DIPLOMATIC MANAGEMENT OF THE CRISSES: THE STATE ACTORS (REGIONAL AND GLOBAL POWERS)

Force and diplomacy are the major instruments employed by the nation-states to achieve their foreign policy objectives. In the process of furthering their national interests, the nation-states, with varying power and objectives, sometimes find themselves in a conflictual situation with each other. In the recent past, the regional crises which had their origins in either local or external factors, received sustained support or opposition from the extra-regional powers resulting in their prolongation. The Afghanistan and the Kampuchean crises fall into such a category.

This chapter deals with the role and influence of the regional and global powers on the diplomatic management of the crises in Afghanistan and Kampuchea. The state actors include Afghanistan, Kampuchea, the Soviet Union, Vietnam, the United States, China and Thailand. The broad parameters of the study include the states' foreign policy objectives, employment of various techniques such as aid, arms transfer, propaganda, support to the insurgent groups and other proposals put forward outside the regional organisations and the United Nations.
THE AFGHANISTAN CRISIS

(i) Afghanistan and the Soviet Union

The despatch of the Soviet troops to Afghanistan on 24 December, 1979 was considered to be a serious crisis by the international community. Justifying the intervention, the Soviet leadership:

- charged that "external imperialist forces formed a direct collusion with the internal counter revolutionary forces" to push Afghanistan off its "chosen road" of socialist development;
- claimed that the internal reactionaries were receiving "unlimited backing" in weapons, equipment and money from the United States, China and other countries;
- linked the United States to a broad range of subversive activities in association with Pakistan, China and Egypt directed against the Kabul regime;
- declared that the Soviet Union made no secret that it would not permit Afghanistan to be "turned into a bridgehead" for "imperialist aggression" against the U.S.S.R;
- asserted that the Afghan government again made an "insistent request" that the Soviet Union provide "immediate aid and support in the struggle against external aggression"; - declared that the Soviet
government, acting under the terms of its 1978 friendship treaty with Afghanistan and Article 51 of the U.N. charter sanctioning self-defense, sent in a "limited Soviet military contingent" to be used "exclusively for assistance in rebuffing the armed interference from the outside" and would be "completely pulled out of Afghanistan when the reason that necessitated such an action existed no longer.\footnote{Foreign Broadcasting Information Service (FBIS) (Washington), Daily Report: Soviet Union, 31 December 1979, pp. D7-D9; for reasons of intervention, see Thomas Hammond, Red Flag over Afghanistan (Boulder, 1984), pp.100-1, 130-140; and Henry S.Bradsher, Afghanistan and the Soviet Union (Durham, North Carolina, 1983), pp.153-162.}

President Leonid Brezhnev of the Soviet Union placed his case for intervention squarely on security grounds. "The unceasing armed intervention and far reaching implications of the external forces of reaction," he said, "is a real danger for Afghanistan losing its independence and being turned into an imperialistic military bridgehead on our country's southern borders."

The scholars have analysed the causes for intervention and indicated a wide range of subjective and objective factors:

(i) it was probably because of the degree of independence of President Hafizullah Amin of Afghanistan;
(ii) perception that President Khomeini's Islamic militancy in Iran and President Zia's Islamic reassertive policies in Pakistan posed an Islamic threat to the Soviet central Asia;

(iii) the decline of United States position following the fall of Shah in Iran;

(iv) American naval build up in the Gulf;

(v) the strong Sino-Pakistan relationship, and

(vi) Moscow's search for warm water ports. Most importantly, Afghanistan was the focal point for widening Soviet interests in its southern flank region and yet another case of US-Soviet rivalry in the Third World.²

However, the following two factors appear to have weighed heavily in the Soviet thinking leading to the decision to move its troops into Afghanistan: first, the need to protect Soviet interests and long standing influence in Afghanistan which the Soviet Union saw as linked to political ascendancy and survival of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), a party with Marxist-Leninist orientation, and second, the need to control the Islamic resurgence provoked by the radical

reforms pushed by the PDPA strongman, Amin. Against the backdrop of Islamic revolution in Iran, Moscow could not ignore such a potential threat to its Islamic Central Asian Republics. ³

In Afghanistan, the PDPA government issued a number of statements to the effect that the Soviet troops entered Afghanistan on invitation. The event became a subject of severe international criticism and also led to the formation of groups of Afghan Resistance (the mujahideen) which both Afghanistan and the Soviet Union had to deal with in subsequent years.

The immediate step that the Kabul regime took was to enlarge the political base of the party and the government by securing cooperation of the various sections of Afghan society. Babrak Karmal set up a National Fatherland Front which he hailed as a mass organisation of workers and peasants. ⁴ He evoked Islamic and nationalistic ethos mainly to deprive the Afghan Resistance which was claiming to be the main custodian of Islam. ⁵ This attempt was part of an overall strategy


⁴In the wake of Soviet intervention, the new PDPA leader was Babrak Karmal. Karmal was sent as an Ambassador to Czechoslovakia by the earlier regime; see FBIS, Daily Report: Soviet Union, 26 June 1981, pp.D1-D2.

based on combination of military and political approach to stabilise the regime. Another important tactic of the Kabul regime to wean Pakistan away from the rebel groups and gain legitimacy was to press persistently for direct talks with Pakistan and Iran. This demand continued as far as 1987 when President Najibullah decided to drop it. Simultaneously, the Kabul regime publicised and exposed the evil deeds of Pakistan and Afghan Resistance.\(^6\)

In the midst of worsening military situation between Kabul regime and the rebel groups, President Brezhnev made a statement in 1981 that Moscow would be prepared to withdraw the "limited contingent" of its troops only "with the agreement of the Afghanistan Government" and only when all the "counter revolutionary" activities against the PDPA regime were "completely stopped" and Afghanistan's neighbour had given "dependable guarantees" that they would respect the legitimacy of the Karmal rule and would not support the "counter revolutionary gangs" (the Soviet term for the *mujahideen*).\(^7\) This represented the fundamental position of the Soviet Union. Kabul also offered proposals in May 1980 and August 1981 to Islamabad and Teheran. The May 1980 proposals represented the first and the most significant initiatives and their content provided crucial clues to the Afghan (and

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\(^6\)White Paper published by DRA in March 1983.

perhaps Soviet Union) negotiating position. The crux of the proposal was direct bilateral dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Afghanistan and Iran. The Afghan-Pakistan dialogue was supposed to work out bilateral agreement on the "normalisation of relations" on the basis of principles of good neighbourliness and non-interference and "concrete obligations on non-admissibility on any armed or hostile activity from one's territory against the other." The proposal envisaged "appropriate political guarantees" specifically on the Soviet Union and the United States in addition to any other state agreed upon by the parties to the proposed bilateral accord to become part of the political settlement. The cessation and "guaranteed non-recurrence" of military invasion and other forms of interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan were seen as pre-requisite for the resolution of "the question of withdrawal of the Soviet limited contingent from Afghanistan." The incentive offered by the proposal was Kabul's readiness to accept voluntary return of refugees and reaffirmation of its offer of general amnesty. However, the demand for the procedure of direct bilateral dialogue betrayed the dominant concern on the part of Kabul to gain legitimacy.

A revised version of the May 1980 proposals was the August 1981 proposals. Procedurally, the new proposals contained bilateral negotiations between the

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Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA), Iran and Pakistan and also the empty chair formula --- should any country decide not to join the negotiations in the beginning; such country would be free to join the dialogue at a subsequent stage. Kabul further affirmed its acceptance of having the United Nations Secretary General attend the talks as well as its readiness to participate in an international guarantee "simultaneously and parallel" with the bilateral and trilateral talks.9

There was no headway on these proposals as Pakistan refused to talk directly with Afghanistan. Even later, no flexibility was shown by Afghanistan as to the time frame for Soviet withdrawal since Afghanistan's central concern appeared to be consolidation of its regime.

The Afghanistan situation was directly influenced by the new changes that were taking place in the Soviet foreign policy under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev. Due to the stagnant economic and political situation on the domestic front, Gorbachev enunciated new objectives that were to be pursued at the global level. These mainly included emphasis on negotiations as a method of settling disputes, arms control and disarmament, demilitarisation of the Third World through disengagement, and priority to the policy of national reconciliation in the third world in order to resolve the regional conflicts. Gorbachev aimed at improving

9ibid., p.68
the US-Soviet relations at the highest level in order to end the cold war. In pursuance of the 'new thinking' which laid emphasis on de-ideologisation, Moscow expressed readiness to scaling down of military presence on foreign territory provided that United States displayed a similar readiness. Gorbachev announced that Moscow was determined to withdraw from Afghanistan as early as possible but desired that President Najibullah (who replaced Karmal) consolidated his position in Kabul in a year's time by way of national reconciliation. Gorbachev was, however, against any change of PDPA government.

In December 1986, Najibullah enunciated the "national reconciliation programme" which was predicated on three elements: six months ceasefire with the mujahideen commencing from 15 January 1987; the offer of a dialogue with the opposition, including 'moderate political groups', monarchist and leaders of anti-state armed groups; and a possible coalition government allowing participation for the factions. The programme promised control of local administrative organs to passive and neutral armed bands provided they cooperated with the government.


12 UN Doc. A/42/83-S/18564, 7 January 1987, annexed "Declaration on National Reconciliation: Najib's Address to the Special Plenum of the PDPA Central Committee, 30-31 December 1986".
failing to mention the critical issue of withdrawal, Najib's initiative had fallen short in making a specific promise on power sharing although the PDPA did not claim a monopoly of power. The national reconciliation offer was largely confined to ceasefire and dialogue and did not attract the Afghan Resistance. The apparent emphasis on PDPA retaining the initiative and leading role in the proposed coalition government made easy for the Afghan Resistance to dismiss it as 'a sham' and 'a deception.'

While the UN-sponsored indirect talks at Geneva were being held between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and attempts made for national reconciliation, Kabul regime and the rebel groups were pursuing military objectives on the battle field with the overt and covert support of their respective partners outside the region in the hope of forcing the opponent to the defensive. Facts are available to show that Moscow's arms and aid supply multiplied since 1985 (even after Gorbachev had announced new peace initiatives) with the aim of defeating the Resistance and weakening the Pakistani bargaining position.

With the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1988 following the


Geneva Accords signed by Afghanistan and Pakistan, with USSR and USA as guarantors for non-interference, the international dimension of the crisis was no longer a matter of controversy and the focus shifted to the internal dimension i.e. the civil war.

(ii) **Pakistan and the United States**

The entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan was immediately followed by the Pakistani decision to support the insurgent groups in order to topple the Kabul government. This led to the sustenance of military conflict between the Kabul government and the Afghan Resistance. The various rebel groups and around 3.2 million refugees who supported these groups found sanctuary in Pakistan. The motives behind the Pakistani support to rebel groups were based on the threat posed to Islam by a strong communist government (of the PDPA) in Kabul supported by the Soviet Union. Pakistan's policy was based on (i) maintaining control over the supply of weapons and keeping it within a limit that did not risk provoking a violent Soviet reaction, (ii) working to prevent the emergence of an Afghan government in exile (headed by former King Zahir Shah), thus encouraging the continued fragmentation of the Resistance and (iii) retaining the political initiative.\(^1\)\(^5\) The Resistance was primarily expected to keep the military pressure on the Soviet Union

and to thwart Soviet efforts to stabilise the Karmal regime. While the Pakistanis left to the Afghan Resistance the sole responsibility of fighting the Soviet occupational forces, they kept to themselves the responsibility of diplomacy. The combined political and military pressure stood the best chance of compelling the Soviet Union to review its Afghan policy.

With the direct intervention of President Zia of Pakistan, the seven Peshawar-based groups known as 'Tenzeemat' formed an alliance called the Islamic Unity of Afghan Mujahideen (IUAM) in May 1985 usually referred to as the Afghan Alliance. While the formation of the Afghan Alliance ensured better disbursement of military and economic assistance for the Resistance and fulfilled the elementary requirement of international representation, the arrangement remained politically flawed and severely handicapped by internal divisions and constant squabbling. While the moderates felt that they were being unfavourably treated in comparison

16 The seven groups were: Jamiat-e-Islami Afghanistan (Islamic Society of Afghanistan) headed by Burhanuddin Rabbani; Hizb-e-Islami (Islamic Party) headed by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar; Jubbhat-e-Melli-Nijad Afghanistan (Afghanistan National Liberation Front) headed by Sibghatullah Mojadeddin; Mahaz-e-Melli Islami Afghanistan (National Islamic Front of Afghanistan) headed by Pir Sayed Ahmed Gailani; Harakat-e-Inqulab-e-Islami (Revolutionary Islamic Movement) led by Mohd.Nabi Mohammadi; Ittehad-e-Islami-Azadi-e-Afghanistan (Islamic Union for Liberation of Afghanistan) led by Abdul Rab Rasul Saiyaff; the first two organisations were known for their fundamentalist bearing and the next three organisations though Islamist in their character were traditionist who preferred constitutional monarchy and were regarded as moderate; for details on the Resistance, see Charles Dunbar, "Afghanistan in 1986: The Balance Endures", Asian Survey, vol.27, no.2, February 1987, pp.127-142.
with the fundamentalist parties, the ISI (Inter Services Intelligence) of Pakistan which was the main conduit for aid and arms transfer to the mujahideen argued that its distribution was determined by the performance of individual parties on the ground and by their effectiveness in the *Jihad*.\(^{17}\) The split within the Alliance and its lack of political consensus proved fatal when the time came to test its capacity to take political initiatives. The fundamentalists generally rejected the moderate demand for a *Jihad* as a ploy for bringing forth the former King Zahir Shah. Although no group possessed a well defined agenda, the more ideological, pan-Islamist, and fundamentalist aimed at the establishment of an orthodox government in Kabul for which they were amply supported by the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).\(^{18}\) Pakistan's efforts to support the Afghan rebels with the intention of replacing the government in Kabul continued even after it had accepted the UN-sponsored talks with Afghanistan.

This role of Pakistan was supplemented with the United States' support since the beginning of the crisis. The Soviet intervention catapulted Pakistan into sudden prominence. The United States could do little without Pakistani co-operation to help the Afghan Resistance against the Soviet troops. In order to make the Soviet

\(^{17}\) *Jihad* meant a holy war between the Islamic Resistance and Communist infidels and this was based on the strategy of a protracted military struggle.

\(^{18}\) The OIC granted a hearing and also an observer status to the Afghan Resistance with the objective of raising their international standing.
intervention "as costly as possible", a number of sanctions were announced by the Carter administration against the Soviet Union on 4 January 1980. They were:

- blocking grain sales beyond the eight million metric tons already contracted, meaning the withholding of an additional seventeen million metric tons which the Soviet Union had already ordered;
- halting the sale of high technology and strategic items, including computers and oil drilling equipment;
- curbing Soviet fishing privileges in US waters, reducing the catch allowed to Soviet fleets in 1980 from 350,000 tons to 75,000 tons, resulting in an estimated Soviet economic loss of fifty-five to sixty million dollars;
- delaying the opening of a new Soviet consulate in New York and an American consulate in Kiev;
- postponing new cultural and economic exchanges then under consideration and suspending space cooperation; and
- holding out the possibility of non-US participation in the Moscow Summer Olympics. (A final decision was made on 20 February 1980, establishing the US boycott of the Olympics).

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President Reagan, when he replaced Carter, made the global containment of the Soviet Union as the center-piece of his foreign policy. The Reagan Doctrine, as it was called, proposed an activist plan to roll back Soviet power in the Third World through the support to the insurgent movements.\(^{20}\) The United States utilised Pakistan as a frontline State to achieve its objectives of containing the Soviet Union by constant support to the Afghan Resistance.

President Zia, who earlier expressed that Pakistan must adjust itself to the Soviet presence in the area as a political fact of life, now tried to bargain strongly with the United States for economic assistance when he declared the President Carter's offer of 400 million dollars in sales credits and economic assistance as inadequate and declined the offer as "peanuts".\(^{21}\) By late 1984, there had been a major escalation of American weapons aid to the Resistance. The US Congress overwhelmingly approved a resolution calling for a more and better aid; and in April 1985, President Ronald Reagan pushed through the National Security Directive 166 which outlined plans for driving Soviet forces from Afghanistan "by all means available". The American aid jumped from 120 million dollars in 1984 to 250 million


dollars in 1985, 470 million dollars in 1986 and 630 million dollars in 1987. Since 1980 it has totalled some 2.1 billion dollars, exclusive of US orchestrated Chinese, Egyptian, Saudi and West European aid.\textsuperscript{22} The total US covert assistance by 1988 is generally assessed as two billion dollars.\textsuperscript{23} Thus the United States became a key arms supplier to the mujahideen with Pakistan as the key conduit. Apart from the increased assistance, the single most important test that changed the fortunes of the Resistance was the US supply of shoulder-borne ground to air Stinger missiles; a step decided in April 1986 after the unabated Soviet use of aerial power and their military offensive against the mujahideen strongholds. The Stinger incident was cited by US and Pakistan as forcing the Soviet side to the negotiating table at Geneva.

Even though there was strategic consensus between the United States and Pakistan to counter Soviet power, there were certain differences between them. According to Yakub Khan, the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Washington initially did not favour the Pakistani decision to participate in the Geneva round of talks.\textsuperscript{24} As it appears, that the United States wanted to make the Soviet Union "bleed" in the crisis and this was the main reason for carrying on a low-intensity conflict war

\textsuperscript{22}Selig S.Harrison, "Inside the Afghan Talks", \textit{Foreign Policy}, no.72, Fall 1982, p.50.


\textsuperscript{24}Harrison, n.22, p.32, pp.36-39.
against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Further, on the eve of signing the Geneva accords, the United States had shown more concern to its objective of securing the Soviet withdrawal than sharing the Pakistani perspective for a favourable internal political settlement.

It was only with the new initiatives of Gorbachev and a change in the perception of the United States consequent to the summit-level meetings between Reagan and Gorbachev, that each side agreed to accommodate their larger interests. Reagan insisted that arms control proposals put forward by Gorbachev could be acceptable only in the event of Soviet disengagement from regions like Afghanistan, Kampuchea, etc. as a 'trade-off'.

(iii) China

China is one of the four countries sharing borders with Afghanistan. It reacted immediately to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan when on 31 December 1979, the Soviet ambassador was told by the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs that "Afghanistan is China's neighbour... and therefore the Soviet armed invasion of the country poses a threat to China's security". China's perception was based on the extent of fears of the guerilla Resistance in the Badakshan province including Wakhan corridor of Afghanistan bordering China. Deng Xiaoping's statement on 15

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November 1980 that in seeking hegemony against China, the Soviet Union had not only stationed ten lakh troops on the Sino-Soviet border but dispatched troops to invade Afghanistan. The Chinese leaders saw this action as aimed in part against China. China too supported the Afghan Resistance in the struggle and in March 1980, Beijing formulated three basic principles regarding the Afghan crisis, all of which reinforced the military assessment: (i) there must be an unconditional Soviet withdrawal, (ii) support should be given to guerillas since "this support cannot be regarded as interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan," and (iii) the Afghans should be left to sort out their own problems. In June 1981, Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang on a South Asian tour stated that the Afghan problem 'mainly depends' on Afghanistan. The Chinese assistance over the five years from 1980 to the rebel groups was estimated at 400 million dollars. There is evidence that China, the United States and Pakistan worked together not only to provide arms but impart training to the mujahideen groups.

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China had considered the Afghanistan issue as one of the main obstacles in the Sino-Soviet normalisation, which was tackled by Gorbachev later.

THE KAMPUCHEAN CRISIS

(i) Kampuchea, Vietnam and the Soviet Union

If Afghanistan issue became the bone of contention between the United States and Soviet Union, the Sino-Soviet rivalry was a major factor in the Kampuchean crisis. Vietnam, a close partner of Soviet Union in the region, intervened militarily in Kampuchea on 25 December 1978 to drive out the Pol Pot government which was launching frequent military incursions into Vietnam with the support of China. Vietnam succeeded in overthrowing Pol Pot and installing a new government headed by Heng Samrin. In contrast to Afghanistan where the sending of Soviet troops coincided with a change in leadership in Kabul but not the party in power (PDPA), in the case of Kampuchea the coming of Vietnamese troops was followed by the change of party in power in Phnom Penh (Democratic Kampuchea (DK) was replaced by People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK)).

Vietnam's central concern in relation to Kampuchea was that it should not be controlled by a pro-Chinese regime. Hanoi might have proved unwilling to make significant concessions on its military presence in Kampuchea, when the Vietnam's spokesmen made repeated assertions in mid-1980 that their forces would remain in
Kampuchea while the "Chinese threat" in its broadest sense persisted, and that this threat was "eternal". 29 This only meant that changes in strategic environment could alone make possible concessions from the Vietnamese government on Kampuchea.

The crisis situation was characterised by the consolidation of Vietnam's control with a troop strength of 1,40,000 to 1,70,000; an escalated insurgency; external support and intensified conflict/civil war in Kampuchea. 30 On one side, Hanoi signed a twenty -year treaty of Friendship with the newly installed Heng Samrin regime on 18 February 1979 to formalise a special relationship. On the other side, simultaneously, the Vietnamese adopted a strategy to attempt reduction of the power of Khmer Rouge, headed by Pol Pot or its elimination in and around Kampuchea which included intrusion into Thailand where these rebel groups of Khmer Rouge sought refuge. The military activities continued between the Vietnamese troops and the rebel groups for a long time as both sides received aid and economic support from their respective Big Powers.

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Vietnam received total support from the Soviet Union in its policy towards Kampuchea and the region. As early as 1975, approximately one billion dollars per annum have been contributed by USSR and its east European allies to Vietnam. When China suspended its 300 million dollars per annum contribution to Vietnam on 3 July 1978, Russia filled the void by substantially increasing assistance to prevent the collapse of what in fact had become a virtual war economy by late 1978. Finally, when pressure on Vietnam from China became intense, the Soviet Union and Vietnam on 3 November 1978 signed a formal twenty-five year treaty of friendship which included provisions for mutual consultation in the event that either nation was attacked by a third party. Soviet Union's massive support to the Vietnamese army in Kampuchea was estimated at 2.5 to 3 million dollars a day.  

Similarly, the Soviet aid to People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) was according to one estimate signed for 150 million dollars in December 1979 and some 85 million dollars in unconditional aid was what the Soviet Union claimed to have provided to the Heng Samrin government in 1979.  

Politically the Soviet Union's special relations with Vietnam had been institutionalised in the 1978 friendship treaty. Economically the Soviet Union had


32 FBIS, 22 January 1980.
achieved a dominant position in Vietnam, i.e. constantly reinforced by the existing structure of trade and debt-servicing as well as by the direction of Vietnam's economic development. Militarily, Vietnam was dependent on Soviet arms transfers and other military aid for its modernisation programmes and pacification campaigns in Kampuchea. And as a quid pro quo for its assistance, the Soviet Union was allowed to upgrade and utilise the naval facilities at Camranh Bay to enhance its military posture in the region and throughout the Pacific and Indian Ocean.

In the diplomatic arena, the Vietnamese adopted their familiar strategy of "fighting and negotiating," offering cosmetic concessions on relatively minor concerns related to the modalities of a conference, in an effort to divide their adversaries while holding firm on the issue of importance to the maintenance of their authority in Kampuchea. In the meantime, Hanoi kept up the pressure on the battlefield, maintaining over one lakh Vietnamese troops inside Kampuchea in an effort to reduce the size of the rebel forces. Though the Vietnamese leaders had calculated that the rebel groups and Thailand would soon tire off the struggle and agree to a negotiated settlement based on conditions favourable to Vietnam, the Resistance forces aided by the ASEAN countries, China and the United States had achieved more staying power and threatened to pose a credible political and military threat to the Phnom Penh regime. In an effort to break the impending stalemate, Hanoi launched its heaviest offensive in years against the Resistance forces along the Thai
border during the winter of 1984-85. The operation which was a success resulted in the destruction of rebel bases along the Thai-Kampucheans frontier, severely reducing the military effectiveness of the non-Communist Resistance forces. \(^{33}\)

Interestingly, it was after this offensive that Vietnam in 1985 accepted the United Nations' role in finding a political settlement to the crisis so that it could negotiate from a position of strength. Needless to say, Vietnam refused to give any role to the United Nations till then, mainly on the ground that DK was allowed to continue occupying the UN seat which deprived the PRK of its legitimacy.

An added impetus was provided in mid-1986 when the new Soviet leadership under Mikhail Gorbachev had launched new initiatives to delink intractable regional issues like Kampuchea in order to normalise its relations with United States and China. \(^{34}\) Moscow especially had backed Hanoi's policy of getting ASEAN to come to direct discussions with Vietnam and her Indochinese allies. The Deputy Foreign Minister of USSR, Mikhail Kapitsa in early April 1985 proposed during his Jakarta visit a limited international conference including ASEAN, the three Indochina states and the five permanent UN Security Council members. Kapitsa said that the USSR would even be prepared to act as "guarantor" of peace in the Southeast Asian region

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\(^{34}\) ibid., pp.176-77.
once the countries at such a proposed international conference had arrived at a mutually acceptable Kampuchean settlement.\(^{35}\)

The most significant change in the diplomatic scene concerning Kampuchea emerged as a result of Gorbachev's keen interest in normalising relations with China. As China made the presence of Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea the most important of the three obstacles to the normalisation of its relations with Moscow, new pressures were brought on Hanoi.\(^{36}\) In his Asian initiative (Vladivostok speech, 28 July 1986), Gorbachev acknowledged China's security interests in Kampuchea by suggesting that China and Vietnam could bring about a solution. When the Vietnamese Party Secretary, Nguyen Van Linh, held talks with Gorbachev on the bilateral relations and Kampuchea in Moscow in May 1987, Gorbachev spoke of the horrors of Pol Pot genocide and the continued military activity and interference by outside forces which was a transparent allusion to China's support for the Khmer Rouge. Stating the need for a political solution in Kampuchea, Gorbachev introduced a new formulation -- that the Kampuchean problem can be solved only "on the basis of all their national patriotic forces." (The national patriotic forces referred to the old coalition Nationalists under Prince Sihanouk and Communists who fought the


\(^{36}\)The other obstacles being (i) Soviet troops in Afghanistan and (ii) on the Sino-Soviet border.
US backed Lon Nol regime). With the continued Soviet assistance to Vietnam, Moscow was in a position to apply sufficient pressure on Hanoi to soften its position and normalise its relations with China in order to solve the Kampuchean problem.

It is against this background, in a significant move the Kampuchean National Assembly decided in February 1986 to postpone until 1991 the national elections that were to have been held in 1987. This meant that the door would be open for settlement through an election. PRK Prime Minister Hun Sen told in an interview that a Constitution under which the election would be held was open to negotiations.\footnote{Newsweek (New York), 24 February 1986.}

On 17 March 1986, the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) unveiled an eight-point proposal which showed unusual flexibility towards Vietnam.\footnote{The CGDK formed in June 1982 comprised of Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea/Khmer Rouge; Son Sann's Khmer People National Liberation Front (KPNLF) and Prince Sihanouk's United Front for Cooperative, Independent and peaceful Cambodia (FUNCINPEC).} Dropping the previous demand for total withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea as a pre-condition for talks, the resistance groups now called for a two-phase pull-out under international supervision. The proposal also suggested the formation of an interim government with Sihanouk at the head and Son Sann as Prime Minister without insisting on Khmer Rouge
personality in the top position. It also agreed for the first time to include the Heng Samrin group as part of a four-party coalition government.

Later the PRK made a statement on the national reconciliation policy that softened the conditions for talks with the Resistance. It dropped its demand that the Pol Pot clique be eliminated saying that the PRK was ready to meet with the other group of Khmers and their leaders, except the criminal Pol Pot and some of his close collaborators. In other words, Khmer Rouge (minus Pol Pot and his deputy Ieng Sary) was to have a role in the negotiations and a role to play in the solution. This proposal was rejected by the Khmer Rouge as a deceitful manoeuvre to push CGDK into holding talks with PRK. In response to the eight-point proposal of CGDK, the PRK announced a five-point Peace Plan in which it offered Norodom Sihanouk a high position in the government. The five-point proposal stated - "we will hold a general election in the presence of an international observation team after the Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea and establishing a coalition government, which will aim for the construction of a peaceful, independent, democratic, neutral and non-aligned Kampuchea." The


addition of the term 'neutral' signified a new development because 'neutral' signifies above all allowing no foreign military base or armed forces on a nation's own land.

The PRK initiative aided by French mediation, led to the Hun Sen-Norodom Sihanouk face to face meetings in December 1987. The joint Communique signed by Sihanouk and Hun Sen on 4 December 1987 said conflict in Kampuchea must be resolved politically; that there must be negotiations among all the Kampuchean parties to the conflict to put an end to the war and reconstruct a peaceful, independent, democratic, sovereign, neutral and non-aligned Cambodia; then once an agreement was reached an international conference should be held to guarantee the agreement; and that the two parties would meet again.42

At the second round of Hun Sen-Sihanouk talks in January 1988, the parties thrashed out in substance differences such as the time-table for Vietnamese troop withdrawal; the specific nature of international guarantees and control; the framework for establishment of a coalition government and more importantly the question of Khmer Rouge participation in the political arrangement. To Sihanouk's insistence that Vietnam complete its troop withdrawal by 1989, Phnom Penh was prepared to offer a reduction from thirty to twenty-four months. While denouncing

Sihanouk's proposal of "dismantling" of the PRK prior to an election as "no less than suicide", the PRK government persisted in linking Vietnam's withdrawal to the elimination of the Khmer Rouge military organisation.\footnote{FBIS, Daily Report: EAS, 26 January 1988.}

At the first round of the Jakarta Informal Meetings, which were held in July 1988, the four Kampuchean factions met for the first time where substantial concessions were to be made. A conciliatory gesture came in the form of a proposal in which the earlier demand for the dismantling of the PRK was significantly modified. The call now was to "gradually and meticulously" transform the PRK administration into a quadripartite and to "fraternally form" a joint military force. Prince Sihanouk went on to advocate that the UN seat presently occupied by the CGDK be left vacant and he also stated that the differences between him and the PRK were narrowed.\footnote{Cited in "Cambodia in 1988: The Curved Road to Settlement", Asian Survey, vol.29, no.1, January 1989, p.76.}

While none of the meetings produced any agreement as such, there was a consensus on the issues that must be negotiated; issues such as Vietnamese troop withdrawal and fixed time-table, cease-fire, peacekeeping force, free supervised elections, disarming of troops, coalition government mechanism, an international
conference to organise the peacekeeping and to declare the neutralisation of Kampuchea.

There were signs of readiness on the part of the Hun Sen government to substitute tactical pragmatism for ideological entrenchment. The PRK was renamed the State of Cambodia (SOC) and constitutional amendments were undertaken in an apparent effort to edge closer to Sihanouk’s position and to capitalise upon the platform of Khmer nationalism. In this effort, Buddhism regained its status as state religion with restrictions such as the age limit for ordination removed.\textsuperscript{45}

The deliberations received a shot in the arm when both China and USSR held an unprecedented meeting in September 1988 specifically to discuss a political settlement in Kampuchea. The talks ended with an agreement "in principle" on the establishment of four-party coalition government and favouring international supervision. Moscow also officially endorsed Sihanouk’s leadership in the process of national reconciliation. This meant that China was willing to allow a regime change by not insisting on Khmer Rouge alone. Later in a significant change of position, Beijing told Prince Sihanouk that it wanted him to takeover the leadership of Kampuchea where neither Khmer Rouge nor the Heng Samrin government would

have dominating influence.\(^{46}\)

It appears that the conjuncture of Big-power accommodation (US-USSR Summits and Sino-Soviet improvement/rapprochement) and the stalemate on the battle-field finally created conditions for peace. It was only in 1987 that Hanoi, Beijing, Moscow, PRK and CGDK were getting ready for serious bargaining which finally led to the signing of the comprehensive settlement by the various parties in October 1991 at Paris.

(ii) **Thailand, China and the United States**

Like Pakistan encouraging the Afghan rebels on its territory, Thailand became a strong battle ground where the Kampuchean rebel factions could strengthen their military power to fight the PRK government. China, the ASEAN and the United States rallied to Thailand's side in the fight for Kampuchea by collectively denying recognition to the new Vietnam-backed government of Heng Samrin and articulating a common stand against Vietnam's military presence in Kampuchea. In the years that followed the Vietnamese intervention, they put forward a policy describing a resolution of the problem which would include the withdrawal of Vietnam's forces and self-determination within Kampuchea. They also persuaded the international community to deny the new regime a seat in the UN General Assembly; they

\(^{46}\)Chanda, n.42, p.114.
promoted an international conference to dramatise the issue. Further, the most important aspect of their role in countering Vietnam had been the creation and the support of the anti-Vietnamese Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK, formed in 1982) led by Norodom Sihanouk, Son Sann and Khieu Samphan (of the Khmer Rouge) to represent Kampuchea diplomatically and co-ordinate armed Resistance.

Thailand thus faced an ancient adversary at its border in the form of Vietnam and faced the pressure of massive refugee influx. Thailand became a frontline state for the United States which in turn provided security guarantees for Thailand in its confrontation with Moscow and its allies. The United States decided to bolster the defences of its Thai ally, and in early October 1985 a US-Thai agreement was signed giving the Bangkok government access to US military logistic system, thus accelerating supply of US war material aid to Thailand in the event of an emergency such as an incursion of Vietnam's forces into Thailand.47 Thailand also bore the brunt of Vietnam's raids on the rebel camps when the Vietnamese forces pursued Khmer Rouge's soldiers in the Thai territory. While Thailand formally protested the Vietnamese incursions to the United Nations, Vietnam took the position that it had the right of hot pursuit into the Thai territory so long as the

47 For an analysis of US policy position, see Justus M. Van der Kroef, "The US and Cambodia: The Limits of Compromise and Intervention", Contemporary South Asia (Singapore), March 1986.
Resistance was based on Thai territory.

The refugee camp on the Thai-Kampuchean border served as both recruitment and military staging bases for all factions of the CGDK. These included Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge: KPNLF headed by former Kampuchean premier Son Sann with a strength of 12,000 and FUNCINPEC of Norodom Sihanouk with a strength of 2,500. In the CGDK, Sihanouk served as the President, the DK's Khieu Samphan as Vice-President in charge of foreign affairs and Sann as premier. Along the turbulent Thai-Kampuchean border, the armed followings of each leader had retained separate organisational identities and military independence. To a large degree, the increase in man-power of these Resistance groups was the result of growing arms-flow to these groups. The following table reveals the increase in man-power of the Resistance groups.

### Table I

**Troops Strengths of Khmer Opposition Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>End 1979</th>
<th>Mid 1982</th>
<th>End 1984/Early 1985</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KPNLF</td>
<td>2,000 or less</td>
<td>7,000-8,000</td>
<td>15,000-16000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sihanoukists</td>
<td>500 or less</td>
<td>4,000 or less</td>
<td>6,000-7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khmer Rouge</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,000-35,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minister Mikhail Kapitsa warned that Vietnam would begin supplying arms to insurgency in neighbouring Southeast Asian countries, presumably including Thailand, if these countries persisted in aiding the Khmer Rouge and other CGDK elements. Moscow's apparent endorsements of such possible interventionist tactics only revealed the diplomacy of confrontation.

Not only did the United States provide an offshore military presence that by far outweighed the Soviet minor air and naval deployment in the region and substantial economic and military aid and diplomatic support on the Kampuchean issue, but its strategic entente with China also went some way towards reassuring the ASEAN governments that its leverage in Beijing would prevent the Chinese from acting incautiously in relation to Vietnam. Bangkok had a special interest in using its alliance with Washington to balance Thailand's relations with China. Although America's Asian security interests were centered in Southwest and Northeast rather than Southeast Asia, Washington (particularly once the Reagan administration took power) saw the ASEAN states as the important allies and associates in its strategy of thwarting Vietnam's role as the spearhead of 'Soviet expansionism' in a region straddling American and Japanese lines of communication with the Indian Ocean and the Gulf.

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China had charged that Vietnam was seeking to reach a "long-sought hegemony" throughout Indochina and that the USSR, for reasons of its own strategic interests, was implementing such hegemonistic designs.\textsuperscript{53} In February 1979, Beijing launched an attack on Sino-Vietnamese frontier clearly signalling its limited objective of "teaching Vietnam a lesson" but forestalling the possibility of a direct Soviet response. As a part of its propaganda, China well aware of the odious reputation of its client, Pol Pot, attempted and accused Vietnam of the same crime, i.e. genocide and surveying the refugees spoke of colonising Vietnamese settlers in Kampuchea since early 1979 and Vietnamisation of all phases of the Kampuchean life. Beijing used the term 'genocide' of the Kampuchean people by Hanoi.\textsuperscript{54}

Beijing backed all the factions of CGDK and promised increased military aid to all of them. It was clear that China's policy was to raise the costs of occupation of Vietnam. Beijing held the view that the CGDK could achieve military victory so long as the coalition stayed. In December 1985 when the leaders of the three CGDK factions, Sihanouk, Son Sann and Khieu Samphan visited Beijing, the Chinese leader Deng Xiao-Ping told them that China would unconditionally support Democratic Kampuchea's struggle until it won final victory.\textsuperscript{55} Thus China emphasised the


\textsuperscript{54}\textit{FBIS}, 13 August 1985.

\textsuperscript{55}\textit{Beijing Review}, vol.28, no.51, 23 December 1985, pp.7-8.
military measures needed to compel the Vietnamese to leave Kampuchea.\textsuperscript{56} China had attempted to increase its regional presence in several ways: by demonstrating that it was the only great power willing to use force in pursuit of its goals in Southeast Asia; by supporting and supplying arms to the surprisingly resilient Khmer Resistance groups and by forging crucial links with the Thai military, which was then in the process of extending its own power-base within Thailand. The centre-piece of Chinese strategy was the formation of an international coalition of states through ASEAN and the formation of coalition Resistance (CGDK) to pressurise Vietnam.

The insurgency in and around Kampuchea was optimally utilised by the United States and China so as to reduce the influence of Soviet Union and Vietnam in the region. It also provided a fine bargaining chip in any negotiations with their main adversaries. The United States' low profile policy to the Kampuchean issue and China's staunch support to the rebel groups were mainly geared towards a low intensity conflict in the region in order to "bleed" Vietnam, thus complicating the crisis. The costs of continuing stalemate over Kampuchea were tolerable for the external powers involved. For the Chinese, the low intensity war was inexpensive but effective means of maintaining pressure on Vietnam. For the Reagan

administration, the conflict provided a low risk theatre to challenge 'Soviet expansionism'. For Moscow, the support for Vietnam in Kampuchea provided an opportunity to exact greater strategic advantage from its relationship with Hanoi while maintaining a second front in its confrontation with China.

There were also reports that China was privately offering inducements to shake Hanoi from its hardline position in terms of economic assistance to Vietnam. 57

China's differences with ASEAN in the Kampuchean settlement and the United States' reluctance to normalize its relations with Vietnam, further delayed a quick solution to the crisis. There has been a difference towards China in basic policy question on the Kampuchean conflict by Washington. The United States had acquiesced in attempt by Beijing to block a more compromise-oriented policies by some ASEAN countries. For instance, at the International Conference on Kampuchea, a strong Chinese opposition agreed to by the United States, secluded an ASEAN proposal which among other points, would have envisaged a UN-supervised Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea and the disarming of all armed Kampuchean factions including Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge followed by elections for a

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new government.\(^{58}\) Precisely because the ASEAN proposal would have meant the disarming of China's partner, the Khmer Rouge, China blocked it. China's own unrelentingly hardline policy towards the Kampuchean question had been apparent. In 1983 when ASEAN countries were feeling out the possibility of a direct dialogue with Vietnam, the Chinese Foreign Minister, Wu Xuequian, visited Bangkok and conveyed that the Chinese government was totally opposed to such a bilateral discussion by emphasising that Vietnam had not basically changed its position nor was it prepared unconditionally to withdraw its forces.

The United States which already had insisted that any US-Vietnamese normalisation required a complete settlement of the Kampuchean issue, including a "withdrawal of Vietnam's armed forces", refused to go beyond such formal rigidities and never explored various avenues of settlement. Since the Vietnamese success of 1984-85, the US Congress had also shown an increased willingness to support a more visible role of the United States as a protector of the region.\(^{59}\) Nevertheless, the level of intensity of the US involvement had been selective. On the theory that the Kampuchean problem would be settled in a regional framework, the United States had left the task of negotiating a withdrawal entirely to the


\(^{59}\)Paribatra, n.48, p.88.
representatives of ASEAN and had consistently refused to take an active role. This was a convenient position to take because besides allowing Washington to lend full moral support to its allies in Southeast Asia, it also responded to American people's apparent desire to keep out of the fray in Indochina.

Besides the presence of Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea, the resolution of which was a long standing pre-condition for commencing the US-Vietnam normalisation talks, the other pre-condition was the resolution of the MIA issue.\(^6\) The MIA had been used as political pawns by both Vietnam and the United States and there were no diplomatic relations between the two countries. On 8 August 1985, President Reagan signed into law a measure to provide a total of ten million dollar assistance for covering the next two years to the two non-communist factions of the CGDK.\(^6\) The provision of military aid was simply a further admission that the US would not take a direct, active and constructive role in the search for a negotiated settlement.

In his speech at the United Nations on 24 October 1985, Reagan highlighted the Kampuchean situation as one of the five regional conflicts in which Moscow and

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\(^6\) The MIA or the Missing in Action issue involved the U.S. demand to account for the American soldiers lost during the Vietnam War.

Washington must reach an accommodation. He stated that the US and Soviet representatives should meet to discuss those areas only after the talks between the warring parties had taken hold and real progress had been achieved, at which point American and Soviet negotiators could consider how best to support the ongoing talks among the belligerents. In other words, the United States was asking Soviet Union to use its influence to move Vietnam towards a political settlement of the Kampuchean crisis.

It is evident that the Kampuchean conflict appeared to be a "proxy war" between the global powers who in order to serve their respective national interests, utilised various methods like military aid, economic assistance, propaganda, overt and covert assistance to the insurgent groups for reducing the power and influence of the other side. In the process, the local state actors and the rebel groups were drawn into the big-power game resulting into a prolonged stalemate, thus deferring a lasting solution to the Kampuchean issue.

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