THAILAND, ASEAN AND THE KAMPUCHEAN PROBLEM
FROM 1979 TO 1986

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DECLARATION

Except where otherwise indicated
this thesis is my own work.

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All the errors in this sub-thesis, however, are my own full responsibility.
ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN - The Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CGDK - The Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea

DK - Democratic Kampuchea

ICK - International Conference on Kampuchea

KPNLF - Khmer People's National Liberation Front

PKI - The Communist Party of Indonesia

PRK - People's Republic of Kampuchea

SRV - The Socialist Republic of Vietnam

UN - The United Nations

ZOPFAN - Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality
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INTRODUCTION

The situation in Kampuchea has been an interesting issue in international politics. The Kampuchean people have been battered and exposed to foreign domination for the past five hundred years. After such a long period, however, peace is still not at hand. Moreover, since the 1970s the country has faced three major events: US bombings that started in 1970 and culminated in 1973; the inhumane evacuation of towns and mass executions under the Pol Pot regime (1975-1978); and the war between the SRV and the Kampuchean resistance groups since 1979.

On December 25, 1978 what has been called the Kampuchean problem or the Third Indochina War broke out when the army of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) launched an invasion into Kampuchea, ousting Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge regime and installing a new Khmer government. This new Khmer government was the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) led by pro-Vietnamese Khmer, Heng Samrin, backed up by Vietnamese advisors and forces.

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2 In this sub-thesis, the term "Kampuchea" is used instead of "Cambodia".

3 Heng Samrin had been a member of the executive committee of the Communist Party of Kampuchea for its Eastern region and political commission and commander of its Fourth Division. He was credited with leading a revolt against the Pol Pot government in May 1978. See Michael Leifer, "Kampuchea 1979: From Dry Season To Dry Season", Asian Survey, vol.20, no.1, January 1980, p.34.
While the dramatis personae in the Kampuchean conflict are many, involving both the regional and extra-regional powers, the focal concern of this sub-thesis is on ASEAN and, Thailand in particular.

For Vietnam, there was no Kampuchean problem in the sense that what happened in Kampuchea was no concern of other nations. Vietnam's intervention, as defined by Vietnam, was thus morally and legally justified as it was made to assist the Kampuchean people and was made at the request of the legitimate Heng Samrin government.

However, ASEAN has asserted that the Kampuchean problem arises from the invasion by Vietnam which forms the root cause of instability in Southeast Asia. Vietnam's invasion is considered illegal and a violation of Kampuchea's independent, sovereign and territorial integrity.

Why has the Kampuchean problem been of so much importance in the formation of Thai foreign policy since the early 1980s, seeing that the issue is depicted as the SRV-Kampuchean war? Has Thailand managed to be neutral in such a conflict? Did the Vietnamese invasion make it easier for the governments of Thailand to attract the support of their regional partners within ASEAN?

This sub-thesis attempts to find out the answers. It is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is an overview of Thailand's foreign policy since the Vietnamese invasion in Kampuchea in 1979, i.e. the policy of the Kriangsak and Prem governments.

As the ASEAN members have rallied their political friends and economic partners around the world into a solid front in opposition to Vietnam's position in Kampuchea, the second chapter will discuss the attitudes of the ASEAN members to the issue; differences between Indonesian and Malaysian views on the one hand, and Singaporean and
Thai views on the other. The Philippines, more remote from the war area, and preoccupied with internal economic and social problems, has demonstrated relative indifference to the Kampuchean situation. The chapter will also discuss Thai reactions to those different attitudes.

The last chapter attempts to discuss the prospects for a Kampuchean settlement, and Thai views of it.
CHAPTER 1
THAILAND'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE KAMPUCHEAN PROBLEM: AN OVERVIEW

Since 1975 when Vietnam was unified, some changes in Southeast Asia's political and strategic circumstances can be discerned. One culminated point is that the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea in December 1978 with the establishment of a pro-Vietnamese regime headed by Heng Samrin in January 1979. This action has upset the balance of power in the region by the defacto Vietnamese conquest of the previously independent state of Kampuchea.

The impact of the Kampuchean conflict on the region has been complicated as it has not been an exclusively inter-communist affair. It has obviously affected the policy directions of some external powers and adjacent countries. In the first place, the conflict is one of the competing interests of China and the Soviet Union, both of whose governments committed resources and prestige to their clients, Khmer Rouge and Vietnam respectively. In the second place, neighbouring countries, and Thailand in particular, have had a special concern and interest in preventing Vietnam from becoming the dominant power in Indochina, with the capacity to expand beyond its border.

The Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea has become a major consideration in Thai foreign policy, as Thailand is strategically situated in the middle of mainland Southeast Asia, and also shares a long border with two Indochinese countries; Laos and Kampuchea. Moreover, it is only in recent times that Thailand has had to take the primary responsibility for dealing with such a threat. In the past, Thailand's foreign policy orientation had depended on the policy of foreign allies. From the Thai perspective, Kampuchea has been regarded primarily as a buffer state; its independent and sovereign existence would thus ward off foreign dominance. Thus when Vietnam invaded Kampuchea in 1978, the strategic environment of Thailand was under threat.

In the Thai view, the events in Kampuchea have had detrimental
effects on the peace and security of Southeast Asia. Militarily, there are about 100,000 Vietnamese troops near the Thai-Kampuchean border, and accordingly to the Thai Foreign Minister ACM. Siddhi Savetsila, Vietnam has in effect pushed its border westward to impringe on Thailand.¹ This advance has also involved incursions by Vietnamese troops at many points actually across the Thai border. Moreover, it has resulted in several military encounters between Thai and Vietnamese soldiers, and in the process it has also affected civilians. Although Thailand has adopted a policy of constraint on the spillover effect of the Kampuchean conflict, she is concerned with the possibility of armed conflict between Thailand and Vietnam. This is due to the fact that Thailand allowed the Pol Pot forces to use Thai territory as their sanctuary and to recruit their supporters from the Kampuchean refugee camps.

Politically, there has been a question of the legitimacy of the Heng Samrin regime, installed by the Vietnamese after the genocidal Pol Pot government had been driven away. This issue is, of course, not without complications relating to the policies of other major powers.

A major social problem is caused by the large number of people who fled from the troubled land and sought refuge in camps along the border with Thailand. Evidence also shows that the Kampuchean conflict has posed a threat to Thai security as can be seen from the massive influx of Kampucheans and the possibility of fighting between the

¹ ACM. Siddhi Savetsila, "Thailand's contribution to regional security", Foreign Affairs Bulletin, September-October 1983, p.34. Siddhi also remarked that this was the first time in the history of Southeast Asia that Thailand had to face with the situation of having share more than two thousand kilometres of her border with Vietnam, which has the fourth largest army in the world.
Vietnamese troops and the resistance force spilling over into Thailand. This influx of Kampuchean refugees also displaced over 100,000 Thai villagers in the area.  

Accordingly, when the situation in Indochina changed in the late 1970s, Thailand was faced with the necessity of adapting to a new situation. When General Kriangsak Chomanand became Prime Minister in October 1977, his policy reflected his catalytic role in bringing about good relations between Thailand and the states of Indochina.

The Policy of General Kriangsak's Government

The government of General Kriangsak came to power on 12 November, 1977 as a consequence of an internal military dispute. In contrast to the preceding government of Thanin Kraivichian who had


2 Ibid.


* After three years of experiment with civilian governments and also the ultra-hawkish Thanin Kraivichian government, the military took over in October 1977 through a bloodless coup d'etat and launched the Kriangsak's military government. See Rejiro Toba, "ASEAN favors Reagan's hard-line foreign policy". Asia Pacific Community: A Quarterly Review, Winter 1981, p.63.
followed a violently anti-communist policy, Kriangsak's major goal was to improve relations with neighbouring communist states. In his foreign policy address of 1 December 1977, Kriangsak restated the aspirations of the then civilian Prime Minister, Kukrit Pramoj, and indeed of former Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman also, by affirming that his government would "pursue an independent foreign policy" and would "promote ties with ASEAN and Indochinese states".\(^1\)

Invitations to visit Vientiane and Hanoi provided the former leader with opportunities for constructive diplomacy and, though Kriangsak's trips were described as "fact-finding" and "goodwill" visits,\(^2\) there is little doubt that his objective was to renew his personal relationships with Lao Premier Kaysone Promvihane and, perhaps more significantly, with Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong, in order to help break the impasse over Kampuchea.\(^3\) The hallmark of his policy towards Indochina had been the agreement to exchange ambassadors between Thailand and Vietnam, reached under his government on 2 December 1977. (Diplomatic relations between Thailand and Vietnam had actually been established on 6 August 1976 but such was the Thanin government's animosity to Vietnam that the exchange of ambassadors was delayed.) Asked about Vietnamese forays into Thai territory, Kriangsak minimised their significance:

"We may know where the border is, but others may stray across it because they do not know. In any event, it must be pointed out that the intruders are not necessarily Vietnamese soldiers, but could be soldiers loyal to any side. We must not make it sound as if we are an enemy of Vietnam." \(^4\)

\(^1\) Thai Foreign Affairs Ministry, _News Bulletin_, November-December 1977, p.15.

\(^2\) Paribatra, _op.cit._

\(^3\) _Ibid._

Thus, in his Kampuchean policy, Kriangsak adopted a less alarmist view of Vietnam in accordance with his policy of accommodation with the states of Indochina.

The Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, however, reversed this policy of entente. The invasion violated the strategic environment with which Kriangsak's government had come to terms after the apprehension caused by the collapse of the Saigon government in 1975 had passed. The Vietnamese action in Kampuchea pointed towards confrontation between Thailand and Vietnam, as it affected Thai security. Even though Vietnam did not disclose its strategic motives for the attack, some critical issues were raised. First, since the Vietnamese seemed willing to use force in a direct and overt manner in order to overthrow a neighbouring independent government and thus affect the regional balance of power, a shift of power in favour of the Vietnamese seemed virtually certain to occur. Second, of direct concern to Thailand, Vietnam may also have intended to block a Thai-initiated refugee return programme to test the response of the Thai armed forces and perhaps to put pressure on the Thai government to change its policies towards Kampuchea to a stance more amenable to Vietnam's objectives.

Since the invasion and consequent deterioration of relations between Thailand and Vietnam, Thai policy has been aimed at a combination of political, diplomatic, military and economic pressure to force Vietnam to withdraw from Kampuchea. Although Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong sent a message to Kriangsak assuring him that Vietnam would do nothing to endanger Thailand, the Thai fears of a full-scale Vietnamese incursion were intensified along with the fighting inside

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1. Michael Leifer, Conflict and Regional Order in South-east Asia, Adelphi Papers, no.162, p.28.
Kampuchea and the increasing flow of refugees. Kriangsak's objective was to ensure a total withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea. Only this, in his view, would restore the historic buffer between Thailand and Vietnam and allow the two countries to cooperate in their common interest to block the southern expansion of Chinese influence.

In international terms, the policy of the Kriangsak government can be seen as aimed at promoting "equidistance" among the superpowers. His conduct of diplomacy can also be described as being "omni-directional" in attempting to strengthen Thailand's position. After the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea in December 1978, he made major efforts to strengthen Thai military capabilities. He visited Washington from 4-16 February 1979 to gain a reassurance of continued US support and military supplies. Kriangsak said that the new situation had made it necessary to ask "my friend Jimmy Carter" for new military credits, adding: "We need military hardware, spare parts and quick delivery".

As a result, he obtained President Carter's undertaking that the US would consider action under the Manila Pact if Thailand's security were threatened.

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1 Ibid.
3 "Bangkok Stands Up To Leonid", Asiaweek, 6 April 1969, p.10.
With regard to the Soviet Union, General Kriangsak also visited Moscow in March 1979. He was the first Thai premier to visit the Soviet capital. During this visit, his skill in presenting Thai foreign policy as a flexible response to changing circumstances was fully demonstrated when he carefully explained to the Soviets why Thailand refused to recognize the Heng Samrin regime. He also tried to convince the Soviets that Thailand had not tilted towards China.1

Kriangsak's first intention was probably to signal to Moscow that its desire to be consulted over regional affairs would be linked to tangible efforts to control the Vietnamese. He reportedly advised Soviet leaders that Thai policy was one of "strict neutrality".3 Thailand continued to sell rice to the Soviet Union, even though much of the rice is probably destined for Vietnam. It made an agreement to sell rice to the Soviets in December 1979. Kriangsak defended implementing the agreement by declaring in February 1980 that "We will decide ourselves as to whom we should sell our grain".3 In return, the Soviet leaders assured him that Vietnam had no plan to attack Thailand.

Kriangsak's second intention was probably to remind the Vietnamese that the Soviet Union's regional aims in seeking ASEAN agreement to Moscow's collective security proposals conflicted with Hanoi's efforts to consolidate its position in Indochina. But if Kriangsak had hoped to undermine the Vietnamese expectation of Soviet support, by seeking to exploit differences in the Soviet-Vietnamese relationship, he was disappointed.

The next link in Kriangsak's diplomacy was his visit to China from 29 March to 4 April 1979, which brought about the so-called Thai-Chinese alignment. It was at this time that the Chinese leader, Deng

1 Asiaweek, op.cit.
2 FEER, 6 April, 1979 quoted in Buszynski.
Xiaoping, was seeking regional allies against Vietnam. Deng also expressed support for ASEAN and the neutralization proposal. In return Kriangsak refrained from raising questions about Chinese support for Thai insurgency movements,¹ for it was evident that Bangkok could not isolate itself from the Sino-Vietnamese conflict, especially after Vietnam had sought Soviet backing in occupying Kampuchea. Thus Soviet assistance to Vietnam had the effect of pushing Thailand into a closer relationship with China, as Thailand perceived it to be the only power that could apply pressure on Vietnam for a withdrawal from Kampuchea.

Nevertheless, because there was a degree of uncertainty about China's commitment, and that of the US, so the Thai government was reluctant to be drawn into military conflict in Kampuchea. The government of Kriangsak accordingly pursued an ambivalent policy which may be described as "flawed neutrality".² This means that, in a diplomatic sense, Thailand was not neutral. It continued to recognize the Democratic Kampuchea regime and, although no one in Bangkok was willing to say it, Thailand would have preferred for strategic reasons a savage but independent Kampuchea under the Khmer Rouge to a more humane regime under Hanoi.³

The Policy of General Prem's Government

General Prem Tinsulanond came to power on 21 March, 1980 after an economic crisis toppled the Kriangsak government. Under Prem, Thai policy to Kampuchea continued to be founded upon the basic assumption

¹ The Thais openly accepted the Chinese distinction between party-to-party relations in order to be assured of what Kriangsak called in his banquet speech of welcome a "constructive relationship" between Thailand and China. See News Bulletin, March-April 1978, p.2.
² Leifer, op.cit., p.29.
³ Asia 1979 Yearbook, p.313.
that a Vietnamese-controlled Indochina posed a fundamental threat to Thailand's security. He also developed the policy of linking Thai policy with China, retaining the policy of neutrality only in name.

Under Prem, however, Thailand's orientation towards the Kampuchean problem shifted from a policy of detente in relation to the communist Indochina states as practised under the Kriangsak government to a strongly anti-Vietnamese policy. The Prem government's hardline attitude towards the communists in Laos and Vietnam was reflected when the Prem government promoted a defence build-up against possible Vietnamese expansion westward across the Mekong corridor.

The policy of the former Kriangsak government, to achieve a rapprochement with the Soviets, lost all meaning following the latter's support for Vietnam as a result of the incursions into Thailand at Non Mark Moon on 23-24 June 1980. Despite the deterioration in relations, the Thais tried to keep the policy of equidistance between the superpowers and avoided any direct conflict between Thailand and the USSR. The then Thai Deputy Foreign Minister, Arun Panupong pointed out during his visit to Moscow that despite the Thais' increasing concern about the Soviet presence in the region, "Thai policy is to be friendly with all countries. We have no problem with the Soviets, apart from the fact that they are supporting Vietnam along the border".

But it was precisely this that jeopardised Thai hopes that the soviets would put pressure on Vietnam. Thailand consequently sought

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1 Moreover, Thailand's relation with the Soviet Union deteriorated when, during Prem's visit to China in October 1980, four Soviet warships -- the anti-submarine carrier Minsk, two patrol vessels, and an oceanographic survey ship -- on 31 October ventured close to Sattahip naval base while remaining in international waters. See Buszynski, op. cit., p. 1048.

closer association with China in an effort to compel Vietnamese withdrawal and deter further aggression. The Prem government has actively attempted to coordinate policy with China in the belief that Chinese support would ultimately thwart Vietnam's interests. The significance of Prem's China policy was apparent during his visit to China in October 1980, when he attempted to persuade Chinese leaders to consider the formation of a coalition of anti-Vietnamese groups in Kampuchea.¹

The formation of the Kampuchean resistance coalition in June 1982 was probably the most significant event in Thai diplomacy during the early years of General Prem's government. There has been, however, little subsequent evidence to indicate that it was anything more than a coalition in name. Nevertheless while the Thais had been at the forefront of efforts to bring together the Khmer Rouge and non-communist resistance leaders, Son Sann and Sihanouk, in a so-called alliance, there was also recognition of the inherent danger of being sucked into a conflict.²

Relations between Thailand and China obviously grew closer when the Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang paid a return visit to Bangkok on 30 January to 2 February 1981.³ His visit resulted in a convergence of Thai and Chinese policies over the issue of Kampuchea. The prospect of unified resistance against the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea had been raised in discussion. The Chinese Premier assured the Thais that any Vietnamese attack on Thailand would immediately prompt a Chinese

¹ See "Declaration on the formation of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea" and other CGDK documents in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Documents on the Kampuchean Problem 1979-1985, (Bangkok, Thailand), 1985, pp.119-122.

² Asia 1983 Yearbook
³ Asia 1982 Yearbook, p.255.
assault on Vietnam's northern border. However, he added the condition that concrete action would depend upon "the development of the situation at that time".²

However, the resentment of Prem's close relations with China was expressed by a faction within the military known as the "Young Turks", who had shown their prowess by bringing down Kriangsak's government.² The revolutionary council, formed by coup leaders in Bangkok during their attempted coup from 1-3 April 1981, issued a declaration on 2 April that promised to make "improvements" in Thai foreign policy in this respect.³ However, in crushing the rebellion, Prem, who had visible support of the Monarchy in Korat, removed the source of immediate internal resistance to cooperate with China. Contacts with China were thus perceptably increased in the aftermath of the attempted coup.

Thus, a polarization in the region, which was initiated by the Soviet intention to support Vietnam, was intensified by the close relations between Thailand and China. Thai policy in seeking closer coordination with China actually hardened the Vietnamese in their intransigence and deepened their dependence upon the Soviets. Hanoi continued to accuse Thailand of serving Chinese interests and acting as a conduit of Chinese supplies to the Khmer Rouge.

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¹ Ibid.
³ Bangkok Post, 3 April 1981.
Thailand continued to take comfort from its relationship with the US. Under the Manila Pact, the US has served as Thailand's traditional suppliers of arms and as ultimate guarantor of its security. The US also reaffirmed support for Thai policy and acknowledged the Kampuchean coalition agreement as an important development in applying more pressure on the Vietnamese.\(^1\) Thai leaders, however, recognized that US interests were engaged in Southeast Asia as a consequence of Soviet encroachment and that American policy was directed more by global strategic considerations, such as the Soviet Navy's use of Cam Ranh Bay, than by local concerns.\(^2\)

Under the Prem government, Thailand's basic objective has been to counter diplomatic moves by the Vietnamese and its allies to transform the Kampuchean issue into a dispute between Bangkok and Hanoi and to encourage world acceptance of the fait accompli in Kampuchea. The Thai Foreign Minister, Siddhi Savetsila, has repeatedly stated that Thailand will only use political pressure against Vietnam and will not fall into the trap of being dragged into the conflict.\(^3\) Siddhi also refused to accept a hotline measure or even a non-aggression pact, which were proposed by the Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, to prevent clashes between Thai and Vietnamese troops. An acceptance of such proposals would mean that Thailand would accept the fait accompli of the presence of Vietnamese troops along the Thai border. Thailand, according to Siddhi, is not involved in the war waged by Kampuchean resistance forces against the occupation of the Vietnamese army.

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\(^1\) Buszynski, *op.cit.*, p.1047.

\(^2\) Ibid., p.1048.

Since Hanoi imposed control by its armed forces over Kampuchea, Thai policy has concentrated on neighbouring communist Indochina and this problem continued to be a prime concern for Thai security.

Basically, Thai attitudes towards the problem have remained unaltered. Thailand's main diplomatic efforts have been devoted to trying to persuade Vietnam to withdraw its troops from Kampuchea, and thus ease the communist threat on its border. The Thais held the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea responsible for the existing conflicts in Kampuchea, as well as for instability in Southeast Asia in general.

Regarding the formation of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, Thailand generally appeared pleased at the way the coalition has been functioning politically, despite evidence of friction between Khmer Rouge guerrillas and armed elements loyal to the two non-communist partners.

Thailand has also been anxious to avoid direct involvement in the actual fighting. As far as the conflict within Kampuchea is concerned, the Thai government has declared itself neutral and shunned involvement. However, such neutrality is suspect, especially to Hanoi, as it became evident that the Pol Pot resistance has been able to make use of Thai territory along the common border as an active sanctuary and as a source of resupply. Indeed, there is reason to believe that the Chinese government has used Thai territory, including its waters, to sustain the forces opposed to the Heng Samrin regime with military assistance.¹

¹ In terms of military cooperation, China cemented a kind of informal military alliance with Thailand shortly after Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea and China's invasion of Vietnam, promising to once again invade Vietnam if Vietnamese troops enter Thailand. Beijing's military actions on the border, and its continued aid to anti-Vietnamese forces in Kampuchea have, to Thai leaders, given this promise a considerable degree of credibility. See John F. Copper, "China and Southeast Asia", in Donald E. Weatherbee (ed.), Southeast Asia Divided: The ASEAN-Indochina Crisis, Westview Press, 1985, pp.47-64.
The tacit understanding between Thai and Chinese policy on Kampuchea that the Prem government fostered was an acknowledgment of the obvious fact that China is the only power that shares the immediate Thai concern that Vietnamese forces should be withdrawn from Kampuchea. Nevertheless pursuit of the classical balance of power is seen as essential — that is, a balance between China, ASEAN, the US and the USSR — as the experience of alliance with a single great power had taught Thailand the dangers of being discounted as a dependent ally.

However, concern has been expressed by some ASEAN officials, particularly those from Indonesia and Malaysia, that Thailand's relationship with China is now uncomfortably close.

In the process of foreign policy formulation of small country like Thailand, one way to decrease a bad effect is to cooperate with neighbouring countries, the ASEAN members.
CHAPTER 2
THE ATTITUDES OF ASEAN MEMBERS TO THE KAMPUCHEAN ISSUE

Some principal developments in the Asian region since the 1970s have affected the security of Southeast Asia: the Sino-Soviet conflict; the US. withdrawal from mainland Southeast Asia; the close relations between Vietnam and the Soviet Union; and, of more direct importance to ASEAN, the presence of Vietnamese military troops in Kampuchea. These changes, especially the situation in Kampuchea, have brought new concerns to ASEAN members. The ASEAN countries, which initiated the concept of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), have expressed their concern that such an invasion, apart from violating the principle of non-intervention, has introduced an era of Great Power involvement in the region. Indeed, the anticipated danger from these Indochina developments was not so much the emergence of communist regimes per se, as the impact that these regimes would have upon the indigenous communists of ASEAN countries, on the one hand, and that these situations would affect the security of neighbouring countries of ASEAN, on the other. As it became clear that the growing rivalry between China-supported Kampuchea and Soviet-supported Vietnam was intensifying, ASEAN felt compelled to clarify its positions.

As ASEAN's main concern with regard to the Kampuchean problem was Vietnam's relationships with the Soviet Union and the ways in which the former dealt with Kampuchea, responses from ASEAN at an early stage were similar to its stated objectives; to preserve peace and to uphold the self-determination of the Kampuchean people. ASEAN's policy to Indochina states, particularly Vietnam, was then aimed at non-involvement and accommodation. This policy was evident at a special meeting of ASEAN's Foreign Ministers in January 1979 in Bangkok when the outcome was a joint statement indirectly censuring Vietnam and calling for a withdrawal of its troops from Kampuchea. Significantly, Vietnam was
named only in the preamble and not in the main clauses of the statement\(^1\), indicating that ASEAN wanted to present a strong statement but one still conciliatory enough to keep the lines open to Vietnam. This attitude was also reflected in the ASEAN objective of maintaining its neutral path without leaning towards China.

However, ASEAN members were worried about the implications of Vietnamese sponsorship of the Kampuchean National Front for National Salvation (KNFNS)\(^2\) as a cover for Vietnamese intervention. This posed a critical problem for relations between ASEAN and Vietnam. Consequently, ASEAN initiated the convening of an International Conference on Kampuchea (ICK), sponsored by the UN, in 1981 and took the position of giving support to the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK); but this support was limited to diplomatic and political support only.

As ASEAN covers a range of diverse political and historical backgrounds, there are more differences than similarities among its members. Thus one problem for its unity is that the sense of shared predicament of the ASEAN states has never been expressed in terms of a common identification of external threat. This lack of a tangible

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\(^1\) See the Joint Statement, Special Meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers on the Current Political Development in the South East Asian Region in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Documents on the Kampuchean Problem 1979-1985, (Bangkok, Thailand), 1985, p.74.

\(^2\) See Thakur Phanit, "ASEAN Cooperation and developments in Indochina" in Aspects of ASEAN, eds. by Werner Pfennig and Mark M.B. Suh, 1984, p.132.
common source of external common threat has led to a further problem of common response.¹

Thus in this decade ASEAN has faced a difficult problem of how to maintain neutrality in the Kampuchean conflict, while backing Thai policy (against Vietnamese pressure) neither to support nor to repatriate refugees, and at the same time maintain national interests of all ASEAN members.

ASEAN: Which is the greater threat, Vietnam or China?

As distance from danger lessens the priority of concern, consensus among the ASEAN members cannot be reached about the relative threats posed by Vietnam and China. While all ASEAN governments have indicated concern about the potential hazards of a spreading conflict, national assessments of the situation differ greatly. For instance, to some countries which have had bitter experience with the PRC in the past, it appears that the PRC presents a more dangerous threat, possibly because of its size and its inclination to get involved in the internal affairs of other countries, especially in political and ideological

¹ One example of problems of the ASEAN members' common response was that the concept of neutralization of the region. While the Malaysian government conceived of neutralization as serving primarily a domestic political purpose, Indonesia viewed the proposal with suspicion because of the role allocated to external powers; especially to China. For Singapore, it favoured a balanced multiple involvement of extra-regional powers. See Michael Leifer, "ASEAN and the problem of common response", *International Journal*, vol.38 (1982-1983), p.320.
matters. On the other hand, some ASEAN countries view Vietnam as the long-term threat basically because of Vietnamese historical expansionism.

Soon after the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, ASEAN members began to discuss possible cooperation in the face of Vietnam's new challenge. Generally, each state rejected Vietnam's offer of bilateral non-aggression pacts and friendship treaties. They all agreed that no treaties or agreements would be initiated with Vietnam, as they feared that this would be the first step in drawing ASEAN into the conflict. Moreover, as a collective entity, ASEAN members have had three main concerns. Firstly, they feared that the Thai-Vietnamese tension might develop into an armed conflict that would involve the other ASEAN states. Secondly, they were afraid that the domino theory might yet be proved right if insecurity in Thailand were to increase. Thirdly, they all viewed Vietnam's behaviour as violating the principle of non-intervention.

Broadly speaking, ASEAN's overall objectives in the Kampuchean problem are three-fold; it seeks to enhance Thailand's security against direct or indirect threats from Vietnam; it seeks to promote a balance of interests among the great powers; and it seeks to bring about more order in its relations with Vietnam. ASEAN's strategy towards


Kampuchea has also remained unchanged since 1980. It relies mainly on political, diplomatic and economic measures to isolate Vietnam. At the same time, it hopes that military pressure by the resistance within Kampuchea backed by external support (chiefly from China) will compel and deter Vietnam without ASEAN's being directly involved.

However, beneath the superficial cohesion of ASEAN on the Kampuchean issue, the divergent security perceptions of individual member states have persisted. The common concerns of the members are more apparent than real and have only symbolic force within the regional association. Individually, each state has its own attitude to the developments in Indochina. Moreover, they have not maintained a fully unified diplomatic stance; the Kuantan proposal was an obvious example of the importance of their differences. Geopolitical and ethnic factors explain many of the variations in ASEAN's responses to the Kampuchean conflict.

There are a range of different responses to the challenge of Vietnam. Among the ASEAN members, Indonesians have a sense of nationalist affinity with Vietnam. The enduring perceptions of long-term Chinese threat by both Indonesian and Malaysian governments have engendered a different response to the problem from that of other ASEAN members. Thus they have viewed the historical antagonism between Vietnam and China as a natural political obstacle to Chinese expansion in the Southeast Asian region. On the other hand, Thailand and Singapore regard the resurgence of Vietnamese communism and nationalism as posing the most immediate and serious threat to the region. Contrary to Indonesia and Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore see China as a source of countervailing power.

Herein lies the basis of the differences within ASEAN regarding the Kampuchean conflict: while Indonesia and Malaysia are sympathetic to the prospect of greater Vietnam, Thailand and Singapore seem to

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1 See details of the Kuantan proposal later in this chapter.
prefer a restriction on the influence of Vietnam and would like to see restored the buffer state of Kampuchea. Differences among them emanate from the fact that the Kampuchean conflict poses unequal threats to the ASEAN members. For Thailand, geopolitical reasons have made the Thais highly sensitive to land-based threats coming from both their western and eastern borders. On the other hand, Indonesia's geopolitical security from an immediate external threat provides the country with an opportunity to take a more multi-directional and long-term view of the world and the region.

These two divergent conceptions of security interests have aggravated other conflicts of interest within ASEAN. Although these differences are not likely to erupt openly, it does not follow that such latent tensions may not become serious and have far-reaching implications. These tensions may lead to greater unilateralism within ASEAN. Although both sides are careful to conceal their differences, the division might become more open if either side strongly expresses and supports its viewpoints.

In the past, all ASEAN members have been worried about the PRC's support the communist insurgents in the region since the PRC was viewed as the source of communist subversive activities and thus was seen as a threat to the ASEAN governments. The communist parties of Southeast Asia were more pro-Beijing than pro-Moscow. But Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea in 1979 changed this view, as such an action was assumed to be backed by the Soviet Union. The ASEAN states were fearful of becoming dominoes. This alarmist view was reflected in the

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2 G.W.Choudhury, "ASEAN and the Communist Countries", Asia Pacific community: A Quarterly Review, Summer 1981, no.13, p.44.
emergency meeting of ASEAN which was held in Bangkok. As noted above, the ASEAN foreign ministers issued a strongly worded statement calling for the immediate and total withdrawal of the foreign forces from Kampuchea.

For ASEAN, the Chinese connection, however, is the crux of its political problem and ASEAN members are afraid that any new Chinese attack on Vietnam might be rationalized as a contribution to Thailand's defence. Moreover, as Thailand has permitted the transportation of Chinese military assistance to the Khmer Rouge through Thai territory, it is feared that this might draw Thailand to the Chinese side in the Sino-Vietnamese conflict and hence undermine ASEAN neutrality.

Indonesian Chronic fear of Chinese regional hegemony

By contrast, the Indonesian leaders, particularly those in the Defence Ministry, see Vietnamese dominance in Indochina as beneficial to regional security, creating a buffer for ASEAN states against Chinese pressure and acting as a "starting point for a regionally ordered structure of relations". The Vietnamese invasion, however, compelled Indonesia to assert loyalty to Thailand whose strategic environment had been threatened.

Indonesia's stance towards the PRC since 1970s has been marked by several characteristics. Firstly, and basically, the Suharto government's view of a Chinese threat is partly created by the presence in Indonesia of an economically important Chinese minority. The fear of China as a threat is not of recent origin but has been prevalent since 1950 when tension between the two countries arose over the prohibition

1 See further details of the meeting in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, op.cit., p.74.
2 Huxley, op.cit.
of ethnic Chinese participation in trade in rural areas in Indonesia. Tensions, however, were contained on both sides as they moved under President Sukarno closer politically to one another. The present Indonesian government is concerned about Chinese residents in the country because they have resisted assimilation into Indonesian society and culture, and also because they have traditionally dominated finance and commerce. Second, like most other Southeast Asian states, the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) has been supported by the PRC, and by elements of the Chinese community within the country. The abortive coup in Indonesia in 1965 was to be blamed as China was said to be implicated in it. Although the PKI has ceased to function as an active political force, remnants of its leadership reside in exile in China (or in the USSR) and it remains in principle in a state of armed uprising against the Indonesian government. The attempted coup in 1965 thus caused the Indonesian government to suspend diplomatic relations with the PRC on the suspicion that the PKI had PRC backing. Third, Indonesia has a relatively positive view of Vietnam on the grounds that Vietnam’s militant struggle for independence reflects Indonesia’s own experience of armed struggle against colonialism.

However, there was an initiative by Indonesia to improve Sino-Indonesian relations. In January 1980 President Suharto signed two related decrees to facilitate the speedy naturalization of some 95,000 Chinese nationals resident in Indonesia. At the same time, the PRC also indicated a willingness to resume diplomatic relations. Nevertheless, suspicions of the Chinese threat still linger among Indonesian officials, and particularly among the military.

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2 Ibid.

3 Asia 1980 Yearbook, p.188.
In contrast to this continuing suspicion of the PRC, Indonesia has adopted an understanding stance towards Vietnam as an independent communist country which should be welcomed as a buffer between China and the Southeast Asian region. The Commander of the Indonesian Armed Forces, General Benny Murdani, has remarked that Vietnam was not a threat to the region. He even stated that the Indonesian people and armed forces shared the wishes of Vietnamese towards peace in the region. In a significant sense, this is a restatement of Indonesia's long-term position: Indonesia believes that a strong Vietnam could act as a barrier to the southward expansion of the Chinese. Previously, an Indonesian ambassador to Hanoi, Mr. Hardi, suggested at a seminar in Jakarta that China might succeed if Thailand regarded the threat from Vietnam as being greater than that from China. The Foreign Minister, Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, also argued that China wanted to make use of ASEAN to implement its own policies.

It would not be right for Thailand to blame Indonesia for viewing China as a threat to both national and regional security. Indonesia has understandably been alarmed into thinking that the long-term threat to the region comes from China and this fear has been reinforced by the fact that the PRC has never abandoned its party-to-party relations with the local insurgents. Although the PRC has stated that it has no designs on Southeast Asia, there is no guarantee that this attitude will be maintained in practice.

Malaysia: the Chinese threat

The importance Malaysia attaches to the security of the region


3 Suhrke, op.cit., p.23.
is clear. Indeed, a major unilateral initiative partly in response to the developments in Indochina, was undertaken by the government of Malaysia. At the ASEAN meeting in 1971 it proposed the ideal concept of the so-called "ZOPFAN"; the neutralization of Southeast Asia to be realized through the collective guarantee of the major powers. Moreover, the Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, listed Malaysia's commitment to ASEAN as the first priority of its foreign policy, followed by its commitment to the Muslim countries, the non-alignment movement, and then the Commonwealth countries.¹

However, Malaysia is less ready than some other ASEAN members to treat the Vietnamese as a threat to regional stability. Like Indonesia, the Malaysian posture has reflected a deep concern with the perceived threat from China.² Its "ZOPFAN" initiative, realistic or otherwise, presupposed guarantees by the great powers to respect the sovereignty of Southeast Asian states by not involving themselves either politically or militarily in the region. For Malaysia, involvement by any external powers is regarded as unacceptable behaviour. Prime Minister Mahathir has stated that Malaysia does not differentiate between the role of China and that of the Soviet Union. According to him, both are equally disruptive: "We want to keep them at arms length."³ However, if Malaysia has to choose sides, it seems that


³ See more details in "Interview/Mahathir Mohamad", FEER 30 October-5 November, 1981, pp.31-34.
it would choose to support the Soviet Union and the Vietnamese positions rather than that of the PRC. Malaysian leaders see Soviet-Vietnamese relations as an important axis because Vietnam needs Russian military assistance against China. Moreover, a senior Malaysian official was quite frank in admitting that:

"What we would prefer is a strong Vietnam ---one which is a counterpoise to Chinese influence-- irrespective of whether it holds sway over Laos and Kampuchea. But what we don't want is a Vietnam so strong it will dominate Southeast Asia."¹

Malaysia's apprehension of China's motives in the region has become more open since Dr. Mahathir assumed the premiership from Tun Hussein Onn and openly declared China to be a threat to Southeast Asia. The Malaysian perception of the Chinese threat has deep roots. Malaysia maintains that China has adopted a belligerent attitude towards Southeast Asia. The Malaysian government has a strong belief that its clandestine communist party has historically drawn most of its support from the ethnic Chinese in Malaysia. Moreover, the PRC permitted the clandestine groups to broadcast from Yunnan². Although China has signalled that it has discontinued military support to these parties, the Malaysian government still remains suspicious of Chinese involvement. Malaysia's attitude conflicts with that of the Thais on the point that Malaysia saw no reason to accept even moral links with China: Malaysia's policy is always to press the Chinese to offer more positive reassurances to the ASEAN countries.

² The broadcasting station called the voice of the Malayan Revolutionary that beams messages hostile to the Malaysian government is particularly annoying to the Malaysians. The government has urged the PRC to refrain from such broadcasts if their declarations of friendship for Malaysia are true. See Lee Poh Ping, op.cit., p.519.
Second, unlike Indonesia, Malaysia has a direct interest in the stability of Thailand. While the government has managed to contain its communist guerrillas, it has not been able to eliminate them entirely and the remnants have camped along the border between Thailand and Malaysia. It is assumed by the Malaysian government that so long as the guerrillas get continuing Chinese support, they will pursue their operations against the Malaysian government. Malaysia remains unconvinced that there is a distinction between state-to-state and party-to-party relations, for in China the party controls the government.1

However, the Indonesian-Malaysian position is perhaps best summed up by a senior ASEAN diplomat who stated:

"Vietnam's intransigence has given them no other choice (but to go along with the Thai position). This is not an acceptance as such but more a realisation of Thailand's need (to depend on China) as present realities dictate. But as and when the Vietnamese become more flexible, they would expect the Sino-Thai relationship to loosen up, and Bangkok to be more accommodating with Hanoi".2

The Philippines: an indifferent view

The Philippines seems to be the only ASEAN member which has taken a low-key approach to the Kampuchean conflict. Far from the situation, preoccupied by internal problems and least affected by the conflict, one feature of the varying perspectives of ASEAN has been the Philippines' low profile. Generally, the Philippines has clearly stated in the international arena its support for the ASEAN position for the International Conference on Kampuchea (ICK) resolutions on the

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1 Lee Poh Ping, op.cit.
Kampuchean problem. However, it seems that the Philippines is relatively indifferent on this issue. In his speeches and interviews on February 18, 1980, the former Philippines President Marcos outlined his views on the new strategic situation in the region and its implications for ASEAN. He was convinced that Vietnam had no plan to attack Thailand. However, he warned that if Vietnam had evidence of Thai support for the Khmer Rouge, it might then prepare to attack Thailand in retaliation.

For the Philippines, the main threat to ASEAN has been, and continues to be, insurgency. This assessment reflects the pressing internal problems which arise from insurgency. The Philippines is strongly anti-communist and is suspicious of all communist actors in the region. Thus it has resisted entanglement in Thailand's problems although, for the sake of ASEAN solidarity, it is willing to join the Association's condemnations of Vietnamese actions.¹

Apart from this concentration on insurgency, some other factors also contribute to the Philippines' limited interest in the Kampuchean problem. One is that its physical distance from the situation means that it is little affected by the altered situation. Another is that the presence of American bases has provided a guarantee of Philippines national security to a certain extent, at least against attack by a local power.

Singapore: a very close ally to Thailand

Singapore's position is the most extremely supportive of Thailand. Contrary to other ASEAN members, Singapore conjured up a very different context for the need for solidarity with Thailand and ASEAN.

Singaporean officials have clearly expressed their interpretation of the Kampuchean conflict as being part of a spreading pattern of aggression directed by the Soviet Union, and hence requiring countervailing big power pressure. This view has remained unchanged since the start of the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea in 1979. For instance, soon after the invasion the then Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, S. Dhanabalan, declared that Singapore may have to put aside a "puristic idea of non-alignment" and seek big power backing if Singapore's security is threatened. He also added that Vietnam, which could prevent big power involvement in the area, has found the involvement of the Soviet power to its advantage and therefore has not left the other states in Southeast Asia with much of a choice to remain free of big power pressures. In a speech on February 15, 1980, the Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew insisted that any attack on Thailand was an attack on ASEAN. Singapore's concern has been to mobilize international recognition of the danger of a conflict embroiling Thailand which would widen the area of devastation and conflict beyond the territory of Kampuchea.

The former Foreign Minister of Singapore, S. Rajaratnam, sees the issue as initially a step towards establishing Vietnam's hegemony over Laos and Kampuchea and at the same time serving as a stage in a protracted Sino-Soviet war. Rajaratnam has also emphasized that Singapore wants to see Southeast Asia free of any great power domination and to see Vietnam independent even if it is a communist state.

Furthermore, long-term implications of what happened in Kampuchea have begun to cause serious concern among ASEAN states. When Hanoi established "KNUFNS" to liberate Phnom Penh from the Pol Pol government, Rajaratnam expressed his fear pointedly. After noting that now "Thailand is on the frontline", he added that:

"The Vietnamese have set up a Cambodian National Salvation Front. We are concerned whether two years from now it would be necessary to set up a salvation front for (other) ASEAN countries."¹

It is obvious that Singapore has taken a far more forceful position in the issue, especially in supporting Thailand, than other ASEAN members. Presuming to speak for all ASEAN nations, Singapore bitterly condemned Vietnam for its invasion of Kampuchea and for creating the tragedy of the boat people. At the ASEAN Conference in Bali in 1979, Rajaratnam urged ASEAN jointly to support Thailand, which is the most vulnerable of all the members, and also warned of falling dominoes.²

There are reasons for Singapore's position of rejecting a great power dominance in the Kampuchean issue and of supporting Thailand. First is that Singapore probably has a deep sense of vulnerability because of the tiny size of the island-state. This apprehension has been reflected in Singapore's vehement protests when principles of territorial integrity are violated by open invasions. Second, Singapore perhaps sees itself as a spokesman for Thai views which Thai officials -closer to Vietnam- are reluctant to articulate. Third, but less convincing, is that Singapore's predominantly Chinese ethnic populations

² Asia 1980 Yearbook, p.276.
sympathize with China, and Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea constitutes a safe issue to express their view without creating anxiety in Singapore's predominantly Malaysian neighbours.

Thailand: reactions to ASEAN's different views

While some ASEAN members, notably Indonesia and Malaysia, hold strong views against the PRC and are more comfortable in siding with Vietnam's interests, Thailand has claimed that appeasement of Vietnam does not make its actions more acceptable, as Vietnam has had historical ambitions for regional influence.

After the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, Thailand has naturally expected strong support from her ASEAN friends who, in turn, strongly endorsed Thailand's position in condemning the Vietnamese military operation.

Traditionally, Thailand has defined its security needs as including the existence of friendly buffers against Vietnam in Laos and Kampuchea. The loss of a Khmer buffer state has brought Thailand face to face with Vietnamese troops. Given the unsettled conditions on the border and continued fighting between Khmer Rouge and Khmer Serei guerrillas (who seek refuge and support on the Thai side of the border) and Vietnamese regulars, there is always a possibility of uncontrolled escalation of armed conflict involving Thailand. The Vietnamese might also make incursions into Thai territory, as has happened in the past. Such moves would serve Vietnamese tactics to punish Thailand both for assisting the Khmer Rouge and for facilitation Chinese supplies to them.

Second, the consolidation of Vietnamese presence in Kampuchea has generally made the regional balance of power tilt to Vietnam. Vietnam may now use its influence in Kampuchea against Thailand in various ways, including support for Thai insurgents. Moreover, since Vietnam has considerable influence in Laos, it means that Vietnam's

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1 Indorf, op.cit., p.68.
present sphere of influence in the region is wider and that Thailand has to face the Vietnamese preponderance along both of eastern and northeastern borders and, as the Thai-Kampuchean border is relatively close to Bangkok, Vietnamese troops along that border are viewed with particular apprehension.

However, Thailand's concern over ASEAN differences was clearly affirmed when Indonesian President Suharto and Malaysian Premier Dato Hussein Onn formulated a so-called "Kuantan Principle" in March 1980. The main points of the principle were that great powers should refrain from involvement in the Kampuchean crisis and that interest of Vietnam must be preserved.

Although official Thai reactions were not explicit in order not to insult their ASEAN partners, it proved an abortive initiative. Visiting Jakarta shortly after the Kuantan talks, Thai Prime Minister Prem rejected the principle by emphasizing that considering ASEAN's

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1 After the fall of the Kriangsak government, Indonesia feared that Thailand was already heading towards political chaos, which they thought Peking would be quick to exploit. According to Indonesia, this was the atmosphere in which the leaders of the two ASEAN members (Indonesia and Malaysia) agreed in principle that it would be better to reach some accommodations with Hanoi over Kampuchea than to allow Thailand to tumble willy-nilly into China's lap. See Richard Nations, "Prem takes peace hopes one step further", FEER, 9 May, 1980, p.12.

earlier criticism of Vietnam's intervention in Kampuchea, the time seemed hardly appropriate to be making new overtures to Vietnam. He also noted that the Thai government was not about to collapse, and that it did not intend to provoke the Vietnamese by allowing Thai territory to be used for the benefit of Pol Pot's guerrillas.

From the Thai viewpoint, ASEAN has to face the delicate manoeuvre of having closer links with the PRC, which alone could "teach a lesson to Vietnam." The closer cooperation between Thailand and China is obvious since the course of developments in Indochina in 1979-1980. For Thai officials, China has clearly emerged as Thailand's de facto ally, principally because the PRC could bring pressure on a Soviet-supported Vietnam and so deter a Vietnamese attack on Thailand. Contrary to Indonesia and Malaysia, the Thais have viewed the Chinese as an important strategic deterrent against a major attack on Thailand; and although deterrence can fail, the PRC's apparently important interest in containing and pressuring Vietnam suggests that Thailand can rely on the self-interest of Chinese leaders to honour its de facto alliance. Moreover, the military threat becomes less critical to

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1 With the political confusion following the fall of Kriangsak government only a month before the Kuantan talks, and the expectation that the new government of Prem augured an intensifying and uncertain power struggle between the Thai armed forces and the political parties, Thailand, in the perceptions of Onn and Suharto, appeared less able than ever to meet the chaos of conflict along its Kampuchean border. See Simon, op.cit., p.98.

2 Somphong Choomak, Southeast Asian Security in the Light of the Kampuchean Crisis, (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University), 1985, p.72.

3 Choudhury, op.cit., p.44.

4 Indorf, op.cit., p.68.
Thailand, on the grounds that Vietnam's ability to make either tactical or strategic strikes on Thailand is limited by a possible Chinese retaliatory move. Although Vietnam has approximately twice the number of armed forces that Thailand has, half them are tied down on the Sino-Vietnamese border.

However, too close an association with China not only has the obvious danger of provoking Vietnam but might also cause apprehension among some ASEAN members. In an implicit effort to maintain its independent and territorial integrity, Thailand adopted a policy that happened to parallel that of China. This has appeared to place Bangkok on the Beijing side of both the Sino-Vietnamese and the Sino-Soviet conflicts, and also seems to undermine ASEAN's stated posture of neutrality.

It is, however, by no means clear that Thailand, during the period of Kriangsak government, had complete freedom of action in her relations with China. For Thailand, the first reason to be friendly with China was that China has been very useful in helping to create an opposition to Vietnamese hegemony over Kampuchea. Thailand's action in allowing the Khmer Rouge to use its territory for sanctuary has also probably resulted in a guarantee by China of Thai security. Moreover, the Kriangsak government also saw the economic benefits of close relations with China.

However, while Kriangsak's policy was to become friendly with the PRC and to become involved in supporting the Kampuchean resistance, he certainly did not abandon his efforts to achieve detente with

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1 China has dropped its support to most communist movements in Southeast Asia, though it has not broken all links. China claims that a complete break would only result in Moscow penetrating the movements. In Thailand, one result has been the surrender of hundreds of elsewhere insurgents. See Copper, op.cit., p.56.
Vietnam and Laos, as the benefits of so doing were the cessation of	heir support to the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). Kriangsak still
followed his omni-directional policy; he opposed Vietnam's role in
Kampuchea but at the same time he claimed that Thailand and Vietnam
shared a fundamental long-term strategic interest in preventing the
spread of Chinese influence southwards.¹

Under the Prem government, however, Thai attitudes are tougher
than those of the Kriangsak administration. Thai views of the
Kampuchean conflict have become very close to those of the PRC;
further, a large-scale repatriation of Kampuchean refugees was
initiated in June 1980. Thailand thus moved towards a more
confrontationist posture in regard to Kampuchea, which would widen the
policy differences with Indonesia and Malaysia.

Since Thailand's alignment with China stimulated Indonesian and
Malaysian fears that ASEAN is being used by the Chinese as a means of
asserting diplomatic influence in the region, the Thai public position
has been a calculated attempt to preserve the superficial appearance of
ASEAN unity over the issue. Since ASEAN sees its long-term security in
regional neutrality rather than in alignment with China, Thailand's
desire not to openly acknowledge its close relation with China is
particularly important. This policy was demonstrated when General Prem
promised General Suharto that Thailand would not permit China to use
Thai territory for any massive supply of arms to the Khmer Rouge.²
This promise has served to reassure both Indonesia and Malaysia that
Thailand has not opted for the PRC and so is not undermining ASEAN
neutrality.

¹ Huxley, op.cit., p.48.
Yet apprehension has arisen not only among ASEAN members but also among Thai officials. Some Thai leaders would prefer to see Thailand distance itself from the PRC over the long run. It has been argued in some Thai official circles that although the PRC presently has dissociated itself from Thai insurgents, China's long-term ambitions in the region cannot necessarily be taken to coincide with Thai interests. Consequently, to compromise both with other ASEAN members and among the Thais themselves, Thailand has declared that in foreign policy formulation it is neutral with respect to the Kampuchean conflict.

Moreover, it is not generally understood that the Thais are by no means strongly pro-Chinese. There is a considerable body of opinion in the government and military leadership which is as suspicious of the Chinese as of the Vietnamese and the Soviet Union. Indeed, these points of view are quite realistic; but the Thai policy is apparently based on the belief that Chinese involvement in Thailand and elsewhere in the region will only decline when the Vietnamese withdraw from Kampuchea.

For ASEAN, the hope is that the present close association of Thailand with China is only temporary and is related to the issue of Vietnam's occupation of Kampuchea. The reality, however, is likely to be somewhat more complex. Thailand and the PRC do share a short-term interest in seeking the Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea but their longer-term aims do not necessarily coincide. Thailand, like other ASEAN states, would like to preserve Vietnam as a regional

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1 Kramol Tongdhamachart, Thai perspectives of the Conflict in Kampuchea in Graduate School Journal, Chulalongkorn University, 1982 pp. 136-144.
counterweight to Chinese influence. The PRC, however, seeks Vietnam's humiliation. The vulnerability of Thailand's policy is that it only links its alignment of policy with Chinese aims over the short-term issue, but this issue also provides the Chinese an opportunity of pursuing their long-term purpose. Indeed, Vietnam's collapse, which would make the PRC a dominant power in the Southeast Asian region, would greatly disturb not only Indonesia and Malaysia but also all the other ASEAN members.
"To some, we may appear to be preoccupied with the Kampuchean problem, and at the same time, being inflexible in our search for a solution. Regarding the allegation of inflexibility, I can only state again what I have said so many times before, the door to further means of peaceful solution stands open. Others need only across the threshold."  

After seven years of posturing and calling for talks, the conflicting parties to the Kampuchean problem have faced the fact that the conflict is far from being settled. All proposals raised by either side were viewed by the other as actually nothing more than propaganda manoeuvres. 

In attempting to consider prospects for a settlement of the Kampuchean conflict, it might be useful firstly to discuss the objectives of all related parties to the conflict, Vietnam and the Heng Samrin on the one hand, and the PRC and ASEAN on the other, for such considerations would help elucidate their pre-conditions for any settlement. Then Thailand's attempt to solve the problem will be considered. 

In directly involving itself in the Kampuchean conflict, Vietnam's conditions for settlement are quite obvious. Already having controlled most of Kampuchean territory and being confident that time is on its side, Vietnam seeks to localize the Kampuchean issue. It thus refused to discuss the issue in its bilateral negotiations with China. Vietnam repeatedly proclaimed that any attempt to promote a

political solution to the Kampuchean question or to hold an international forum was both unnecessary and unwarranted, and indeed constituted a "gross interference in the internal affairs of Kampuchea". For Vietnam, the Kampuchean problem is the question of Chinese expansionism against the Kampuchean people through the Pol Pot regime, thereby threatening the survival of Vietnam. Vietnam thus tries to persuade its Southeast Asian neighbours of the necessity to accept the status quo in Kampuchea, thereby effectively undercutting Chinese diplomatic efforts and the entire resistance forces.

Vietnam sees its relation with the ASEAN members, especially Thailand, as largely conditioned by the latter's connections with external power. In Vietnam's view, Beijing and the Kampuchean reactionaries have also carried out coordinated operations with the US Navy and Thai Armed Forces at sea, committing provocations and threatening the security and territory of Kampuchea. Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach has asserted that as far as Hanoi is concerned, "We do not see major obstacles to the door of relations between Thailand and Vietnam because the two countries' interests do not come into conflict". However, Hanoi has also issued a warning that Thai support for Pol Pot and the coalition is a "pernicious mistake". Moreover, the main problem with Thailand, in Vietnam's view, is that it has allowed itself to be used by the PRC, which has had to rely on Thailand because of its limited means of influencing the situation in Kampuchea, and that this has created more opportunities.

2 Tap Chi Quan Doi Nhan Dan, "The Vietnam's view" in Donald E. Weatherbee (ed.), *Southeast Asia Divided: The ASEAN-Indochina Crisis*, (Boulder and London: Westview Press), 1985, p.3.
4 Ibid., K5.
for China to interfere more deeply in Thailand's internal affairs. The implication is that if Thailand were to end its support of Pol Pot and the coalition, there would be no direct conflicts of interest between the two countries.

Vietnam has tried to counter Thailand's attempt to broaden the Kampuchean question and place it in a UN framework by insisting that the issue be settled regionally between ASEAN and Indochinese countries. For Vietnam, it is obvious that the situation in Kampuchea has been normalised and, if only other ASEAN members could dissuade Thailand from cooperating with China in backing Pol Pot, peace and stability would return to the region. And Vietnam would not leave Kampuchea until a solution is found which does not overlook Vietnam's security interest.

As Vietnam's dependence on the Soviets is substantial, the direct involvement of the latter would suggest that a Kampuchean settlement would require its participation. It is worth mentioning - although the event is slightly outside the time of this sub-thesis - that Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze made it clear during his visit to the Asia-Pacific region in March 1987 that Moscow would not force Hanoi to settle the Kampuchean conflict. In attempting to solve the conflict, Shevardnadze responded with new (according to him) Soviet proposals that:

"Although we have a certain means of settlement, we will not allow ourselves to force any democratic state to accept it.....We have stressed everywhere that the solution to the Kampuchean problem is the affair of the Kampuchean people themselves."

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1 Nayan Chanda, "A subtle approach from Hanoi", FEER, 8 February 1980, p.17.


The objectives of China's diplomacy concerning the Kampuchean issue are also obvious. Unable to provide the ousted Khmer regime with massive material aid in its armed struggle against Vietnam, the PRC seeks to generate as much of an opposition to the Vietnamese occupation as possible, thereby preventing Hanoi from legitimizing its conquest.1 The PRC hopes to win the sympathy and support of all Southeast Asian countries for the Khmer resistance movement.

The conditions put forth by China for Kampuchean settlement are, of course, opposed to those of Vietnam. When Vietnam described the conflict as a local one, the PRC contended that the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea was not an "isolated event" or "local issue",2 since it not only revealed Hanoi's ambition to dominate all Indochina but also represented "an important component of the Soviet attempt to further its strategy of seeking world hegemony". Moreover, from the Chinese view, Vietnam invited the Soviets in because it needed their support in realising its regional ambitions. And the Soviet Union backed Vietnam, as China sees it, because it needed Vietnam in order to "push its policy of driving south [to] link up its strategic deployments in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean."3

Therefore, the Kampuchean issue, China argued, was not so much a manifestation of conflict between China and Vietnam or between the Indochinese and other Southeast Asian states as of the Soviet and Vietnamese threat to the entire region. China would never accept a federation of Indochinese states under the dominance of a Soviet-supported Vietnam along its southern border. In order to check "Soviet-Vietnamese expansion" in the Southeast Asian region, China from the very beginning pledged full support for all proposals or formulas that called for an immediate and complete withdrawal of Vietnamese troops

1 Chang Pao-min, cp.cit., p,598.
2 Ibid., p. 599.
3 Ibid.
from Kampuchea as the prerequisite for any political settlement of the problem. However, in a further gesture of solidarity with the ASEAN states, towards the end of 1980 China decided to drop its demand for at least a partial Vietnamese withdrawal of a prerequisite for holding an International Conference on Kampuchea (KCK),¹ in order to sustain the momentum of political pressure on Vietnam.²

While ASEAN is as worried as is China about the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea, the then Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua in 1980 received differing reactions to his hawkish approach to the problem.³ Huang's line, as expressed in Singapore, was that if the Khmer guerrillas (he gave their strength as 30,000)⁴ were kept in battle condition long enough, a time could come when Hanoi and Moscow would, in effect, sue for peace by seeking a political settlement. That, according to Huang, would be the time to consider negotiating with the Vietnamese. The problem with the Chinese is that they disagreed with any solution that would weaken their Khmer Rouge ally. They even rejected the ASEAN call for the disarming of the Khmer factions after the Vietnamese withdrawal. Some Thais thought that Chinese disagreement with the ASEAN proposals could disprove allegations of connivance between China and ASEAN, and would possibly make the Vietnamese more amenable to them. One opinion was that

² Chang Pao-min, op.cit., p.603.
⁴ Ibid.
Vietnam can join ASEAN to prevent the return of Chinese domination of Kampuchea. This view, however, was not shared by Thai leaders who make the final decisions.

Therefore, the problem remains for China that although most of the nations of the world, as well as the ASEAN nations, oppose Vietnam's occupation of Kampuchea, they cannot be persuaded to simply support China's hard line position which includes unqualified support for Pol Pot and expelling Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea at any cost. The UN and the West find it difficult, perhaps impossible, to support Pol Pot, who is regarded as the worst violator of human rights.

Despite the differences among themselves, the ASEAN members have presented common initiatives in the UN. Generally, the collective response of ASEAN has been to deny legitimacy to the administration in Phnom Penh to uphold the international status and representation of Democratic Kampuchea. Since the occupation of Kampuchea in 1979, they have achieved a degree of solidarity. They have introduced and developed to a high level of efficacy certain rules of the game for the management of relations among themselves. One principle is that, no matter what each individual member state's predispositions may be, the ASEAN countries are committed to securing a political settlement in Kampuchea. Another is that the understanding that, again no matter what

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1 Theh Chongkhadikij, Bangkok Post, 13 July 1981. quoted in Buszynski.
2 K. Das, op.cit.
3 John F. Copper, "China and Southeast Asia", in Weatherbee, op.cit., p.50.
each individual member state's aspirations or reservations may be, the security interests and requirements of Thailand receive first priority in all questions related to the Kampuchean problem.

Clearly, ASEAN's main objective has been to maintain and improve the support given to the government of Democratic Kampuchea at the UN General Assembly. And as the Kmer Rouge, one faction of the CGDK, appeared to be the only effective opposition to Vietnam's dominance of Kampuchea and generally of Indochina, the ASEAN states have laid the groundwork for a settlement of the problem by, among other things, motivating the Kampuchean resistance forces to work together against the Vietnamese occupation. Aparting from fostering the CGDK and denying recognition to the Heng Samrin regime, ASEAN has also worked towards the diplomatic and economic isolation of Vietnam by canvassing international condemnation of Vietnamese behaviour in Kampuchea. Moreover, ASEAN has pursued its policy which sought primarily to internationalise the Kampuchean issue. Given the faith that ASEAN states had put in the Kampuchean resistance movement, it felt that an internationalisation of the problem would facilitate a political solution by increasing the pressure on Vietnam to negotiate and to withdraw troops from Kampuchea.1

ASEAN's strategy has been to deny the Vietnamese claim that the situation in Kampuchea is irreversible, thereby refusing to engage in any direct negotiation with the Heng Samrin government lest this be

seen as an acceptance of that government's legitimacy. Instead, ASEAN has proposed several initial steps that could be taken to facilitate a comprehensive political settlement. For example, the ASEAN Joint Appeal of September 1983 proposed phased troop withdrawals on a territorial basis, ceasefire in safe areas, and introduction of peace-keeping and observer groups to monitor the withdrawals and ceasefire.¹

However, the ASEAN members are concerned about future support for the Khmer Rouge regime, unless the Khmer Rouge changed its leadership by including a wider spectrum of anti-Vietnamese Kampuchean. They recognised that their effort to broaden the DK government required the cooperation of China. Towards this end, the ASEAN states, Thailand and Singapore in particular, attempted to persuade the Chinese government to agree to broadening of the DK government. In November 1980 the Thai and Singaporean premiers visited Beijing to discuss with their Chinese counterpart the question of their support of the Khmer Rouge group. In attempting to be flexible towards Vietnam, the two ASEAN members proposed that the Khmer Rouge leaders be dropped from the government or, if that was not possible, that the government of DK be revised to include leaders of the other anti-Vietnamese resistance movements. However, as the Khmer Rouge was an effective anti-Vietnamese fighting force, the Chinese leaders were reluctant to accept such proposals.²

Therefore, the problem with the ASEAN proposal was that it could not assure the Vietnamese that a pro-Chinese Khmer Rouge regime would not emerge after the withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces. This

¹ See details in the full text of ASEAN Joint Appeal made on 21 September, 1983 in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, op.cit., p.104.
was reiterated by Pham Binh in a seminar organised by the CSIS and Vietnam, responding to the so-called ASEAN Joint Appeal of September 1983, that:

"The ASEAN solution is not acceptable because it demands that Vietnam unilaterally withdraw its troops while China is free unilaterally to maintain its threat, Thai territory is free to be used against the Indochinese countries, and Pol Pot is free to carry on activities against the Kampuchean people."

ASEAN: Different Approaches To Settlements

From the beginning the ASEAN states have taken the view that a compromise was necessary for the sake of the region's stability as well as for Vietnam's own sake. A prolonged conflict would only burden Vietnam with the necessity of maintaining a large standing army, and would increase its dependence on the Soviet Union. However, although the ASEAN governments have publicly given highest priority to the Thai viewpoint, there are differences among them regarding their assessments of the conflict and on ways and means of solving it.

In October 1980, for example, Indonesia seemed to favour the Vietnamese proposal for a partial withdrawal from Kampuchea in return for Thai withdrawal from supporting the Khmer Rouge. Such favour was shown when Indonesia maintained that the ASEAN resolution in the UN was an expression of support for the principle of self-determination for the Kampucheans, not an expression of support for the Khmer Rouge. Moreover, when President Suharto visited Bangkok in March 1981, apparently one of his objectives was to persuade the Thai premier to conduct a dialogue with the Vietnamese government. Within the ASEAN framework, it seems that Indonesia wishes to reach an approach to settlement which


2 Wanandi, op.cit., p.36
maintains good relations between ASEAN and the Indochinese states. The
Indonesians are convinced that any compromise by Vietnam will be
matched by more forthcoming ASEAN proposals.¹

Furthermore, in early 1981 individual ASEAN governments talked
in terms of a "third alternative" to the Khmer Rouge and the Heng
Samrin regimes. The so-called "third alternative" suggested a form of
Kampuchean government that neither Heng Samrin's nor Khieu Sampan's
regime might emerge from elections. Indonesia and Malaysia adopted a
moderate view as opposed to a hard line towards Vietnam, and hoped that
Thailand would likewise adopt a more flexible attitude towards Vietnam².
It was also felt that ASEAN should recognise Vietnamese security
concerns, and at the same time emphasise the need to alleviate pressure
on Thailand. The Thai prime minister, however, expressed unhappiness
over the Indonesian approach.

It was commented by the Thais that the main problem with
Indonesia's plan, which the Thais found extremely difficult to accept,
was that the plan sought to prevent the Khmer Rouge from sharing some
of the power through an election, as this, from the Thai viewpoint,
would conspicuously violate the principle of non-interference in
domestic affairs of others.³ But apparently Thailand's flexibility was
demonstrated when the Thai expressed the view that if Thailand and
China were to stop aiding the Khmer Rouge, the latter would flounder in
four to six months, without being able to threaten Thailand's security
seriously. One interpretation is that if the quid pro quo is right, the
Thais might agree to drop the Khmer Rouge.⁴

¹ Wanandi, op.cit., p.36
² Lau Teik Soon, op.cit., p.551.
³ Susumu, op.cit., p.17.
⁴ Ibid.
Thailand: A Flexible Approach

With regard to the Kampuchean issue, according to Thai Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila, Thailand would continue lending political and diplomatic support to the DK government under the leadership of Sihanouk in its struggle to restore full independence and sovereignty to Kampuchea. Siddhi consistently called for a political settlement and for a clearly defined geographic area from which Vietnamese troops should withdraw. He attempted to assure Vietnamese Foreign Minister Thach of his flexibility in order to get a settlement that could be satisfactory to all parties. He also reportedly offered to be an intermediary between Vietnam and China if it were true that the solution of the Kampuchean problem depended on relations between the two countries.

Generally, the Thais wished to see the Kampuchean conflict settled by an international agreement. This has repeatedly stated by Siddhi:

".....This [the Kampuchean problem] is a classic case of internal problems becoming regionalised by the outside intervention of a local power, and finally internationalised by support from two of the major powers to the contending factions. The magnitude of the involvement by major powers has made the situation an international problem requiring an international solution."

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1 The Bangkok Post "The full text of Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila's address at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand", 28 June 1984.
2 Solidum, op.cit., p.90.
It seems that since the end of 1983, Thailand's stand in the Indochinese conflict has been somewhat more moderate than before, reflecting perhaps a greater willingness to improve relations with its neighbour to the east.¹ Although the generally accepted position was that Vietnam should withdraw completely from Kampuchea, Thailand was prepared to countenance a partial Vietnamese withdrawal if Thailand's security interests were protected. Indeed, in the Thai view, Vietnam should withdraw to at least at the east bank of the Mekong River. Moreover, it is obvious that a softer Thai approach was further reflected in the so-called "Joint Appeal", prepared during the June 1983 ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting in Bangkok. While preserving the non-negotiable essential elements of the ICK formula, that is, the demands for a "total withdrawal" of foreign forces and for Kampuchean's self-determination, this proposal could be considered "new" as it called for a "national reconciliation" in Kampuchea which, as later clarified by the then Malaysian Foreign Minister, Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, was intended to be one between the Heng Samrin group, the non-communist resistance groups and the Khmer Rouge. Moreover, the Joint Appeal also outlined possible steps which would be taken in pursuit of a comprehensive political settlement on the Kampuchean problem. This again was further explained by Tan Sri Ghazali that "peace-keeping forces-observers" groups which should be introduced to ensure that the withdrawals have taken place should not be under the UN's auspices but should take some other form and might possibly include the Vietnamese themselves.²

However, from the Thais point of view, the months that followed the Joint Appeal proposal had served to demonstrate the failure of the softer approach. As indicated by the Vietnamese incursion into Si Saket

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¹ Sukhumhhand Paribatra, "Thailand and the search for a Kampuchean settlement: Is time running out?", ASEAN Forecast, May 1984., p.69.
² Paribatra, op.cit.
province at the end of March 1984,¹ the Thais perceived that Vietnam had interpreted the more moderate stand as a sign of weakness and division within ASEAN and Thailand, and consequently sought to exploit the situation both diplomatically and militarily without any genuine desire to seek a workable compromise. To put it in another way, there was a perception that the softer approach had proved counter-productive.

However, Thailand's confidence in its capacity to cope with the threat arising from Vietnam's occupation of Kampuchea may also be perceived. The Thais believed that the balance of forces was favourable to their cause and consequently, time was on their side. Firstly, the Thais perceived that Vietnam was now weakening partly because of the economic burden of the occupation of Kampuchea, and that this trend was likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Or to put it differently, from the Thai point of view, within certain limits the situation in Kampuchea began to look "reversible".² They also hoped that growing strength of the Khmer Rouge would raise the cost of Vietnam's forces in Kampuchea. Secondly, the Thais, especially in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, perceived that ASEAN had attained a high level of resilience and unity, that regional cooperation had developed to a point where the group could tolerate a certain a level of intramural differences. So the Thais believed ASEAN was now bargaining from a position of strength, not weakness. Thirdly, the Thais, especially the military, believed that the country was now more assured of US-support than at any time since the Vietnam debacle and that this trend was likely to persist as the US became more assertive in the international arena. But the Thais were also aware that time might be

¹ This happened after Nguyen Co Thach's visit to Jakarta, Canberra and Bangkok in the middle of March 1984.
² Paribatra, op.cit.
working against them within their own camp. There were signs of fatigue among some Western countries, and anxiety for a solution to the problem which would rid them of the embarrassment of continuing to recognise the Pol Pot regime.¹

The Thai Military Concerning The Kampuchean Problem

From the perspective of the military, there are valuable domestic "spin-offs" from the continuing existence of the conflict over Kampuchea. The Kampuchean problem seems to have given the military an opportunity to play an increasingly dominant role. An external conflict is capable of making the people grow accustomed to the requirements of national security, that is, a growing defence budget and the centrality of the military's position in the affairs of state, as was commented by a Thai scholar:

"In a number of ways, Thailand is once more already becoming a national security state: the defence budget has grown from 2.77 percent of the GDP in 1975 to 3.82 percent in 1983; the Royal Thai Armed Forces' extensive role in the country's political, social and economic development, outlined in the Constitution, has become more pronounced with the promulgation of the Office of the Prime Minister's Orders No.66/2523 (1980) and No.65/2525 (1982); the persistent involvement of some military leaders in all issues of political significance has become readily evident; paramilitary formulations are being strengthened by the creation of a new elite armed unit, Santi Nimit, which has been given wide powers to campaign against communism,..."²

² Paribatra, op.cit., p.69.
Moreover, the Kampuchean conflict has served not only to increase the role of the military as a group but also to strengthen the power based of some military leaders over others. More specifically, the main beneficiaries have been those who are in charge of weapons procurement policies, arms shipment to the Khmer Rouge, and security on the Thai-Kampuchean border.

Although it is admitted that the lack of solution or agreement on the Kampuchean problem definitely constitutes a threat to peace and stability in the region, so far no compromise nor solution has yet been reached. This is probably because the Soviet Union and China have no immediate interest to help in reaching an agreement, and may even find an advantage in keeping these uncertainties prolonged. For the Soviet Union, retention of facilities at Cam Ranh Bay and Danang to some extent depends on continued alienation between the SRV and its neighbours, while for China the situation enables it to gain favour with some ASEAN members without unduly alarming the others.

For the Southeast Asian region, the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea is a major issue and one that could lead to the escalation of great power conflict in the region. For the PRC, the Kampuchean conflict might provide a good excuse to bleed Vietnam and to increase its involvement in Southeast Asia. And the conflict might strengthen cooperation between China and ASEAN, and perhaps between China and the US as well, in confronting the USSR. The Chinese would thus favour continuing military, economic and political pressures on Vietnam until they become so unbearable that the latter could be forced to agree to total withdrawal from Kampuchea.

For the USSR, its involvement has provided an access to facilities at Danang and Cam Ranh Bay to balance the US bases at Subic and Clark field and also helped encirclement of China from its southern borders. However, one significant change on the recent Soviet diplomatic scene concerning the Kampuchean issue has emerged with Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's keen interest in normalising relations with China. As China made the presence of
Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea an obstacle to their normalisation, so new pressures were brought to bear on Hanoi.\(^1\) It is, however, unlikely that normalisation will take place in the near future.

As the USSR reportedly has to provide Vietnam about three million dollars in aid a day, the US sees the conflict as putting another burden on the Soviets, in addition to Cuba, Afghanistan and elsewhere, all of which, the US hopes, will drain Soviet resources and reduce its global capabilities.

Ultimately, any solution needs ASEAN's active participation as it is directly affected by the conflict. However, despite the fact that ASEAN has succeeded in mobilising international support in most international fora, especially in the UN General Assembly, where the votes for ASEAN-sponsored resolutions supporting the CGDK and calling for Vietnam's withdrawal from Kampuchea have increased almost every year,\(^2\) there is little prospect for a compromise settlement. Because there is a constant need to maintain the group's solidarity and because it has won political victories in international fora, ASEAN seems to believe that it needs to maintain its present course.\(^3\) Furthermore, given the differences among its members, ASEAN is not, and is unlikely to be, a military alliance. This means that it cannot mobilise sufficient power to achieve its objectives where Kampuchea is concerned.

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2 In 1980, it was 97 for, 23 against; in 1981, 100-25; in 1982, 105-23; in 1984, 100-22; and in 1985; 114-21. The SRV, Cuba, the USSR, and, with the exception of Rumania, Moscow's Eastern European Warsaw Pact allies recognised the Heng Samrin regime.

3 Paribatra, Between Watana Nakorn and the UNGA..., (op.cit.) p.12.
Thus, despite expressed desires to lessen the degree of external powers' involvement. ASEAN members collectively and individually are committed to seeking and maintaining extra-regional affiliations, especially with the US and the PRC.

Looking towards the future, it seems that there will be no weakening of Vietnamese control over Phnom Penh. Vietnam has maintained close control over Kampuchea through Heng Samrin, and has little interest in either military withdrawal or a political settlement. ASEAN, however, has hope for settlement when the costs of Vietnam's occupation of Kampuchea reach a sufficient level and if the forces of Sihanouk and Son Sann demonstrate a capacity to grow in strength and effectiveness. The ASEAN members, Thailand in particular, perceive that Vietnam has military problems and is facing economic stagnation, and it also lacks international assistance. Moreover, in Kampuchea, Vietnam has faced challenges by the resistance groups of the CGDK. In time, ASEAN hopes, Vietnam will seek a settlement. However, from the Vietnamese view, it is true that the ASEAN states have been successful in supporting the CGDK but unless the Khmer Rouge regime changed its leadership and broadened its representation, the likelihood of Vietnam's attempt for a compromise settlement would be slim. On this matter, it is clear that the role of Sihanouk and Son Sann is critical.
CONCLUSION

Geographically, it is clear that Thailand is the most vulnerable ASEAN member to the Kampuchean conflict. However, as Thailand does not want to be dragged into the conflict, it has attempted to be neutral. Prior to the Kampuchean conflict in 1979, General Kriangsak Chomanand, Thailand's Prime Minister from 1977-1980 expressed his major goal in conducting his foreign policies as to improve relations with neighbouring Indochinese states (since the preceding government of Thanin Kraivichian was extremely anti-communist).

However, the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea reversed Kriangsak's policy of entente. Since then, Thailand had no choice but to try to force Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea. In coping with the Kampuchean problem at an early stage, Kriangsak pursued his "omni-directional" policy in attempting to strengthen Thailand's position. As a result, he obtained a reassurance of continued US support and military supplies. He was also the first Thai premier to visit Moscow, signalling his desire to be consulted over regional affairs. Moreover, with regard to the PRC, Kriangsak's diplomacy brought about the so-called Thai-Chinese alignment.

As the successor of General Kriangsak, General Prem continued Thai policy to Kampuchea as one based on the basic assumption that a Vietnamese-controlled Indochina posed a threat to Thailand's security. Thailand's orientations towards the Kampuchean problem under Prem, however, obviously shifted from a policy of entente in relations to the communist Indochina states to a strongly anti-Vietnamese policy. His hardline attitudes towards the Kampuchean issue was reflected in his attempts to persuade Chinese leaders to consider the formation of the Kampuchean resistance coalition.
Relations between Thailand and China have obviously grown closer as their interests, to a certain extent, coincide. Under Prem, the Thais seek to coordinate policy with China on the assumption that Chinese support is essential to provide aid for resistance against Vietnamese within Kampuchea. Thailand's attempts to be neutral in the issue have thus lost all meaning during the Prem government.

At an early stage, responses from ASEAN to the Kampuchean conflict were similar to its stated objectives of preserving peace and upholding the self-determination of the Kampuchean people. ASEAN's common political position on Kampuchea is thus understandable; the withdrawal of Vietnamese occupation forces and the dismantling of its puppet regime in Phnom Penh, followed by the restoration of a truly indigenous and representative government based on self-determination. Its common stand on the Kampuchean problem is one of the reasons for its resilience, with fellow-members unity behind its front-line state, Thailand. This common political position, however, is not without difficulties.

The most obvious problem for the ASEAN governments concerning the policy towards Kampuchea is the threat posed to ASEAN cohesion by their intra-association differences of opinions over the best course to take in relation to Indochina. There are two divergent conceptions of security interests among ASEAN members. On the one hand, Indonesia and Malaysia have enduring perceptions of a long-term Chinese threat. On the other hand, Thailand and Singapore regard the resurgence of Vietnamese communism as posing the most serious threat to the region, thus seeing the PRC as a significant source of countervailing power.

Consequently, ASEAN-PRC relations regarding the Kampuchean problem are characterized by a curious ambivalence. On the one hand, because China has strongly backed Thailand against Vietnamese pressure, ASEAN engaged in tacit diplomatic coordination with Beijing on
Indochinese policy. On the other hand, China is distrusted because of its possible regional ambitions, while the overseas Chinese residents in ASEAN are seen as a source of internal instability in some ASEAN states.

Fortunately, however, ASEAN speaks with one voice on the Kampuchean issue. Observers have noted that the organization's decision-making format is always based on consensus on the "lowest common denominator". What this means in practice is that no decision is ever taken if any one of its member states expresses reservation over any subject.

Nevertheless, a close relation between Thailand and China can well be perceived. Thai analysts themselves are not sanguine about the Association's ability to assist militarily in the event of a serious Vietnamese challenge. As far as military action is concerned, Thailand sees China as a much more credible tacit ally and a more potent deterrent to Hanoi.

Regarding prospects for settlement, the level of conflict seems tolerable to all parties involved. For the PRC, the conflict has been an effective means of maintaining pressure on Vietnam. Since the Kampuchean crisis in 1979, China has sought a common front in Southeast Asia against Vietnam on the Kampuchean issue. The policy has been generally successful to a certain extent. However, the problem is that there are some disagreements between China and the ASEAN members on their attitudes towards a negotiated settlement. A major disagreement is that concerning the role of the Khmer Rouge if and when the SRV withdraws from Kampuchea. The PRC contends that the Khmer Rouge must be given a role after the withdrawal while ASEAN states take a softer position, recognising that allowing Heng Samrin to remain would prevent the Khmer Rouge from returning to power.
For the US, the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea is a source of embarrassment for the Soviets and constitutes a significant military and financial burden. This probably provides a rationale to American opinion concerning the necessity of continuing the US military buildup. It thus seems that there is little incentive for the US to initiate any settlement to resolve the conflict.

For the USSR, support for Vietnam in Kampuchea has provided an opportunity to exact greater strategic advantages from the relationship with the SRV while maintaining a second front in the confrontation with China.

Clearly, Thailand has attempted to organise international pressure against Vietnam to force a settlement of the Kampuchean problem. Thai policy has two features in this respect. First, the present Prem government has promoted the proposal to hold an international agreement on Kampuchea that would focus world opinion upon Vietnam's occupation of Kampuchea and would also devise a solution to the dispute acceptable to all concerned. Second, in order to force Vietnam to withdraw from Kampuchea, Thailand has sought a united resistance front in Kampuchea that would combine the strengths of the Khmer Rouge and the Non-communist groups. In this sense, from the Thai viewpoint, Chinese support is thus essential both to guarantee the results of any solution and to provide material aid for successful resistance against the Vietnam's occupation in Kampuchea.
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