



Cambodian Leaders and their Tragic Alliances ¹

The contemporary political history of Cambodia cannot be fully appreciated without having an inquisitive glance into the past. As Confucius said: "*study the past, if you would divine the future*", and it is in line with this saying that we have the firm conviction that it is sometimes not useless to re-examine the "past" for better understanding the "present" and improving the "future".

The past of Cambodia is full of relations "from causes to effects". And it is thanks to search and analysis of the causes that one manages to understand its current critical situation. The events which occurred in Cambodia on Tuesday July 13, 2004 with the departure of Samdech Chea Sim towards Thailand could be interpreted under several dimensions as it was mentioned in our answers addressed to some of our readers.

But regarding our position, we privileged the aspects related to the manipulating tactics which were used and re-used in various moments of Cambodian political history.

In our research, the alliances concluded by some of our leaders drew very much our attention and we wish to deal with them in this article through some stylized facts. These alliances seem to constitute one of the major causes of the "pathology" from which Cambodia is currently suffering. Because these alliances represent the way by which the strategies conceived with the aim of destroying the Khmer Nation could be implemented.

The goal of our article is not to cause hatred against any one, but simply to bring to our current and future leaders some of elements of reflexion that would help them to analyze the consequences of their policy of alliances, and to support the capacities of anticipations and the collective consciousness of the Khmer community.

¹ This article is the modified version of the answers addressed to some of the feedbacks from the Cambodian community in France and in the United States after the diffusion of the analysis entitled "*An Implosion of CPP or a mere Political Tactics?*". Although these feedbacks were privately addressed to us, we wish to express our sincere thanks to these people for their interest expressed about our previous analysis which was released within Khmer forums.



Although being analyzed successively as follows, these strategies are not exclusive and do not represent either the exhaustive list of the panoply of the strategies used.

1) Strategies of cooperation and manipulation

Norodom Sihanouk and Ho Chi Minh: the relations of these both men is not the result of any hasardous occasion but of a strategy maturely conceived by the latter. After having tried in vain to fight against French colonialism by its own means, Ho Chi Minh had the idea to conclude strategic alliances with King Sihanouk with the aim of evicting France from IndoChina in order to enable Vietnam to build its Empire at the detriment of Cambodia and Laos.

Thanks to Ho Chi Minh's discrete supports, King Norodom Sihanouk became to the eyes of the majority of Cambodians "the Father of Independence" for the Khmer Nation and gained an immense popularity from the Khmer people. As we could observe, the Vietnamese used for several times the "Sihanouk card" to realize their interests. To convince King Sihanouk to sit indefectibly on their sides, Vietnam would have promised him to give back Kampuchea Krom in order to renew his popularity among the Khmer people.

Having savored with great pleasure the immense popularity generously offered by the honest people, King Sihanouk committed to serve the interests of Vietnam without moderation.

The agreements concluded with the Vietnam do not unfortunately lack: supports, in spite of his neutrality policy, gave to Vietnam at the time of the war against the Americans (Ho Chi Minh Trail, provisioning of food), creation of the FUNK on March 24, 1970 to fight at the sides of the Vietnamese against the so-called American agressor in Cambodia, and so on.

But at last, Kampuchea Krom became not only a mere province of Vietnam but the existence of Cambodia, or at least for what remains from the Khmer Empire, is dangerously threatened.

2) Strategy of cooperation and destruction

Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese strategists: the "Sihanouk card" was not unfortunately the only one to be placed on Vietnam's chess-board. While King Norodom Sihanouk reigned over his Kingdom through his *Sangkum Restr Niyum*, Vietnam was already preparing another strategy by being combined with the Khmer Rouge. These latter were the "product" made both by the King Sihanouk and Vietnam. Because having not found any place within *Sangkum Restr Niyum*, the Khmer Rouge took the maquis with the supports in any kind from Vietnam. 1960-70 were going to be the starting point for the destruction of Cambodia by Vietnam through "Khmer hands". This strategy was very effective since it contributed at the same time to create hatred between the Khmers and the destruction of Cambodia to the profit of Vietnam. **The massacre of Khmer by Khmer prevents many Khmer People from going beyond the factual events.** Even worst, many of them did not want their children to learn nor speak



Cambodian once they have just arrived in foreign countries (US, Canada, France...). And this is due to the image of the "killing field".

Knowing perfectly the project of "social and societal revolution " and the nationalist intentions of the Khmer Rouge, the Vietnamese helped them (Khmer Rouge) to take power while infiltrating their elements within the Khmer Rouge Movement in order to reactivate them in the appropriate times. The Khmer Rouge were hardly composed of 3 000 men at the beginning of 1970 and Vietnam could perfectly measure their military potential (Khmer Rouge). At the difference of the China, Vietnam acted secretly within the organization of the Khmer Rouge thanks to their infiltrated elements which held more or less the control of this political movement.

After having applied their insane project of "social and societal revolution ", the Khmer Rouge were going to be placed in the destroying circle: military and human weakening by frontier attacks and intern purification following the rumours of plots.

From 1977, confusion reigns within the Khmer Rouge movement. On the one hand, Pol Pot is informed of an imminent plot aiming at ousting him from the power, and on the other hand, one made believe to another group of Khmer Rouge, within which there were Hun Sen, Chea Sim, Heng Samrin and PEN Sovann, that they were going to be betrayed by Pol Pot. Because this latter, with fear of being indeed ousted, started by massacring his comrades.

So the Vietnamese strategists have succeeded, as planned, in dividing Khmer Rouge Movement into two opposed clans. On one side, there was the clan of Pol Pot, but still infiltrated by Vietnamese elements (Nuon Chea for example) and the other one was the group composed of Hun Sen, Chea Sim, etc, mad of the idea of treason by Pol Pot, that (Hun Sen Clan) was going to be used by Vietnam as the brave savers of the Khmer Nation from the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge (Pol Pot, Hun SEN, etc).

But in fact, they are just a tool created to only serve the interests of Vietnam to invade Cambodia. The plan of the Vietnamese strategists functioned very well. Because the majority of the Khmer population and part of the international opinion perceived indeed the arrival of the Vietnamese *Bo Doi* as being that of the "providential liberators".

Persuaded that they were saved just in time by the Vietnamese from the treason of Pol Pot, the group of Hun SEN and Chea Sim reign in fact without real democracy since 1979 in Cambodia while conforming blindly to the diktats of Hanoi **without having the least concern with the idea that they may be one day pushed out of the political scene, and even eliminated, by the Vietnamese once they will not need them anymore to conquer Cambodia.**

3) Strategy of duplication and manipulation

CPP and Khmer Opposition: to face with the growing dissatisfactions of the Khmer people who live in the extreme poverty, Vietnam seems to be willing to set up a strategy which would consist in



"duplicating" their pawns, and doing in sort so that Cambodian population and the international community believe to a beginning of dissension within CPP.

In fact, such a strategy was already tested with PEN Sovann. This latter was attributed a role of so-called dissident in the early of 1980 with the protest against the policy of the government of that time and particularly against the construction of the walls of bamboo.

For this audacity, PEN Sovann got, according to information in "free circulation", only few years' prison in Hanoi. Whereas others were systematically killed for political crimes that are even minor.

It would seem that the profound meaning of such a strategy resides in the will to prepare the prolongation of CPP's life under another name while waiting for the direct administration over Cambodia by the Vietnamese themselves. "Playing the chess" with Khmer pawns would enable Vietnam to avoid direct confrontation like the case of Israëlans and Palestinians and of waking up the Khmer national consciouness.

The strategy of duplication of their "conquering arm" (CPP) would allow the Vietnamese:

- to see within the PPC those who are not faithful to them. Those who are not granted a role of dissidents dare to join the so-called dissident will be probably eliminated. The dissension of appearance within the CPP would be an effective means to practise a "purging" of the unreliable elements.
- to make illusion to Khmer people with the false nationalism of the so-called dissidents. So these latter will be able to reduce the electoral potential of the Khmer opposition. The vote of the people will thus be divided between the true opposition and the false opposition. And the room for democratic manoeuvre of the true opposition within the National Assembly will be in this fact reduced.

As a conclusion

By reading this analysis, one can say that the Cambodian political scene curiously looks like a "theatre of shadow" where the majority of the actors are beforehand selected elements to carry out roles which were formatted with their measurement. In spite of the successive appearance of some actors on this scene, the scenario writer remains always the same one. Whatever the subtly imagined turns of magic, it is the duty of all spectators, whether they are "leftist" or "rightist", to disfigure/reveal the malefic shadow - 4 - in order to cleanse the "amphitheatre" to rewrite together our own scenario for the general interests.