter proposal, however.