KAMPUCHEA: THE ENDLESS TUG OF WAR

Justus M. van der Kroef
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by Justus M. van der Kroef*

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INTRODUCTION

On September 18, 1981, the United Nations General Assembly, for the third consecutive year, voted in a better than two to one majority to allow what is presently the underground government of "Democratic Kampuchea" (DK) headed by President Khieu Sampan and chief guerrilla commander Pol Pot, to keep its seat as the legitimate Cambodian government. The vote was 77 to 37, with 31 abstentions. This was an even more decisive defeat than in previous years for the Soviet Union and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV), which have been sponsoring recognition of the Hanoi-installed "People's Republic of Kampuchea" (PRK) government of President Heng Samrin, in control of Phnom Penh since January, 1979. Despite PRK Foreign Ministry protestations to UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim that the Khieu Sampan-Pol Pot regime is but "a band of pirates conducting terrorist activities," and Hanoi's charge that the DK's presence of the UN was made possible only because "Beijing reactionaries" colluding with the "US imperialists and other reactionary forces have bribed some countries and put pressure on them," most UN members have continued to go along as in 1979 and 1980 with the skillful anti-Heng Samrin lobbying of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations).

Yet the decisive September 18 UN vote masks important policy differences among the ASEAN members (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand) regarding the long-term implications of the Kampuchean question and how to resolve it, as well as conflicting interests among the superpowers. Rapid changes in policy posture and the launching of new diplomatic initiatives render analysis of the Kampuchean problem even more difficult. For example, even before the September 18, 1981 UN General Assembly voting, the Soviet Union, which in previous months had adamantly supported Hanoi in confronting ASEAN with an unyielding demand for the Heng Samrin regime's recognition, began to counsel the
Vietnamese to show a more restrained and even conciliatory attitude toward ASEAN. At least two ASEAN members, Indonesia and Malaysia, which, driven by fear of People's Republic of China's long-term ambitions, have been interested in reaching a political accommodation with the SRV over the Kampuchean issue are, reportedly, targets for "cultivation" during this new Soviet-Vietnamese gambit.3 Commonwealth members, like the United Kingdom and Australia, which participate in bilateral military exercises with some ASEAN members but refuse to recognize either the Khieu Sampan or the Heng Samrin regimes, and the United States, which during most of 1981 closely followed Beijing's lead in the diplomatic interplay on the Kampuchean question, are directly involved in the outcome of these and other new initiatives.

In an attempt to sort out the conflicting interests and diverging policy postures and nuances in the Kampuchean question both in the international arena and "on the ground" in Kampuchea itself, the following pages will briefly focus on four aspects: (1) the official position of and "unofficial" internal divisions within ASEAN, with respect to the Kampuchean problem; (2) the policies of the other major powers involved, particularly the United States, People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union; (3) the prospects of contending factions in Kampuchea itself; and, (4) alternative approaches to a possible solution of the Kampuchean problem which threatens not only to become a hardy perennial in international diplomacy, but also to become the pivot of future ASEAN relations with its regional neighbors and the major world powers.

I. THE PERSPECTIVE OF ASEAN COUNTRIES: OFFICIAL POSITION AND "UNOFFICIAL" INTERNAL DIVISIONS

Mutual suspicion and hostility, interspersed with periodic professions of good will by both sides, have marked the contradictory course of Hanoi-ASEAN relations since the course of the latter's founding in 1967. Initially, and while preoccupied with its aim of unifying Vietnam, Hanoi had had few positive comments about ASEAN. Hanoi's media linked ASEAN's appearance to US "imperialist" ventures in Southeast Asia, and authoritative pronouncements of Hanoi's ally, the National Liberation Front (NLF) of South Viet-

nam, tied the Communist struggle in Vietnam closely to various revolutionary "liberation" movements in Thailand and the Philippines. When in 1971 ASEAN members pledged themselves to make their area into an internationally recognized "Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality" (ZOPFAN), Hanoi described ASEAN as but "a product of US aggressive and interventionist policy." Hanoi also later insisted that all of Southeast Asia should rid itself of US influence, and stated that the Vietnamese fully supported the "struggle of the peoples of the Southeast Asian nations for independence, democracy, peace and social progress."4

Yet, by July 1975, with the Communist unification of Vietnam an accomplished fact, there were also signs that a new and more hopeful departure might be possible. Malaysia's premier Tun Abdul Razak declared that the recent triumph of Communist regimes in Vietnam and Cambodia posed no threat to Southeast Asia, and he even mooted the possibility of their entry into ASEAN. Hanoi, in turn, in a general July 5, 1976 foreign policy statement, stressed commitment to peaceful co-existence, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and peaceful settlement of disputes. About the same time Vietnamese deputy Foreign Minister Phan Hien visited ASEAN capitals for a cool but correct get-acquainted visit. Still, in subsequent years, Hanoi kept tempting ASEAN into abandoning its close ties with the West, urging creation of a new form of regional cooperation, a zone of "Peace, Freedom and Neutrality" (PIN) that would replace ZOPFAN. Though such ploys were rejected by suspicious ASEAN leaders, SRV spokesmen, like premier Pham Van Dong, in another ASEAN tour in September, 1978, persisted in portraying his government as having had a genuine change of heart about ASEAN. They also promised, despite ASEAN skepticism, that the SRV would not support Communist insurgents operating in ASEAN countries.5

Shortly thereafter, Vietnam's acceleration invasion of Kampuchea at the close of 1978, and the installation, backed by 200,000 SRV troops, of the Heng Samrin regime in Phnom Penh the following January 8, forced ASEAN-Vietnamese relations to a new


nadir. On January 13, 1979, ASEAN foreign ministers, in a special
Bangkok conference, called for the withdrawal of all “foreign
forces” from Kampuchean soil. By November 14, 1979, the UN
General Assembly passed a similar ASEAN-sponsored resolution
after first having confirmed the underground Khieu Sampan-Pol Pot
regime as the rightful holder of Kampuchea’s UN seat. However, in
subsequent months, neither UN disapproval, nor the increased de­
defense and intelligence cooperation among ASEAN members, swayed
Hanoi from continuing its Kampuchean occupation or from tighten­
ing its hold as well on its Laotian ally in the interests of Vietnamese
media began calling the “Vietnamese unity bloc.”

Indeed, new ASEAN overtures toward Hanoi to discuss the
Kampuchean situation made at the close of 1979 met with sharp
Vietnamese criticism of ASEAN’s alleged “crude interference” in
Kampuchean affairs and of ASEAN’s failure to recognize
Kampuchea’s “right to self determination.” At the same time, how­
ever, the SRV proved willing to discuss the Kampuchean question
with Malaysian Foreign Minister Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen. On
January 5, 1980, a Phnom Penh conference of the SRV, LPDR and
PRK Foreign Ministers offered friendship and cooperation to South­
east Asia and even bilateral treaties of non-aggression between indi­
vidual Indochinese and ASEAN states.6

Some ASEAN states remained skeptical. But between March
26 and 28, 1980, Indonesian President Suharto and Malaysian pre­
mier Dato Hussein Onn, after a joint conference in the East Malay­
sian town of Juantan, adopted a new policy position. Both Suharto
and Ohn insisted that Vietnam be as free as possible from depen­
dence on, or influence by, either the Soviet Union or People’s Re­
public of China and that, in Kampuchea, a “political solution” rather than a military one be sought. Such a political solution would
give some recognition to Hanoi’s security interests in Kampuchea.
In this “Kuantan principle” as it came to be known, Suharto’s and
Onn’s views reflected a significant body of ASEAN opinion that a
strong but independent Vietnam could be a strategic regional asset,
since it might function as a desirable counterweight in the future to
the influence in Southeast Asia of a modernizing, resurgent China.
Moreover, it was felt that, in any case, Hanoi’s long-term political
and security interests in Kampuchea would have to be recognized in

6. The Southeast Asia Record, December 27, 1979-January 3, 1980, p. 10, and Ra­
dio Hanoi, VNA, January 7, 1980 (FBIS, January 9, 1980).
some way if the stalemate over the issue was to be broached.  

In May, 1980, the head of Indonesia’s military intelligence, Lieutenant General Ben Murdani, a confidant of Suharto, arrived in Hanoi to discuss the Kampuchean question. But before a further implementation of the Kuantan principle could be sought, the tense refugee problem along the Thai-Kampuchean border erupted into a new crisis. Vietnamese forces on June 23, 1980, briefly invaded Thailand, presumably in retaliation for a recent Bangkok government decision to begin repatriating Kampuchean refugees held in various Thai camps. The refugees were viewed by the SRV and the Heng Samrin government in Phnom Penh as being pushed by the Thais into the guerrilla army of Pol Pot. This was further evidence, Hanoi alleged, that Bangkok was conspiring with Beijing to bring the Hen Samrin regime down.

The ASEAN reaction to the SRV’s brief invasion was swift. ASEAN Foreign Ministers at the end of their conference in Kuala Lumpur on June 26, 1980 appeared to have regretted the Suharto-Onn Kuantan initiative and reaffirmed their demand for a “total withdrawal” of Vietnamese forces from Kampuchean soil. Yet, hardly had the Kuala Lampur conference ended when both Indonesian and Malaysian spokesmen began insisting on the need for a “new dialogue” with Hanoi. Meanwhile the Vietnamese Communist Party daily, though blaming Thailand and calling the situation in Kampuchea “irreversible,” also expressed the hope for future “peaceful and friendly relations” with ASEAN. Moreover, at a July 17, 1980 Vientiane Foreign Ministers conference, the “Indochina unity bloc” appeared to take up the “Juantan” approach, now referring in a communique to “the development of the situation in the region” which was said to necessitate “understanding of and respect for each other’s legitimate interests.” The Vientiane meeting also offered new discussions to solve the Thai-Kampuchean refugee problem, and elaborated on the idea of establishing a possible “demilitarized” zone between Kampuchea and Thailand, an idea first suggested by Japanese Foreign Office specialists.

Still, all such suggestions were eventually rejected by ASEAN

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leaders as being "diversionary." The Vientiane proposals, from ASEAN's vantage point, seemed designed to shift attention from the issue of the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea to the problem of the Thai-Kampuchean border refugees. By the time the UN General Assembly opened in the fall of 1980, even Vietnamese offers to open "immediate discussions" with ASEAN on Kampuchea specifically on the basis of the Kuantan principle; the June 26, 1980 Kuala Lampur statement of ASEAN Foreign Ministers; or, the July 18, 1980 Vientiane proposals of the Indochina bloc were equally devaluated. Even Djakarta and Kuala Lampur seemed determined to make it clear to Hanoi that whatever "political solution" could be found in the Kampuchean problem, it would have to involve significant Vietnamese concessions. To ASEAN it seemed that only a persistent demonstration of the weight of adverse world opinion about Hanoi's continuing presence in Kampuchea could drive this point home.

To this end, ASEAN and People's Republic of China succeeded in the UN General Assembly on October 22, 1980 in winning continued recognition as a UN member for the Khieu Sampan-Pol Pot government. Moreover, somewhat earlier, on October 13, they persuaded the Assembly to agree to hold an international conference on Kampuchea the following year. The conference was to include "all parties" to the dispute and would, among other issues, deal with the withdrawal of foreign troops from Kampuchea, the holding of free elections in, and the formulation of, international guarantees for both the independence and "neutrality" of Kampuchea. From the Indochina bloc came an immediate rejection of such a conference as being but evidence of the "collusion between Beijing, Washington and Bangkok," and this was said to make the presence of Vietnamese forces in Kampuchea now "more necessary than ever." 10

Yet, once again, behind such seemingly unequivocal stances, both in Hanoi and ASEAN, further explorations toward a more conciliatory policy continued to be made. For example, on January 28, 1981, yet another Indochina "unity bloc" foreign ministers conference, this time in Ho Chi Minh City, proposed to ASEAN a "regional" rather than an "international" UN-sponsored conference on Kampuchean and related questions. Such a "regional" conference, as the Ho Chi Minh City communique put it, would "discuss problems of mutual concern according to the principle of nonimposi-

tion of the will of one group on the other.” As an apparent inducement, the Ho Chi Minh City conference added that Vietnam would be prepared to withdraw some of its forces from Kampuchea, if the Thais stopped providing bases and supplies for Pol Pot's guerrillas. Complete withdrawal of Vietnamese forces, as Hanoi had so often emphasized in the past, could only come, however, if “the threat from China no longer exists.”

It might be noted that in subsequent weeks the Soviet Union, through its ASEAN ambassadors, kept giving strong backing to what Moscow termed Hanoi’s “new constructive initiatives.” However, at this time even the Indonesian Foreign Office described the idea of a limited “regional” conference as but a “trap.” The “trap,” as Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja explained, was that if ASEAN met only with the three Indochina states, it would be tantamount to an ASEAN recognition of the Hanoi-backed Heng Samrin government in Phnom Penh. Hanoi, as one official Djakarta radio commentary characterized the Ho Chi Minh City proposal, “is saying ASEAN must justify the result of the Vietnamese military intervention in Kampuchea.” The Soviets, however, appeared to have made the Ho Chi Minh City conference proposal virtually into a new diplomatic initiative of their own, linking it to an Asian collective security concept adumbrated by Soviet party chairman Leonid Brezhnev a decade ago, and quickly forgotten. In Bangkok, on January 27, 1981, the visiting deputy chairman of the Presidium of the USSR’s Supreme Soviet presented what was described as the Brezhnev proposals in a discussion of the Kampuchean problem with Thai deputy premier Thanat Khoman. The latter said that “We do not understand much of what he said,” but added that it was Vietnam that was occupying Kampuchea and that had installed the Heng Samrin regime.

In ASEAN circles, meanwhile, increased attention now came to be focused on yet another “political compromise” gambit, namely the promotion of a “Third Alternative” regime for Kampuchea (i.e. neither Heng Samrin’s PRK, nor Khieu Sampan-Pol Pot’s “Demo-

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cratic Kampuchea”), acceptable to all parties. The two chief contenders for this possible "Third Alternative" regime, Cambodia's former ruler Prince Norodom Sihanouk and one of his former premiers Son Sann, will be considered more fully below. In September 1981, in yet another round of discussions in Hanoi with Suharto's personal emissary, General Murdani, Vietnamese officials for the first time indicated a willingness to alter the structure of their client, the Heng Samrin regime. Hence, as one Indonesian source put it, "there will be a new group" in Phnom Penh that "we (i.e. ASEAN) can talk to." This signalled an important breakthrough. But, as we shall see, before the point was to be reached, a dramatic rift over Kampuchean policy had developed between ASEAN and the People's Republic of China, with the United States caught uncomfortably in between.

The reasons for ASEAN's redoubled emphasis on the "Third Alternative" approach probably stemmed in part from the disquiet among some of ASEAN's supporters. Major ASEAN allies like the United Kingdom and Australia were becoming increasingly disenchanted with the protracted Kampuchean stalemate. Shortly after the UN General Assembly on October 22, 1980 again had affirmed "Democratic Kampuchea" as the rightful holder of Cambodia's UN seat, Canberra announced that in the future it would not do so again. Like the United Kingdom, Australia announced its position would be that there was no rightful claimant to Cambodia's UN seat at present. Privately, the Malcolm Fraser government reportedly was urging ASEAN "to produce its long talked about third option for Kampuchea." After a Washington journey and discussions with US Secretary of State Alexander Haig, Singapore's Second Deputy Premier (Foreign Affairs), S. Rajaratnam, said in early February 1981, that ASEAN's "immediate objective" in the Kampuchean question was to create a "Third Force," consisting of a "united front" of all anti-Vietnamese and anti-Heng Samrin resistance groups, and to supply them with aid, including arms, so as to exert "just enough" pressure on Hanoi to make the latter understand that the resistance to its Kampuchean occupation would not disappear. According to Rajaratnam, Haig, Sihanouk and Son Sann, as well as the People's Republic of China, all approved of this idea.

But after ASEAN Foreign Ministers had begun to detail their

“Third Force” strategy in their June conference in Manila, Beijing began reacting quite differently to it and for good reason: the ASEAN approach would inevitably threaten the legitimacy and even existence of Beijing’s client, the Khieu Sampan-Pol “Democratic Kampuchea” regime. For in their June 1981 Manila discussions, and as subsequently further refined, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers proposed a cease-fire and withdrawal of all foreign forces from Kampuchea, the stationing of UN troops and of a temporary UN administration in Kampuchea pending free elections under UN supervision, the “disarming of the various conflicting factions” in Kampuchea, and, the formation of an international committee to “negotiate with Vietnam, the Soviet Union, the People’s Republic of China and all other ‘interested parties’” on a permanent Kampuchean settlement. The Manila communique also “welcomed” efforts by various Kampuchean factions to form a “united front,” and establish a coalition government. 18

These proposals ASEAN intended to offer for adoption by the special, UN-sponsored international conference on Kampuchea called for, as noted above, by the UN General Assembly’s resolution on October 13, 1980. But even before the first meeting in New York on July 13, 1981 of this special UN conference (consisting of 93 nations and boycotted, despite UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim’s strenuous mediation efforts, by the SRV, the PRK, the LPDR, the Soviet Union and its Eastern bloc allies), the People’s Republic of China had made its opposition known to some basic provisions of the ASEAN proposal. This Chinese opposition focused on the proposed “disarming” of contending Kampuchean factions, the sending of a UN peace-keeping force and establishment of a temporary UN administration in Kampuchea, and the formation of an international committee to “negotiate” with Hanoi, Moscow, and other parties to the Kampuchean dispute. All these measures, as Beijing saw it, would have the effect of jeopardizing the strength and legitimacy of its client, the Khieu Sampan-Pol Pot regime. 19 Though Singapore’s delegate and ASEAN spokesman, Professor Tommy Koh, emphasized that ASEAN’s demand for the disarming of all Kampuchean factions was “not negotiable,” the Chinese insisted that only the “Heng Samrin puppet force” be disarmed, and that the “patriotic forces” in Kampuchea to permitted to develop their own

“necessary measures” to insure free elections. There was, understandably, no quarrel over the question of “withdrawal of foreign” (i.e. Vietnamese) forces from Kampuchea.

As the deadlock deepened, the United States, apparently desirous of firming its relations with Beijing, strongly supported the Chinese, and thereby, the Sampan-Pot regime's exclusive legitimacy. As several ASEAN sources confirmed to this writer, American influence on ASEAN to accept ultimately a vaguely worded French compromise formula probably saved the conference from ending in an embarrassing failure. In the French formula, which was ultimately adopted on July 17, 1981 as the conference's formal closing statement, the ASEAN call for a “disarming” of Kampuchean factions is deleted, and so is the call for the establishment of a UN “temporary administration” in Kampuchea. Instead, the French proposal calls for unspecified “appropriate measures for the maintenance of law and order in Cambodia and the holding of free elections” after “foreign forces” have pulled out of Kampuchea.

ASEAN spokesmen tried to put as good a face on the UN conference's outcome as possible. Singapore's Foreign Minister S. Dhanabalan pronounced himself “totally satisfied,” and his Malaysian counterpart, Tengku Rithauddeen, said that ASEAN “had won all its objectives” at the conference. Most observers agreed, however, that with the help of strong US lobbying, and in the boycott absence of the Soviet and Indochina blocs, the Chinese had had their way and succeeded in protecting their Kampuchean client, “Democratic Kampuchea.”

The latter, with a Chinese-supplied force of some 30,000 guerrillas and well-established territorial bases in the Phnom Kravanh (Cardomom Mountain) range and in Kampuchea's Western Battambang province along the Thai frontier, is clearly the largest anti-Heng Samrin and anti-Vietnamese force in Kampuchea today. Unless the Hen Samrin government suddenly acquired significant popularity and strength on its own, a withdrawal of “foreign,” i.e. Vietnamese forces, from Kampuchea, as provided for by various UN resolutions, would assure that the Khieu Sampan-Pol Pot “Democratic Kampuchea” regime would play a major role in, if not dominate, whatever specific “appropriate measures” might be undertaken to insure free elections in Kampuchea.

For ASEAN, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, the result of

the New York conference could only underscore what appeared to be Beijing's long-term ambition to maintain its own hold on Kampuchea through its client regime there. Acquiescence in such an outcome would only perpetuate and indeed deepen the rigid polarization of the Kampuchean problem and impede a solution. In the wake of the New York conference, therefore, ASEAN redoubled its efforts to develop a "Third Alternative" approach, but one unlike previous "Third Alternative" approaches, that would recognize also the closer involvement of Beijing's client, "Democratic Kampuchea." Such an approach, it was believed, perhaps would also exert still further pressure on Hanoi, which up to now could take comfort from the internal divisions among the chief anti-Vietnamese Kampuchean factions.

And so, on September 2, 1981, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Son Sann and — to the surprise of many — Khieu Sampan began discussions in Singapore in order to develop a "united front" of Kampucheans directed against the Vietnamese presence in Kampuchea. The road to this Singapore conference had been a particularly rocky one. Khieu Sampan's willingness to attend such discussions at all after Beijing's clear victory at the July 1981 New York conference may have been prompted as much by (1) strong ASEAN overtures in both Beijing and Washington expressing dissatisfaction with the outcome of the New York conference, (2) subsequent pressure by Beijing on Sampan, for reasons to be explained presently, and (3) the remarkable seemingly accommodating pronouncements in recent months of "Democratic Kampuchea's" spokesmen. Among the latter was the reported assertion by Sampan in a foreign press interview in his northwest Kampuchean base camp in August 1980, that in terms of appeal for Kampucheans, "Communism is dead" and that "to reject Communism once and for all is undoubtedly the best way of uniting all Kampucheans in the anti-Vietnamese crusade as part of a national front."\(^{23}\) Then there was the assertion by Sampan's Foreign Minister, Ieng Sary, during a Djakarta visit in November 1980, that "we are prepared to hand over power to anybody capable of driving the Vietnamese out of Kampuchea." He also indicated that Sihanouk and Son Sann would be especially welcomed in this connection.\(^{24}\)

One can only speculate on how seriously these and similar assurances made by "Democratic Kampuchea's" leaders were in-

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tended to be taken. Certainly the policy of Sampan subsequent to the Singapore conference has only raised new questions. Most decisive for Sampan’s decision to attend the Singapore conference was Beijing’s acceptance of the ASEAN argument that the forthcoming UN General Assembly meeting would be far more likely to reaffirm the Sampan-Pot regime for a third successive time as the rightful holder of Kampuchea’s seat if that regime in fact had been broadened by the presence of other anti-Vietnamese factions in Kampuchea.25

Son Sann, leader of the “Khmer People’s National Liberation Front” (KPNLF), with a claimed following of about 9,000 in Kampuchea and Thai refugee camps, proved another major stumbling block to the holding of the Singapore conference. Initially, on August 23, while referring to pre-conference statements made recently by Democratic Kampuchea’s leaders, Son Sann claimed that he could not accept the Sampan regime’s insistence that it alone was Kampuchea’s “sole and legitimate state.” He asserted that each Kampucheans faction maintain its own “political individuality” and “freedom of action” in the future united front. In turn, Son Sann’s own demands seemed hardly calculated to win Democratic Kampuchea’s adhesion. These demands included: (1) KPNLF control of all chief “united front” leadership or future Ministerial posts; (2) exile for “all leaders compromised” by the Sampan-Pot regime’s atrocities in Kampuchea in the 1975-79 period; and, (3) arms and other aid to the KPNLF to make it equal in strength to “Democratic Kampuchea’s” forces. So insistently did Son Sann voice his demands that at one point any prospect of convening the conference seemed doomed. Only a reported Thai government threat to end its aid to Sann, and a personal appeal by Malaysia’s Foreign Affairs Minister to San “to stop obstructing the formation of a coalition front,” seem to have persuaded the KPNLF leader to come to the Singapore conference table. Remarks during the Singapore conference by the mercurial Norodom Sihanouk that he too had only reluctantly agreed to come to Singapore to join in discussion with his “warmongering” colleagues, did not improve the atmosphere either.26

Under the circumstances, it was not surprising that, as in the

case of the New York conference on Kampuchea, the Singapore meeting sought refuge in ambiguous generalities. The Singapore conference communique issued on September 4, 1981, declared that the participants "express the desire to form a coalition government of Democratic Kampuchea," in order to continue the struggle against Vietnamese occupation forces. A mere expression of a "desire" hardly seemed a very categorical formulation to most observers. There also had been a complete failure at the Singapore conference to agree on the means of organizing either the united front or the proposed coalition government. Hence the participants in their communique merely decided to "set up an ad hoc committee to study the principles and forms" to bring the coalition about. The least controversial feature of the Singapore conference document was its appeal to all "peace-loving nations" to support the resolutions on Kampuchea passed by the United Nations. Characteristic of existing relations between Khieu Sampan, Sihanouk and Son Sann was an agreement in the Singapore conference communique to "avoid clashes among themselves" and to "refrain from bringing to the public" their mutual differences during the period of the agreement.

In any event, some relatively low key quarrelling soon erupted among the Singapore conference participants. Son Sann, apparently under pressure from his KPNLF followers, insisted that he would continue to press his demand for leadership dominance of the proposed coalition. Some of Son Sann's followers appeared to have difficulty in particular with the Singapore conference's formulation that the proposed coalition would bear the name "Democratic Kampuchea" government, i.e., the name of the Khieu Sampan-Pol Pot faction. Already by September 13 "Democratic Kampuchea" was complaining of certain remarks and actions by other participants. It rejected particularly the veracity of "some reports" which indicated that Son Sann had been appointed premier of the coalition government, or would attend the forthcoming UN General Assembly meeting as "Democratic Kampuchea's" representative. Meanwhile an "ad hoc" committee composed of representatives of the KPNLF, Sihanouk, and of "Democratic Kampuchea" had begun meeting in Bangkok, even as the UN General Assembly on September 18, 1981 once again beat back a Vietnamese-Soviet drive to unseat the Sampan-Pot regime and replace it with Heng Samrin's PRK. Beyond an agreement "in principle" to have Sihanouk assume the

presidency of the "Democratic Kampuchean" coalition government, the "united front" conferees appeared to have increasing difficulty in finding a common ground.

Toward the close of 1981, these Bangkok discussions, like the Singapore conference and the UN-sponsored New York conference before it, seemed to many observers to be so many exercises in futility. There were good reasons for such an impression. Denunciation of the Singapore conference and of the continuing UN recognition of the Sampan-Pot regime kept pouring from Indochina's capitals and Moscow, seemingly reflected further policy rigidification. On October 21, 1981, the United Nations General Assembly, in a new ASEAN-sponsored resolution, endorsed the decisions of the New York conference and called once more for the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea. In Indochinese circles this renewed UN call met with the expected vitriolic reaction, and Radio Phnom Penh, on October 23, 1981 dismissed the General Assembly's resolution as "null and void." LPDR media, after first lashing out at the "tragic play" of the New York conference on Kampuchea, likened the "farce" of the Singapore meeting to an "assembly of horses from different stables," always bent on destroying each other, and undoubtedly leading "their masters," Washington and Beijing, to failure. A PRK commentary saw the New York and Singapore meetings as but a "series of dry and tasteless comedies," declaring the proposed Kampuchean "united front" to be "dead even before it was born," because "from the hangmen of the Democratic Kampuchea regime," to the "millionaire Son San," and to the "capricious Prince Sihanouk" each desired only his exclusive return to power over the Kampuchean people. To Hanoi, the "united front" aspirants were but "lackeys," whose "strings" were being pulled by the United States and the People's Republic of China. According to a Vietnamese broadcast, though Beijing today is trying by all possible means, including presumably the staging of international gatherings, to legitimize the Democratic Kampuchea regime, nothing can wipe out the "genocide" of the "Pol Pot clique."28

Behind Hanoi's critical facade, however, there was developing a more conciliatory policy, as we have seen, toward a "broadening" of the Heng Samrin regime, as was explained to Suharto's emissary, General Murdani.29

29. See note 15 supra.
A somewhat similar paradox was developing in the Soviet position, which prompts a consideration also of the policies of the other superpowers in the Kampuchean question. Officially, Moscow has maintained its hard line. From this official point of view Moscow's policy toward the Kampuchean question revolves around three principles. First of all, there is in reality no Kampuchean "problem." A "non-existent" Kampuchean problem, however, has been created by US and Chinese "strategists," according to Moscow, with the aid of certain ASEAN governments who have "joined in the intrigue" because of "pressure" from Washington and Beijing. Thus, Thailand is charged by the Soviets with giving aid to "Pol Pot supporters" and other "counterrevolutionary elements." It is important to keep in mind, according to Moscow, the context of this artificially manufactured "Kampuchean problem." That context is China's internationally aggressive designs, e.g. "fanning tension" of the Vietnam-LPDR border, and waging all-out psychological war "against the Indochina states."

Second, according to the Soviet Union, the Heng Samrin government is the "lawful government," of the Khmer people, "efficiently wielding power" over the entire national territory of the PRK. It has its own "legally elected parliament" and functioning constitution. Hence, the New York and Singapore conferences constituted a "gross interference" in the internal affairs of the sovereign PRK state. The international legitimacy of the PRK is not in question either, according to the Soviets, because the PRK "has already been recognized by over 30 states and national liberation movements," and its "international prestige is growing."

Third, whatever differences there may be in the Southeast Asian region, these can and should be settled on the basis of the "peace-loving and constructive" proposal put forward on January 28, 1981 by the Indochina states to hold a regional conference of ASEAN and the Indochina countries. Soviet commentators say that during meetings held in Moscow during the first two weeks of September 1981 with visiting PRK premier Pen Sovan, LPDR premier Kaysone Phomvihan, and SRV party secretary general Le Duan, Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev had emphasized that "implementation" of the

30. See, e.g., Izvestiya (Moscow), September 20, 1981 (morning edition) and Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya (Moscow), September 5, 1981 (FBIS, September 16 and 30, 1981).

31. See note 11 supra.
regional conference proposal would certainly enhance prospects for peace in Southeast Asia.

Yet, in Moscow as in Hanoi, there were more conciliatory perspectives. Whatever Soviet media may have been reporting about Moscow's support for the Indochinese proposal for a regional conference with ASEAN only, the Soviet President in his September, 1981 meetings with Indochinese leaders also appears to have been urging a new policy of restraint in the Kampuchean problem. Brezhnev notably avoided direct criticism of ASEAN in his discussions and urged his Indochinese allies to "keep the dialogue going" with ASEAN. Both Brezhnev and Le Duan, at the conclusion of their talks, voiced a "readiness to establish and strengthen relations of friendship and cooperation with Malaysia and Indonesia and all peaceloving countries."

The singling out of Malaysia and Indonesia was particularly noteworthy. It will be recalled that among ASEAN members these are precisely the two states most interested in considering Vietnam as a strategic buffer against a possible regional expansion by a resurgent and modernizing post-Mao China. That interest crystallized in the "Kuantan principle" and it appeared that Brezhnev in his September, 1981 meetings with the leaders of the "Indochina unity bloc" was well aware of the possible tactical advantage to the Soviets that the "Kuantan principle" and a conciliatory approach offered. As one Bangkok editorial pointed out, avoiding a deepening polarization over Kampuchea, and perhaps having to counter a new Chinese move against Vietnam as well, might appear especially desirable to Moscow at a time when the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was not proceeding very smoothly; when the Polish problem loomed larger almost every day; and, when Reagan-Haig foreign policy reactions in the United States could not be gauged very accurately.

It can hardly have been coincidental that the idea of a "broadened" Heng Samrin government was mooted to Suharto's emissary General Murdani at about the same time that Brezhnev was discussing the Kampuchean question with Le Duan in the Kremlin. Equally telling was the statement by SRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach on September 14, 1981, on the eve of the UN General

32. See Chanda, supra note 9.
33. Ibid.
34. See note 7 supra.
36. See note 15 supra.
Assembly opening. In this statement Thach unexpectedly supported ASEAN’s 1971 concept of a “zone of peace, freedom and neutrality” in Southeast Asia as constituting “a solid basis for negotiations” on the Kampuchean question, although such negotiations, again, according to Thach, had to be held on a “regional” level. To ASEAN's (and the UN's) demand for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Kampuchea, Thach now also countered with a new gambit of his own: a call for a cessation of all “direct or indirect interference and threats” in the Southeast Asian area by foreign powers, and a demand for the “withdrawal of all foreign troops from Southeast Asia.” By this call, Thach managed to link the solution of the Kampuchean question to a “genuine” neutrality, in which military ties by individual ASEAN states to Western powers (e.g. the Philippines and the United States; and Malaysia and Singapore to the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, under the Five Power Commonwealth Defense Arrangement) were made inseparable from the withdrawal of the Vietnamese from Kampuchea. To what extent the adverse — for Hanoi and Moscow — UN General Assembly vote on Kampuchea on October 22, 1981 may have dampened Hanoi's interest, and yet, prodded by Moscow, compelled Hanoi to keep “the dialogue” with ASEAN going on these points, remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, the Soviets have other strategic considerations in the Kampuchean crisis. For one thing, the Kampuchean under Heng Samrin’s regime, are restive under Vietnam’s heavy military and political dominance of their country. Pen Sovan, secretary general of the ruling People's Revolutionary Party of Kampuchea has begun to de-emphasize his country’s “special relationship” with the SRV and the role played by Hanoi in the Kampuchean “liberation” struggle and has begun to stress as well that the unity of the Indo-China states is on the same footing as Phnom Penh's bilateral solidarity with Moscow. The numbers of Kampuchean military and civilians being trained in the Soviet Union is growing. And Moscow is clearly interested in enlarging its own direct strategic base in the PRK, (e.g. through the development of Kampuchea's Kompong Som harbor where currently some 30 Soviet technicians are at work). The number of Soviet personnel in Kampuchea has grown from 40 in March, 1980 to about 400 in June, 1981, and “a steady flow of Soviet delegations” to Phnom Penh as well as the opening of a “technical university” in Phnom Penh in September, 1981 staffed entirely by

37. Renmin Ribao (Beijing), September 17, 1981 (FBIS, September 18, 1981).
Soviet experts, reflect what appears to be a PRK "tilt" to Moscow.\textsuperscript{38}

It is unlikely that this "tilt" will at any time soon align the Soviet Union, the SRV, and Heng Samrin's PRK against each other. But the deepening Soviet commitment to the PRK, a state which Hanoi has tended to view and treat as its satrapy, suggests that Moscow, even at the risk of straining its relations with Vietnam, is seeking to balance and more evenly spread its influence in Indochina. It has been noted that by its SRV alliance the Soviets, in a way, "entrapped" themselves in the present Sino-Vietnam conflict. Hence, "Moscow's restraint during the February-March, 1979 Sino-Vietnam border war may have been a signal that Soviet forces were not at the disposal of Vietnam's policymakers."\textsuperscript{39} The further development of an independent Soviet commitment to Heng Samrin's PRK reflects Moscow's realization of the dangers of its heavy support for the SRV, as well as its determination that whatever the ultimate settlement of the Kampuchean question may be, Soviet interests in the country will be protected.

Beijing's official position also may be summarized under three basic categories.\textsuperscript{40} First, Beijing is basically supportive of the UN's and ASEAN's position that Vietnam's presence in Kampuchea is unacceptable (a "military and colonial rule" based on "200,000 aggressor troops," as Chinese media put it). The Chinese also claim to support the UN demand that after the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces Kampucheans be permitted to hold free elections under UN supervision. In fact, however, as Chinese policy at the New York conference showed, Beijing's chief concern appears to be to protect the Kampan-Pot regime, even at the risk of alienating ASEAN.

Second, according to the PRC, the Vietnamese presence in Kampuchea is but part of a broader strategy of "regional hegemonism" by Hanoi supported by Moscow. Indeed, the aggressive pursuit of Soviet-Vietnamese "common hegemonist goals" is seen by China as the "root cause of turbulence" throughout the Southeast Asian region. Through Vietnam and her Kampuchean conquest, according to Beijing, the Soviets are further advancing in "encircling" China. Hanoi's proposal to ASEAN to hold a "regional" conference to discuss common problems, including Kampuchea, is perceived by Beijing as but a part of this "hegemonist" strategy, as a result of

\textsuperscript{38} Nayan Chanda in \textit{The Straits Times}, June 9, 1981.


which not only Kampuchea, but also Laos ("now entirely controlled by Vietnam") have fallen under Vietnam's sway. Hanoi's aggression also extends itself to the People's Republic of China, as testified to by allegedly numerous violations of its Chinese frontier in the past three years. Third, precisely because of her confrontation with Hanoi over Kampuchea, Beijing has felt constrained again and again to emphasize her peaceful intentions toward Southeast Asia, and, indeed, toward the SRV itself. China "does not wish to establish a sphere of influence in Southeast Asia," nor "does it wish to bring about the collapse of Vietnam."41 In accordance with this position, Beijing today accuses Hanoi of falsely trumpeting that the region faces a "Chinese threat," in the hope of thereby "intimidating" the ASEAN countries. Ieng Sary, Deputy Premier for Foreign Affairs of Beijing's client, "Democratic Kampuchea," in his September 29, 1981 UN General Assembly address, characterized Hanoi's "Chinese threat" gambit as but a "resort to the odious thief-crying-stop-thief strategem."42

In analyzing Beijing's position in the Kampuchean question, one is particularly struck by the increasing difficulty that position poses for China's relations with her Southeast Asian neighbors. For as China's confrontation with a Moscow-backed SRV has continued, Beijing no longer relies (or feels that she can rely) primarily on the Sampan-Pot guerrilla regime. Rather, as has been noted, Beijing has also attempted "to enlist the ASEAN and all anti-Vietnamese Cambodian forces in the areas as a whole."43 Such a mobilization of ASEAN and anti-Vietnamese Kampucheans to "bleed Vietnam" (as some ASEAN circles have charged),44 and perhaps even provoke a drastic change in Hanoi that might result in a less avowedly pro-Soviet government there, is clearly in Beijing's interest. But this Chinese strategy, as is evident, is already producing adverse results. ASEAN states, along with their persistent denunciation of the Vietnamese presence in Kampuchea, and their pressure at the United Nations to maintain international recognition of "Democratic Kampuchea", have also made it plain that they do not see the latter as a desirable permanent Cambodian government. While Beij-

41. Mu Youlin, note 40 supra, p. 3.
44. Cf. the interview of Singapore's deputy premier (foreign affairs), S. Rajaratnam in Le Figaro (Paris), March 12, 1980.
ing, as in the case of the July 13, 1981 New York conference, blocks policy formulations that might endanger the Sampan-Pot regime's de facto control over whatever free elections might eventually be held in Kampuchea, ASEAN is equally certain that it wants both the Heng Samrin and Kampan-Pot leadership replaced.

This ASEAN objective is tied to another concern evident among at least two ASEAN members, Indonesia and Malaysia, that the real threat to their region in the long-term comes more from China than from Vietnam. Such a view is, currently at least, not generally popular in Thailand, which as a “frontline state,” values China’s support in Bangkok’s tense border and refugee relations with a Hanoi-dominated LPDR and PRK. But it has found sympathy, if less than avowed endorsement, in political-military circles in the Philippines and Singapore. In the aftermath of the July, 1981 New York conference, which saw the ASEAN-Chinese rift over Kampuchean policy more openly revealed than it perhaps had ever been before, Malaysia’s new premier Mahathir bin Mohammad and his associates became equally open and candid about their own threat perceptions.

Thus, early in August 1981, during a Djakarta visit, Mahathir said publicly that he did not regard Vietnam as a dangerous threat to Southeast Asia, adding that in his judgment the SRV did not intend to invade ASEAN, nor that Hanoi after decades of fighting “will have much time for adventures outside of ‘Vietnam.’” In subsequent weeks Malaysian officials, both during Chinese premier Zhao Ziyang’s visit to Kuala Lampur and in discussions in Bangkok, strongly voiced their disapproval of China’s allegedly continuing support for the insurgent Communist Party of Malaya. Indeed, by mid-August 1981, Malaysian Foreign Minister Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie declared that his government considered the Chinese Communist Party’s link with the Communist parties in Southeast Asia to be a greater danger than that coming from the Soviet Union. As Mahathir again put it in a Bangkok visit, “It is well-known that my own political party has no counterpart in China and has no intention of interfering in Chinese domestic affairs.” Mahathir went on to say that “This idea that you can have both party-to-party and government-to-government relations is not really acceptable to us.”

More than a year earlier, in January 1980, then Malaysian Foreign Minister Rithauddeen, after a Hanoi visit, had already declared

that ASEAN should accept Vietnam's assurance that it had no territorial ambition over Thailand or any other ASEAN country. In Djakarta, at about the same time, the outgoing Indonesian ambassador to the SRV, Hardi, said that he too was convinced that Vietnam was ready for friendly relations with ASEAN once the Kampuchean question was out of the way. These Malaysian-Indonesian perceptions further evolved into the relatively accommodating posture of the “Kuantan principle” later that year. And despite new ASEAN-Vietnamese tensions in subsequent months, the concept of an ASEAN accommodation with the SRV, which would include a recognition of Vietnam's security interests in Laos and Kampuchea, has remained basic to Malaysia's regional policy. In August 1981, at the time that Malaysia's new premier Mahathir was downgrading the Vietnamese danger, his cabinet colleagues, deputy premier Musa bin Hitam and Foreign Minister Ghazali bin Shafie, accentuated the historic importance of Hanoi's struggle for independence, and, indeed, drew parallels between the SRV's position in Indochina and Indonesia's role in ASEAN. As one analysis put it at the time:

The Malaysian leadership is ready to recognize a major Vietnamese role in Southeast Asia, particularly in Cambodia and Laos, rather than insist, as does China, on unremitting hostility toward Vietnam. While Mr. Musa and Mr. Ghazali condemned the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, they also spoke sympathetically of Vietnam's struggle for national survival. Mr Ghazali said that Vietnam was entitled to play toward Laos and Cambodia a role similar to that played by Indonesia towards its partners in the Southeast Asian group — that of the biggest country in the group. 'The anchor,' the Foreign Minister said, 'but not the dominant power.'

The present writer has heard similar remarks from various Indonesian quarters, with the added observation, as one Indonesian diplomat once put it, that “the Indonesians and the Vietnamese are the only peoples in Southeast Asia that won their independence through a revolutionary independence struggle against colonialism. That alone should make us sympathetic to each other.” One need not be taken in by all such rhetoric to realize, nevertheless, that in its

47. See note 7 supra.
Kampuchean policy today, the People's Republic of China is beginning seriously to alienate ASEAN.

Equally important, in pursuit of its Kampuchean policy, China, particularly on the international scene, has become dependent on US leverage in Third World (including ASEAN) and Western nations. As previously noted, the Sino-US entente in Kampuchean policy was particularly evident at the July 1981 New York conference on Kampuchea, where, reportedly, "behind the scenes United States diplomats labored for China's cause, eager to cement the new relationship with Peking (Beijing)" and thus successfully prevented any conference policy conclusions that could damage the Samphan-Pot regime. This full US commitment to Beijing, despite ASEAN disquiet, was accompanied by US expressions of strong concern for ASEAN's interests.

For example, at the very time of the July 1981 UN conference on Kampuchea, the US Assistant Secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, John H. Holdridge, was testifying to the East Asian and Pacific Affairs Subcommittee of the US Senate's Foreign Relations Committee. According to Holdridge, "the heart" of US policy in "the entire region" of Southeast Asia is American support for the "progress and stability" of ASEAN. Total US trade with ASEAN's "rapidly expanding economies," according to Holdridge, now amounts to $21 billion annually, and for strategic as well as economic reasons regular consultations with ASEAN ("a cohesive, effective organization") have become a standard feature of American foreign policy. The "positive, active support" of the United States for ASEAN, Holdridge said, is considered by Washington to be "the most effective means of curbing the ambitions of Vietnam and the Soviet Union" in the region. Specifically as to the Kampuchean question, Holdridge portrayed ASEAN and the United States to be "in full agreement" on a policy of making Hanoi's occupation of Kampuchea as costly as possible through "diplomatic isolation and economic deprivation." Such a policy would be most likely to induce the Vietnamese to end their Kampuchean presence. At the July 1981 New York conference on Kampuchea, US Secretary of State Alexander Haig further sharpened the US formulation of a favored solution to the Kampuchean problem. On the basis of a restoration of Cambodian "self-determination" and sovereignty, and of

establishment there of a government that would be representative of "the wishes of the Khmer people," Haig said that a "neutral Cambodia that represents no threat to any of its neighbors" would not only "remove the main cause of conflict" in Southeast Asia but also would contribute to an easing of "global tensions."\(^{51}\)

In analyzing the US position, one may note in passing the possibility of an internal contradiction, i.e. a Kampuchean government reflecting the "wishes of the Khmer people", as Haig put it, might not desire necessarily to be "neutral." But more likely to have been troubling in ASEAN circles was Holdridge's avowal of US support for ASEAN as being the "most effective means" to stop Hanoi's and Moscow's ambitions in Southeast Asia, and his claim of the existence of a "full" US-ASEAN agreement on the means of persuading Hanoi to withdraw its Kampuchean contingents. Long before Holdridge's remarks, there had come to prevail in some ASEAN circles, e.g. Indonesia and Malaysia, a belief in the desirability of a "political solution" of the Kampuchean problem on the basis of some accommodation of Hanoi's security interests, i.e. the "Juantan principle." Was this party of the "full agreement" which the United States had with ASEAN?

There was an even more disturbing question. Should Holdridge's words that support for ASEAN was for the United States the "most effective means" of curbing Hanoi's and Moscow's policies, be taken to mean that Washington intended to use ASEAN as the cutting edge of its own policy of confrontation and containment of the Soviets? There were indications that the United States meant just that. While flying on the US Secretary of State's plane from Beijing to the fourteenth ASEAN ministerial meeting in Manila, on June 16, 1981, a "senior official" in the Haig party told accompanying reporters that Haig believed that Asian non-Communist nations, like ASEAN, already had formed a consensus against the Soviet Union," and indeed, even were "ahead" of the United States "in recognizing the danger posed by the Soviet Union and its allies."\(^{52}\) It was added that presumably because of this recognition, the United States, therefore, would not have to play a leading role herself in opposing the Soviet threat in the region, though it would, of course, still be "sympathetic and supportive" of the non-Communist Asian nations.

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52. UPI dispatch by Jim Anderson, Manila, June 17, 1981.
Kampuchea

But how comfortable would ASEAN be in this US-conceived vanguard role of Communist confrontation? As in the case of ASEAN's differences with Beijing over the Kampuchean issue there has been no public, official expression of dissent in ASEAN capitals, nor is there likely to be for some time. But as was the case with China, the ASEAN policy differences in the United States have not gone unnoticed. At the Manila conference in June 1981 the ASEAN ministers had attempted to give some substance to their "Third Alternative" strategy.55 The strategy made room for Hanoi's interests, including a negotiating process involving the SRV, the Soviet Union and all other "interested" parties, as well as UN-supervised elections in Kampuchea in which all factions, including the Heng Samrin regime's followers, would have had an opportunity to make their case. However, the very hardline position adopted by Secretary Haig toward Vietnam, first during his Beijing visit and then the following week at the Manila conference, greatly disconcerted ASEAN's representatives in the Philippine capital. Haig's stance in the Kampuchean question was described as a "very, very close parallel" of China's. Assertions both by Haig and Assistant Secretary Holdridge that pressure on Vietnam should be maximized including in unspecified "military" ways, and that Beijing should increase its arms deliveries to anti-Vietnamese forces in Kampuchea, all deepened fears in ASEAN circles that "a confrontationist approach would drive Vietnam deeper into Moscow's arms and make a political solution more difficult."54

It should be emphasized, moreover, that ASEAN fears of China were well known to US officials even as their general policy of closely following Beijing's lead in the Kampuchean question were exacerbating those ASEAN fears. For example, in his earlier mentioned July 1981 testimony before the US Senate's subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Holdridge conceded under questioning by subcommittee members that, within ASEAN, Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja had voiced concern over Secretary Haig's announcement, made during Haig's June 1981 Beijing visit, that the United States was now prepared to consider arms sales to China.55 Indeed, shortly after Haig's announcement, Kusumaatmadja complained that there had been no prior consultation with ASEAN on the matter, adding that "it would have been a

53. See note 18 supra.
55. The Straits Times, July 17, 1981.
sign of their [i.e. the United States'] regard for us,” had Washington done so. And US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage, on July 21, 1981, in testimony before the same Senate subcommittee, acknowledged “long standing Southeast Asian concerns” about China, adding that “we have given assurances that our developing relations with China will not be at the expense of our friends.”

To ASEAN, however, it may well seem that such assurances are belied by US policy actions, and that, moreover, the United States feels confident that it can take ASEAN more or less for granted. To a degree and for the moment, such US confidence may well seem justified. In the present polarized condition of Southeast Asian diplomacy, ASEAN states are tied to the United States and/or to its Commonwealth allies by a variety of military agreements and accommodations. Hence ASEAN hardly seems to be in a position strongly and openly to voice objections to the US approach in the Kampuchean question. The more so, because both the United States and ASEAN fundamentally agree on the basic objective: a withdrawal of Vietnamese forces and establishment of an alternative regime in Kampuchea. But despite common goals, even differences in tactics may spoil alliances, and the current US-ASEAN interplay over Kampuchea is beginning to do just that.

Japan, Australia, the United Kingdom, and other Commonwealth nations in Africa and Asia in various degrees have begun to develop reservations similar to ASEAN’s that a hardline anti-Vietnamese policy is likely to achieve results. Many in this group too have strong military and other strategic interdependencies with the United States. None is prepared to go as far as India and extend outright recognition to the Heng Samrin regime. To most US allies, rather, it seems that the idea of a compromise-oriented “political solution” in Kampuchea — arrived at, to be sure, with a judicious combination of inducements and pressures on Hanoi to change course — is more likely to be productive in the long run than a seemingly hardline “confrontationist” approach alone.

III. THE PROSPECTS OF CONTENDING FACTIONS IN KAMPUCHEA

What such a carrot and stick approach might include, will be suggested shortly. First it seems appropriate, however, to look

briefly at the contending factions in Kampuchea today. There is little question that backed by the ubiquitous presence of some 200,000 Vietnamese troops, and some three thousand Vietnamese civilian troops, and some three thousand Vietnamese civilian “advisers” and party cadres, Heng Samrin, as President of the “Kampuchean People’s Revolutionary Council Government” (KPRCG) and of its major political mass movement, the “Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation” (KNUFNS), can with various degrees of justification claim control over about 90 percent of Kampuchean national territory. This control, especially in the countryside, is intermittent however, and dependent on guerrilla activity. During 1981, there was increasing evidence of growing insecurity. The government designated as “trouble zones” (i.e. areas where anti-Vietnam resistance is active) areas not just in the Southwest, East and Northeast regions where insurgents of the Kampan-Pot regime are active, but also in Kratie and Kompong Cham in the East Central region, and Takeo and Kampot in the South.  

A basic party structure is in place and appears to be functioning effectively. Through its network of “people’s revolutionary committees” in villages and towns, the ruling People’s Revolutionary Party (PRP) organized elections for both regional councils and a National Assembly in March and April 1981. In May, at its national congress, the PRP elected Hanoi’s confidant, Vice President and Defense Minister Pen Sovan, as its general secretary, and adopted an ambitious national reconstruction program. Though Samrin has been proclaiming that “during a little more than two years, from scratch, we have achieved great and fundamental successes in shoring up the economic structure” and “stabilizing daily life,” the PRK’s problems of future survival remain formidable. Though rice production is said to have risen from 400,000 tons in 1979 to a claimed 750,000 in 1980, at least a million tons is required for self-sufficiency. Heng Samrin’s Kampuchea has continued need of huge imports of food. PRP-led production “solidarity groups” (i.e. cooperatives) in the villages have avoided doctrinaire or highly regulated cultivation and marketing procedures (individual or family land ownership prevails) and private peasant initiative has been permitted to spur production growth. But the still shattered infrastructure of services seriously inhibits adequate food distribution and economic 

60. Estrade dispatch, note 58, supra.
recovery generally. "Kampuchea is still a graveyard of smashed cities, towns, markets, roads, bridges, telecommunications and other essential facilities of a modern state," one recent visitor noted, and "urban reconstruction has hardly begun even in Phnom Penh." 61

In order to retain its party cadre, military and bureaucratic loyalties, the Heng Samrin regime has been subsidizing heavily the cost of the tens of thousands of rice purchased at artificially high prices from peasant producers and "solidarity groups." 62 Reorganization of food production, some control over the illegal trade and black marketeering with Thailand, introduction of a new tax system to pay for essential services (public utilities, health services and much public transport in Phnom Penh and other towns has been free), and preparation for the expected and inevitable drop in United Nations food relief, which amounted to nearly $700 million worth from 1979 through 1981, all depend to some degree on public support for and confidence in the Heng Samrin regime among the 6 million Kampuchean population (in 1975 the population was estimated at 8.1 million).

One sign that such public confidence exists is the fact that, according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 300,000 Kampucheans who in the course of 1978-79 had fled their country to seek refuge in Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos, had returned to their country by the end of 1980. Indeed, according to officials of international relief agencies, the number of returnees actually is closer to 500,000. 63 With UNHCR assistance, refugees have returned to their home villages, particularly in such frontier provinces as Battambang and Siem Reap in the West, and Prey Veng in the East. In early October 1981, however, according to the Thai military's Supreme Command Information Office, there were still some 120,000 Kampuchean refugees in Thai camps, of which about 30,000 were awaiting resettlement in third countries. 64

Still, to most Kampucheans today the Vietnamese-controlled Heng Samrin regime remains preferable by far to the "Democratic Kampuchea" underground remnant of Khieu Sampan and Pol Pot. For Kampucheans the seemingly excessively bloody violence of some recent guerrilla attacks by the Sampan-Pot forces reinforces

62. Ibid.
the memory of the holocaust in the whole of the country unleashed by the Sampan-Pot government when in power during the 1975-79 period. Then, too, while anti-Vietnamese feelings are traditional and endemic among Kampucheans, the SRV's military and bureaucratic establishment has been relatively unobtrusive and restrained in its relations with Kampucheans. According to "people's revolutionary committee" spokesmen, the Vietnamese even are "withdrawing" from some public service sectors, such as health care, as Kampucheans themselves are able to take over. At the same time, however, as has been noted earlier, the direct Soviet presence in the PRK is beginning to loom larger. The degree to which that presence now equals or overshadows Hanoi's in popular Kampuchean antipathies is difficult to determine. During their discussions in the Kremlin in mid-September 1981, Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev assured Pen Sovan that Moscow would continue to assist the Heng Samrin regime "in building cases of socialism." Most Kampucheans are probably resigned that absent a general superpower agreement on a "Third Alternative" government, even a modified or "expanded" Heng Samrin regime would probably allow for a continued and considerable Vietnamese and Soviet influence in their affairs.

Were it not for Beijing's active support in weapons, money and diplomatic pressure in the international arena, it is doubtful if the "Democratic Kampuchea" government would last more than a few months, despite its legally strong case that it, and not the PRK, is Kampuchea's only legitimate government. Headquartered primarily in the Phnom Kravanh (Cardomom Mountain) range, and in Western Battambang province, "Democratic Kampuchea's" guerrilla commander Pol Pot is supplied with Chinese-financed weapons through the porous Thai-Kampuchean border. Senior Thai military, as well as Pol Pot sympathizers and recruiting agents among the human flotsam in the border refugee camps, facilitate the process. US-made weapons, captured from the forces of the deposed Lon Nol government in Phnom Penh also remain in use. Beijing finances as well "Democratic Kampuchea's" presence at the United Nations and its media. It was due to Beijing's pressure that Pot, who remains an odious figure internationally because of his role in the

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65. See note 15 supra.
Kampuchean holocaust of 1975-79, formally resigned his premiership in mid-1980, maintaining his post as military commander however.

Small but well-equipped units of the Sampan-Pot "national army" now roam over an ever widening area of Kampuchea, establishing their own "revolutionary people's" committees in villages, and becoming more effective in ambush and sudden night attacks. In April 1981, Sampan claimed that "we have intensified our guerrilla warfare" in the entire country, "including Phnom Penh, Kompong Som town, provincial seats, railroads, highways, the Kampuchean-Vietnamese border and the Eastern part of Kampuchea."67 The effectiveness of the Sampan-Pot insurgents is confirmed by other observers and the Heng Samrin regime itself.68

On the other hand, "Democratic Kampuchea's" territorial base is small. While in Battambang it does control several scores of thinly populated, malaria-ridden villages, it holds no major population centers or even smaller towns. As a rival state, "Democratic Kampuchea's" political economy, such as it is, is dependent on Chinese largesse, the convoluted barter arrangements, smuggling, and extensive food and consumer good racketeering rampant in the Thai border towns and refugee camps. A glimpse of life in Phnom Tani village in "Democratic Kampuchea" controlled territory is offered in one recent journalist's account:69

The village people produce up to 40 per cent of their food needs... the rest they get from Thailand. As during the Khmer Rouge regime in Phnom Penh money is non-existent. Barter is the only form of exchange except for occasional frontier deals made by the most resourceful. Wood is the principal commodity in this trade. A sack of charcoal — the product of long hours of work — sells for just $1.50 at the nearest Thai village, enough to buy batteries for a torch. At Phnom Tnai village a carpenter with five workers manages to make and sell the occasional bed in Thailand for $75, enabling him to buy food or new tools. Such entrepreneurs are allowed to keep and share out the profits, an official said... In between Khmer Rouge soldiers patrolling the jungle paths come regular 'convoys'

68. See note 52 supra.
of women, balancing sacks of rice, oil cans, foreign aid med­
dicaments or Chinese supplied ammunition on their heads.

According to “Democratic Kampuchea” officials, private ownership and payment for work are now said to exist side by side with traditional Khmer practices of sharing goods and work. Moreover, “na­tional army” personnel during their spare time reportedly plant crops and help the peasantry. But even without the bloody brutality prevailing during Pol Pot’s premiership, existence is confined to the narrowest of margins of survival. And except for the youthful, indeed teen-age, fanatics who compose much of the bulk of the cadre system and guerrilla forces, and who have never known anything else, life in “Democratic Kampuchea” today has few attractions and even fewer realistic prospects.

There are two other major claimants to Kampuchean leadership, i.e. the 70-year-old former premier Son Sann and his “Kampuchean (or Khmer) People’s National Liberation Front” (KPNLF), and Cambodia’s longtime ruler, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, and his “National Union Front for an Independent, Pacific and Cooperative Cambodia” (usually abbreviated to FUNCINPEC). On October 9, 1981, at a gathering held under the watchful eye of Thai military and intelligence personnel in the Thai border town of Ban Nong Chan, Son Sann celebrated the KPNLF’s second anniversary. On this occasion Sann claimed that his armed fighters now numbered 9,000 and that his group had another 10,000 armed supporters “operating inside Kampuchea.” He also claimed the existence of “liberated territory” in Kampuchea under KPNLF control, with a population exceeding 100,000, that is “increasing every week.”

Independent observers, though conceding that several hundred KNPLF recruiters are active throughout Western Kampuchea, tend to reduce these numbers by one-half to two-thirds. They also point out that much of the “liberated territory” Son Sann refers to consists of villages and refugee camps under the sometimes rapidly shifting control of local camp leaders or guerrilla chiefs. More permanent seems to be KPNLF’s control over the Ban Samet and Nong Chan border encampments.

As he had done before, Son Sann in his KPNLF anniversary address, criticized his fellow participants in the Bangkok “united front” organizational discussions then taking place. According to

71. The Bangkok Post, October 11, 1981.
72. See note 27 supra.
Sann, the other representatives in the Bangkok talks were setting "harsh and unrealistic conditions." But he himself insisted that his KPNLF had to have majority control of a "united front" government, and added that (though this matter "could be negotiated") "Democratic Kampuchea" leaders should go into "self exile" because their participation in a common government would alienate the Kampuchean people. 73

It should also be noted that there is no love lost between Sihanouk and Sann. The latter, reflecting conservative, anti-Communist Cambodian political currents in the 1960s, had opposed the Prince's accommodationist approach to the Vietnamese Communists and their Cambodian allies. There is little question that Sann and the KPNLF today have the quiet support of some powerful Thai Army regional commanders who reportedly supply them with weapons. The KPLNF also appears to be getting some arms from China from the connivance of Thai border officials. On July 24, 1980, a daring KPNLF raid on Prey Sar prison near Phnom Penh brought freedom to some 180 leading political prisoners. In subsequent months, according to Thai sources, a number of other, smaller anti-Vietnam and anti-Pol Pot groups inside Kampuchea and along the Thai-Kampuchean border joined the KPNLF. 74

But although the KPNLF has seasoned anti-Communist combat veterans, among them chief of staff Dien Del, and although Son Sann's rigid, testy, integrity has won him widespread respect, Sann's age, lack of charisma, his feuding with other "Third Alternative" leaders like Sihanouk and Pol Pot, and his failure to develop significant Chinese support, have greatly minimized his role. Sann has repeatedly criticized Khieu Sampan for failing to put Chinese aid to good military use. San also has charged that during repeated sojourns in Beijing, Chinese leaders said that they desired an anti-Vietnamese united front, but could not afford to give the KPNLF any aid because of China's domestic economic difficulties. 75 When asked in a press interview what his relations were with Sihanouk, Sann replied that "Now I only mind the problems of the people", and that "I do not have any time to waste." 76 In many ASEAN circles, though he is admired as Cambodia's "Mr. Clean," as one Singapore daily has put it. Sann is viewed, at best, as a transitional figure

73. See note 71 supra.
74. Ibid., September 3, 1980.
75. The Straits Times, February 4, 1981.
76. Ibid.
to a possible third alternative government, unless the United States would openly support him — an unlikely contingency.

Already in 1979 it was authoritatively reported that Prince Norodom Sihanouk was the clear favorite among tens of thousands of Kampuchean refugees in and near Thailand and elsewhere to lead a possible “Third Alternative” movement. Many Cambodians can look with some justification on Sihanouk’s fall from power in 1970 as the end of a relative “Golden Age” in their country’s history, compared to the horrors that were to visit Kampuchea in the following years. In the past decade, however, the Prince’s volatile relations with Beijing, Pyongyang, and other potential friends and allies in the communist world, his well publicized vitriolic exchanges both with the Heng Samrin government and with that of Kieu Sampan, and his seemingly mercurial interest in participating in a broad anti-Vietnamese alliance of Kampucheans, have tended to make him less and less effective. Also, there is no question that his personal popularity among Kampucheans is still immense, and that remains a factor to be reckoned with in any lasting Kampuchean settlement.

In September 1979, Sihanouk, then in Pyongyang, proclaimed a “Confederation of Nationalist Khmers.” By the following month Sihanouk, while criticizing Son Sann for conducting a guerrilla campaign from Thailand “where he can be filmed by television cameras,” claimed that already some 5,000 Sihanoukist guerrillas actually were fighting the Vietnamese. Yet, necessity drove him to serious discussions with the followers of Sampan and Sann, and the Prince, by February 1981, announced his readiness to preside over a “united front” movement, even one which was in effect led by Sampan and Pot. But evidently well aware that in such an arrangement he would be reduced to a mere figurehead, Sihanouk also hoped to widen his personal base of support by forming a new organisation of his own, the above mentioned FUNCINPEC. Sihanouk’s former premier, In Tam, became FUNCINPEC’s chief spokesman at various international meetings. Sihanouk also approached China and the United States to assist him in the further organization and supply


of weapons for his own "independent army."  

Early in March 1981, reportedly at Chinese urging, Sihanouk had what was described as a "difficult" conversation with Sampan in Pyongyang. Sihanouk at this time insisted on the need for a laying down of arms by all armed factions in Kampuchea once the Vietnamese agreed to withdraw. Sihanouk in this conversation with Sampan also declared that only an international peacekeeping force could assure Kampuchea's neutrality. It may be emphasized that these demands of Sihanouk's were reflected also in the ASEAN Foreign Minister's own Kampuchean peace proposals developed during their June, 1981 Manila conference and which were rejected by Beijing a month later at the UN-sponsored conference on Kampuchea. According to Sihanouk it was Beijing which had been trying to get him to head an anti-Vietnamese "united front." But, said Sihanouk, as early as February 1981, he had made known his conditions to the Chinese. These conditions, to which the Chinese did not formally respond, included the disarming of armed factions in Kampuchea and entry of an international peace-keeping force. They included as well the demand that China provide weapons to Sihanoukist forces similar in amount to the assistance being received in Sihanoukist forces similar in amount to the assistance being received by the Sampan-Pot regime. 

By its stance at the New York conference, Beijing made it plain that its wish to see Sihanouk head a "united front" was not as strong as its determination to keep its own channel of influence in Kampuchea by means of its "Democratic Kampuchea" client. Sihanouk did not fail to read this Chinese signal. Though, one will recall, Sihanouk subsequently attended the September 1981, Singapore conference along with Sampan and Sann, he declared that he had done so only reluctantly. In Singapore, Sihanouk criticized Sann and Sampan as "warmongers" who hold "intransigent" views, and added that Chinese leaders had told him that Kampuchea had to be prepared to wage a long war "of 10 or 20 years, against the Vietnamese," if necessary, until victory was achieved. But, said Sihanouk, he was convinced that Cambodia "could never win such a war", and that only "honorable compromise" could bring a way out.

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82. See note 18 supra.
83. The Straits Times, February 9, 1981.
Since the Singapore conference, and even as the “united front” ad hoc committee in Bangkok continued to seek a compromise, Sihanouk voiced disappointment and skepticism over Superpower policies in the Kampuchean question. But Sihanouk’s own future as a possibly broadly acceptable “Third Alternative” figure in an “honorable compromise” formula has dimmed. Beijing has shown that it desires him primarily to be a figurehead, with real power staying with the Sampan group. Hanoi’s and the Heng Samrin regime’s opposition to Sihanouk remain strong. To the Phnom Penh media today, Sihanouk has “chosen to be a lackey of the Beijing expansionists,” and his own peace-seeking efforts are being ridiculed as comparable to the “loud noises” made by “a peddler at a marketplace.”

Looking at the main “alternative factions” in the Kampuchean question, the outstanding fact that emerges is the obvious inability of these factions to come together in a policy and operational framework by means of which effective military and diplomatic pressure might be exerted on the Vietnamese presence in Kampuchea. On the contrary, the divisiveness among the major anti-Vietnamese factions solidifies the Heng Samrin regime’s position, even as it encourages various lesser claimants in the murky underworld of the refugee camps and Thai border towns. Among these, for example, is one Andre Oukthol, a former Kampuchean student in France, who also calls himself Prince Norodom Soriyavong and asserts a family relationship with Sihanouk. The latter has repudiated such ties. Oukthol heads a shadowy “National Movement for the Liberation of Kampuchea.”

The consequences of factional divisiveness and disintegration of control over the anti-Vietnamese resistance also are evident in the worsening gang warfare along the Thai-Kampuchean border. In the middle of October 1981, rival bands of Kampuchean guerrillas, firing grenade launchers and automatic rifles, killed twenty villagers during a battle for control of the lucrative black market at Ban Kok No Nong Do village in Thailand. The guerrillas, according to one report, belonged to a faction of Son Sann’s “Khmer People’s National Liberation Front” led by Chea Chut. Chut, onetime soldier in the Cambodian forces of President Lon Nol, fled to the Thai border in 1975. According to another report, however, Chut now leads his own movement, the “Free Khmers.” Ban Kok Ko Non do’s black market, where at the time of Chea Chut’s attack, several dozens of

villagers were buying gold from various anti-Vietnamese Kampuchean insurgents, was controlled by another former Lon Nol soldier, In Sakhan, whose loyalties are uncertain. Chea Chut’s attack derives significance from the fact that, according to border observers, about $40,000 worth of “business” daily is being transacted at Ban Kok Ko Non Do alone, and that “as much as half a million dollars changes hands daily along the border.”

Under these conditions Kampuchean factionalism acquires an added dimension. Corrupt Thai officials, rival refugee gangs also styling themselves “liberation” fighters, Kampuchean villagers from all over the country in desperate need of food and consumer goods, various would-be or deposed Kampuchean politicians aspiring to power, and others now use the murky frontier world to their particular advantage. A stable and relatively efficient system of public administration by a generally acknowledged central government authority might greatly improve the misery of the refugee flotsam in the camps, and the plight of the great mass of Kampuchea’s peasantry, whether in “Democratic Kampuchea” or PRK-dominated territory. But it would not necessarily be so for those who have an economic interest in the political chaos of Western Cambodia and along the Thai frontier. One can only speculate at this point as to the extent to which such economic interest is a factor not only in impeding the formation of an effective anti-Vietnamese “united front,” but also in preventing the Vietnamese forces and their Heng Samrin allies from launching an all-out offensive against “Democratic Kampuchea” and stabilizing the PRK’s territorial and sovereign claims.

In the meantime, the border world continues to obey its own political and economic imperatives. In mid-October 1981, the Thai military’s “Supreme Command Information Office” reported that clashes between Thai forces and various armed Kampuchean groups involved in smuggling, black market and other illegal frontier trade had begun to increase since September — just about the time that the “united front’s” ad hoc committee began its Bangkok discussions. The increased clashes officially were attributed, however, to the continuing severity of the shortage of food and commodities inside Kampuchea.

Kampuchea

IV. CONCLUSION: OPTIONS AND SCENARIOS FOR A POSSIBLE SOLUTION

In light of the preceding what are the likely developments in the Kampuchean crisis and what are the policy options open to the United States and other powers? Four answers and possible scenarios suggest themselves.

1. Continuance of the status quo. This would mean a long-term conflict, in which the PRK, ever more deeply dependent on Vietnamese and direct Soviet support, probably would find it increasingly more costly to defeat completely a Beijing-supported "Democratic Kampuchea." Such a relatively low voltage, protracted civil war, if Sihanouk is to be believed, would suit the PRC interest of "bleeding" the SRV and the Soviet Union "white." But it would hardly benefit the mass of Kampucheans seeking an end to decades of violence on their soil.

Though she is in a more precarious condition, Thailand too would benefit from a weak and divided Cambodia that in many ways would have become Vietnam's (and perhaps the Soviet Union's) "Vietnam." The historic roots of ethnic and dynastic conflict and mutual bias go deep in the Thai-Indochina area. Thailand would have good reason to be fearful of a strong, stable Indochina "federation," dominated by Vietnam. Even in the unlikely event that a broadly acceptable, third alternative and "neutral" regime were to establish itself firmly in Kampuchea, there could be problems for Bangkok, because of unresolved disputes over boundaries and population migration. In short, just as China has historically preferred weak and compliant neighbors along her southern flank, so Thailand has a security interest in a feeble and riven Kampuchea. Moreover, the dangers posed by the Kampuchean refugee problem along her border and the possibility of its exploitation by Hanoi are to some extent mitigated by (1) Beijing's repeated assurances that China will come to Thailand's aid in the event of a Vietnamese attack, and (2) the previously mentioned benefits of the illegal trade along the frontier.

For nearly two decades the Bangkok government has pointed to Laos and Vietnam as training and supply bases for the insurgents of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). According to a press in-

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88. See note 74 supra.
Interview in mid-October 1981 with a senior Thai military commander, General Sak Buntharakun, documents captured from Laotian officers reveal that Hanoi is committed to incorporating the 17 northeastern provinces of Thailand into Laotian territory as part of the Vietnamese-controlled Indochinese federation. The role of Kampuchea as yet another source of Communist subversion in Thailand would depend very much on the nature of the regime in Phnom Penh. Beijing under present circumstances finds it easy to persuade Bangkok to be as intransigent in a Kampuchean settlement as the Chinese appear to be themselves. Only a "united front" compromise formula that does not jeopardize Chinese interests is likely to be acceptable to Bangkok. In the meantime, any political process, such as the September 1981 Singapore conference on Kampuchea, that can add a measure of respectability to "Democratic Kampuchea," or that holds out the promise of a Kampuchean solution in which the Sampan-Pot regime is actively involved, is likely to find China's endorsement, provided it does not threaten the de facto powers of the Sampan-Pot regime. However, a protracted guerrilla war of moderate intensity in Kampuchea, one that keeps the Indochinese states weak and drains Soviet resources, is what Beijing would prefer.

For the United States, under the Reagan administration, the East-West conflict and the need to contain the looming Soviet strategic danger is clearly the first foreign policy priority. Washington today shares the perception of such a hardline ASEAN state as Singapore, which has noted with alarm the recent march of Soviet power in Asia "From Phnom Penh to Kabul." Supporting China's status quo policy in the Kampuchean question and thus weakening both Vietnam and her patron, the Soviet Union fits the United States' containment policy quite well. Soviet naval vessels riding at anchor at Kampuchea's Kompong Som or Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay harbors; Soviet technicians installing sophisticated electronic surveillance facilities in Laos, and increasingly participating in the rehabilitation of Heng Samrin's PRK; Moscow, at a rate of $3 million a day, pouring economic and military assistance into Vietnam — all those are but elements of a global Soviet strategic thrust that reaches from South Asia to the Persian Gulf, East Africa, and into Central America.

Confident that the ASEAN states, including Malaysia and Indo-

90. The Bangkok Post, October 11, 1981.
91. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore, From Phnom Penh to Kabul (Singapore, September, 1980).
nesia, as well as Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the Republic of Korea, can be counted on in this new East-West confrontation, the United States at the moment sees no good reason to strain relations with China by taking new initiatives to break the Kampuchean deadlock. On the contrary, since a number of issues, such as the status of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and its relationship to Washington, are a source of friction between China and the United States, the Kampuchea issue affords the Reagan administration an especially valuable opportunity to underscore its sincerity in strengthening relations with Beijing. For the moment, the disquiet such a US policy posture creates in prominent ASEAN circles, in Japan, and in some Commonwealth countries, to say nothing of the havoc which the status quo and protracted fighting has on the Kampuchean people, are not sufficient to bring a change.

2. **Intensified Sino-Soviet conflict through Indochinese proxies.** Kampuchea today seems like Spain in the nineteen thirties, a testing ground of conflict between certain major powers. Since 1975 and the Communist capture of Saigon, the struggle between People’s China and the Soviet Union for control of Indochina has been particularly evident, each of the major Communist powers has sought to capitalize on centuries-old ethnic antagonisms and border disputes in the region. The Communist Party of Kampuchea long had to live in the shadow of Hanoi’s dominance. Cambodian Communists, in the course of 1975, were determined to assert their independent leadership. In this they enjoyed backing from the start from a China ever concerned with following a divide and rule policy among weak and preferably compliant neighbors. The Vietnamese Communists’ intent, manifested in the course of 1975 and subsequent years, to turn their victory in South Vietnam into a Hanoi-dominated Indochinese alliance as well, did not at all suit Beijing. In June and July 1975, it came to fierce fighting between Cambodian and Vietnamese Communist forces over control of the island of Poulo Wai and adjacent islands in the Gulf of Siam, as well as over border territories such as the “Parrot’s Beak” in Cambodia’s Stay Rieng province which juts into Vietnam.

Sino-Soviet rivalry intruded in the midst of and indeed fanned

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this developing Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict. In August 1975, the People's Republic of China and the new state of "Democratic Kampuchea," led by premier Pol Pot, signed a "Friendship and Cooperation Treaty," which provided the Kampucheans with $1 billion in economic and military assistance. By May 1976, Thai sources were reporting that there were some 1,000 Chinese advisers in Phnom Penh, and Chinese vessels were busily and continuously unloading cargoes of ammunition, rice, and other commodities at Kompong Som harbor. Already in October 1975, however, Vietnamese party Secretary Le Duan had visited Moscow and the Russians agreed to a new Soviet assistance program for the SRV. This included industrial development projects valued at $500 million at least. A Soviet-Vietnamese declaration at the time of the Le Duan visit said that the two nations shared a "full identity of views," and Le Duan praised the Soviet Union for having been "the first to have opened the road to Socialism" for mankind.94

In subsequent months and years relations between the SRV and "Democratic Kampuchea" steadily worsened. For example, in April 1978, a Japanese correspondent who visited the Cambodian-Vietnamese frontier reported that "incessant clashes take place practically across the entire length of the 1,100 kilometres border" of the Vietnamese provinces which he had visited.95 Both Beijing and Moscow meanwhile continued to back their respective Indochinese proxies. In mid-January 1978, at a time when Pol Pot's forces had been repeatedly and deeply penetrating Vietnam's Tai Ninh province, China's "People's Daily" (Jen-min jih-pao) praised Pol Pot's army for "defending and helping to build the Motherland," also quoting a Cambodian national hymn of praise for the Army. Moscow, at the same time, charged the Chinese with having provoked the continuing border fighting.96

As early as the close of 1977, the Vietnamese, wearying of Cambodian raids, had launched a major counter-offensive, penetrating up to 20 miles into "Democratic Kampuchean" territory with some 58,000 troops. On November 3, 1978, just before they moved

into Kampuchea in force, with the clear intent of driving out the Pol Pot regime altogether, Hanoi and Moscow signed a twenty-five year treaty of “friendship and cooperation.” Article 6 of this treaty provides that an attack on either of the two signatories will prompt mutual consultation and the taking of “appropriate measures” to insure mutual security. After January 7, 1979, when Hanoi radio announced that Phnom Penh had fallen and was now in the hands of Heng Samrin’s KNUFNS, Soviet aid to the Vietnamese greatly accelerated. In 1977, such aid had amounted to $500 million. But after February 1979, and the brief Chinese “punitive” incursion into Vietnam, Soviet assistance leaped to about $1.5 billion. Some 30 percent of the SRV’s rice imports now depend on the USSR and about 60 percent of Vietnam’s Five Year Plan of 1976-1980 ($3.2 billion) was funded by Moscow.97 Already on June 29, 1978, the SRV entered Comecon (the Moscow-dominated Council of Mutual Economic Assistance in Eastern Europe), and the process of incorporating Heng Samrin’s PRK into Comecon is virtually complete.

Meanwhile Sino-Vietnamese antagonisms deepened still further, particularly after the fall of Phnom Penh, when the Vietnamese extended their purge campaign against ethnic Chinese in Kampuchea. The harrowing tales of Chinese refugees from Vietnam and Kampuchea, arriving in the PRC recounting how they had been forced out of their shops, herded into agricultural cooperatives and deprived of food during enforced long journeys, doubtlessly played a part in the development of Beijing’s uncompromising stance in the Kampuchean problem today. SRV-Chinese discussions to settle mutual differences, which began after the Chinese “lesson,” soon broke down. As early as December 1979, the RV wired UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim that a new Chinese “war of aggression” could erupt at any moment. From the Vietnamese perspective, China’s own alleged plans to establish its hegemony over a “‘balkanised’ superpower free Southeast Asia” as part of its own southern security have been thwarted.98

Considering the political and economic investment which the Soviet Union and the PRC respectively have made by now in the warring Kampuchean camps either a defeat or a disengagement from the conflict may well seem unthinkable for either Moscow or Beijing. To be sure, if one disregards their Ussuri River border

98. The Straits Times, June 11, 1980.
clashes, nowhere in the world, and at no time since their spectacular rupture more than two decades ago, have the PRC and the Soviet Union militarily confronted each other. But Kampuchea surely is among the instances closest to it, even if the confrontation is primarily by proxies (according to the Soviets themselves, however, Russian military advisers were killed during the Vietnamese drive on Phnom Penh).99 Though in many respects their brief invasion of Vietnam in February 1979, was hardly a significantly military success for the Chinese, Beijing did prove with this strike that it was prepared actually to back up its anger at Hanoi with force. Moscow's reaction to the Chinese strike was confined to verbal denunciations. A second Chinese intervention likely would bring a more forceful Soviet response. China's commitment to a strategy of protracted, guerrilla-style war in Kampuchea, and of "bleeding" Vietnam and its Soviet sponsor "white," may for a while keep the level of violence down. But precisely because of this Chinese strategy, and the high stakes for the Soviet Union in maintaining its influence in Indochina, the temptation for both the Vietnamese and the Soviets to launch an all-out campaign and attempt to demolish the Sampan-Pot regime once and for all may become irresistible. A commensurate Chinese response, including a new strike against the SRV, would bring dangerous new dimensions to what S. Rajaratnam, Singapore's deputy premier for foreign affairs already has called "the age of Communist wars in Asia."

Such a development would be particularly unwelcome to the United States. Since the Vietnam war, American security interests have focused on what has been called "tacit regional security coalitions."100 These are not necessarily formal treaty-specific alliances. Rather, they are varying forms of partnership, involving close economic links and technological transfers, implementation of common diplomatic objectives and tactics at the United Nations and other international gatherings, and flexible, non-binding forms of military assistance, consultation and cooperation. Asia has been a major focus of this US strategy, and two "tacit regional security coalitions" are said to be evident in the region, ASEAN and a "China-Japan-US triangle."101 Though with some elements of these coalitions, e.g. the Philippines and Japan, the United States has formal treaty commit-

101. Ibid.
ments, the alliance systems are generally as yet fragile, and in operational specifics, still often very much "tacit" (e.g. the US-ASEAN relationship). Thus far the Kampuchean crisis, at its present level of intensity, has tended to encourage the further growth of this carefully understated Asian regional security system, although, as we have seen, in ASEAN circles like Indonesia and Malaysia, there is already serious disquiet over China's policy and the evident close US support for it. But a vaulting escalation of the Sino-Soviet conflict through its Indochinese proxies would place the still evolving coalition system under a severe strain, compel "either/or" commitments that are not ready to be made, and undo the quiet building of US security structures developed since the end of the Vietnam war.

3. A "Third Alternative" for Kampuchea. When the "Third Alternative" concept first surfaced in the course of 1979 it tended to revolve around some single Cambodian figure (Sihanouk's name was often heard), who might be found acceptable by the two principal Kampuchean antagonists, the Sampan-Pot and Heng Samrin regimes and their Chinese and Soviet-Vietnamese backers respectively.102 In the convoluted world of Cambodian exile politics and refugee camp power struggles other competing "Third Alternative" claimants soon arose. As has been noted, those with an interest either in developing their own "Third Alternative" claimant, or in preventing a viable "Third Alternative" from developing because they prefer a weak, near chaotic or compliant Cambodia, were quick to lend a measure of support.

The result was that by 1980, the "Third Alternative" notion moved in a new direction, i.e. an anti-Vietnamese "united front" arrangement that included rather than was an alternative to the Sampan-Pot regime. As a consequence, whatever chance the "Third Alternative" might have had in Hanoi and Moscow quickly evaporated. Moreover, the mutual hostility between the three major "united front" participants and the near debacle of their September 1981 conference in Singapore103 could only encourage the Soviets and Vietnamese. It may well have prompted the latter to suggest an important "Third Alternative" gambit of their own, i.e. a changed and broadened Heng Samrin government so that ASEAN would have "a new group" in Phnom Penh "to talk to."104 "Third Alterna-

103. See notes 26 and 27 supra.
104. See note 15 supra.
tive" thinking thus has become polarized today in terms of the interests of the two chief antagonists and their superpower patrons, rather than in terms of a possible, commonly accepted middle ground regime. Like the wrangling in Bangkok among the delegates of the united front's ad hoc committee, this polarization renders prospects for a "Third Alternative" even bleaker.

It might be noted that the majority of the UN's members appear to have agreed on their particular modality of a "Third Alternative" as the solution to the Kampuchean problem. Under the terms of the final, French-conceived compromise resolution on Kampuchea's future government, adopted by the July, 1981 UN-sponsored conference in New York, "free elections" in conditions of "law and order" are to be held in Kampuchea after foreign troops there have been withdrawn. Implicit is the idea that after such Kampuchean elections another, presumably "neutral" government will emerge, and that neither Pol Pot nor Heng Samrin is likely to lead it. Both Hanoi's and Moscow's sharply negative reaction to the New York conference resolution, and the obvious absence of any machinery of enforcing the implementation of the resolution itself, make it unlikely that a "Third Alternative" regime will come to Kampuchea in this way. There may well be value in the New York resolution as an expression of moral purpose on the part of the United States and the rest of the world community in the Kampuchean problem. But the practical effect of the New York conference, including its implied "Third Alternative" proposal, was to endorse the status quo, i.e. China's policy of protracted conflict in Kampuchea with all the dangers of deepening political polarization in the area and havoc in Kampuchea itself.


In November 1978, shortly before Vietnamese forces stormed into Phnom Penh and drove out the Pol Pot regime, a Canadian journalist, after an extended journey through the SRV, reported that "I ran into Russians everywhere I went," and that there appeared to be a lively Vietnamese awareness of Russian maneuvering to enhance Moscow's position in Vietnam. The reporter also was informed "several times" by Vietnamese officials that "if the United States were genuinely concerned about this problem it was more than welcome to help to provide some balance and alternatives —
By the time this report appeared, however, the Carter administration had already decided to strengthen further American ties with the PRC instead, thus foreclosing for the time being a policy of reapprochement toward Hanoi that had begun nearly two years earlier.

In the 1977-78 period, as Phnom Penh-Hanoi relations were beginning to strain but had not yet reached the breaking point, it was evident that the Vietnamese, though feeling compelled to forge close links with Moscow, still were anxious to avoid a one-sided foreign policy, the risk of growing isolation, and widening hostility in their region. Hanoi, at the time, was not only urging a new form of "regional cooperation" on, and better relations with, ASEAN but, more importantly, also was making overtures toward the United States as well. For example, during his July 1978 visit to Australia, SRV deputy Foreign Minister Phan Hien, evidently in the context of an overall policy statement to widen Vietnam's international acceptance and "in a message clearly intended for Washington", informed Australian cabinet officials that the SRV no longer considered payment of US war damages as a prerequisite for normalizing relations with Washington. Phan Hien also emphasized his government's more positive attitude toward the ASEAN organisation. These Vietnamese initiatives were prompted no doubt by the realization that Vietnam's stagnant, war-torn national economy and rehabilitation needs urgently demanded greater access to the financial and commercial resources of the Western world, lest the SRV become wholly dependent on the Eastern bloc.

By the middle of 1978, as one US commentator later was to put it, the SRV and the United States "were near a historic friendship": Hanoi's emissaries were in Honolulu aiding US military personnel in identifying US military still listed as missing in action from the Vietnam war; Hanoi had dropped her demand for "reparations" which SRV spokesmen long claimed President Richard Nixon had promised, and a number of US Congressmen, after visiting Hanoi, began urging full US-Vietnamese diplomatic relations. Talk of establishing such relations was still heard in September 1978, when US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, and SRV deputy

106. See note 5 supra.
Foreign Minister Nguyen Co That were in New York reportedly discussing “such practical problems as where to put the United States Embassy in Hanoi.”

Within weeks this atmosphere was to change, however, even though all the while relations between Phnom Penh and Hanoi were worsening and crying out for a mitigating influence. As the Carter administration played its “China card,” and decided to firm up as soon as possible its relations with Beijing, the opportunity for the United States to exercise such a moderating influence in the Vietnamese-Cambodian crisis, let alone proceed with diplomatic recognition of the SRV, disappeared. By mid-December 1978, as the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea accelerated, the SRV’s Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh was to charge that while Hanoi had wanted to establish diplomatic relations with Washington, it was the United States which had been “stalling.” According to Trinh, the Carter administration was “using the refugee situation and our border problem with Cambodia as excuses” to forestall formal diplomatic exchange. Carter Administration officials reportedly were admitting as much themselves. US officials, citing the priority needs of the Washington-Beijing-Moscow balance of power (and, presumably, its necessary prerequisite, i.e. formal US recognition of People’s China) in mid-December were quoted as saying that Vietnam had been put on the diplomatic “backburner.” The reason given was that a sudden reapprochement with Hanoi, in view of its present relation with Beijing, would have seemed inappropriate. By this time, Hanoi already had begun to turn to the USSR, signing on November 3, 1978 the previously mentioned friendship treaty. What was to become the Kampuchean deadlock was rapidly being set in place.

Need events have taken this turn? It can probably never be established one way or the other whether an American-Vietnamese diplomatic reapprochement, even as late as early October 1978, would have provided Washington with some leverage with which to mitigate the deepening Cambodian crisis. Meanwhile, it might be asked, has the United States gained all that much from the Carter Administration’s playing of the “China card” and the formal diplo-

109. Ibid.
matic recognition of Beijing? Whatever the answer, there is little
doubt that Hanoi has been driven deeper into the arms of Moscow,
and probably with steadily diminishing enthusiasm for the embrace.
With the Vietnamese dependence on Moscow, the Kampuchean
problem has become more intractable.

There has never been any doubt of the high nationalistic con­
tent in the SRV's Communist ideology, before or since the fall of
Saigon. The longer and heavier Vietnam's economic and strategic
dependence on Moscow becomes, the deeper the Vietnamese resent­
ment of the “Americans without dollars,” as the burgeoning number
of Russians in the SRV derivisively are being called is likely to be­
come. The editor of Asia's leading current events weekly, Derek Da­
vies, recently asserted that it is “Time to encourage the Vietnamese
Titoists,” adding that the “present concerted hostility” led by the
United States and the PRC toward Hanoi is unlikely to cause the
latter to change its policy in Kampuchea. On the contrary, the net
effect of the Sino-US policy in the Kampuchean question is that
"ASEAN’s most precious commodity — its hard won political unity
will be dissipated. Is this a foreign policy goal of Washington? Or of
Peking?" 112

Davies' observation that ASEAN unity may be fractured refers
to the repeatedly noted perception of leading ASEAN circles, nota­
bly in Indonesia and Malaysia, that China, not Vietnam constitutes
the greater danger to the Southeast Asian region. 113 Indeed, from
this perspective, a unified, stable Vietnam an Indochina are seen to
serve as a useful buffer between ASEAN and a resurgent, modern­
ized China. In early October 1981, at the Commonwealth Heads of
Government meeting in Melbourne, Australia, both Singapore and
Malaysia once again stressed their fear of China. Singapore’s Lee
Kuan Yew said that in his region, and because of Beijing's refusal to
cut its links with Southeast Asian Communist movements, “There
are apprehensions at the long term implications of a strong,
modernised China. . . . For a country that cannot afford economic
or military aid in order to influence the policies of the smaller coun­
tries of Asia, harassment through guerrilla insurgencies in a second
best instrument of influence.” 114 Malaysia's Foreign Minister Tan
Sri Ghazali Shafie expressed similar concerns by referring to the im-

112. Derek Davies, “Time to Encourage the Vietnamese Titoists,” Far Eastern Eco­
113. See note 45 supra.
lications of the recent US decision to consider supplying arms to China. As Ghazali put it, "If the Americans do not take into account China's policies in Asia . . . then the assistance the US gives might be negative for us." Ghazali added that it was one thing for the United States "to support China in its global strategy," but quite another if that United States support strengthened Chinese-assisted "subversion against us by the guerillas." 115

Even in Thailand there appear to be second thoughts about the wisdom of following a hardline anti-Vietnamese policy in the Kampuchean question. Former Thai Foreign Minister Phichai Rattanakun declared in September 1981 that Thai policy vacillations toward the Pol Pot government and the SRV in the past had failed to win for Bangkok stable relations with either, and hence that it was now time to improve Thailand's posture toward Hanoi rather than continue to back the ousted Sampan-Pot regime. Rattanakun said he saw advantages for Thailand in Hanoi's current effort to rebuild Kampuchea, as this would open new markets in all of Indochina for Thailand and also offer opportunities to build peace. 116 Meanwhile, in Indonesia in particular, there is appreciation for Vietnam's—or for that matter Kampuchea's—nationalism as a constant in the political equations of Indochina and in the search for political balance in foreign relations. Indonesia's Vice President Adam Malik, long his country's Foreign Minister, and one of ASEAN's veteran diplomats, observed at the close of 1978, as the struggle between Pol Pot's "Democratic Kampuchea" and the invading Vietnamese was reaching a climax, that he did not believe in a "permanent friendship," either between Pol's regime and China, or for that matter between the Vietnamese and the Soviet Union. Hanoi, with its long history of independence struggle against the French and the United States, was hardly likely now to become a "pawn" or an "ally" of the Soviet Union, according to Malik. Hanoi needed Moscow, at the moment, Malik added, because of Vietnamese economic requirements, just at the Pol Pot regime had sought assistance from Beijing. 117 But one-sided dependencies, Malik implied, hardly suited either the nationalist temper of the Vietnamese or of the Kampucheans or their foreign policy aspirations.

To the United States the ASEAN views appear to be of lesser significance than the need to maintain improved and improving rela-

115. Ibid.
tions with Beijing. Moreover, and evidently putting confidence in
the anti-Vietnamese Kampuchean resistance, adherents of the pres-
ent US policy might well ask why the Kampuchean nationalism to
which Malik and others have alluded, could not be mobilized to
drive the Vietnamese out? The answer, as has been indicated above,
is that the factional disputes among the “united front” participants,
however zealous such individually may be in his nationalist commit-
ment, are so severe as to preclude the forging of an effective common
strategy. More important, even if an effective but anti-Vietnamese
“united front” were to come into existence involving the present par-
ticipants, its campaign would doubtlessly stiffen Hanoi’s and Mos-
cow’s resistance, plunge Kampuchea into renewed havoc, and
quickly place the United States before the problem of having to
commit itself, if only through economic or military support, to an-
other Southeast Asian land war.

The United States remains convinced that the various “diplom-
atic, economic and military pressures” being exerted on Vietnam
today will, in the words of Assistance Secretary John Holdridge
“achieve the objectives of ASEAN and of ASEAN’s supporters.”118
After three years of such “pressures,” however, there is no indication
whatsoever that these objectives are any nearer. On the contrary,
doubt within ASEAN itself about the present policy of “pressures” is
growing. One may suggest, therefore, that another option which the
United States still has, is to seek a new accommodation with the
SRV. The purpose would be (1) to attempt to diminish and eventu-
ally withdraw together (Vietnamese military forces from
Kampuchea, (2) bring about an “alternative” Kampuchean govern-
ment that is sensitive to Hanoi’s security interests but also reflective
of Kampuchean national wishes, and (3) lessen Vietnamese eco-
nomic and strategic dependence on the Soviet Union. Such an ac-
commodation could proceed from the earlier discussed “Kuantan
principle”119 and instead of basing itself on the present “united
front” concept, might instead proceed from an “altered” Heng
Samrin regime referred to above.120 It also would have to overcome
admittedly formidable protests from the PRC which appears

118. “Recent Developments in Indochina,” statement by U.S. Assistant Secretary of
State John H. Holdridge before the U.S. House of Representatives’ Subcommittee on
East Asia and Pacific Affairs, October 22, 1981, Current Policy (U.S. Department of
119. See note 7 supra.
120. See note 15 supra.
strongly committed to its “bleed Vietnam white” policy in Kampuchea.

Finding the proper leverage in Beijing might well prove to be more difficult for the United States than persuading Hanoi that there may be advantages in a trade-off between a Kampuchean withdrawal and an end to isolation. Yet, amidst all its hardline rhetoric, China’s development needs remain as real as Hanoi’s, and no one knows this better than the new, pragmatic, Deng Xiaoping leadership in Beijing. “The only reason why we’re supporting Democratic Kampuchea’s credentials,” one US Congressional source reported at the time of the July 1981 New York conference, “is that the Chinese want us to.” 121 It is not readily apparent what the United States has gained thus far from such unenthusiastic support for China.

No sudden dramatic moves need figure in the search for such a new US rapprochement toward Hanoi — small steps could be taken first such as a renewed effort to clear up the problem of remaining US missing in action, the gradual lifting of the US embargo on trade with the SRV, or a signal that Hanoi need no longer disregard the United States and its major industrial allies (e.g. Japan, as sources of development and venture capital). Eventually, and under an appropriate quid pro quo in Kampuchea, diplomatic normalization might be considered.

Such an approach would bring the United States back to the possibility of developing a more balanced diplomatic relationship in Asia that existed in Asia before, in the closing months of 1978, Washington began to commit itself more and more completely to a strengthened rapprochement with the People’s Republic of China. Opening a window to Hanoi would return the United States to the role of “balancer” among the Communist super- and smaller powers, as this was perceived in the Kissinger years. Abandonment of that policy must be guaged by its consequences, not least in Kampuchea. So serious and deep has the Kampuchean deadlock become, and so rigidified the postures of the main antagonists, that a new, Hanoi-oriented, “carrot and stick” initiative by the United States might well be the only way to get the problem off dead center. The alternatives — among them continued fighting and deepening human misery in Kampuchea, the ever present dangers of more direct and sharpened Chinese and Soviet conflict, and the policy uncertainties, if not ruptured, within ASEAN — do not seem worth the risk to the United States. They are also not worthy of the post-Viet-

nam war recovery of American diplomatic leadership in Southeast Asia.
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