Conflict in the international system occurs when there is a divergence of interests among nations. As such, any international conflict gets complicated with the involvement of outside powers. The nature of the conflict and its importance are determined by the interests which are at stake. In recent times, one such conflict upon which world attention had been focussed was in Cambodia.

The thrust of the present study has been to analyse the international dimensions of the Cambodian conflict and to focus upon the roles of the various regional and extra-regional actors that had been involved since 1978. This study is an attempt to develop an understanding of the factors that led to the conflict, the international responses and reactions that it evoked and the changes in the global scene which led to its resolution both at the external and internal levels. It concentrates on the crisis in Cambodia, that was once known as the 'gentle land of the smiling people'. In recent years, this country had been subjected to several changes that have been violent and transmogrific, leading to political and social disintegration.
The scope of this study is limited since it deals with a particular time frame. It primarily deals with the roles of the various international actors that were involved. Hence the study is restricted to their roles in terms of the cold war politics and the strategic concerns that were at stake. Thus the effect of the conflict and the roles of the external participants upon the political setting in Cambodia has been the main focus.

As regards the time frame, the study has been from 1978 upto to mid-1993. The title of this work may suggest that it was intended to be a study upto the present. However, at the time of finalising the title, the elections in Cambodia did not seem to be a very sure possibility. The actual study ends with the elections and the establishment of the Constituent Assembly in Cambodia. The attempt to collect and collate material upto the present, would have been difficult since the political situation in Cambodia remains critical and fluid despite the restoration of democracy in the post UNTAC period.

The present study is divided into five chapters. Chapter I forms the Historical Background to the study and deals with the political evolution of the Cambodian state, the colonial period and the nationalist movement and the
political changes in Cambodia since independence, which forms the precursor to the conflict that engulfed it. The second chapter focuses upon the regional actors to the conflict - Vietnam, China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Being within the region these were the most affected and their responses and roles in the conflict are discussed in this chapter. The third chapter deals with the extra-regional actors. The repercussions at the regional level was orchestrated by the cold war politics among the superpowers and hence the roles that the United States and Soviet Union indirectly played has been significant.

While the superpowers had been involved in the continuation of the conflict, other extra-regional actors attempted to bring about a solution to the crisis. These were Japan, Australia and India. Inspite of not being directly involved in the problem, they played the role of peace-brokers in the resolution. The most significant move towards the resolution was the implementation of the UN Peace Plan. This had been a very important part of the resolution and restoration of democracy. The role of the UNTAC, the mandate which it had and an assessment of the extent to which it succeeded have formed the structure of
the fourth chapter. In the final chapter the concluding remarks have been made. It focuses on the actual reasons the change towards a resolution, the stakes of the participants and the extent to which the conflict has been resolved.

As a historical - analytical study, it is based on both primary and secondary sources. A great deal of information has been compiled through interviews which were carried out during the course of my field study in Singapore, Bangkok and Cambodia between August and November 1994.

(SHANKARI SUNDARARAMAN)