

have, like the protagonists in most regional conflicts, managed to preserve a remarkable degree of political autonomy.

This paper is for the benefit of all those who, over the last ten years, have lost track of a situation which has been made all the more confusing because of the intransigence of the principal actors and the numerous interventions of would-be mediators. It seeks to give a brief account of the essential elements of a conflict which is still going on, and to illustrate some of its less apparent aspects in a way which will enable the reader to ask more pertinent questions about Canadian policy *vis-à-vis* Vietnam and Kampuchea. Although Canada is only marginally involved in this conflict, it has not remained indifferent to the confrontations which have brought more than 100,000 Indochinese refugees to its shores, and which led to a lengthy participation in a failed peacekeeping exercise. In addition to providing some historical background to the current conflict, this paper will also give a brief account of the *raison d'être* for Canada's previous participation and to provide a critical analysis of current Canadian policy.

Before embarking on any consideration of what contribution Canada can make to the situation, however, one must begin by retracing the meandering history of the conflict, studying the nature of the various coalitions to which it has given rise, and understanding the strange and often paradoxical nature of these relationships. Each of the following chapters is designed to clarify Vietnam's place at the centre of the conflict in Indochina; despite the fact that Vietnam was reunited in 1975 and enjoyed a brief period of peace, ever since 1978 it has experienced great difficulty in regaining a place in the international community.

This paper will also consider the new proposals for a settlement which were put forward at the end of 1987; these initiatives are certainly the most encouraging to have appeared since 1978 but one must nonetheless beware of making definitive predictions or conclusions based upon them.\*

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