

THE DEADLOCK: RIGID AND PARADOXICAL POSITIONS

The disputes in Indochina are numerous, interdependent, yet distinct. They resemble a Chinese curio in which the balls, which have been labouriously sculpted at the centre of a block of ivory, can move around yet never escape — each one is trapped by the others. Since the war began in Kampuchea, the conflict has come to have much wider implications and has gone from being one which involves regional antagonisms to one with implications for Sino-Soviet rivalry and East-West relations. Kampuchea's future is now entangled in such a maze of interlocking interests that it would seem impossible to deal with it in any single set of negotiations.

THE GROWTH OF EXTREMISM

Improvisation is not a term which can aptly be applied to Vietnamese policy. There is no doubt that the Vietnamese leaders, who are battle-hardened and past masters of the art of strategy, knew exactly what they were about when their troops invaded Kampuchea on 25 December 1978.

Throughout 1978 the diplomatic campaign which had preceded this offensive did not produce the results which were anticipated. The Vietnamese leaders — especially the Prime Minister, Pham Van Dong, the Foreign Minister, Nguyen Co Thach and his Vice Minister, Phan Hien — had spent the year wooing their opposite numbers in the ASEAN countries in the hope of obtaining a treaty of friendship with ASEAN. This attempt failed, as did Vietnam's efforts to persuade their critics that China represented the greatest threat to Southeast Asia.¹⁴

¹⁴ Nayan Chanda, *Brother Enemy. The War after the War*, *op.cit.*, page 319.