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Accords ending American involvement in 1973. In fact, the Khmer Rouge at that point held 80% of Cambodia and were so powerful that the Vietnamese were powerless to disband the group, as the Americans wanted. Vietnam shared this interest too, as a power vacuum in Cambodia would give them a free hand there. This was an important consideration for the Vietnamese. Anne Gik argues that the Khmer Rouge were seen as pawns into whom they could insert their own people:

[Both geographical proximity and recent political experience have apparently convinced Vietnam that a Kampuchea closely allied with, if not also subservient to Vietnam, constitutes one of the essential conditions of regional order and Vietnam's own security.]

From 1970 to 1972, in fact, Vietnam had on several occasions entertained the idea of launching a full-scale invasion of Cambodia to install a puppet regime there as they would do at the end of the decade.²³ Hanoi thought better of it, though, of each occasion, believing that Hanoi-trained leaders of the Khmer Rouge would be able to gain dominance within the party. These hopes would be dashed when Pol Pot, realising from the beginning that Hanoi was using the Khmer Rouge for its own ends, liquidated members tied to Hanoi. By the Paris Peace Accords of 1973, the Khmer Rouge was so powerful that Pol Pot discarded any chances of unity between Hanoi and his forces.

This is significant to note that, while the Khmer Rouge had not formally toppled the government in Phnom Penh, it had consolidated power in Battambang, the second largest city of Cambodia, as well as the majority of the country. Even without the capital, the Khmer Rouge controlled other essential features of Khmer state including its only port, Sihanoukville; its

²³ ibid.

Wanting the Battle, Losing the War

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