The crisis in Cambodia turned for the worse in April 1975 when the Khmer Rouge forces captured power. They ruled Cambodia for nearly three years and inflicted the most savage rule on the people ever known in history. In India too, the political situation was moving from bad to worse when the Indira Gandhi Government declared national emergency in June 1975 following political chaos and uncertainty. Admittedly, there was no parallel between the situations in India and Cambodia, but they tended to have a deep impact on India’s foreign policy postures.

The communist conquest of Saigon, Vientiane and of Phnom Penh seemed to presage the realization of Ho Chi Minh's political dream: the creation of an Indo-Chinese federation comprising Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. But soon after the communist take-over in both Vietnam and Cambodia, the border dispute between the two burst into the open and led to the Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia in December 1978. The Cambodian question thus emerged on the world scene, especially when it became a
proxy war, with China backing Cambodia and Soviet Union coming to the help of Vietnam. The United States on its part sided with China and ASEAN states in the Cambodian problem. Meanwhile there was a change of government in New Delhi, which naturally raised the question as to how this government reflected on the problem and with what perspective, given its foreign policy objectives and priorities in Southeast Asia. This chapter seeks to analyse the rule of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the Vietnam-Cambodia border dispute and the Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia. It also analyses India's policy towards Cambodia during 1975-77. This chapter also examines the Janata Government's policy postures with respect to the developments in Cambodia.

The Rule of the Khmer Rouge

Khmer Rouge Communist forces captured Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975. After their capture, several leading members of the previous government and a number of generals were executed. Sihanouk remained the Head of State, but when he returned to Phnom Penh in September 1975, his movements were circumscribed and he realised that he was only a figurehead with no effective political power. By early 1976, Sihanouk understood that he had no
chance to play a pivotal role as Head of State and resigned from the position in April 1976.¹

On 5 January 1976 the communists adopted a new constitution for Cambodia which proclaimed the existence of a new state, Democratic Kampuchea.² The new constitution provided that the State of Kampuchea was an independent, unified, peaceful, neutral, non-aligned, sovereign and democratic state enjoying territorial integrity. It also stipulated that it was a state of the people, workers, peasants and all other Cambodian labourers. Under the new Constitution all means of production were the collective property of the people. Legislative power was invested in the Representative Assembly of the people, workers and all other Cambodian labourers. As per the new constitution, every person had the right to worship any religion but reactionary religion detrimental to Democratic Kampuchea and the Cambodian people was absolutely forbidden. On foreign policy, the new constitution stipulated that Cambodia would adhere to a policy of independence, peace, neutrality and non-


alignment while remaining within the great family of non-aligned nations and contributing to the mutual defence against imperialism.

The new constitution provided for significant changes in Cambodian society and politics. It abolished monarchy, terminated Buddhism as the official state religion, expropriated all private economic enterprises and established peasants, workers and members of the army as the ruling proletariat. One of the main aims of the revolutionaries was to create an ideal society to attain independence and sovereignty. For the realization of this goal, according to the new rulers, three principles were essential - rely on their strength, take destiny in their own hands and defend and construct the country.

When the Lon Nol forces surrendered, the victors won control of a country in a state of chaos. The new rulers demanded basic changes in Cambodian society and personality which required inculcating new values under a
discipline unknown to modern Cambodia. The first action of the revolutionary forces that marched into Phnom Penh in April 1975 was to initiate a mass evacuation of the entire population of the city. In the history of mankind, there had never been such a huge displacement of population as that undertaken by the Khmer Rouge regime who drove millions of people out of Phnom Penh and other towns and cities. In the countryside they abolished grassroots organisations in the hamlets and villages and created upheavals in the life of the people throughout the country. They declared the above measures were necessary because "there was not enough food to feed the city people" and "resistance by imperialist agents had to be frustrated".

At least, five reasons were advanced for this "ultra radical action". First, there was the problem of security. Secondly, the new authorities in Cambodia at that time were faced with the problems of health,


7. For details see Etcheson, n.2, pp.144-45.
sanitation, food distribution and production problems which could be solved in the long run only by the return of the bulk of rural refugees to productive agricultural employment. A third reason had to do with ideology. A fourth reason was internal party politics. Gaining control of the defeated urban population was an important step in Pol Pot's move towards total supremacy within the party as a whole. A last reason for this evacuation was the fear of bombing of the capital by the Americans.

The Khmer Rouge divided the people of Democratic Kampuchea into three categories: category A, the old people who had supported the resistance and were in the areas liberated on 17 April 1975; category B, the new people in Lon Nol-controlled areas and constituted the majority of the population; and category C, consisting of those who had served in the armed forces or administrations of the Lon Nol and Sihanouk regimes. The third group was marked down for extermination together with their families. Category B were considered guilty of disobedience for failing to heed the order of the revolutionary forces. They were put to work in the countryside under conditions which made certain the

gradual disappearance of at least the adult portion among them from overwork, starvation, disease and indiscriminate use of death penalty. For the new people, the work lasted from ten to twelve hours daily. They were given only four ounces of rice for a person per day. In addition to this, they were given leaves, snails, crabs and insects. By this, in fact, the Khmer Rouge were attempting to eliminate those sections of the population who would be resistant to their efforts to create a new Khmer culture and a new Khmer personality.

Under the Khmer Rouge regime, "radical egalitarianism" was expressed in complete collectivization of agricultural and industrial production, and the abolition of all private property including money, bank accounts, loans and interest rates. According to their official ideology, which was based on Marxism-Leninism and Maoism, the root of all pre-1975 domestic problems lay in the dominance of the feudal land-owning and capitalist classes residing mainly in the cities.⁹ Throughout the country, the entire social structure of the Khmer Republic was decapitalised by the immediate execution of many military officers, government functionaries and wealthy businessmen. Under the new regime, the citizens were

commanded to be humble, to love work and to be ready for all sacrifices up to that of life for the people, the workers, for the revolution and for Angkar, the revolutionary authority. 10

They attempted to bring up the Cambodian children according to their concept of the ideal citizen. Children between the ages of six and twelve attended schools. Owing to the lack of learned and trained teachers, children were taught by people who could barely read and write. Actually, their emphasis was on indoctrination and not on instruction. 11 Their education consisted largely in memorizing revolutionary songs and phrases, and developing hatred for class enemies and agents of Vietnam. One of the main aims of education was to eradicate the normal parent-child relationship. Children were supposed to belong to the Angkar. After the age of twelve or so, children went to the fields to do manual labour, except for a small portion which was absorbed into torture games.

As a result of starvation, overwork, the lack of medical facilities and execution, the death rate among the

Kampucheans went up fast. François Ponchaud who interviewed many refugees escaped to Thailand during 1975-76 found that each refugee family had lost one or more members due to illness.

The Pol Pot regime also exterminated the Muslim Cham community who numbered about 250,000. Their attitude was that "let the Muslim Cham disappear -- there will be more food left for the others".\(^\text{12}\) Their policy towards the Chams was summarized in an official order which read:

> The Kampuchean revolution is one, because Kampuchea is one. The Kampuchean land belongs to the Khmer. The Khmer language shall be the only national language. Therefore, there shall be no place for a Cham community. The Cham must cease to exist as an ethnic group. Their ethnic consciousness, their language, their habits and customs, their faith must be destroyed. They must have Khmer names instead of Cham names. Those who resist or oppose the orders of Angkar shall be severely punished.\(^\text{13}\)

In keeping with this policy, all 113 mosques in Kampuchea were bulldozed, blown up or desecrated by being turned


into pigsties or manure stores. Copies of the Koran were burned or used as toilet paper. Although the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) government could not provide the exact death rate, it was confident that between two-thirds and three-fourths of the Cham population were wiped out.

Owing to unending labour, too little food, wretched sanitary conditions, terror and summary executions, a vast number of human lives were lost under the Democratic Kampuchea regime. But due to the lack of reliable sources, the intensity of the human suffering under the Pol Pot regime is not really known. Francois Ponchaud has written that "at the end of the year 1975, unofficial diplomatic sources put forth the figure of 8,00,000 deaths; those from the American Embassy 12,00,000 and those from welfare agencies installed in Bangkok 14,00,000". Agence France Press (AFP) suggested about two million. John Barron and Anthony Paul observed that more than 12,00,000 men, women and children died between


1975 and 1977 as a result of disease, starvation, massacres and execution.\textsuperscript{16}

The Pol Pot regime proclaimed the country's foreign policy as one of independence, peace, neutrality and non-alignment, absolutely prohibiting any country from establishing military bases in Cambodia and as against all forms of subversion from outside whether military, political, economic, cultural, social or diplomatic. Speaking at the United Nations in October 1975, Prince Sihanouk stated that Cambodia wished to be neutral and self-reliant without soliciting aid from any country. It would not belong to any power bloc and have no alliance with any power. Foreign Secretary Ieng Sary, in his speech to the UN General Assembly on 15 October 1976 proclaimed that Cambodia will

show active solidarity with an unwavering support for all movements of people's struggle for independence, freedom, democracy and social progress and against imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism, racism, Zionism and all the forms of foreign exploitation and domination.\textsuperscript{[17]}


\textsuperscript{17} Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 15 October 1976, p.H1; also see Zasloff and Mac Alister Brown, n.1, p.151.
However, the Pol Pot regime established closest relations with China. In a message congratulating the liberation of Phnom Penh, Chairman Mao Zedong said:

... the great victory scored by the Cambodian people through armed struggle is another eloquent proof that, firmly following a correct road, a weak nation can certainly defeat a strong one, and a small nation can certainly defeat a big one.\[18\]

Reaffirming the strong friendship established between China and Cambodia the *Renmin Ribao* editorial said:

The Chinese people and the Cambodian people are brotherly comrades-in-arms, close members of one family. In the long years of revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle, profound revolutionary friendship and militant solidarity have been forged between the two peoples. Our friendship is long-tested and indestructible. The Chinese people will always stand firmly on the side of the Cambodian people and resolutely support their just struggle. They will always be united, fight side by side and win victory together with the fraternal Cambodian people.\[19\]

In August 1975, at the invitation of the Chinese government Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary visited China.


\[19\] Ibid., p.19.
In the joint communique issued at the end of their visit, the two sides were determined to unite still more closely, support each other and advance together in their common struggle against colonialism, imperialism and hegemonism.20

The PRC had been the closest ally of the new regime. The only outside assistance the Khmer authorities accepted in the first year after their victory came from China. Only Chinese diplomats, journalists and photographers were permitted to travel within Cambodia. The Cambodian officials expressed appreciation for Chinese support during the revolutionary struggle and characterized the China-Cambodian relationship as one of militant solidarity and revolutionary fraternal friendship.21 This close relationship between the two was dramatized in September 1977, when Cambodia's top leaders, Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Vorn Viet and Nuon Chea paid an official visit to China. At a banquet honouring the Cambodian delegation, Chairman Hua Guo Feng publicly endorsed the Cambodian revolution by noting that the Cambodians "are not only good at destroying the old world but also good at building a new one".22

22. Ibid., p.20.
In his speech at this banquet, Pol Pot was exuberent in his praise of the wisdom of Mao Zedong, proclaiming that:

we creatively and successfully applied Mao's Thought from the time we had only empty hands.... Our people and the revolutionary people of the world deeply believe that... it (Mao's thought) is always efficacious, sharp and victorious.[23]

During this time, the Chinese broadcasts proclaimed that the Cambodians and Chinese were fighting shoulder to shoulder in the struggle against imperialism, revisionism and hegemonism.24 It was a clear indication that Cambodia was firmly in the Chinese camp in the Sino-Soviet dispute. For Cambodia, in view of the rising tensions and deteriorating relations with the Vietnamese, it was important to reinforce Chinese support to it. The Khmer communists undoubtedly saw their friendship with the Chinese as a useful protection against potential Vietnamese threats to their independence.

As regards the United States, it was being portrayed as a threat to Cambodia. In March 1977 the United States

23. Ibid., p.25.

24. For details see ibid., Vol.XIX, No.17, 23 April 1976, pp.4-7.
requested that an official delegation be allowed to visit Cambodia. The Cambodian Foreign Ministry refused to entertain such a request. The American President's concern with human rights led him to condemn the rule of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. He called the Khmer Rouge "the worst violators of human rights in the world". In September 1977, Richard Holbrooke, the Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs issued a statement which read:

.... Based on all the evidence available to us, we have concluded that Cambodian authorities have flagrantly and systematically violated most basic human rights. They have ordered or permitted extensive killings, forcibly relocated the urban population, brutally treated supporters of the previous government, and suppressed personal and political freedoms.[26]

While the Pol Pot regime maintained and developed close ties with China, there was no corresponding move towards developing friendly relations with the Soviet Union. Soviet Union's requests to open an embassy at


Phnom Penh were turned down by the new regime. With the new government in Cambodia the last diplomatic link ended when the Cambodian attache in Moscow was recalled in May 1977.

After a period of self-imposed isolation, the Cambodian leaders began to expand their diplomatic relations and to invite selected visitors. By the end of 1976, nine countries - China, North Korea, Vietnam (until December 1977), Laos, Cuba, Albania, Rumania, Yugoslavia and Egypt - had permanent representation in Phnom Penh. Although diplomatic relations were established with Malaysia, Peru, Philippines, Burma, Mexico, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Singapore, Greece, Japan, the United Kingdom, Finland and Austria, it kept diplomatic missions only in Peking, Pyongyang and Hanoi. Thus, on the diplomatic plane, the Pol Pot regime had largely symbolic relations.

The Border war and the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia

Cambodia again drew the attention of the world in 1977-78 when border tensions with Vietnam developed culminating in the invasion of the country by the latter in late 1978. The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia was the result of tensions created by the Cambodians themselves.
However, till then Vietnam considered the genocidal policy followed by the Khmer Rouge as an internal affair and it had showed willingness to maintain good relations with Cambodia.

Border tensions between Vietnam and Cambodia were not over vast tracts of land, but over the precise delineation and demarcation of a land border. The disputed area appeared to be less than 100 square kilometers of a land border. There was also a territorial dispute concerning the maritime border. However, this territorial dispute involved only territorial waters and not offshore islands. At sea, both Vietnam and Cambodia had agreed in principle on the existence of Brevie Line. The disagreement came over whether this line would determine the division of territorial waters or not. The Khmer Rouge accepted the existence of Brevie Line both in the case of islands as well as maritime boundary. The Vietnamese, however, could not agree with the Cambodians that the Brevie Line be considered as the maritime boundary. They proposed the Brevie Line should be used only to settle the question of ownership of the offshore islands and that the maritime boundary be drawn so as to provide them easier naval

access to Phou Quoc island in return for their concessions on the waters lying south west of Phou Quoc. These differences between Vietnam and Cambodia emerged at a conference in Phnom Penh in May 1976. Cambodia considered that negotiations with Vietnam could not involve any mutual give and take policy. Rather they could involve Vietnamese acceptance or rejection of border proposals presented by the Cambodian side on a take it or leave it basis. 28

In the first three weeks of January 1977, the Cambodian forces started attacking civilian settlements in six Vietnamese border provinces, penetrating above four kilometers into Vietnamese An Giang province. The border attacks were further intensified in April 1977, and by May the Cambodian side had broken off all meetings between border liaison committees. The Vietnamese retaliated by counter-attacks. However, on 7 June they tried to initiate negotiations to end the fighting. But the Phnom Penh regime rejected the offer on 18 June, saying that such talks should only be held when the situation returned to normal and there were no further border conflicts. 29


Fighting continued at intervals throughout mid-1977. Cambodian troops shelled Ha Tien on 11 June and 14 June and Chau Don on 16 and 18 July. In September Cambodian forces attacked all six border provinces along a 240 kilometers in the Vietnam territory. Vietnam again retaliated by launching a major counter-attack on Cambodia in December 1977. It was aimed at putting pressure on Phnom Penh to negotiate a border settlement. But on 31 December 1977 the Cambodian Foreign Ministry announced the suspension of diplomatic relations with Vietnam. Meanwhile, the Cambodians alleged that Vietnam was seeking to establish an Indo-Chinese Federation under Vietnamese domination. But the Vietnamese claimed that they only desired to have a special relationship with Cambodia.

On 5 February 1978 Vietnam announced a new peace plan. It proposed a mutual withdrawal of forces to lines five kilometers from the border, immediate negotiations for a non-aggression treaty and international guarantees and supervision to be negotiated by the two sides.

30. Heder, n.27, p.42.
31. Ibid., p.35.
However, the Pol Pot regime was in no mood to listen. It ignored the proposals altogether. On 6 June 1978, again the Socialist Republic of Vietnam reiterated the above three points and proposed another two more points for negotiation. It called for the issue of a joint statement to cease all hostile military activities in border regions and to station their armed forces within their respective territory five kilometers from the border. Also, the representatives of Vietnam and Cambodia should meet and discuss and reach an agreement to settle the problems in relations between the two countries. The Cambodian side remained silent on this proposal and their armed forces continued attacking Vietnam.

Meanwhile, the Vietnam-Cambodian conflict became a proxy war with China backing Cambodia and the Soviet Union coming to the help of Vietnam. Indeed, China did not want a Soviet-backed Vietnam to dominate Indo-China. The Chinese leaders encouraged the Pol Pot regime into practising an extremely reactionary policy. They drove them even deeper into a policy of practising opposition to the Soviet Union, Vietnam and other socialist countries, provoking tension with the neighbouring countries so as to

33. Ibid.
force them to depend on China against the Soviet Union and Vietnam. In fact, the Cambodian forces were playing the Chinese game. Vietnam considered the Cambodian attacks on its territory as indirect Chinese aggression.

When it became clear to Vietnam that a conflict with the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia was inevitable and that a Chinese intervention on the Khmer Rouge's behalf could not be ruled out, Hanoi became interested in 1978 in acquiring a guarantee of support from the Soviet Union in the form of a friendship pact. "We took a leaf out of India's book", a Vietnamese official later told the Indian Ambassador in Hanoi. Accordingly, in November 1978, Vietnam entered into a Friendship Treaty with the Soviet Union. Hanoi's explanation for entering into the treaty was the Chinese threat. However, Hanoi was a reluctant ally of the Soviet Union. Actually, it was the Americans and the Chinese who were pushing Hanoi into


35. For the text of the Treaty see Vietnam, Vol.XIX, No.4, December 1978, pp.3-5. As per Article VI of the treaty both countries agreed that if threatened with attack, they would immediately consult each other with a view to eliminating the threat, and safeguarding peace and security of the two countries.

Moscow's embrace. This increased the chances of a showdown between Cambodia and Vietnam and dimmed the prospects of resolving their differences.

China's relations with Vietnam had already begun to deteriorate. In this situation China began to cultivate the Pol Pot regime as a good ally in its struggle against Vietnam. It may also be remembered that ever since the early seventies, the Chinese considered Soviet expansionism in Southeast Asia as a bigger threat than American imperialism. After the communist victory of 1975 Vietnam's refusal to join China's anti-Soviet campaign caused resentment in Beijing. During this period, there was a steady deterioration in Sino-Vietnamese relations because of the dispute over the offshore islands and Vietnam's new policy toward people of ethnic Chinese origin.

Although the Vietnamese intended to overthrow the Pol Pot regime by means of an offensive of their own, they preferred to do it under the pretense of an internal uprising. In the fighting between June and September


1978, the Vietnamese troops had gained control of much Cambodian territory. They began referring to this area as a "liberated zone" controlled by a resistance movement, although it was really under Vietnamese occupation. A large number of Cambodian refugee population had sprung up in Vietnam. And from this refugee population, the Vietnamese set up in the Cambodian territory, an organisation called the Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation, under their control. The formation of this was announced on 3 December 1978 with Heng Samrin as its President and Chea Sim as the Vice President. The Central Committee of the Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation decided to found the Front's official News Agency to be called Saporamen (SPK) and the Front's Radio to be called Voice of the Kampuchean People. It adopted a political programme of which the following were the most important points: the overthrow of the reactionary Pol Pot - Ieng Sary clique, the holding of a general election for the National Assembly and adoption of a new constitution guaranteeing the people's rights, building up of mass organisations affiliated to the front, the building up of a revolutionary army, the recognition of the people's

right to work, the abolition of compulsory marriage, the eradication of illiteracy and the building up of schools and hospitals, the punishment to those guilty of crimes against the people, the pursuit of a foreign policy of peace, friendship and non-alignment, the replacement of the reactionary culture with a new culture with national and popular character, the settlements of all disputes with neighbouring countries through peaceful negotiations, and strengthening solidarity with all revolutionary and progressive forces. 40

On 25 December 1978, 1,00,000 Vietnamese troops including tank and motorised units moved into Cambodia accompanied by some 20,000 soliders of the Front whose role was mostly symbolic. By 7 January 1979, Phnom Penh fell. A People's Revolutionary Council was set up in Phnom Penh with Heng Samrin as its President. A new name was given to the state, People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) in the place of the old name Democratic Kampuchea.

Attitude of Major Powers

The crisis in Cambodia intensified the strategic rapprochement between China and the United States.

40. Ibid., pp.6-8.
It also offered China an opportunity to draw closer to the ASEAN countries. The goal was to isolate Vietnam and thus reduce its influence and that of the Soviet Union in Southeast Asia.

The Chinese reaction to the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia was to launch a one month punitive invasion of Vietnam from mid-February to mid-March 1979. It also supported the Khmer Rouge by supplying arms and materials to raid Cambodia from bases in Thailand. China also described Vietnam as an aggressor:

The Vietnamese aggressors have committed towering crimes. This is a flagrant act of armed aggression against Kampuchea by the Vietnamese hegemonists. It is a grave provocation to the countries in Southeast Asia, the Asia-Pacific region and all the world, and also to peace-loving people all over the world ... it is to serve the Soviet Union in its expansionist strategic plan that the Vietnamese authorities have invaded Kampuchea so recklessly. Vietnam's attempt to annex Kampuchea by force and set up an "Indo-Chinese Federation" under its control is a major step in pushing its own regional hegemony and an important part of the Soviet drive for hegemony in Asia and the Far East.[41]

The Chinese Vice Premier, Deng Xiao Ping said:

Vietnam has become the Cuba of Asia, or the agent of Soviet social imperialism in the Far East. The Vietnamese authorities have wild ambitions. Having brought Laos under their control by force of arms, they further attempt with Soviet backing to annex Kampuchea and establish a colonial empire under their complete domination called the "Indo-Chinese Federation". To meet the needs of the Soviet hegemonists, they would proceed to expand into Southeast Asia and realize their fond dream of regional hegemony.[42]

The public reaction of various ASEAN countries to the development in Cambodia was very strong and sharp. They accused Vietnam of committing aggression against Cambodia and feared that their attempt to turn Southeast Asia into a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) would suffer a serious setback because of the aggressive policy of Vietnam. 43 They called for an immediate withdrawal of Vietnamese troops. To discuss the Cambodian problem, the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN countries met at Bangkok on 12 and 13 January 1979. As chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Mochtar Kusumaatmadja said that the ASEAN countries were greatly


43. The concept of ZOPFAN was first promulgated by Malaysia in January 1968 and adopted by ASEAN in the form of Kuala Lumpur Declaration of 1971.
perturbed at the escalation and expansion of the armed conflict between the two Indo-China states and expressed great concern over the implications of this development and its impact on the peace, security and stability of Southeast Asia. A joint statement issued by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN who met at Bangkok observed:

The ASEAN Foreign Ministers affirmed the right of the Kampuchean people to determine their future by themselves free from interference or influence from outside powers in the exercise of their rights to self-determination. Towards this end, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers called for the immediate and total withdrawal of the foreign forces from Kampuchean territory.[45]

In addition to this, the ASEAN countries individually condemned Vietnam. In the UN Security Council debate on 13 January 1979 the Malaysian representative to the United Nations, Zaiton Ibrahim appreciated the Council's decision to consider the situation arising from the escalation of the armed conflict between Vietnam and Cambodia. He said:

... the recent developments have resulted in an escalation which has brought about an armed intervention against the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kampuchea.

44. Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Documents on the Kampuchean Problem 1979-85 (Bangkok, n.d.), p.73.

45. Ibid., p.74.
Above all, the armed intervention constitutes a serious violation of the fundamental principles which govern peaceful relations between nations. Clearly, armed intervention by any country ... cannot be condoned: it is to be deplored by all.\[46]\n
Similarly, speaking at the United Nations Security Council, the permanent representative of Singapore, Tommy T.B. Koh said:

My Government strictly upholds the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states .... The evidence is irrefutable that the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has sent its armed forces across an international border into Democratic Kampuchea and intervened in the affairs of that country .... No other country has a right to topple the Government of Democratic Kampuchea, however, badly that Government may have treated its people.\[47]\n
Another leading ASEAN member, Thailand also raised its voice against Vietnam in the world body. Speaking at


47. Ibid., p.5.
the United Nations on 15 January 1979, its representative Guna Kasem said:

Thailand views with growing distress and concern the escalation and enlargement of the armed conflict between our two close neighbours, a conflict which may ... become a threat to the peace, security and stability of Asia and, in particular, of Southeast Asia.[48]

The Philippines also believed that Cambodia was a victim of aggression. Its permanent representative, Alejandra D. Yango at the United Nations stated:

We of ASEAN are convinced that there was entry or introduction of foreign forces into Kampuchea which eventually led to the fall of Phnom Penh. The entry or introduction of foreign forces into Kampuchea, in our view is against the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.[49]

The Indonesian representative at the United Nations Chaidir Anwar Sani said that the outbreak of hostilities between Vietnam and Cambodia was a severe setback to the

49. Ibid., p.9.
hopes of ASEAN to make Southeast Asia a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality. He also said:

Indonesia deplores the fact that it has not been possible for the two close neighbours which have made their heaviest sacrifices to defend their sovereignty and independence to settle their differences through peaceful negotiations .... Indonesia has always been of the view that relations between states should be based upon the strict observance of the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Bandung Declaration.[50]

The United States had true vital interests in Southeast Asia - raw materials, markets and military bases. But the presence of a pro-Soviet and pro-Vietnamese government in Cambodia in no way threatened these interests. In spite of this, it supported the China-ASEAN line on Cambodia in order to consolidate its relations with these countries. Opposition to the PRK was also a part of its general anti-Soviet policy. Andrew Young, the permanent representative of the United States to the United Nations said on 15 January 1979 that whatever the origin or the character of the so-called Salvation Front, which now claimed to govern Kampuchea,

50. Ibid., p.7.
there could be no question that Vietnam had conquered its neighbour. The claim of the Salvation Front was that it had the support of the Cambodian people. The facts were that it now ruled, thanks to Vietnamese bayonets, and that there had been no effort to determine the wishes of that people. The United States called upon all countries interested in peace, stability and an independant state system within Southeast Asia to counsel restraint on the parties to the conflict, press urgently for withdrawal of all foreign forces from Cambodia, act to ensure the integrity of all frontiers in the East Asian region and try to find ways to avoid any expansion of the geographic area of conflict.\textsuperscript{51}

While the United States, China and the ASEAN states supported the ousted Pol Pot regime, Soviet Union and its East European allies supported the PRK regime in Cambodia. On 9 January 1979, the Soviet Union recognized the PRK and, in a message to Heng Samrin, described it as the sole legal government of Cambodia and legitimate representative of the will and interests of the Cambodians.\textsuperscript{52} The Soviet Union did not support the


\textsuperscript{52} Pravda, 10 January 1979, p.1; also see Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol.XXXI, No.2, 7 February 1979, p.2.
complaint made by Democratic Kampuchea about aggression by Vietnam and opposed it when the matter came to the Security Council on 15 January 1979.

India and Cambodia

When the Khmer Rouge forces took over power in Phnom Penh, the political situation in India was moving from bad to worse with the result that the Indira Gandhi Government declared a national emergency in June 1975 following political chaos and uncertainty.\(^53\) In fact, there was no parallel between the situation in India and Cambodia but the Indian domestic situation tended to have a deep impact on its own foreign policy. India did not have any diplomatic relations with the Pol Pot regime even though the Government of India had requested for the same. Cambodia was not interested in it and India was the 26th country in the list according to the criteria prescribed by the Democratic Kampuchea regime for recognition.\(^54\) To them, ideology was apparently the main reason for this.\(^55\)


54. The Hindu (Madras), 27 November 1978.

55. This argument was well presented by Francois Ponchaud, n.4, p.52.
There was a total lack of ideological affinity between India and Cambodia. Moreover, the Pol Pot regime was relying on its own strength and wanted nothing from anybody. They refused all forms of foreign help because they regarded it as an unjustifiable interference in their domestic affairs. Also they considered it as an insult to their country's independence and sovereignty. This policy was borne out by other significant reactions in the same period. Their slogan during this period was "our Angkar has everything it needs". This resulted in a policy of self-imposed isolation, which led to the description of Democratic Kampuchea as the Albania of Asia.

However, India followed a policy of utmost restraint in regard to Cambodia for nearly two and a half years. Moreover, the concern for foreign policy was increasingly overshadowed by the domestic political situation in India and national emergency. The proclamation of emergency in June 1975 was the most significant event of the year in terms of human rights in Asia. The declaration followed a growing anti-corruption campaign led by Jaya Prakash Narayanan and it won support from most opposition parties.

56. Ibid.

57. The Hindu (Madras), 31 July 1976.
After the proclamation of emergency the government took severe measures. On the day of declaration itself, strict censorship was imposed and the leaders of the joint opposition parties who had demanded the Prime Minister's resignation were arrested. Thousands of members of opposition parties and Gandhian workers were arrested after a government order banning 26 right and leftwing political groups. Most political prisoners were held under preventive detention legislation, such as the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) and the Defence of India Act.

Immediately after the emergency declaration, Amnesty international made a public appeal to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to free all political prisoners arrested under the MISA. In a cable, the Amnesty International said the arrests constituted a "departure from the long standing traditions of democracy in India". It even proposed to Foreign Minister Y.B. Chavan that an Amnesty International mission should visit India to discuss the measures taken under the emergency. But no reply had been received by the Amnesty International. Moreover, in August 1976 in an interview with Socialist India,


59. Ibid.
Indira Gandhi charged that the Amnesty International was very active in the "hate India campaign".60

However, the internal situation returned to normalcy by the beginning of 1977. By early 1977, the Government issued instructions to all 22 states to start releasing detainees and allow public meetings in preparation for the elections.61 During this time, the official interpretation in India was that emergency had no impact whatever on India's foreign policy. But it is clear that the political situation at home did have a bearing on foreign policy and here we note that no official statements came out during this time about the genocidal policy of the Pol Pot regime. Perhaps, the fact that India's human rights record was coming under criticism made India reluctant to criticize other countries on this score.

Meanwhile during 1975-76 India was trying in a very small way to improve its relations with China. In April 1976 India had decided to send K.R. Narayanan as the new Ambassador to China. Following the government announcement there ended a frozen relationship of

60. Ibid., p.130.

fourteen years between India and China. Foreign Minister Y.B. Chavan said that it was India's understanding that its initiative would be followed by a similar move by the Chinese government and China did send an Ambassador to India. In his first official announcement the Chinese Ambassador stated that the normalization of Sino-Indian relations through joint efforts was in full accord with the interests of the peoples of the two countries and he hoped that the friendship between the two would grow further and the bilateral relations would improve. Perhaps the efforts to improve relations made India unwilling to criticize the human rights violations of China's ally, Democratic Kampuchea.

While New Delhi was conscious of the sharp differences among Hanoi, Khmer Rouge and the Chinese Communisty Party, given the common struggle against a common enemy, it believed that a new era of Indo-Chinese friendship would emerge and Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos would work unitedly for the rehabilitation of the war-ravaged economies of the region. The ideological aberrations of the Khmer Rouge, the insensitive violence that the new regime employed against its own citizens in the name of total revolution, the attack on the Vietnamese nationals in Cambodia, and Vietnam-Cambodia and Cambodia-
Thailand border clashes, though not completely unexpected, became shocking developments. New Delhi's keen desire to normalise diplomatic relations with Phnom Penh can be understood from the fact that it had requested for diplomatic relations. However, for Phnom Penh this was not at all a priority item. A perusal of New Delhi's official statements during 1975-77 is also extremely revealing because hardly any mention was made about the tumultuous developments in Cambodia. The absence of Indian diplomats and newspaper correspondents who could report reliably on day to day developments and also New Delhi's inability to forecast the immediate future were all factors for its silence on Cambodian developments. It may also be of interest to highlight the fact that when India was under an emergency during 1975-77 the priority of the Indira Gandhi government was consolidation of political power within the country, and hence foreign policy questions seldom received the attention they deserved. Probably this was the real reason for India's silence, not its own human rights record or the rather weak effort to improve relations with China.

Janata Government's Foreign Policy

In March 1977, the Janata Party led by Morarji Desai assumed power in New Delhi following the general election and thereby ended thirty years of Congress rule.
Soon after the assumption of office, Prime Minister Desai said that foreign policy should not be based on the fear that its pursuit might annoy others. An honest, straightforward and principled approach was always the best guarantee of securing national interests. 62

He also added that the main purpose of India's foreign policy was to establish world peace and from this followed the policy of non-alignment. He clarified that, the foreign policy of India would be fully non-aligned with no suspicion of any alignment with anybody. India would not have any special relations with any country. 63

During the Lok Sabha debate on 29 June 1977 Foreign Minister A.B. Vajpayee gave a detailed exposition of the Janata Government's non-aligned policy and its view of "genuine non-alignment":

Non-alignment is not the policy of an individual or a party. This is based on national consensus .... The policy of non-alignment is, in fact, a logical and essential extension of the national independence in the field of international affairs .... We affirm

63. Ibid.
this old tenet of policy because non-alignment recognizes that in today's nuclear world, war or its inevitability must be ruled out. We cherish our national independence, but reject the need to consign national defence to a committed or dependant military or ideological arrangement. Non-alignment frees a nation from the pressures to borrow foreign models or adopt other ideologies which may be alien to a nation's civilisation or its ethos.[64]

The general expectation in India during this period was that under the Janata regime, India's relations with the United States which had been following an uneven course during the last 32 years would improve and Indo-Soviet relations would suffer a serious setback. It is true that the Janata government tried to improve relations with the United States. On 23 July 1977, the United States Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher visited New Delhi and held talks with A.B. Vajpayee and H.M. Patel on bilateral and international questions. Vajpayee visited America in October 1977 and he met President Carter and Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance. During his visit the two sides expressed hopes for an increasing support and understanding between two

64. Vajpayee's statement in the Lok Sabha, 29 June 1977. FAR (New Delhi), Vol.XXIII, No.6, June 1977, p.90.
governments and peoples. Speaking at the third meeting of
the India-United States Joint Commission in New Delhi on 3
January 1978, Vajpayee said:

On the basis of shared ideals and
complementary purposes, our countries
are poised for better understanding and
intensified bilateral co-operation as
well as for harmonising our efforts in
the resolution of major international
problems.[65]

But during his visit to India in 1978 the American
President Jimmy Carter and his top advisers showed a lack
of adroitness and fineness in the actual handling of
sensitive problems like nuclear safeguards and the non-
proliferation treaty. Also Carter was reported to have
passed over in silence Morarji Desai's suggestion to keep
the Indian Ocean free from power rivalries. Carter had
nothing positive to offer because he was unable to make
any firm commitment on the long-term supply of uranium for
Tarapur.

In June 1978 Desai visited the United States and he
used this occasion to express the hope that the big power
military presence in the Indian Ocean would soon be
withdrawn. But there was no resolution of the Indo-

American differences on nuclear safeguards, non-proliferation or resumption of uranium supplies to Tarapur. Moreover, India's relations with the Soviet Union did not undergo any significant change. A few weeks after Janata party assumed office in April 1977, Soviet Foreign Minister A.A. Gromyko visited India. The joint Indo-Soviet communique issued before the Soviet Foreign Minister left New Delhi on 27 April reaffirmed their faith in the spirit of the 1971 treaty and noted with 'satisfaction' their 'identical or close' positions on many important world problems. The visit of Gromyko removed the apprehensions of many people that the Janata party would have a new look at India's foreign policy especially its relations with the Soviet Union. In a foreign policy speech in Lok Sabha, Vajpayee declared:

we have in fact no reason to doubt that the quality of relations between India and the Socialist countries of Europe have in any way suffered with the change of government; on the contrary, the logic of mutual benefit and a common interest in peaceful co-existence and international stability promises even closer economic cooperation in the future.[66]

On 14 July 1977, the Lok Sabha debated Indo-Soviet relations against the background of the Soviet Asian

66. Ibid., Vol.XXIII, No.6, June 1977, p.93.
collective security proposal. This time, Desai spelt out an equidistant approach towards the superpowers. He sought clarification from the Soviet Union. He said that if the plan meant the formation of another bloc or alliance, India would not be interested in it. 67 Desai also visited Soviet Union in October 1977. In his speech at Moscow, Desai said that this relationship was not based on personalities or ideologies but on equality, national interest and common purposes. Both nations recognised that they had keen interest in peace in the world and both would work for international stability and cooperation. 68 Desai's visit helped to underscore the continuity of Indo-Soviet relations.

Soviet Premier, Kosygin visited India in March 1979. The talks covered a wide range of issues especially the situation in Vietnam. The joint communique issued at the end of his visit called for immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of Chinese troops from Vietnamese territory. 69 But it was conspicuously silent on the issue of Cambodia. Reviewing the situation in Southeast


68. FAR (New Delhi), Vol.XXIII, No.10, October 1977, p.198.

69. For details see ibid., Vol.XXV, No.3, March 1979, pp.69-73.
Asia, Desai and Kosygin considered it necessary to exert further efforts in the interest of strengthening peace in Asia, developing cooperation among all Asian countries on the basis of the principles of sovereignty, equality and independence, non-use of force, inviolability of frontiers and territorial integrity of states.

Desai again visited Moscow in June 1979 to discuss the strengthening of bilateral relations with the Soviet Union. At that time the leaders of both these countries expressed their concern over the happenings in Afghanistan and Cambodia.

Being committed to "genuine non-alignment" and "beneficial bilateralism" the Janata government initiated early efforts to normalise relations with China. While delivering a speech in the Lok Sabha on 29 June 1977, Foreign Minister Vajpayee said:

Based on the old Five Principles, we must have as our goal the forging of beneficial relations as is appropriate between the two large Asian countries like India and China.[70]

70. FAR (New Delhi), n.64, p.93.
In all speeches and statements, Vajpayee repeated that India would continue its endeavour to normalise and develop the relations of the two countries on the basis of the five principles of co-existence and good neighbourliness. The Janata Government was much more strongly committed to improving relations with China than its predecessor.

The Chinese too were keen to improve their relations with India because they wanted to isolate the Soviet Union. They also wanted to establish close links with the United States. It may be remembered that on 16 December 1978, simultaneous announcements were made in Washington and in Beijing by President Carter and Chairman Hua Kuo Feng that both countries had decided to establish diplomatic relations as of 1 January 1979. 71

The zenith of India-China relations during the Janata period was in February 1979, when Vajpayee paid an official visit to China. Vajpayee said that this visit would present an opportunity for him to get to know the leaders of China personally and for the two sides to know each other's outlook and thinking. While he was still

there, China attacked Vietnam on 17 February 1979 and he returned to India, a day before the scheduled date for return trip.

Janata Government and the Cambodian Problem

At the outset, the Janata Government's position on the Cambodian question was non-committal and even-handed. It did not give recognition either to the Democratic Kampuchean regime of the Khmer Rouge or People's Republic of Kampuchea regime. In Parliament, the reactions by members to the various developments in Southeast Asia were mixed. When Vietnam intervened in Cambodia and set up a new Government there, some members of the Indian Parliament were in favour of the new realities in Southeast Asia, while some others openly denounced it. Soon after the establishment of PRK regime, Prime Minister Morarji Desai said in a press conference in New Delhi that the new regime in Phnom Penh would be recognised upon a receipt of official communication, or if it sought recognition by India.72

However, Foreign Minister A.B. Vajpayee stated in the Lok Sabha on 22 February 1979:

Our policy is to accord recognition to a government that is in effective control of a country. The situation in Kampuchea still appears to be unsettled and we are continuing to keep it under watch.[73]

It may be noted that to Vajpayee the criterion determining recognition must be "effective control". The opinion at the consultative committee of the MPs was in favour of recognition on the following grounds: (1) the Pol Pot regime had committed various atrocities and it was hated by the people and its overthrow was popularly welcomed; and (2) recognition would facilitate efforts at integrating the new government into the mainstream of Asian politics.74

In the Lok Sabha speech of 22 February 1979 Vajpayee expressed regret on Vietnam-Cambodia conflict and said:

... when Vietnam and its neighbours, Cambodia and Laos who were ravished, are trying to utilise every ounce of their energies and every resource available to create a better life for their people, they are facing armed conflict ....[75]

73. India, Lok Sabha, Debates, Vol.XXII, No.4, 22 February 1979, col.46.
74. Chakraborti, n.72, p.64.
75. Debates, n.73, col.369.
However, the recognition question came up for discussion in Parliament again and again. K. Lakkappa, an opposition Member of Parliament, sought clarification from the government about the delay in recognising the PRK regime in spite of the efforts made by the MPs and views expressed by the people of this country. He said that it was a revolutionary government and a people's government that had been created. He even doubted whether India's foreign policy was not tilted in favour of imperialist forces.76

In reply to that Foreign Minister said:

No tilt either towards West or towards East. The Government has been elected on the mandate of genuine non-alignment and we are strictly adhering to it .... The matter (of recognition) is under consideration. Out of the 150 members of the UN, only 13 nations have recognised the new government. But our decision does not depend on that. We are receiving reports from Kampuchea that the situation is not yet settled. We are keeping a watch over the situation.[77]

76. Ibid., col.26-27.
77. Ibid., col.27.
Eduardo Faleiro, another Member of Parliament expressed suspicion and asked whether the Indian policy towards the new Cambodian regime was influenced by pressures from Beijing and Washington. In reply Vajpayee said:

There is no pressure either from Peking or from Washington or from countries friendly to the new government of Kampuchea. The government will take its own decision. The decision will be taken when we will be assured that the new government is in effective control of the situation and when there is no instability in Kampuchea.[79]

Several Members of Parliament alleged that India's refusal to recognise the new government was due to its policy of appeasing China. The Foreign Minister dismissed the allegation as "baseless".80

Thus the Janata government was opposed to giving recognition either to Pol Pot or Heng Samrin Government and adopted a neutral stand on the issue. The Janata leaders always felt that Indian foreign policy under Indira Gandhi had tilted heavily in favour of the Soviet Union and its allies. Desai and Vajpayee argued that

78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., col.28.
80. Ibid., Vol.XXIV, No.30, 2 April 1979, col.47.
India's policy had to be shifted back to "genuine non-alignment" as between the two superpowers and beneficial bilateralism with its neighbours. In fact the Indian attitude towards the Cambodian question revealed two things: first, it demonstrated that they were distancing themselves from the Soviet policy towards China and second, it showed their intention of pursuing a policy of friendliness towards China. Not taking sides on the Cambodian issue was, therefore, a signal to China that India was aware of Chinese sensitivities on this issue as well as a dramatic demonstration of New Delhi's independence from Moscow.81

China’s Attack on Vietnam and Indian Reaction to it

Another notable event during the Janata regime, which put India's Southeast Asia policy once again in a serious dilemma was the Chinese aggression on Vietnam in February 1979. The Chinese invasion of Vietnam stirred anti-Chinese feelings in Indian minds particularly for two reasons: first, it was launched when India's External Affairs Minister A.B. Vajpayee was in China on an official visit. The timing of the attack was a great embarrassment

for the Indian government and Vajpayee had to cut short his visit as an act of protest. New Delhi interpreted the timing of the Chinese attack as a deliberate Chinese attempt to spoil India’s relations with Vietnam and humiliate India. Second, the Chinese invasion of Vietnam reminded policy makers in New Delhi of the Chinese incursion into India in October 1962 to teach India a lesson. 82

Immediately after the Chinese invasion of Vietnam, Morarji Desai expressed his profound shock and distress at the outbreak of hostilities in the northern border of Vietnam and stressed the urgent need for the withdrawal of Chinese forces from Vietnam. 83 Vajpayee described China as an aggressor and called for withdrawal of Chinese forces from Vietnamese territory. Vajpayee said:

All countries and particularly, the great powers have to put pressure on the PRC to withdraw from the Vietnamese territory .... An aggressor cannot be allowed to enjoy fruits of his aggression.[84]

82. Ibid., p.37.
83. Times of India (New Delhi), 19 February 1979.
84. Debates, see n.73, col.274.
Vajpayee had at first avoided describing the Chinese attack as aggression. But in his response to repeated interruptions by Satyanarayan Rao, Samar Guha and J. Rameswara Rao who wanted him to categorically state whether China had committed aggression or not, he said: "The PRC is guilty of committing aggression against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam". 85

After the Chinese invasion of Vietnam, the Soviet representative in the United Nations, Kharlamov said:

The incursion of Chinese troops into Vietnam represents a flagrant act of aggression. The actions of the Peking leadership run counter to the principle of the United Nations and flagrantly violate international law. The invasion of Vietnam is one more step towards the implementation by Peking of its expansionist plans in South East Asia. It once again shows how irresponsible is the attitude of the Chinese leadership with regard to the fate of international peace and security.[86]

Similarly, the Indian representative at the United Nations, Rikhi Jaipal said:

My country is totally opposed to the concept of punitive military action, which is fraught with great peril for stability and international relations

85. Ibid., col.370.
.... It is a violation of the Charter of the United Nations for one State to take punitive action against another and to usurp the powers and functions of the Security Council when the Council is inhibited by the veto from taking action .... The system of collective security envisaged by the Charter does not permit unilateral punitive action, and the exercise of the right of self-defence cannot possibly extend to punitive measures .... It cannot but be a matter of concern and regret that Vietnam and Kampuchea should have been subjected to armed conflicts involving outside forces.[87]

However, India's anger at the Chinese invasion did not cause New Delhi to support the PRK regime during the Janata period, because of the need to improve relations with China and to maintain equidistance from the Soviet Union and the United States. Moreover, the demand that China withdraw from Vietnam was a continuation of the concept of Indo-China as an area of peace where outside forces should not interfere. Again, according to this concept, the Indo-Chinese countries should themselves not interfere in each other's affairs. And it will be noticed that Rikhi Jaipal did express regret at the Vietnamese involvement in the Cambodian conflict, although China was his main target.

Cambodia at the NAM and United Nations and India's Policy

After the Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia, the non-aligned countries took more interest in the problem. The Co-ordinating Bureau of the Non-aligned countries held its first extraordinary meeting at the end of January 1979 in Maputo, Mozambique. Cambodia was not a member of the Bureau but in accordance with earlier practice Cambodia could join with 24 other members of the Movement which decided to send observers to the meeting. India did not oppose the seating of the Pol Pot regime as an observer. India, however, suggested that the Cambodian issue should not be discussed in the meeting because it would divert the conference from its assigned objective - a discussion on the situation in Southern Africa and an expression of solidarity with the liberation movements there.88 On the eve of the Colombo ministerial meeting (June 4-9, 1979) of the Co-ordinating Bureau, Morarji Desai sent Dinesh Singh as a special envoy to visit Southeast Asian countries in order to explain why India had refrained from recognizing the new Cambodian regime. He also wanted to avert the threat of a sharp division of opinion within the Co-ordinating Bureau over the rival claims to Cambodian representation. However, at the regular Ministerial

Meeting of the non-aligned nations which was held in Colombo, the question of Cambodia became a highly divisive issue. This time both Ieng Sary, Pol Pot's Foreign Minister and Hun Sen, Heng Samrin's Foreign Minister, arrived, each claiming a seat as an observer. In the Movement, the main protagonists in the Bureau in favour of Hun Sen were Cuba and Vietnam. On the other side were the Yugoslavs. They were supported by Indonesia and by two more ASEAN members, Malaysia and Singapore, which feared Vietnam becoming a dominant regional power. India maintained a strict neutrality on the issue of Cambodia instead of coming out decisively in favour of any faction. In fact, India would have preferred to keep both the governments of Cambodia out, though Pol Pot's representative was actually allowed to attend the meeting without the right to speak.

By mid-1979, there was a change of Government in India in the wake of a series of political events. As a result, Charan Singh became the new caretaker Prime Minister with Shyam Nandan Mishra as the External Affairs Minister. The change of government did not bring about any change in the policy towards the Cambodian problem. When the sixth NAM meeting was held in September 1979 at Havana the Cambodian problem came up again. However, Cuba as
chairman, took a decision to keep the Cambodian seat vacant. Some of the delegates left Havana annoyed at the way the Cubans had handled the summit. At the summit India also took a position similar to that of Cuba. In an address, External Affairs Minister Shyam Nandan Mishra reiterated the traditional Indian goal in regard to Indo-China:

Southeast Asia is once more troubled and threatened by foreign involvement. The people of Indo-China have suffered enough in their struggle for freedom because of intervention and destruction.... The seminal fact that stands out is that the region calls for a return to the search for stability through mutual confidence and regional cooperation. Such stability will never come unless there is respect for the personality and independence of every state and willing co-operation amongst them.[90]

Consistently with its stand in the non-aligned movement, India at the United Nations General Assembly session in late September 1979 voted against seating the Pol Pot delegation without supporting its replacement with the Heng Samrin delegation. Speaking at the United

89. For example Burma.

90. Address Delivered At the Sixth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-aligned Countries. Havana 3-9 September 1979 (La Habana, 1980), p.285; also see FAR (New Delhi), Vol.XXV, No.9, September 1979, p.177.
Nations, the Indian representative B.C. Mishra said that the non-aligned movement also faced a similar problem about Cambodia. 91 Again on 22 September 1979, he defended the Indian position saying:

There was a repeated argument that if we were to seat the new regime of Kampuchea in this Assembly we would be condoning intervention in the affairs of one state by other state .... India has not subscribed to the proposal to seat the new regime in Kampuchea in this Assembly. But at the same time, those very representatives who argue that we should not condone intervention go on to say that they are not condoning the atrocities of the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea.[92]

This comment shows sensitivity to the Pol Pot regime's genocidal policy.

Noting with grave concern the armed conflict in Cambodia, the United Nations General Assembly included the Cambodian situation on its agenda. On 12 November 1979 India proposed a draft resolution in the United Nations which provided for a conference between the states of the region to discuss all issues which had given rise to tensions in Southeast Asia. According to India, by


leaving out the great powers such a conference could meet the genuine national needs of the countries concerned. In paragraph two, the draft resolution called upon all other states not to take any steps which would hinder the convening of the conference or vitiate the atmosphere for its successful conclusion. Paragraph three requested the United Nations Secretary General to render all assistance to facilitate the convening of the conference. 93 However, on 14 November 1979, the United Nations General Assembly voted in favour of an International Conference on Kampuchea proposed by 30 countries including the five ASEAN states. India withdrew its draft resolution of 12 November. On 14 November 1979 proposal voting was 91 in favour, 21 against and 23 abstentions. India was among the countries that abstained. 94 This proposal had a strong anti-Vietnamese and anti-PRK flavour. In view of the catastrophic record of the Pol Pot regime, and the need to maintain equidistance from both the United States and the Soviet Union, India was unwilling to endorse it. Moreover, consistently with its concept of an area of peace, India would have preferred a conference where great power influence would be carefully excluded, enabling the Southeast Asian countries to resolve their differences by themselves.

93. Ibid., A/34/L/38, 12 November 1979.

In sum, the political situation in Cambodia following the capture of power by Khmer Rouge forces did not suggest any improvement in the living conditions of the people. The new regime only perpetuated the agonies of Cambodians which had been exacerbated with the launching of "ultra radical" measures. A look at the official statements of India reveals that the Indira Government did not react to these developments in the manner it used to in the past. One explanation could be that the political situations in India was also not conducive to make critical remarks about the human rights situation in Cambodia. Moreover, during 1975-77, the priority of the Indira Gandhi government was consolidation of political power within the country and hence foreign policy questions seldom received the attention they deserved.

The Janata Government which succeeded the Congress Government in India, however, brought in concepts such as "genuine non-alignment", and "good neighbourliness" to rationalise its foreign policy strategy. Hence India's efforts to improve relations with the United States and China should be viewed in this context. This had definite implications for India's Cambodia policy which reflected in its "non-committal" approach on the question of
recognition of the government in Phnom Penh. All along, New Delhi strictly adhered to the policy of neutrality in regard to this issue, without favouring either factions. Moreover, in tune with its long-sustained goal of seeking an area of peace in the region, India opted for a regional conference of Southeast Asian countries to resolve the Cambodian question free from the pulls and pressures of great powers.