that Whitlam appeared to have buckled under the pressure of North Vietnam and the PRG when he scaled down the RAAF's refugee relief operation in South Vietnam.225

On April 30, 1975, Fraser, the leader of the opposition, was also critical of the Whitlam Government when he complained that the Whitlam Government had conspired with Hanoi in the interests of Communist North Vietnam, and that the refugees had been sacrificed in the interests of Whitlam's expediency. Continuing his blistering attack, Fraser accused Whitlam of lacking in compassion and concern for people whose lives were at stake. He said that Whitlam Government remained indifferent when many citizens of South Vietnam appealed to it to show magnanimity and do everything in its capacity through its embassies in Moscow, Peking and Hanoi to secure mercy for those Vietnamese who were former employees of the Australian embassy in Saigon and the relatives of the Vietnamese living in Australia as citizens, residents or students.226 Prime Minister Whitlam, nonetheless, stuck to the stand he had taken in the statement he made in Parliament on April 10, 1975, which runs as follows:

Now it is true that after Phan Rang when South Vietnamese troops barged aboard a C-130, we decide there would be no further positions arise where officials or soldiers of the South Vietnamese Government would be aboard our aircraft. I would apprehend that there would be no members of the House who would suggest that RAAF aircraft should be used to ferry South Vietnamese troops. We are not engaged in a Dun Kirk Operation. Australia does not have allies anywhere in Indochina and has not had any allies in Indochina since 1927. We have been concerned to relieve human suffering and this country under my Government has spent millions of dollars in rehabilitating Indochina.227

Cambodia as a factor in Australia’s relations with Vietnam
Whitlam's Labour government which lasted for three years (1972-1975) witnessed hectic activity particularly in the realm of foreign policy with the result that the whole gamut of Australia's foreign policy came in for scrutiny and restructuring. The process of revamping was carried out so ardently that Erhard Haubold, an Australia specialist, remarked: "The total of five months which Prime Minister Whitlam has spent in travels abroad is as illustrative of this shift as is the fact that diplomatic missions have been opened in no fewer than 21 countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe". The exercise of reshaping of Australian foreign policy which, as Minister for Foreign Affairs Willesee claimed, was "painlessly" accepted by the Australians and was designed to make Australia an "active, forward-looking medium power" to bring it greater independence from "powerful friends" and ideologies. Whitlam's series of breakthrough in the domain of foreign policy made him "overestimate the amount of influence that can be wielded by a medium power like Australia" and call on the Soviet Union during his visit to Moscow in January 1975 to enter into "detente with China".

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
The conservative opposition severely criticised Labour government's, what *Sydney Morning Herald* called, "almost pathological hatred of the United States" and the attendant neglect of relations with the United states despite the fact that the people of Australia as a whole continued to accord vast importance to Australia's American connection.4 Opposition leader Fraser accused Labour's altered foreign policy course of courting "popularity in Moscow and Peking".5 Therefore, as expected, Fraser government formed in December 1975, took steps to mend the situation by paying due attention to the improvement of Australia's relations with the US. However, the "return to old friends" policy pursued by the Fraser government, certainly meant giving up not only the "love-hate relationship that existed during the Labour regime", but also the "sycophantism" of the 1960s. Minister for Foreign Affairs Peacock noted: "We do not need any Big Brother".6 Australia was no longer willing to accept a status which would allow Washington to take Canberra for granted. This was clearly reflected in Australia's resentment of the appointment of "a politically unknown businessman" in the place of a "highly regarded career diplomat" as the US Ambassador.7

While making a deliberate effort to "revive and spread" its relations with the US, Australia remained quite apprehensive of the "massive expansion" of Soviet military power. Canberra viewed the fishing and other "harmless - seeming agreements" that the Soviet Union entered into with Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa as Soviet attempts to gain a foothold through the "backdoor to Australia".8

In an interview with Radio Australia a few days after he assumed the Office of

4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
Prime Minister, Fraser said on December 19, 1975: "Russia is the major power that has been pushing and thrusting in the Indian Ocean and in this respect I have shared a number of China's concerns". On January 7, 1976, Fraser gave an assurance to a visiting US senate delegation that Australia would strongly support US approaches to Russia to prevent a super power buildup in the Indian Ocean region.

Fraser government showed keen interest in forging closer and better ties with the Southeast Asian Countries, the northern neighbours and the trading partners of Australia. In an interview with the Malaysian News Agency Bernama on January 16, 1976, Fraser stressed that his government believed that Australian foreign policy efforts needed to be concentrated more in the area in which Australians lived. In conformity with this policy, Prime Minister Fraser paid his first state visits not to the US and Britain but rather to the Southeast Asian Countries and Japan and China. Following the termination of the Vietnam war in 1975, Australia fervently hoped that after three decades of suffering and bloodshed in Indochina, "an environment conducive to economic and social progress, unhampered by the threat of conflict" would be established in the Southeast Asian region. The Australians were aware of the economic potential offered by Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Pheuiphanh Nagaosyvathn, a Lao expert on Australia, said: "The amounts required for the reconstruction of the Indochinese countries will probably be as much as the cost of the Indochina war itself, and this reconstruction will take years, perhaps as long as the war". The Australian military experts saw "justified prospects for stability in post-Vietnam Southeast Asia". They were also optimistic that basic ideological differences would not

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9 Australian, December 20, 1975.
12 Australian Foreign Affairs Record (AFAR), February 1979, p.92.
prevent the establishment of contacts between the non-communist ASEAN states and the communist countries of Indochina. They maintained that the chances of any one major power gaining dominant strategic influence in the region had considerably receded.14

Australia's views on the peace and stability in the Southeast Asian region seemed to be vindicated by the unfolding political scenario in the region. Though ASEAN countries felt insecure following the establishment of the communist governments in Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos following the American debacle, they took a number of initiatives to promote their relations with the Indochinese states. Meeting in Kuala Lumpur on May 13-15, 1975, the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN welcomed the end of the war and the restoration of peace in Cambodia and South Vietnam and expressed their willingness to enter into friendly relations with each nation of Indochina. In a press statement issued at the end of their meeting, the Foreign Ministers recognised that the differences in social and political systems in countries of Southeast Asia "should not be an obstacle to the development of constructive and mutually beneficial relations".15 Again, in the joint press communiqué issued at the end of their summit conference in Bali on February 24, 1976, the ASEAN Heads of Government expressed their readiness "to develop fruitful relations and mutually beneficial cooperation with other countries in the region",16 implying the countries of Indochina.

North Vietnam which spearheaded the liberation movement in Indochina, remained suspicious of ASEAN's potential as a military grouping, and its links with the US17 and thus a joint communiqué issued by Vietnam and Laos in July

14 Haubold, n.8.
15 Times of India, May 16, 1975.
16 For text of the Joint Communiqué issued by the ASEAN Heads of Government on February 24, 1976, see ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Documents Series 1967-86, (Jakarta, 1986), pp.41-42.
1977, condemned the US for attempting "to use ASEAN to oppose progressive trends in the region". The communique was also critical of ASEAN for the "feverish efforts made by some of its members to strengthen bilateral military alliances". Vietnam continued what Australia perceived as its, "intermittent criticism directed towards ASEAN" - on the eve of the first - ever summit meeting in Bali in February 1976; during the joint Thai-Malaysian border operations (from January to June 1977); and before the second ASEAN summit conference in Kuala Lumpur in August 1977. However, as perceived by Canberra, "Vietnam's criticism of ASEAN was more moderate after the Kuala Lumpur summit meeting". In the communique issued at the end of their meeting, the ASEAN Heads of Government "emphasised the desire of ASEAN countries to develop peaceful and mutually beneficial relations with all countries in the region, including Kampuchea, Laos and Vietnam. In a bid obviously to placate Vietnam, the ASEAN leaders "welcomed the decision of the Security Council of the United Nations to recommend the inclusion of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam as a member of the Organisation".

Though hostile to ASEAN, Vietnam began to show a "greater interest" in Southeast Asia since the end of the Indochina war in 1975 and initiated diplomatic moves to foster better relations with the non-communist states of Southeast Asia. Vietnam's Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Phan Hien visited Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia and Burma in July 1976. Further, being reluctant to offend the non-communist states of Southeast Asia, Vietnam refrained from inviting representatives from the Southeast Asian Communist parties to its communist Party Congress in December 1976. A senior Vietnamese delegation

18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 For text of the joint press communique issued at the end of Meeting of ASEAN Heads of Government, Kuala Lumpur, August 5, 1977, see ASEAN Documents Series, n.16, pp.43-49.
headed by a Vice Minister for foreign Trade Nguyen Canh visited Burma, Indonesia and Malaysia in November 1977. Continuing Vietnam's drive to promote bilateral relations with ASEAN countries, Vietnamese deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh visited Jakarta on December 28-31, 1977, Kuala Lumpur on January 3-6, 1978, Manila on January 6-9, and Bangkok on January 9-12. In the Australian perception, these visits represented "the most important and determined effort" on the part of Vietnam "to consolidate good relations with its Southeast Asian neighbours". Vietnam availed itself of these visits not only to enter into agreements for economic, scientific and technical cooperation with the host countries, but also to propose that the countries of the region should cooperate regardless of their divergent ideologies and social systems within a new framework. Like ASEAN countries, Australia too thought of a "cooperative and friendly relationship with Vietnam putting aside ideological differences" not only for mutual benefit but also for the benefit of the region, and thus could not but welcome the growth of friendship and cooperation between ASEAN states and Indochinese countries. However, this happy trend was retarded by the unfriendly developments in Cambodia which cast their shadow on the political scenario of the region. Therefore, in this chapter, the focus would be on the study of the impact of the Cambodian developments on the relations between the Fifth Continent and the dominant Indochinese state of Vietnam during 1970-1979.

Cambodia's Historical Background

In Southeast Asia, Cambodia was the first to emerge as a mighty empire with rich cultural heritage. At the height of its glory, the Cambodian empire under Jayavarman VII (1181-1218) included a major part of the mainland Southeast Asia. Though steady decline had set in following the death of Jayavarman VII,

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
Cambodia still "competed as an equal power" with its Thai and Vietnamese neighbours in the east and the west.\textsuperscript{25} In the later half of the 18\textsuperscript{th} and the first half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, Cambodian Royalty being divided into pro-Thai and pro-Vietnamese factions, paved the way for the military interventions of the more powerful kings in the neighbouring Siam and Vietnam. These military invasions ended in 1846 when Siam and Vietnam agreed to establish their joint protectorate over Cambodia. The prospect of "the eventual loss of national independence and of what remained of the land of the Khmer "(Cambodia), prompted King Norodom, the great grandfather of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, to enter into an unequal treaty with France in 1863 which proclaimed Cambodia as a French Protectorate.\textsuperscript{26} The Cambodian monarchy was used as "an instrument of French imperialism".\textsuperscript{27}

When King Norodom died in 1904, the French set aside the claims of his sons and enthroned his brother Sisowath (1904-1927) who in turn was succeeded by his son Monivong (1927-1941). Following the death of Monivong in 1941, the French passed over his son Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak and reverted to the Norodoms and crowned the 19-year old Prince Norodom Sihanouk evidently "because of his youth, his lack of experience and his pliability".\textsuperscript{28} For three decades till he was deposed in 1970, Prince Sihanouk not only reigned but also ruled in diverse capacities as King, Chief of State, Prince, Prime Minister and head of the main political movement. Besides, he played a variety of roles including Jazz - band leader, magazine editor, film director and gambling concessionaire. He

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid}, p.91.
also attempted "to unite in his rule the unfamiliar concepts of Buddhism, socialism and democracy."\textsuperscript{29} As Shawcross noted, the exercise of powers by Prince Sihanouk "was so astonishing and so individual that he came to personify his country and its policies abroad as well as at home."\textsuperscript{30} "The preservation of Cambodian peace and independence from further encroachment by its neighbours", was the primary motive behind all these deeds.\textsuperscript{31}

During the World War II, King Sihanouk, encouraged by Japan, proclaimed the independence of Cambodia on March 13, 1945. Though Cambodia's brief period of independence ended with the reestablishment of the French rule in October 1945, the Cambodian appetite for freedom increased. It was a difficult task for king Sihanouk to fight for independence while remaining as head of state. Yet he launched the "royal crusade for independence" in order to prevent the Cambodian politicians and the Cambodian Communists who branded him as a 'French collaborator', from stealing the show.\textsuperscript{32} In 1949, Cambodia was granted independence within the French Union as an Associate State. On November 9, 1953, France proclaimed full independence which was ratified at the Geneva Conference, 1954.

To contest the elections provided by the Geneva Agreement, king Sihanouk abdicated the throne on March 2, 1955 in favour of his father, Norodom Suramarit and launched in the following month a political movement named Sangkum Reastre Niyum (Popular Socialist Community), popularly known as Sangkum. In the elections held on September 11, 1955, Sangkum secured 83 per cent of the vote and bagged all the seats in the National Assembly. This spectacular performance repeated itself in the elections held in 1958 and in 1962. Following

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Shawcross}, n. 28, p.46.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{32} Ross, n.28, p.22.
the death of his father in 1962, Prince Sihanouk became the Head of State without becoming king. He remained in that office till he was deposed in March 1970. Prince Sihanouk commanded reverence among his people to such an extent that hardly there was any political opposition to him or to his Sangkum. Leaders of other political parties found it prudent to join the Sangkum. The result was that berths in his government were offered not only to those belonging to Sangkum but also to those whom he called the "Khmers Bleus" (rightists) of whom the most important were Penn Nouth and Lon Nol and the "Khmers Rouges" (leftists) prominent among whom being Hu Nim, Hou Yuon and Khieu Samphan.

Compared with other nations, Australia was deeply-involved in the affairs of Cambodia. Applying 'domino theory' according to which the fall of Vietnam to Communism would have chain reaction in Malaya, Thailand, Burma and Indonesia, Australia showed greater concern for Cambodia, a tiny state which is proximate to Vietnam. Australian Foreign Minister Spender, therefore urged as far back as in 1950, that the states of Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) which gained partial independence, should be promptly recognised by Australia and other nations so as to encourage moderate nationalist leaders in Indochina "who did not wish their country to become a satellite of Moscow or Peking".33 Australia, therefore, established diplomatic relations with Cambodia in 1952. Subsequently Australia had set up its legation in Cambodia that was raised to the status of Embassy in 1955.

One month before the French surrendered to the Viet Minh in May 1954, Foreign Minister Casey warned on April 7, 1954: "If Indochina were to fall to the communists there is no doubt at all that the whole of Southeast Asia would be

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threatened". Casey again warned, before leaving for the Geneva Conference on Indochina after the French surrender: "It is important that any settlement should not be on terms which mean that Vietnam and possibly Laos and Cambodia are swallowed up soon afterwards into the communist empire". Expressing his deep concern about communist menace at the Geneva Conference, Casey proposed that the Cambodian and Laotian issues should be considered separately. Believing that the presence of Viet Minh forces in Laos and Cambodia posed greater threat than that of communist China, Casey demanded the pullout of Viet Minh troops from Laos and Cambodia. In September 1954, Casey, supporting the membership of Laos and Cambodia in the world body, told the UN General Assembly: "We believe that there is a special and urgent case for the admission of Laos and Cambodia. These states are free and independent but their position could be precarious."

In order to ensure the peace and security of Cambodia, Australia made efforts to extend military and economic aid to Cambodia in addition to its diplomatic moves. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) which was founded in 1954 and included Australia among others, was designed to offer not only military cover but also economic and technical aid. The "protocol" of the SEATO treaty said: "The Parties to the Southeast-Asian Collective Defence Treaty unanimously designate for the purposes of Article IV of the Treaty the States of Cambodia and Laos." Australia believed that the economic development was the best defence against communist insurrections. Therefore, Australia took active part in the programmes of the Colombo Plan which was

37 Ibid.
38 For Text of SEATO Treaty, see Appendix -II.
inaugurated on July 1, 1951 in Colombo. When the first meeting of the consultative committee was held in Sydney in May 1950, preparatory to the inauguration of the Colombo Plan, Australia invited Cambodia to participate as an observer. Thereafter as a donor country, Australia offered assistance to Cambodia in various ways. Besides extending economic aid, Australia provided technical equipment and offered the services of experts to advise on various projects. Merrillees argued that Australia's contribution fostered good relations between the two countries.

'Coup' of 1970 and the deposition of Prince Sihanouk

Like any other tiny nation, Cambodia too was deeply concerned about its territorial integrity being threatened. Prince Sihanouk, therefore, was obliged to pursue a foreign policy which he called "extreme neutrality". Accordingly, he played his neighbours off against one another, "exploiting both their ambitions and weaknesses", and "alternated between pro-west and pro-communist policies". Cambodia dissociated itself with SEATO for fear of provoking the communist powers. At the Bandung Conference in 1955, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and North Vietnam made return gestures by assuring Prince Sihanouk that they would respect Cambodia's independence and territorial integrity. In the following year, during his visit to Phnom Penh, Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai exhorted the Chinese community in Cambodia numbering about three lakhs, to cooperate in Cambodia's development, to stay out of politics and to take the citizenship. In 1960, the two countries signed a treaty of Friendship and Non-

40 Merrillees, n.33, pp.51-52.
41 Shawcross, n.28, p.51.
42 Ibid.
44 Ross, n.28, p.32.
aggression. The Sino-Soviet rift offered an opportunity to Prince Sihanouk to reaffirm his ardent friendship with China.

Prince Sihanouk also sought to maintain friendly relations with the Vietnamese communists. Perceiving that the Saigon government "tottered on the brink of anarchy," and that the North Vietnamese and the NLF represented the winning side in the Vietnam War, he regarded the Vietnamese Communists as "political neighbours". As Prof. Sardesai had pointed out the "friendship with China and the Vietnamese Communists became the anchor of Cambodia's foreign policy". Cambodia, therefore, snapped diplomatic ties with South Vietnam in August 1963. In August 1965, Australia viewed the Cambodian request for a representation of its interests in South Vietnam, as a reflection of Phnom Penh's confidence in Canberra. Foreign Minister Hasluck stated in August 1965: "I think there can be no greater expression of the confidence that one country has for another than to be asked to represent its interests in another capital, as Cambodia has done. We believe that this action expresses a real confidence in us and confidence in the type of Australians who represent this country abroad". On the other hand, Prince Sihanouk expressed his desire to establish diplomatic relations with Hanoi at the earliest. Cambodia had the distinction of becoming the first to recognise the PRG of South Vietnam in June 1969, i.e. six years before Australia did the same. Prince Sihanouk was the only foreign Head of State to attend the funeral of Ho Chi Minh who died in September 1969. Despite his cordial relations, Prince Sihanouk was not comfortable with North Vietnam and Viet Cong who had established sanctuaries inside the Cambodian territory in late 1960s and this prompted Cambodia to turn to the US.

46 Sardesai, n.43.
47 Ibid.
48 CNIA, August 1965, p.509.
49 Ross, n.28, p.34.
Though Cambodia maintained cordial relations with China and refused to join SEATO, Prince Sihanouk did wish to cultivate relations with the US not only for economic but also for strategic considerations. Cambodia's non-aligned policy too demanded friendly ties with the US. In 1955, Prince Sihanouk entered into an agreement on military aid with the US as a result of which Cambodia secured funds and military equipment. But Prince Sihanouk was never comfortable with the US. He was deeply disenchanted with the US because of its growing influence with the high ranking military officials like Lon Nol, the repeated violation of Cambodian airspace by the American and South Vietnamese military aircraft that chased the Viet Cong insurgents, and the growing suspicion of US intelligence agencies' moves to remove him from power. Matters came to a head in 1965 when Cambodia broke off its diplomatic relations with the US. At this time, despite its being a strategic ally of the US, Australia's relations with Cambodia were so extraordinary that they were described as "special". Foreign Minister Hasluck noted in August 1965:

The Australian government has been in a close and friendly relationship with Cambodia for a quite a number of years. Cambodia is a strictly neutralist country but this has not prevented the development of close links between Australia and Cambodia. We believe there is real friendship between the two countries.50

The US, therefore, requested Australia in June 1965 to take care of its remaining interests in Cambodia. However, the increasing military activities of the Vietnamese communists within the Cambodian territory and the dire need for external economic assistance, compelled Prince Sihanouk to initiate moves in 1967 to resume diplomatic relations with the US. Finally, the diplomatic relations were restored between the two countries in June 1969. During 1965-1969 American interests in Cambodia were looked after by Australia.

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50 CNIA, August 1965, p.509.
On January 14, 1970, Prince Sihanouk embarked on a foreign tour to undergo prolonged medical treatment and also an excursion through world capitals like Paris, Prague, East Berlin, Warsaw, Moscow, and Peking. But Prince Sihanouk did not foresee that this foreign tour would turn out to be "a voyage without return". Four years prior to this he declared that "flight into exile would be an ineffaceable dishonour for History and the honour of my family". But, what he hated most, had happened in March 1970.

On March 18, 1970, Prince Sihanouk was in Moscow on his way to Peking for seeking the help of the Soviet Union and the Chinese government to arrange for the withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops from Cambodia. On the previous day, the Cambodian Parliament which met in a special joint session, deposed Prince Sihanouk and appointed Cheng Heng who was earlier an acting Chief of State by Prince Sihanouk himself before his departure in January 1970. Cambodia was proclaimed as a Republic. Lon Nol, who continued as Prime Minister, was elected "in an apparently fraudulent contest" in March 1972 as President of the Khmer Republic and remained in that office till his government was ousted by the Khmer Rouge in 1975. The ouster of Prince Sihanouk signalled the transformation of Cambodia which had been relatively untouched by the war in the adjacent Vietnam, into "the centre of the mailstrom".

52 Ibid.
53 Sangkum, No.9, April 1966, cited in Ibid; see Henry Kissinger, White House Years, (Boston, 1979), pp.457-468.
55 Bernard K. Gordon and Karthryn Young, "The Khmer Republic : That was the Cambodia that was", Asian Survey, January 1971, p.27. Also see Elizabeth Becker, When the war was over : Cambodia's Revolution and the Voices of its People, (New York, 1986).
Reportedly, Australia had played some part in assisting the 'coup' that deposed Prince Sihanouk. In an article prepared by its correspondents in New York, Washington and Canberra The National Times of September 28, 1970 claimed that "part of the blame for bringing Cambodia into the Indochina war is for the first time now placed on Australia". Though Noel Deschamps, former Australian Ambassador to Cambodia from 1962 to 1969 denied that his embassy had operated against Prince Sihanouk or his government, the fact that Australia took over some US Central Intelligence Agency operations in Cambodia from 1965 until the overthrow of the Sihanouk government in 1970 lent credence to the report of the National Times which was based on the information furnished by John Marks, a former State Department intelligence officer, Victor and Marchetti a former CIA agent, incidentally the co-authors of The cult of Intelligence. John Marks firmly believed that Australia took over CIA's "assets" in Cambodia when CIA personnel had to withdraw after Prince Sihanouk broke off diplomatic relations with the US in 1965. Marks was also quoted as saying: "Once the U.S. left, the Australians took over and financed the operations. We paid generously too."56

Prince Sihanouk who learnt about his destitution while he was still in Moscow, continued his scheduled visit to Peking where he founded a government in exile called Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea (GRUNK) on May 5, 1970. From Peking he appealed to the people to resist the usurpers. Aided by Viet Cong, the supporters of Prince Sihanouk attacked the forces of Lon Nol Government. Different parts of Cambodia witnessed violent demonstrations and riots. The Vietnamese Communists "intensified and widened their military operations". The Phnom Penh government's forces were hardly in a position to repel the enemy. The result was that the Khmers of the countryside who in their bid to escape the hostilities, fled to Phnom Penh to double its population.57

56 Times of India, September 29, 1970.
57 Gordon & Young, n.55, p.34.
Australia's Role in the Djakarta Conference on Cambodia

When the internal situation in Cambodia had deteriorated to an "extremely grave state of affairs", Lon nol government "time and again made urgent appeals" in April 1970 to the international powers "requesting the contribution of arms to Cambodia". Lon Nol personally wrote a letter to President Nixon.\(^\text{58}\) Since Indonesia was the largest non-communist Southeast Asian country greatly concerned about the regional security, Phnom Penh also appealed to Jakarta. In his first press conference after he successfully engineered the 'coup' of March 17, Lon Nol expressed hope that among others, Indonesia and France would respond favourably to his request for military assistance.\(^\text{59}\)

When the 'coup' took place in Cambodia, President Suharto was away in Malaysia (March 16-20, 1970). The joint communique issued at the end of his visit said:

> Both sides expressed their grave concern over the worsening situation in the Indochina area and affirmed their view of the need for adherence to the principles of self-determination and non-interference which should guide all parties in the solution of these problems.\(^\text{60}\)

Sympathising with the Lon Nol government's grave struggle against the communists, Jakarta sent several officials on an investigating trip to Cambodia. Indonesian Military officials were rather interested in extending military help to Cambodia. On May 25, 1970, *Newsweek* reported: "A team of Cambodian officials secretly visited Indonesia last November, and again in January to study in depth how the Indonesian army managed to overthrow President Sukarno".\(^\text{61}\) Forced by the Army, Indonesia planned to offer its own Russian manufactured

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\(^{60}\) For text of Joint Communique see *Asian Recorder*, June 18-24, 1970, p.9603.

weapons to Cambodia. Some Indonesian military leaders even proposed sending an expeditionary force to Cambodia as such a move would enable Indonesia to seek American military aid to "replenish their run-down arms and equipment." Indonesian military's views on the subject were not shared by the Foreign Ministry which believed that the effective way of extending help to the victim of aggression was not giving military aid but assisting in the form of a "diplomatic occasion". Following the conference on Cambodia held in Jakarta, Foreign Minister Malik said that if any one of the ASEAN members was attacked by an outside power, the other members would certainly go to its rescue as the fate of an ASEAN member would naturally affect the interest of the others. "Nevertheless", he hastened to add, "the aid of other ASEAN members would not necessarily be in the form of military one". What Malik said with reference to ASEAN countries held good for Cambodia too. President Suharto was impressed by the line of argument of the Foreign Ministry because he recognised the practical difficulties in the way of any military intervention. Jakarta, therefore, expressed its inability to provide any military assistance and in July 1970 Malik was reported as saying: "We have no arms for them. We just pray for Cambodia". Indonesian government also was critical of the American decision to provide arms to Cambodia. On April 20, 1970, the American Ambassador in Jakarta assured Indonesia that his country would not offer arms aid to Cambodia and would instead support Indonesia's proposal for an Asian conference. It was in this

62 Hsien-chien, n.58, p.6.  
64 Ibid, p.516.  
65 News From Indonesia, (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, New Delhi), February 11, 1971.  
66 Leifer n.63.  
backdrop that Indonesia made a call for an international conference, seeking the 
preservation of the neutrality and independence of Cambodia through diplomatic 
means.

On April 19, 1970, Foreign Minister Malik sent invitations to 20 Asian 
countries to join a conference in Djakarta to discuss the Cambodian situation. 
Though the Indonesian public hailed their government's move as "the most 
important diplomatic initiative since the Bandung Conference of 1955", the 
international community's response was not encouraging. As a founder member of 
the NAM, Indonesia was disappointed when the other nonaligned nations like 
India, Burma and Ceylon chose to keep off the conference. Communist countries 
including North Vietnam, PRC, North Korea and the Mongolian People's 
Republic, did not respond positively. This was not unexpected. In a joint 
communique issued on April 24, 1970, at the end of the "Summit" Conference of 
Indochinese peoples held in a border area of Laos, North Vietnam and China 
under the auspices of China, Prince Sihanouk, Pham Van Dong (North Vietnam) 
Prince Souphanouvong (Pathet Lao) and Nguyen Huu Tho (NLF of South 
Vietnam) expressed their "resolute support to the heroic struggle of the Khmer 
people to oust the Lon Nol-Sirik Matak 'coup d' etat clique' and foil the US 
imperialists' schemes of aggression." Prince Sihanouk condemned the proposed 
Djakarta Conference as a perfidious manoeuvre by "deasianised" Asians and 
lackeys hired by US imperialism. He described the prospective participants as 
"anti-people, anti-socialist countries firmly allied to the United States." 

Finally, of the 20 invited, only 10 agreed to participate in the Conference - 
Australia, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Newzealand, the Philippines, 
Singapore, Thailand and South Vietnam. As a Singapore scholar has pointed out,

68 Leifer, n.63, p.516.
69 For text of the Joint Declaration issued at the end of the Summit Conference 
of Indochinese peoples on April 24, 1970, see Asian Recorder, June 25 – July 
1, 1970, p.9612.
with the exception of the host country, all others who responded to the invitation positively were either members of the Anglo-Malayan Defence Treaty, SEATO or military allies of the US, and six of them were directly involved in the Vietnam war. None including Indonesia had diplomatic relations with China. The result was that though the host country wanted the Conference to be a non-aligned gathering, it turned out to be "a gathering of aligned in Support of the Lon Nol Government." Not unnaturally, Indonesia was certainly disappointed but did not get disheartened.

In his opening address of the two-day Conference of Foreign Ministers on May 16, 1970, President Suharto noted:

We regret ... that not all countries that have been invited, which would have constituted a much broader composition of ideal, are able to take part in this conference. ... We are aware that prior to this conference different opinions have been expressed. I am convinced that our common decision to come to this meeting is a proof that we are not discouraged by the existence of those conflicting evaluations. We simply wish the world to understand that our effort is a sincere one, motivated by our profound love for peace, based on the conviction that peace in this area is our absolute right and the key to the success of development towards our common prosperity. We are therefore determined to do something which may become the basis of a solution, not only for the Cambodian problem, but for other problems directly related to it as well.

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71 Soon, n.67, pp.8-9.
72 Leifer n.63, p.516.
73 For text of speech delivered by President Suharto on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the conference of Foreign Ministers on Cambodia in Djakarta on May 16, 1970, see News From Indonesia, May 20, 1970.
Of the 20 Asian-Pacific countries that were invited and of the 10 countries that responded positively, Australia was one. As Prof. Harper had pointed out, "Australia immediately accepted the Indonesian invitation and there was warm press support for its decision."\textsuperscript{74} Australia not only attended the Conference but also played an active role in it. The reasons are not far to seek. First, internally Gorton government was under pressure to pay due attention to the Cambodian crisis. This was because of Australia's "confused response to the Cambodian situation."\textsuperscript{75} For one thing, Canberra supported American military operations in Cambodia and for another, it advocated "genuine neutrality" of Cambodia, according to which, as Prime Minister Gorton himself said, "all foreign forces would be removed from that country."\textsuperscript{76} Australia also refused to offer military aid to Cambodia. Australia's policy towards Cambodia was entirely different from that of its policy in regard to South Vietnam. Commenting on this, Merrillees observed: "Australian unwillingness to help Cambodia militarily was in direct contrast to her response to South Vietnam in 1965, who had not even asked for military assistance."\textsuperscript{77} The Labour leader Whitlam, while making a scathing attack on Gorton government for its low-keyed response to the Cambodian crisis, urged it to hold an international conference on Indochina.\textsuperscript{78} Second, Australia sympathised with the Lon Nol government which was threatened by the Vietnamese communists. On the other hand Canberra was not happy with Prince Sihanouk. In 1967, in his letter addressed to Monash students, Prince Sihanouk urged them not only to support NLF but also to extend material assistance for which Canberra took serious exception. The result was, on September 11, 1967,

\textsuperscript{75} Merrillees, n.33, p.57.
\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{78} Harper, n.74.
Prince Sihanouk recalled his Ambassador in Canberra. While in power Prince Sihanouk had demanded that Australia should recognise Cambodia's claims but Canberra responded negatively. Third, Australia showed deep interest in the conference perceiving that it offered a rare opportunity to project itself as a country deeply concerned about the peace and security of Asia in general and Southeast Asia in particular. As Merrillees had pointed out, "a purely Asian initiative, without the American or British participation," the Conference "gave Australia the chance to take her place as a full and active member of the region". Fourth, the conference had an "added attraction" to Australia being in conformity with the Nixon doctrine which laid emphasis on self-help in the resolution of regional problems. Fifth, the conference was sponsored by Indonesia, Australia's immediate neighbour and the largest Southeast Asian nation concerning which Canberra's diplomacy had traditionally been sensitive. Further, like Indonesia, Australia was interested in the neutrality, independence and sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cambodia. Again, like Indonesia, Australia too refused to offer military assistance to Cambodia. Prime Minister Gorton regretted his government's inability to meet Cambodia's request for military aid.

At the conference, McMahon had parleys with all the other ten participants and in particular with the host country and Japan. He successfully prevailed upon the conferees to limit the scope of the conference to deliberations on the core issue, namely, securing the withdrawal of foreign forces from the Cambodian soil and ensuring the independence and honouring the integrity of Cambodia. Australia did not want the conference to take sides in the Cambodian civil war nor did it like

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79 Ibid.  
80 Ibid.  
81 Merrillees, n.33, p.58.  
83 Harper, n.74.
the conference to indict any foreign country for violating the sovereignty of Cambodia. McMahon, therefore not only opposed the participation of Lon Nol government's representative in the conference as a full fledged member but also succeeded in convincing other participants to accept Australia's stand. The result was that Cambodia was granted observer status. McMahon also successfully stalled South Korean and South Vietnamese demands for condemning North Vietnam for transgressing the Cambodian border. It may be recalled that a few weeks before the Djakarta conference was held, Indonesian foreign Minister Adam Malik, in his talks with Ceylon's Ambassador to Indonesia, emphasised that the conference's aim was not to condemn any nation but to find a solution to the explosive situation in Cambodia. Yet another achievement of Australia was that it succeeded in persuading Japan to join Indonesia and Malaysia in the "task force" which was to be set up by the conference "to embark upon urgent consultations among themselves and others as well as the co-chairman of the Geneva conference ... and to initiate discussions with the Secretary General of the United Nations and President and Members of the Security Council keeping in view the action by the United Nations." It may be mentioned that two months before the Djakarta Conference was held, McMahon in his first speech as Minister for Foreign Affairs said that he looked forward to the political contribution Japan might make "beyond the commercial and economic sphere".

At the end of its two-day deliberations, the conference issued an appeal in which it "earnestly and emphatically" urged that all acts of hostilities be stopped forthwith and all foreign forces be withdrawn from the territory of Cambodia. It also called on all parties to respect the sovereignty, independence, neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia and refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of the country to enable the Cambodians to solve their own problems peacefully.

84 Ibid.
86 Soon, n.67, p.10.
The co-chairmen of the Geneva conference of 1954 were requested to cooperate in "reactivating" the International Control Commission and in convening an international conference. 88

It was an irrefutable fact that the conference was an occasion to express "an Asian concern for an Asian problem" 89 It was also equally true that the conference, as the Economist has observed, "achieved little more than a statement of principles". 90 The only concrete result of the conference was the creation of "task force". But it too failed miserably in its chief task of taking the Conference process forward.

Though the Djakarta Conference seemed a wasted effort, from Australian perspective it was a fruitful diplomatic endeavour. No doubt Cambodian neutrality, for all the endeavours of Australia in concert with other participants to realise, remained a mirage. But Canberra had other gains. First, the extension of invitation to Australia and Australia's active role in the Conference signified that Asian states recognised the relevance of Canberra's association with the regional issues relating to peace and security. Prof. Harper observed thus:

The main value for Australia was that it gave an opportunity for close consultation with Asian leaders and demonstrated a greater flexibility in its approach to regional problems. It had on the one hand established its right as a member of the Asian community to take part in regional conferences and on the other its ability to maintain close relations with the United States. 91

91 Harper n.74, p.312.
McMahon himself stated that the conferees of the Djakarta Conference had exhibited their regard and warmth for Australia: "At the meeting itself we were warmly accepted and recognised not as interested outsiders but as regional partners in the fullest sense".92 Second, Australia realised its objective of persuading Japan to assume a political role commensurate with its economic power. Third, by readily accepting Indonesia's invitation and sharing Indonesia's views on the Cambodian crisis, Australia demonstrated that it was a cooperative friendly neighbour of Indonesia. The Conference helped to reinforce Australia's "special relations" with Indonesia which is a neighbouring land and thus of really great significance to it.93 On June 7, 1970, in a Press Statement on the outcome of the Djakarta Conference, McMahon paid rich tributes to Indonesia when he said: "Indonesia has given constructive leadership to the countries of the region".94 Fourth, by demanding the pullout of foreign troops from Cambodia, Australia indicated that involvement of its troops in Cambodia under any circumstances, was ruled out.

Australia's policies towards the Khmer Republic

On April 20, 1970, i.e. one day after Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik mailed invitations to the Asian countries to participate in the proposed Djakarta conference on Cambodia, the Cambodian Prime Minister Lon Nol, being concerned about the reports by the Cambodian military authorities that communist forces had more than doubled their area of control and convinced of the utter futility of relying on its neighbours for military assistance, issued an appeal for international aid. In a personal letter, he appealed to President Nixon for military

93 Haubold, n.1.
aid.\textsuperscript{95} Ten days later, the US intervened on a large scale in Cambodia. On April 30, 1970, President Nixon announced his historic decision in a broadcast: "Tonight America and South Vietnam will attack the headquarters for the entire communist operation in South Vietnam... Once the enemy forces are driven out of these sanctuaries and their military supplies destroyed, we will withdraw".\textsuperscript{96} President Nixon also announced that the US, in concert with other nations, would do its best "to provide the small arms and other equipment which the Cambodian army needs and can use now for its defence".\textsuperscript{97} After the last batch of 800 American soldiers returned to South Vietnam from Cambodia on June 29, 1970, i.e. twenty four hours ahead of the deadline for withdrawal, President Nixon approached the Congress for funds required for undertaking a fairly large-scale economic and military assistance effort in Cambodia. As Gorton and Young had pointed out, "the amount requested for 1970-71 alone (approximately $284 million) was almost as large as the total of US provided to Cambodia during the entire previous period of US assistance i.e. from 1955-1965".\textsuperscript{98}

While going ahead with its plans to offer aid to the beleagured Cambodia, the US not only appealed to its friends and allies to follow suit but also took concrete steps in this direction. The communique issued at the end of the 15\textsuperscript{th} SEATO Council meeting at Manila on July 2-3, 1970 said: "The Council condemned North Vietnamese attacks against Cambodia and expressed understanding of Cambodia's appeal for help in resisting North Vietnam's attempt

\textsuperscript{96} For text of President Nixon's speech broadcast on April 30, 1970, see \textit{Department of State Bulletin (DSB)}, May 18, 1970 pp.618-619.
\textsuperscript{97} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{98} Gordon & Young, n.55, p.26.
to dominate it."^{99} US Secretary of State Rogers, who played a central role in the SEATO Council Meeting, was so immensely pleased with the outcome that he told reporters on his arrival in Saigon on July 4, 1970: "I think there is an awareness - on the part of, certainly, other Asian nations and on the part of our allies - that greater help should be given particularly help in the case of Cambodia, that is now having a serious problem, in some ways economically and because of the invasion by the North Vietnamese."^{100} Another communique issued at the end of the two-day meeting of the Ministers of Troop-contributing countries in Saigon on July 5-6, 1970, said: "They suggested that free nations examine that assistance they could give to Cambodia in response to its requests."^{101} Soon after the Manila and Saigon Meetings, Secretary Rogers reminded the Asian nations and Allies of the need to help Cambodia.^{102}

Australia was a party to the decisions of Manila and Saigon Meetings and therefore there was reason to believe that Canberra would honour its commitments to Cambodia. Further, the support Australia lent to the issue of American military intervention in Cambodia presaged Canberra's offer of assistance to Cambodia in its war effort. On May 5, 1970, i.e. five days after President Nixon's decision of April 30, 1970, Prime Minister Gorton supported all the reasons given by the US for its ground intervention in Cambodia.^{103} Again, soon after the American troop withdrawal from Cambodia, McMahon, the Australian Minister for Foreign

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100 Ibid, p.138.

101 For text of final Communique, Ministerial Meeting of Troop-Contributing Countries, Saigon, July 6, 1970, see Ibid, pp.139-141.

102 Ibid, p.144.

Affairs, described American and South Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia as having been "remarkably successful". 104

To start with, Australia was hesitant to get involved in the Cambodian problem in any way. This was because, as an Australian Foreign Ministry Official had said, Australian government thought that "the Americans would do next to nothing to help the Cambodians because of the strength of feeling for disengagement in the United States".105 Second, feeling for disengagement from Vietnam war was strong in Australia itself. Third, Australia did not wish to do anything that might jeopardise Indonesian move to find a diplomatic solution to the Cambodian Problem. While welcoming Indonesian proposal for Djakarta Conference and assuring Indonesia that Canberra would do everything for the success of the Indonesian initiative, Foreign Minister McMahon said that his government "would be most reluctant to take any step which could be construed as prejudicing the efforts" of Foreign Minister Malik.106 Fourth, Australians were divided on the issue of extending assistance to the Lon Nol government. Soon after his tour of Southeast Asia in April 1970, the Democratic party leader Senator Gair said that the developments in Cambodia pointed to another Vietnam and that the proposed withdrawal of Australian and American forces should be reconsidered. He also urged the Australian government to supply arms and ammunition to Cambodia. On the other hand, Australian Labour Party warned Canberra not to jump into the fray.107 Labour leader Whitlam told a press conference on April 19, 1970 that since the presence of foreign troops would serve no useful purpose, the US and Australia should not send troops to Cambodia even if asked.108 It may be mentioned that in a telegram to the Labour Party's deputy

105 Merrillees, n.33, p.57.
107 Ibid, p.42.
108 Ibid.
leader Lance Barnard, Prince Sihanouk requested the Opposition to use its influence "with the Australian Government and President Nixon to stop military aid to the Lon Nol Government".\footnote{109}{Ibid, August 1970, p.30.}

As Australia, was in the process of withdrawing its forces from South Vietnam, the question of sending of its troops to Cambodia, leave alone that of offering military equipment, did not arise. Minister for Foreign Affairs McMahon categorically stated that there would be "no military intervention" by the Australian Government. Speaking to Presspersons in Manila on June 30, 1970, one day after the entire American troops' pullout from Cambodia, McMahon said that though the war in Cambodia posed a serious threat to the security of Southeast Asia, Australian troops would continue to fight in Vietnam alone and their operations would under no circumstances be extended to Cambodia.\footnote{110}{Ibid, July 1970, p.25.} More than anything, Lon Nol government itself was firm that foreign forces should not fight on its soil on its behalf. In a statement before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on November 30, 1970, US Assistant Secretary for East Asia and Pacific Affairs Marshall Green said:

Cambodians have made it clear from the outset that they want to fight their own battles. They need and seek weapons and ammunition. They welcomed the limited allied effort... and they welcomed continued combat support from South Vietnam. However, they do not want foreign ground forces.\footnote{111}{DSB, December 21, 1970, p.759.}

There might have been room for the argument that Australia sent troops to South Vietnam even though the latter did not ask for them and therefore, for the sake of consistency, Canberra should send troops to Cambodia at least after the Djakarta Conference which did yield encouraging results. This kind of argument
lacked sound base, as the Cambodian and the South Vietnamese situations seemed superficially similar while ground realities were divergent. First, the US did not call on Australia to send troops to Cambodia. In fact, even the US military intervention in Cambodia was a limited operation that stretched over two months i.e. May and June 1970. Second, the kind of enthusiastic support the Australians had extended to the American intervention and the consequent Australian participation in Vietnam war in 1965, was missing in 1970. Australian public opinion overwhelmingly favoured the withdrawal of their troops sent to foreign lands to fight for a cause, not of their own. Third, Canberra was on its own wavelength unlike in the past when its foreign policy pursuits justified the popular notion that 'Australia was with America all the way'. Outlining his 'new foreign policy', McMahon said on March 30, 1970:

> The main difference from old foreign policy is that the main emphasis is no longer on supporting traditional great and powerful allies and upholding military alliances. The main emphasis is on Australia looking after its own interests and projecting itself as a significant power in Southeast Asia region.\(^{112}\)

Fourth, a section of the Australians became disillusioned with the way Prince Sihanouk was damned with an unceremonious exit that entailed the installation of a new government under Lon Nol leadership.\(^{113}\) Basically, the idea of 'coup' was not compatible with the democratic process to which Australians were wedded.

Though Australia firmly opposed the despatch of troops to Cambodia, Canberra could not remain altogether indifferent to a tiny Southeast Asian nation which in its view, was involved in a grim struggle against expansion of

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112 Harper, n.74, p.311.
113 Meririllees, n.33, p.56.
communism in the region. Australia also could not afford to ignore the deep interest of its 'powerful ally' in Cambodia because of its strategic importance in view of the preponderance of the communist sanctuaries on its soil. Besides, Australia felt that the Cambodian situation needed diplomatic moves supplemented by the military pressure. On June 30, 1970, Minister for Foreign Affairs McMahon stated in a press conference that diplomatic efforts should be continued in tandem with military measures to prevent the spread of communism in Indochina. A good record of its relations with Cambodia too seemed to have influenced Australia to offer some assistance, save arms and ammunition, to the anti-communist Lon Nol regime. An Australian Foreign Ministry official said: "Australia's relationship with Cambodia from 1965 to 1972 was indeed 'special'. Australia was one of the few countries enjoying cordial relations with Cambodia." On July 23, 1970, Australia for the first time offered $A 500,000 enabling Cambodia to procure paramilitary equipment including vehicles communications material and excluding weapons and ammunitions. A few months later, Australia promised to supply equipment worth $A 600,000 to Cambodia.

A dramatic reversal of Australian policy came to be noticed when McMahon announced on September 3, 1970, that Australia was prepared to supply military equipment as well as arms to Cambodia. He also told Parliament that the government had decided to offer Cambodia a substantial aid totaling $A 2 million, an increase of $ 900,000 over the previous figure. Again, on December 11, 1970, McMahon disclosed that Australia had agreed to supply Cambodia with 7800 Thompson sub-machine guns and ammunitions in partial fulfilment of the aid programme announced in September 1970. He also stated that the first

115 Merrillees, n.33, p.59.
116 Harper n.74, p.310.
consignment of 3000 sub-machine guns and ammunition had already arrived in Phnom Penh, a couple of days earlier.\(^{118}\)

Australian involvement in Cambodia became deeper during the Prime Ministership of McMahon who succeeded Gorton in March 1971. The scope of Australian involvement which was initially strictly confined to the supply of paramilitary equipment and then expanded to include the supply of arms and ammunition, was now further broadened to offer the services of non-combat military personnel to Cambodia. Responding to an American request which was initially made early in 1970 soon after Lon Nol regime was inaugurated but ignored by the then Australian Prime Minister Gorton, the Pro-American government of McMahon agreed in November 1971 to send 30 military instructors to South Vietnam to train Cambodian troops, thus raising the number of advisers Australia was maintaining in South Vietnam to 160.\(^{119}\) The change in Australian policy to send instructors to train Cambodian troops, was attributed to Prime Minister McMahon's anxiety "to win Washington's support for his grandiose proposals for a joint United States, United Kingdom and Australian naval force".\(^{120}\) As the controversy over the sending of additional number of instructors was raging in Australia, Cambodian government threatened to aggravate it by announcing on December 29, 1971 that of Canberra had given to Cambodia six DC-3 aircraft to be converted into gunships as part of Australia's aid programme.\(^{121}\)

Australia's policy towards Cambodia was marked by ambivalence following the establishment of Labour government under Whitlam in December 1972. Whitlam sympathised with Cambodia and the Cambodians who became

\(^{119}\) *Australian*, November, 6, 1971.
\(^{120}\) Merrillees, n.33, p.59.
\(^{121}\) *Bangkok Post*, December 30, 1971.
victims of "the heaviest bombing in history and the great fire power used in history"\textsuperscript{122}, but not with the Lon Nol government. In his perception, Nixon's distaste for Prince Sihanouk's neutralist regime and American bombing of Cambodia since 1969 and subsequent forays into Cambodia, paved the way for the installation of a puppet regime under Lon Nol. In his autobiography Whitlam noted:

His (Prince Sihanouk's) capricious style of government had at least kept his country more peaceful and independent than any in Southeast Asia. I was outranged at the American support for the usurpation by Lon Nol in March 1970 and the invasion by the South Vietnamese forces the following month. I resolved that when we came to government we should distance ourselves from Lon Nol.\textsuperscript{123}

Little wonder, Whitlam who came to power with preconceived notions, pursued certain policies which went against the Lon Nol government. One of the decisions taken by Whitlam soon after assuming office was to end Australian military's non-combatant role in Cambodia. On December 27, 1972, Australia ended its training programme for Cambodian troops. As Merrillees had said, Australia not only ended its military assistance to Cambodia but also urged "other foreign powers to do likewise" in order to prevent Cambodia from becoming a theatre of great power competition" and "at the same time to permit the Cambodians to settle their own affairs in their own way free from foreign intervention".\textsuperscript{124} At the close of 1973, Australia withdrew from a seven-nation (six other nations being the US, the UK, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia and New Zealand) economic relief scheme to Cambodia.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{122} \textit{AFAR}, April 1975, p.172.
\textsuperscript{124} R.J. O Neill, "Foreign Policy and Defence" in B.D. Beddie (ed.), \textit{Advance Australia: Where?}, (Melbourne, 1975), p.120.
\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Straits Times}, November 17, 1973.
Whitlam called on Prince Sihanouk who was leading a resistance movement from there against the Lon Nol government. It was any body's guess that this was very much to the distaste of both the US and the Lon Nol government and was also in for vehement criticism at home by the pro-American Liberal Opposition. Nonetheless, Whitlam justified his meeting with Prince Sihanouk on the grounds that it was a fairly fruitful tete-a-tete with Prince Sihanouk.¹²⁶

Later on, Prime Minister Whitlam undertook a 16-day tour of Southeast Asia, from January 28 until February 13, 1974 during which he visited Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Burma Singapore and the Philippines and this loomed large in Australian foreign policy considerations. Of the three Indochinese countries, Whitlam visited only Laos, skipping Cambodia and Vietnam. One could find reason for the deliberate omission of Vietnam from Whitlam's tour itinerary of Southeast Asia. There were two governments, one in North Vietnam and another in South Vietnam, each ranging against the other. Confounding the situation was the fact that the popular base of the NLF in South Vietnam which was supported by North Vietnam, was constantly getting widened hoping for recognition by the international community. Visit to Hanoi, therefore, would offend not only the Saigon government but also its chief promoter, the US. Visit to the South would displease Hanoi as well as the NLF whose prospects of victory were getting brightened day by day. Cambodia on the other hand, was free from such an intricate situation. Lon Nol government was duly recognised by many a nation including Australia and above all, was a recipient of the US blessings. In fact, visit to Cambodia would have helped the Whitlam government to regain the lost ground in its relations with Washington. But in any case Whitlam chose to skip Cambodia because of his disinclination. Further, visit to Cambodia would not have annoyed Prince Sihanouk for whom he had soft corner, and also China, the principal supporter of Prince Sihanouk and the mentor of the Khmer Rouge with which

¹²⁶ Merrillees, n.33, p.62.
"real power lay increasingly" despite the fact that Prince Sihanouk was the leader of the GRUNK, recognised by forty nations.127

While pursuing a hostile policy towards the Lon Nol government, Whitlam made certain gestures the most important of which was the continuation of the 'de jure' recognition accorded by the previous Liberal government. Considering the eligibility criteria, Australia's conferring 'de jure' recognition on the Lon Nol government especially in the light of the fact that its hold over the country threatened to become tenuous could be viewed as a great favour. According to international law, a government would gain the right to be accorded 'de jure' recognition (full legal recognition) provided it satisfied the following conditions:

- It must have complete control over the administrative apparatus of its country;
- Its authority should not be challenged by a resistance movement.
- It must enjoy the popular support.

In fact, the 'de facto' recognition, a rare phenomenon in international relations, arises when two groups vie with each other in staking identical claims for recognition as the legitimate authority by virtue of the extent of territory and the public support they enjoy.128

Strict adherence to the norms of recognition would demand the accordance of at least 'de facto' recognition to Prince Sihanouk's exile Government of GRUNK which, after establishing its control over vast "liberated areas", had begun knocking at the doors of the capital city, Phnom Penh, in the summer of 1973. But Australia continued its 'de jure' recognition of the Lon Nol government which was struggling to hold on to even the cities until it fell in April 1975 and

127 Shawcross, n.28, p.258.
this, besides serving as a morale booster, tended to enhance the international image of the Lon Nol regime. Strangely enough, Australia continued to recognise the Lon Nol government even after closing down its embassy in the Cambodian capital on March 15, 1975.\textsuperscript{129}

It is interesting to consider what exactly prompted Whitlam to wink at the issue of recognition of the exile government of Prince Sihanouk with whom he maintained good rapport. First, as Professor Keith Suter of the University of Sydney had observed, although Whitlam wanted to evolve a more independent foreign policy for Australia, he thought perhaps that it would be too radical a move to accord recognition to the GRUNK.\textsuperscript{130} Second, Whitlam was afraid that either the granting of the 'de facto' recognition to the GRUNK or any other measure to belittle the 'de jure' recognition of the American supported Lon Nol government would amount to incurring the wrath of the US. In an article in \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, Denis Warner noted: "For the new Australian government to switch recognition would exacerbate the already strained relations with the United States."\textsuperscript{131} Third, by according recognition to GRUNK, Whitlam did not wish to invite criticism that his government was adopting two different approaches to the two parallel cases. Australia's 'de jure' recognition of the Thieu government in South Vietnam continued despite the latter's losing ground to the PRG. Fourth, Whitlam did not want to displease the Australians who continued to cherish the value of Australia's close links with the US that was promoting the Lon Nol regime. Though the recognition issue gave rise to what Professor Suter called "the most politically controversial situation",\textsuperscript{132} Whitlam government could console itself with the thought that its policy towards Cambodia and South

\begin{footnotesize}
\item[129] \textit{Tribune}, March 16, 1975.
\item[130] Suter, n.128, p.75.
\item[132] Suter, n.128, p.75.
\end{footnotesize}
Vietnam where political situations were similar, was consistent and that Canberra eventually accorded recognition to the GRUNK as in the case of the PRG of South Vietnam, no sooner than it captured Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975.

Whitlam government also helped the Lon Nol government by offering an aid of which it was in dire need. Despite his apathy for Lon Nol, Whitlam chose to toe the policy of the previous Liberal government in offering assistance to Cambodia. Whitlam's government provided hard currency totaling $A 835 595 to Cambodia before its economic relief scheme for Cambodia was wound up in the late 1973.

Even on the issue of Lon Nol's credentials at the UN General Assembly (UNGA), Whitlam government seemed to have favoured the Lon Nol government. In 1973, a good number of members of the UNGA, while extending their support to the exile government of Prince Sihanouk, questioned the validity of the credentials of Lon Nol's delegation. In 1974, when the UNGA had to take a decision on the issue of Lon Nol's credentials, Australia supported the ASEAN-sponsored resolution which called on both the Cambodian rival groups to strive for reconciliation even conveniently ignoring the question of representation.133 Lending support to ASEAN-backed resolution meant Australia's voting against the seating of GRUNK in the UNGA much to the chagrin of Prince Sihanouk and his principal promoter China with which Australia was striving for maintaining cordial relations.

During the three year period of office of Whitlam as the foregoing account would indicate, Australia's policy towards Cambodia was subjected to dilemma. On certain occasions, Australian moves clearly favoured Prince Sihanouk's GRUNK government obviously to placate China and North Vietnam, its new found friends. In some instances, American-backed Lon Nol government found

133 Merrillees, n.33, p.63.
Whitlam's policies helpful. Whitlam's dilemma, therefore, stemmed from what Merrillees had pointed out as a balance that his government sought to strike "in his policies between his loyalty to China and his loyalties to America and the ASEAN nations who firmly supported Lon Nol regime".\textsuperscript{134}

**Australia's attitude towards the Democratic Kampuchea**

After five years of bitter fighting, the beleaguered Cambodian capital Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge which exercised real power behind the façade of GRUNK, on April 17, 1975 when the rule of Angka began "the omnipresent and omnipotent state organisation",\textsuperscript{135} and 'year zero'. Soon followed the emptying of not only Phnom Penh but the country's other towns and cities. The result was, to cite one instance, the population of Phnom Penh which stood at more than two millions at the time of liberation on April 17, 1975, was reduced to mere 20,000 or so.\textsuperscript{136} In an apologetic statement Ieng Sary, deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs of the new government of Cambodia, said that the forced migration of the majority of Cambodia's population was necessitated by food shortages.\textsuperscript{137} Of the urban residents called the "new people" who were forced into the countryside to work as a forced labour, many died during their arduous trek because of hunger, diseases and wild animals. Those who survived to reach the destination, found themselves herded in labour camps. Family life was totally disrupted as men and women were not allowed to live together. As Barker of the Indochina section of the Department of Foreign Affairs of Australia had pointed out, "many former civil servants, military personnel, 'intellectuals' and their

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid, p.62.
\textsuperscript{135} Ross, n.28, p.60.
families have been executed" and "many have died as a result of starvation and disease after having been relocated in the cooperatives". According to a study of the US Department of Army, "executions counted for hundreds of thousands of victims and perhaps as many as 1 million." In addition, many more died of the bites of venomous snakes, of wild beasts, floods and malaria.

Though Article 20 of the new constitution promulgated by the Khmer Rouge in 1976 guaranteed freedom of religion, Buddhism, Buddhist priests and 150,000 Cham of the Muslim faith came in for harsh treatment. All educational institutions above the minor elementary level save two or three training schools, were closed. Health facilities were "abysmally poor". Doctors were either executed or were prohibited from practising. People were asked to use traditional plant and herbal remedies. There was no postal system. Currency was eliminated and trade in goods and services only was allowed.

Prince Sihanouk returned to Phnom Penh on September 9, 1975, five months after its "liberation", to become for life - time the head of state of the GRUNK which was rechristened as Democratic Kampuchea on June 5, 1976. However, he was replaced by Khieu Samphan on April 4, 1976 from which time until he left Cambodia before the Vietnamese forces captured the capital city on January 7, 1979 and was kept under house arrest in Phnom Penh.

The day GRUNK established its rule in Cambodia following the collapse of the Lon Nol government on April 17, 1975, Whitlam government hastened to

139 Ross, n.28, p.51.
140 Ibid.
141 Barker, n.138, p.441.
142 Ross, n.28, p.58.
143 Muller n.137, p.18.
recognise the new government even before many nations, including the ASEAN countries, could do so. ASEAN countries which were deeply concerned about the developments in their neighbourhood, recognised GRUNK one day after Australia did. This could be attributed to various factors. After assuming office in December 1972, Whitlam government, as discussed already, could have accorded 'de facto' recognition to the GRUNK in view of the latter's growing public support and its control of major part of Cambodia. Instead, Canberra continued to accord 'de jure' recognition to the Lon Nol regime until it fell. Therefore, Whitlam perhaps thought that by hastening the recognition of the GRUNK at the earliest, he could make amends for the otherwise undue delay in matters of recognition of new governments. Further, when the communist governments were established in all the three Indochinese states in April 1975, Australia did not see wisdom in isolating a country with economic and strategic importance, by withholding or delaying recognition. Whitlam also would have been inspired by his rapport with China and Prince Sihanouk. Granting immediate recognition to GRUNK also indicated Australia's desire to play a benign role in ensuring regional solidarity and stability as it brought together non-communist and communist groups of nations of Southeast Asia. At a press conference in Tokyo on June 18, 1975, Minister for Foreign Affairs Willessee, while reiterating that Australia's basic philosophy towards the Southeast Asian region was to "show our concern for developments in the region and try at all times to be helpful, without ever becoming meddlesome", urged non-communist' Southeast Asian countries "to face upto the fact of the existence of the new socialist governments in Indochina and live together with them in peace, neutrality and friendship". He even proposed an informal gathering similar to the Commonwealth Heads of State meeting to bring ASEAN and Indochinese states together and closer. Elaborating his proposal, he said that the meetings should be held periodically even if they would not be "earth shaking events".144

144 Australian, June 20, 1975.
While discussing the issue of recognition, one should not lose sight of the fact that Whitlam government, which downplayed the importance of ideological differences in maintaining relations with other nations, took cognizance of the brightening prospects of the Communist movements in Indochina states and accordingly made up its mind to recognise the communist governments as soon as they captured power. On April 7, 1975, Minister for Defence Barnard said that Australians should not feel any more or less threatened by the prospects of a communist takeover in Cambodia.\textsuperscript{145} Earlier on April 2, 1975, he refused a suggestion by Killen (shadow Minister for Defence) that the Labour government was leaving Australia defenceless despite communist advance in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{146} Therefore, the Labour government took a decision to recognise the communist governments in Indochina as and when they established authority and began a new chapter in Australia's relations with them. Commenting on Willessee's announcement of Australia's decision to recognise the new governments, Professor Miller, in an article on Australian foreign policy problems, argued that the factor "guiding the government throughout this period of collapse seems to have been the wish to make a fresh start in relations with the governments which could rule in Vietnam and Cambodia in the future".\textsuperscript{147}

The Liberal government under Fraser which succeeded Whitlam's government in December 1975, extended the recognition accorded to the GRUNK despite its being renamed as Democratic Kampuchea in 1976. This was in continuation of the policy Australian Liberal government pursued towards China, namely, that ideology could not be a barrier for bilateral relations. Even though Australia accorded 'de jure' recognition to the new government in Phnom Penh, Canberra did not maintain diplomatic relations with it during 1975-1978. The

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid, April 8, 1975.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid, April 3, 1975.
\textsuperscript{147} Cited in Merrillees, n.33, p.63.
result was that Australia was unable to have "first hand information" about the developments in Kampuchea. For an assessment of developments in Kampuchea, Australia, therefore, had to rely on "wide coverage in the media in many countries giving reports of violations of human rights, the ruthless imposition of a system of mass social organisation and some of the more extreme features" of the Khmer Rouge rule.148 Australian leaders also availed themselves of their foreign visits particularly to the Southeast Asian countries to know about the goings on in Kampuchea. Minister for Foreign Affairs Peacock said that his visit to Thailand on April 16-19, 1977 as part of his tour of Southeast Asia, was of "great value" because it offered an opportunity to him to know about the policies and programmes of the Democratic Kampuchea.149

With the pouring in of reports of large scale atrocities under the new Khmer Rouge regime since 1976, Australian government came under increasing pressure to take a serious view of the situation and withdraw recognition.150 Canberra, on the other hand, believed that derecognition would help neither Australia nor Kampuchea. Peacock told House of Representatives: "I do not believe that it would assist the process of an early return to peace development in Cambodia if we withdraw our recognition of the Cambodian government."151

A similar observation was made by Peacock on March 15, 1977: "The new regime in Cambodia began its rule in the most savage and drastic manner. We believe, however, that nothing will be gained by either Australia or the region ostracising, ignoring or setting out to alienate these (Indochinese) governments". He added that any extreme step against the Indochinese countries would only push

150 Ngaosyvathn, n.13, p.34.
151 *CPD*, House of Representatives, April 26, 1976, p.1765, cited in Merrillees, n.33p.64.
them into the deeper embrace of the other powerful communist states, the fall-out of which would be detrimental to the peace, stability and solidarity of the Southeast Asian region.\textsuperscript{152} Australia wanted the US not only to appreciate its view but also shape its own policies towards Cambodia as well as Vietnam and Laos, the other two communist states of Indochina.\textsuperscript{153}

\textbf{Australia's response to Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea}

The Fraser's Liberal government formed in December 1975 not only continued but also gave a fillip to its predecessor Labour government's policy of maintaining normal relationship with Vietnam as part of its broad objective of close relations with all the countries of the Southeast Asian region. Accordingly, Australia made available to Vietnam $A5.7 million during the aid plan period commencing from July 1976 for English language training, construction of a dairy products factory and a livestock improvement project and purchase of flour and rice. Besides, Australia also contributed to the WHO medical aid programme in Vietnam. Cultural cooperation between the two countries found expression in book gifts, academic visits and a visit by a Vietnamese cultural delegation to Australia in 1978. Australia also sought to develop trade relationship with Vietnam not only to establish "mature and comprehensive bilateral relations, but also as an encouragement to Vietnam to open its economy to the west."

\textsuperscript{154} Australia zealously supported Vietnam's admission into the UN. Though Security Council draft recommendations in support of Vietnam's admission were vetoed by the US in 1975 and 1976, Australia was one of a large number of members which co-sponsored the UN General Assembly resolution that endorsed the admission of Vietnam. Finally, Vietnam became a member of the world body

\textsuperscript{153} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{154} Peter Howarth, "Vietnam and Australia : The Cambodian situation and bilateral relations", \textit{Ibid}, March 1984, pp.176-177.
on September 21, 1977, following the adoption of a resolution by the Security Council on July 20, 1977. At the conclusion of a formal welcoming statement, as the Chairman of the Western European and others Group, the Australian representative said:

I would like to take this opportunity as the representative of Australia to welcome the Socialist Republic of Vietnam as a member of the United Nations. Australia supported Vietnam's application for admission to the United Nations in 1975 and 1976 and looks forward to the development of mutual understanding and a spirit of cooperation in the region.\textsuperscript{155}

On September 26, 1977, Foreign Minister Peacock met his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Duy Trinh who led Vietnamese delegation to the UN General Assembly in New York, and congratulated him personally and had an exchange of views on the region.\textsuperscript{156} The process of development of "close and cooperative relations" between the two countries was "seriously damaged" following Vietnam's military intervention in Kampuchea in late 1978.

\textbf{Vietnam's Intervention in Kampuchea}

At the root of the dispute between Kampuchea and Vietnam, lay the "historical antipathies" between the two countries. This animosity fuelled Pol Pot Kampuchea's ambitions to reclaim the lands of south of Vietnam populated by ethnic Cambodians and hitherto controlled by the rulers of the Kingdom of Angkor. Pol Pot's ultimate aim was to establish a greater Cambodia like "Nazi Germany's almost successful dream of uniting the German people under one Reich."\textsuperscript{157} The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation concluded in July 1977 by

\textsuperscript{155} \textit{Ibid.}, October 1977, p.531.

\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{157} Andy Carvin, "From Sideshow to Genocide : K R Years", \texttt{http://edweb.gsn.org/sideshow/stories/index.html}. 
Vietnam with Laos which "raps around Cambodia's north", expedited the deterioration of relations between the two countries. Pol Pot perceived the treaty as Vietnam's strategy to "strangle Cambodia". The result was the clashes that ensued as early as in May 1975, i.e. one month after the communist governments were in place in Phnom Penh and Saigon, and culminated in the severance of diplomatic relations between the two communist neighbours on December 31, 1977. Khmer Rouge was encouraged to pursue adventurous policies by China which emerged after the "liberation" of Cambodia as the "principal provider of technical and military assistance programmes".

Though Vietnamese detestation of China could be traced to two thousand years of the latter's aggressive imperialistic domination in the region, a dramatic rise in tension between the two historical enemies was noticed in 1978. The mass exodus of more than 1,60,000 ethnic Chinese from Vietnam in April - May 1978 because of Hanoi government's move against capitalist (mainly Chinese) enterprises in the South, was decried by China. Peking geared up its propaganda machine and massed troops on the border. Matters came to a head in July 1978, when China stopped all aid to Vietnam, closed its borders and made a scathing attack on Vietnam's policies towards Kampuchea.

The steady deterioration in Sino-Vietnamese relations was in glaring contrast to the growth of warmth between Vietnam and the Soviet Union. In order to "counteract Chinese pressure", Vietnam, as an Australian Foreign Affairs Department official had pointed out, "despite nationalist antipathy to developing or dependence on any single source", took initiatives to "formalise its increasingly close relatives with the Soviet Union". On June 28, 1978, Vietnam joined Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) as a full member.

158 Ibid.
159 Howarth, n.154, p.173.
Defending this step, Prime Minister of Vietnam Phan Van Dong said in an interview granted to Nikhil Chakravarty, Editor of the Indian paper *Mainstream*:

Being a socialist country, Vietnam's participation in the COMECON is a matter of course. It is aimed at increasing Vietnam's ability to build an independent and sovereign country and, at the same time, creating favourable conditions to strengthen and develop its economic relations with other countries in world.161

Having perceived Vietnam's membership of COMECON as an open declaration of Vietnamese alliance with the USSR, China reacted violently by vociferously supporting Pol Pot's Kampuchea.162

The hostility between China and Vietnam was aggravated by the signing of a 25-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation by Soviet President Breznev and the Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Le Duan in Moscow on November 3, 1978. In view of the mounting hostility between China and Vietnam, Article 6, the core of the Treaty which provided security guarantee to Vietnam, read thus:

The two parties signatory to the Treaty shall exchange views on all important international questions relating to the interests of the two countries. In case either party is attacked or threatened with an attack, the two parties signatory to the Treaty shall immediately consult each other with a view to eliminating that threat and taking appropriate and effective measures to safeguard peace and security of the two countries.163

161 For text of interview see *Vietnam* (Embassy of the SRV, New Delhi), December 1978, pp.9-11.
163 For text of the Treaty see *Vietnam*, n.161, pp.3-5.
China, which was already offended by Vietnam's entry into the COMECON, denounced the Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty in which it discerned an attempt at "strategic encirclement" of itself by the Soviet Union. The Pol Pot regime and China which did not like Vietnam extending its influence throughout Indochina, wherein Hanoi had already brought Laos under its influence, were convinced that the Vietnamese were planning a massive intervention into Kampuchea with Soviet support. ASEAN Governments feared that in the hands of the Soviets, the Vietnamese might turn out to be the Cubans of Asia, in lending support to the communist movements. While the ASEAN countries hoped that Vietnam would wean itself away from the clutches of Moscow, and would be drawn towards Southeast Asia, Hanoi went into the arms of Moscow much to their annoyance.

Sharing ASEAN concerns, Australia expressed dismay at the Treaty. Perceiving the Treaty as "a development of major significance in Soviet-Vietnamese relations," Australia felt that it would "fuel further Sino-Soviet competition in Southeast Asia". As Robyn Janet Lim of the Department of General Studies, University of New South Wales, had pointed out, "Australia regarded improved relations between Vietnam and ASEAN in 1976 and 1978 as a hopeful sign of the reduction of tension in the region". But the Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty, Australians felt, dealt a body blow to that positive development.

164 Asia 1979 Yearbook, p.171.
Pointing out the impact of the treaty on Sino-Vietnamese and Kampuchea-Vietnam relations, Australian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement:

There is little doubt now that signature of the USSR-Vietnam Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in November 1978 was not only a formal sign of the end of Vietnam's policy of maintaining a balanced relationship between China and the USSR, but also a sign that any Vietnamese action in Kampuchea was likely to be underwritten by the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁹

The Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty entailed a revelation that a military showdown between Kampuchea and Vietnam was imminent. In December 1977, Vietnam launched a pre-emptive strike against Kampuchea and pulled back its forces in January 1978. Returning to their territory, the Vietnamese brought along many of the captured soldiers and also a certain number of Khmer Rouge defectors who feared that they would be purged by Pol Pot. The Vietnamese groomed them with the hope of using them to establish a pro-Vietnamese government in Phnom Penh. Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge on the other hand made bold to celebrate the pullout as a "humiliating Vietnamese retreat".¹⁷⁰

Blinded by their anti-Vietnamese fervour and the unstinted Chinese support, the Khmer Rouge forces intensified their attacks across the border. These added to the woes of Vietnam whose war-torn economy was in a bad shape, particularly at that time because of, what Ambassador Pham Sy Tham has described as the,¹⁷¹ "unprecedented heavy natural calamities" which "devastated many regions involving 6 million inhabitants in Vietnam". Determined to get rid of the Khmer Rouge menace, Vietnam launched its final offensive in Kampuchea on December 25, 1978 when 120,000 Vietnamese forces invaded Kampuchea. The Vietnam

¹⁷⁰ Carvin, n.157, p.2.
People's Army completed, what Dien Bien Phu War hero Vo Nguyen Giap called the "historic mission" on January 7, 1969 when it captured Phnom Penh after a 17-day blitzkrieg. Pol Pot and other Khmer Rouge leaders along with their forces fled to Kampuchea's periphery to revive insurgent movement they launched in the late 1960s. A pro-Vietnamese government called People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) was proclaimed on January 10, 1979 under the leadership of Heng Samarin. The Vietnamese forces which played central role in liberating Kampuchea, remained there only, offering security cover to the PRK.

The international community reacted on expected lines. While the Communist world led by the Soviet Union approved of the Vietnamese action, the non-communist world including the ASEAN countries, the US and its allies, and China reacted violently. Defending Vietnam's military intervention, the Soviet News Agency Tass said that "a reactionary dictatorial clique of Pol Pot was only responsible for the change of government in Phnom Penh and the charge of "aggression" was unwarranted and uncalled for." Congratulating the PRK leadership, the Soviet President Leonid Benznev said that the new government in Phnom Penh enjoyed the support of "the broadest strata of the population".

As the next door neighbours of the Indochina region, ASEAN countries took exception to Vietnam's action in Kampuchea. In a statement issued on January 9, 1979, Chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee and Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja "deeply" deplored the escalation of the conflict between two states of Indochina. He also expressed "grave concern" over the implications and impact of this development on the peace security and stability.

173 Times of India, January 9, 1979.
of Southeast Asia. Holding a "Special Meeting" to consider the Kampuchean situation, ASEAN Foreign Ministers issued a statement on January 12, 1979, in which they "strongly deplored the armed intervention against the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kampuchea", Affirming "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 of self-determination", ASEAN Foreign Ministers "called for the immediate and total withdrawal of the foreign forces from Kampuchean territory".

In a statement submitted to the Security Council on January 7, 1979, China, the principal supporter of Pol Pot clique, denounced Vietnam of towering crimes and "acting as a surrogate for the Soviet Union "in its expanded strategic plan". Disapproving of Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea, the US secretary of State Cyrus Vance told a press conference on January 12, 1979:

We have repeatedly stated our support for stable system in independent states in Southeast Asia; and we believe that this system includes an independent Cambodia, despite the strength of our concern over the human rights situation in that country. We believe that all countries, interested in peace, stability and independence should make clear their opposition to this invasion which has taken place, work towards withdrawal of the invading foreign forces from that country, and to act to ensure the integrity of all states in the area.

Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea came in for severe criticism in Australia. In view of Vietnam's entry into COMECON and its treaty with the Soviet Union preceeding its move against Kampuchea, Australians viewed

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175 For text of statement by the Chairman of ASEAN standing committee Mochtar Kusumatmaadja, see ASEAN Documents Series, n.16, p.446-47.
176 For the text of Joint Statement of the special meting of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers see, Ibid, p.119.
178 Third World Unity, February 1979 p.4.
Vietnam's action as a "public gesture against Peking, abetted by the USSR".\(^{179}\)

Australia felt that though the war between Kampuchea and Vietnam appeared to be confined to the Indochina region, it embodied potentials to affect the international political scenario. In a press release issued on February 11, 1979, Foreign Minister Peacock said:

> It (Vietnam-Kampuchea conflict) had many elements of a local conflict but its implications could have a most serious impact for the world community. There was little doubt that the Soviet Union had influenced the course of events through its support for Vietnam. A very ominous aspect of this conflict was the damaging effect it could cause to relations between the Soviet Union and China and intensify their confrontation.\(^{180}\)

Fraser government's policy of moving closer to China was in contrast to its policy towards the Soviet Union of which Canberra was suspicious unlike the previous Whitlam's Labour government. Fraser's Liberal Government took what Lewis Young had termed as "a strong stand" against the Soviet Union.\(^{181}\) Soviet Military intervention in Afghanistan following Vietnam's in Kampuchea, testified to Russia's "expansionistic tendencies".\(^{182}\) Therefore, it was the Soviet factor that prompted Australia to take a hard line against Vietnam.

Australia not only roundly condemned Vietnam's Kampuchea policy, but also as an official of the Australian Foreign Affairs Department had observed, "followed ASEAN's line both at the UN and in its attempts to isolate Vietnam"\(^{183}\) for, like ASEAN, Australia too was disappointed by the new postures of Vietnam. Outlining the bases of ASEAN countries' disenchantment with Vietnam, Roeder wrote in *Swiss Review of World Affairs*:

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179 Cited in Merrillees, n.33, p.64.
180 AFAR, February 1979, p.89.
182 Merrillees, n.33, p.64.
183 Ibid, p.65.
The long-nourished hope that a national-communist Vietnam would establish constructive relations with ASEAN has been blown away with the monsoon winds. The goodwill built up by Vietnam's alert Premier Pham Van Dong during his September 1978 visit to the ASEAN countries has evaporated. Even the former Indonesian Ambassador to Vietnam, a strong advocate of closer relations between Jakarta and Hanoi, condemned the Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia's internal affairs and called on his own government to clearly condemn the action.\textsuperscript{184}

Therefore, Australia which had evinced a "fundamental interest in a peaceful and stable Southeast Asia," shared the concerns of ASEAN and reacted "promptly" to the developments in Indochina. On January 8, 1979 i.e., one day after the fall of Phnom Penh to the Vietnam-backed "Cambodian liberation army", Prime Minister Fraser, while deploring the fighting in Kampuchea, averred that the Vietnamese invasion had created risk of serious intensification of the war into a regional conflict involving serious consequences for the inhabitants of the region. He added: "The very fact that Vietnam has signed an agreement that contains security elements with the Soviet Union tends to introduce the Eastern bloc approach to politics in Southeast Asia."\textsuperscript{185} Australian government dismissed the argument in some quarters that "the nature of the Pol Pot regime of Kampuchea provided some justification for Vietnam's invasion" holding firmly to its view that "Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea cannot be condoned".\textsuperscript{186} Canberra took serious exception to the Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea chiefly for two reasons: first, Hanoi sought to settle a dispute in the Indochina region by resorting to "military means of the most extreme kind, a general invasion across a border," and second, it paved the way for an escalation of great power rivalry in the region.\textsuperscript{187}

\textsuperscript{185} \textit{Third World Unity}, February 1979, pp.81-82.
\textsuperscript{186} "The Indo-China Conflict", \textit{AFAR}, February 1979, pp.96-108.
\textsuperscript{187} \textit{Ibid}, p.108.
Australia "took prompt action to draw international attention to the gravity of the situation and to mobilise international opinion for moderation and restraint".\(^{188}\) Australia hence joined ASEAN to co-sponsor a resolution in the UNGA in January 1979 on Indochina crisis. Though not a member of the UNSC, Australia participated in its meetings to consider the Kampuchean issue. In his statement to the UNSC on January 15, 1979, Australia's permanent representative to the UN Anderson drew attention to his Government's "deep concern about the grave dangers" that the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea "posed for the widening and escalating of conflict in the region". He further proposed that "peaceful solution of that conflict should be based in the first instance on the establishment of a cease-fire and the withdrawal of foreign forces". As Anderson claimed, these objectives found place in the draft resolution of the UNSC which was vetoed despite the fact that "an overwhelming majority of the members representing wide international opinion, gave it their support".\(^{189}\)

Demonstrative of its deep concern about the policies pursued by Vietnam, the Australian Government announced on January 24, 1979 a "suspension" of its ongoing aid programme to Vietnam. However, as an exception, the Vietnamese students who were then undertaking courses in Australia, were allowed to complete their courses. Also suspended were the cultural exchanges with Vietnam. A decision was also taken to express its concern in international forums.\(^{190}\) Showing its profound regard for ASEAN, Australia not only refused to recognise the pro-Vietnamese Heng Samrin government but also sought to influence India to do so.\(^{191}\)

\(^{188}\) Ibid, p.109.
\(^{189}\) Ibid, p.103.
\(^{190}\) Ibid, January 1979, p.42.
Of the various punitive steps Australia initiated against Vietnam, it was the suspension of economic aid that was subjected to severe criticism. There were differences of opinion among the policy planners on this issue. Though Foreign Minister Peacock and other officials of his ministry disapproved of Vietnam's intervention leading to the overthrow of the DK Government by military means which was against the basic principles of international relations, namely non-intervention and non-aggression, they opposed taking an extreme step of suspension of aid. On the other hand, they suggested the recalling of Australian Ambassador from Vietnam by way of adopting a "mild approach". They did not favour the adoption of a "hard-line attitude" for various reasons. First, Vietnam was sufficiently provoked by the forces of Pol Pot through their repeated military forays. Second, the DK government which was dislodged by Vietnam, was also a communist one held in abhorrence by the international community for its heinous crimes of genocide. Third, Australia which remained silent over Indonesian annexation of East Timor by force in 1976, would betray its inconsistency if it imposed sanctions on Vietnam.  

Lending credence to these differences within the government was the news release issued by the acting Minister for Foreign Affairs Ian Sinclair on January 24, 1979 which read:

Prior to the decision being taken, consultations were held with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who is at present in Geneva, and whose views were reported to Cabinet, and with the Department of Foreign Affairs. The Secretary of the Department and the Director of the Australian Development Assistance Bureau were also directly consulted and outlined the options to cabinet.  

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192 Ibid.
All the same, Peacock's arguments, for want of support from the majority of the members of the cabinet of pro-China and anti-Soviet Prime Minister Fraser led to the Australian Government's decision to impose sanctions on Vietnam. In any case, the Labour Opposition attributed Fraser government's hard-line policy towards Vietnam to a "pro-China bias". Senator Ken Wriedt argued that by suspending aid to Vietnam, Australia had lost the chance of using Vietnam to influence the Soviet Union to mend its international policies:

A more promising method of influencing the Soviet Union would be by maintaining good relationships with other countries who may be influential with or influenced by the Soviet Union. By this process we, in concert with other nations, could encourage countries who are subject to Soviet influence to exercise a similar restraining influence.¹⁹⁴

The charge of 'pro-China bias' by the Opposition could not be dismissed as groundless. Not unnaturally, in view of its deep seated distrust of the Soviet Union, Fraser Government highlighted Soviet factor in the Indochina crisis. Foreign Minister Peacock said in a press release on February 11, 1979: "There was little doubt that the Soviet Union had influenced the course of events through its support for Vietnam". Referring to the increasing tension on the Vietnam - China border, he said that "so long as Vietnamese troops occupied Kampuchea, the danger of a wider conflict would remain."¹⁹⁵ Australian government however winked at the Chinese encouragement to Pol Pot forces that contributed to the outbreak of war between Kampuchea and Vietnam. In this context, it will not be impertinent to recall the observations of an Indochina specialist Gareth Porter on this issue. Fixing responsibility on China for Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea,

¹⁹⁵ *AFAR*, February, 1979 p. 89.
Porter argued: "Hanoi's invasion and occupation of Cambodia was a response to external pressure rather than the fulfillment of a long-term plan to take control of Cambodia. The Vietnamese Communist leadership has always seen Cambodia as vital to Vietnam's independence, but they have not always coveted responsibility for Cambodia". Arguing further, Porter said that though the Khmer Rouge launched its major attacks on Vietnam since January 1977, Hanoi did not retaliate initially. It was only in September 1977 when Khmer Rouge forces mounted a heavy attack that the Vietnamese government pressed its army into action to push the invading Pol Pot's forces deep into Cambodia and "tried to get China to intercede with its Khmer ally to get a negotiated settlement". Porter added:

When China not only refused to rein in Pol Pot's border offensive but stepped up army shipments to Phnom Penh, Hanoi began to suspect that the border war was a deliberate Chinese tactic aimed at sapping Vietnam's economic strength. It was then that the Vietnamese began planning to use Khmer Communist forces of Pol Pot and, if necessary, Vietnamese troops, to replace the regime. Six months after the break with China, the Vietnamese installed a new government in Phnom Penh.¹⁹⁶

No doubt Vietnam had violated the principles governing relations between nations. Yet an objective assessment of the Kampuchea - Vietnam conflict demanded a word in appreciation of Vietnam's concerns - security, economic and cultural - before indulging in Vietnam bashing. But Fraser government chose to blow up negative side of Vietnam's case, conveniently ignoring the positive aspects for fear of offending ASEAN, the US and China. Nevertheless, the "pro-China bias" allegation was in focus again following China's invasion of Vietnam in February 1979.

The deterioration of Sino-Vietnamese relations in the wake of Vietnam's entry into COMECON and the discontinuation of aid to Vietnam and the conclusion of Soviet-Vietnam treaty, reached its zenith when China launched its invasion against Vietnam on February 17, 1979 to administer a "punitive lesson". In response to protests from the US as well as the USSR, China justified its attack on the grounds of Vietnamese aggression on the border. On February 27, 1979, the US Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal called on China to pull out its troops from Vietnam.197 Earlier, on February 20, 1979, as Chairman of ASEAN Standing Committee, Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar, by way of expressing grave "concern and anxiety" over China-Vietnam conflict, appealed "urgently... to the conflicting parties to cease all hostilities" and urged "all foreign forces to be withdrawn from all the areas of conflict in Indochina".198 ASEAN countries were worried that the Chinese invasion offered an opportunity to the Soviet Union to entrench itself deeply in the region. On February 25, 1979, fifteen Soviet aircraft laden with equipment landed in Hanoi. On March 7, 1979, US defence officials said that ten Soviet warships were operating in the South China Sea.199 However, China announced on March 5, 1979 that it was ending soon its invasion of Vietnam and withdrawing all Chinese frontier troops to Chinese territory. Peking also warned that it reserved the right to strike back again in self-defence in case of "recurrence of Vietnamese armed provocations".200 Finally, claiming that it had achieved its objective, China announced on March 16, 1979 that it had completed troop pull out and called on the Vietnamese troops to withdraw from Kampuchea.201

197 Asia 1980 Yearbook, p.301.
198 For text of statement made by the Chairman of the ASEAN standing Committee Mochtar Kusumaatmadja on February 20, 1979; see Foreign Affairs Malaysia, March 1979, p.12.
201 Asia 1980 Yearbook, p.319.
Even before the Sino-Vietnamese hostilities broke out, Australia which was keenly following the worsening situation on the China-Vietnam border, expressed concern and warned that "miscalculation of the fighting could escalate into a border dispute".\textsuperscript{202} Again on February 14, 1979, i.e., three days before China invaded Vietnam, Foreign Minister Peacock expressed Australia's deep concern and stated that "the possibility of some sort of military action by China against Vietnam can therefore not be ruled out". He further warned: "The consequences of a broadening of the present dispute, bringing in China and perhaps the Soviet Union, would be grave, with implications for both the region of which Australia is part, and beyond it".\textsuperscript{203}

Demonstrating its sincere interest in the peace and stability of the region, Australia took several diplomatic initiatives to defuse the situation and clear the clouds of war between China and Vietnam thereby denying the Soviet Union an opportunity to interfere in the regional affairs. Prime Minister Fraser and Foreign Minister Peacock sent "personal messages" to Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers of a number of countries with the hope that they "might be able to exercise a moderating influence".\textsuperscript{204} In the course of his discussions on different occasions with President Carter and Indian Prime Minister Morarjee Desai in January 1979, Fraser urged them "to exercise an influence in reducing the tensions" in the Indochina region.\textsuperscript{205} Subsequently, Fraser and Peacock conveyed their concern to both aligned and non-aligned nations and appealed to them "to contribute to restraining the actions of the protagonists, and to relieve tension in the area".\textsuperscript{206} The Australian Government had also asked the USSR, both in Moscow and through its Ambassador in Canberra, to use its special relationship with Vietnam to prevail upon the latter to settle the matter peacefully.\textsuperscript{207}

\textsuperscript{202} \textit{AFAR}, February, 1979, p.92.
\textsuperscript{203} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{204} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{205} \textit{Ibid}, p.96.
\textsuperscript{206} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{207} \textit{Ibid}, p.95.
After the war broke out between China and Vietnam, Australia joined ASEAN countries to express its "special concern", while maintaining "a pro-China bias". Fraser government expressed its disapproval of "the use of force for the settlement of disputes, whatever their cause"\(^{208}\) without being critical of the Chinese invasion of Vietnam. On the other hand, Canberra maintained that the military occupation of Kampuchea by Vietnam abetted by the Soviet Union, was responsible for the Chinese attack. Addressing the 'special session' of the Cabinet on February 18, 1979, Prime Minister Fraser said:

The Australian Government views with real concern the incursion of Chinese armed forces into Vietnam. The situation has arisen out of the earlier Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, and has developed to the stage where armed conflict has now erupted between China and Vietnam.\(^{209}\)

Again, in a veiled approval of China's invasion of Vietnam, Foreign Minister Peacock said:

China's ... incursion into Vietnam can only be understood as a reaction to Vietnam's treaty with the Soviet Union, its invasion of Kampuchea and the installation there of a pro-Vietnamese Government. China's motives in striking across the border do not relate only to a border dispute but are aimed at Vietnam's political influence in Kampuchea, which is beyond China's immediate research. In turn, its concern about events in Kampuchea relate not only to the extension of Vietnamese influence but to the role of the Soviet Union as Vietnam's principal backer.\(^{210}\)

The Labour Opposition mounted attack on the Government, accusing it of "pro-China bias". Lambasting the Opposition, Foreign Minister Peacock said:

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The only bias this Government has in regional affairs is towards peace and stability. To the extent that China itself alone and unprovoked, would prefer peace and stability at this stage of its development in order to concentrate on internal modernisation, and only to that extent, there is convergence between its present interest and ours. Is it being suggested that we should therefore change our interests in order to escape the charge of bias and ensure even-handedness? The idea is absurd.²¹¹

What the Opposition expected of the Fraser Government was certainly not the evolving of a policy towards Vietnam that did not cater to the national interests, or for condoning Vietnam which in its view violated the fundamental principles of the UN Charter that govern the peaceful conduct of the relations between sovereign states.²¹² The Opposition also did not want the Government to do anything either to undermine ASEAN's international position or mar its growing relations with China. What exactly the Opposition wanted was that the Australian Government should not pursue a policy that would totally alienate Vietnam. Suggesting a balanced approach, Senator Ken Wriedt said in August 1979.

Both these actions (of Vietnam and China) are to be deplored. Although the vicious nature of the Pol Pot regime moderated the world's condemnation of the invasion of Kampuchea, it did not provide justification for that invasion.

Nor did Chinese have any justification for its subsequent attacks on Vietnam, and the world should make it plain that the concept of punishing nations is not acceptable.

It is in our interest to bring home to China that its subsequent claim be entitled to punish Vietnam again, should it feel justified in doing so, is unacceptable internationally.²¹³

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²¹¹ Ibid.
²¹³ Wriedt, n.194, pp.263-64.
Vociferously stressing the relevance of "even-handedness" in Australia's relations with China and Vietnam which was otherwise dismissed as irrelevant by the Foreign Minister Peacock, Wriedt argued:

By siding with China in its dispute with Vietnam and the Soviet Union we have limited our capacity to induce China to modify its position.

By taking short-term view of the issue we have reduced our effectiveness for reasons which are not clear. It is very well for the Foreign Minister to claim that the parrot-cry of "even-handedness" is no substitute for thinking through a policy. Our Government fears Soviet access to Cam Ranh Bay, yet its actions don't help Vietnam to remain independent which would appear to be the appropriate course. If our actions on Indochina are an example of thinking through a policy, I for one do not relish our response to an unexpected crisis.\(^{214}\)

In any case, Fraser Government held on to its stand and extended cooperation to ASEAN, US and China to isolate Vietnam internationally and to bleed it white.

**Australia's endorsement of UN initiatives on Indochina crisis**

Australia "strongly supported" the initiatives of the UN which became the centrepiece of ASEAN's strategy to resolve the Kampuchean problem. When the Security Council met following the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, Australia took active part in the deliberations and appealed to Vietnam on January 15, 1979 to accept a "cease-fire" and pull out its troops from Kampuchea. On February 23, 1979, six days after China launched aggression on Vietnam, Australia, joined by Canada and New Zealand, addressed a letter to the President of the Security Council expressing the view that "the situation in Southeast Asia and its

\(^{214}\) *Ibid*, p.264.
implications for international peace and security should be a matter for urgent consideration by the Security Council". When the Security Council met on February 24, 1979, Australia, though not a member of the Security Council, was permitted to participate in the debate. Taking part in the debate, Australian Representative Anderson drew the attention of the Council to the "grave developments" in the Southeast Asian region which "carry with them the risks of widening conflict, with incalculable consequences". He emphasised that there should be "immediate case-fires in the conflicts", that Vietnam should withdraw its forces from Kampuchea and that China must withdraw its forces from Vietnam, and that there should be "concerted efforts to find solutions leading to lasting settlements, possibly by making use of the "good offices" of the UN Secretary General". In the light of the Soviet draft calling for Chinese withdrawal and Chinese draft calling for a Vietnamese withdrawal tabled for the consideration of the Council, Australia, by calling for the Chinese withdrawal from Vietnam as well as the Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea, could boast of its conspicuous non-partisan stand. It was beyond one's expectation that Vietnam would be pleased by this stand because Hanoi was firm about its security concerns being addressed prior to the consideration of the issue of its troop pull out.

Australia also associated itself actively with the International Conference on Kampuchea (ICK) held at the UN Head Quarters on July 13-17, 1981. Including Australia, 79 Member States participated in the conference while 14 other states were represented by their observers. Proposed by the Philippines and supported by Australia, Senegal, Venezuela and Belgium, Willibald Pahr of Austria was elected President of the Conference. Invitation was not extended to Pro-Vietnam PRK. Vietnam was invited but it declined it in favour of a "regional conference" between ASEAN and Indochina states the issue being a regional

216 For text of the Australian Foreign Minister's statement, see *Ibid*, pp.103-104.
one. But Australia held a different view because of the involvement of big powers. Foreign Minister Tony Street argued:

The Australian Government has always held that there should be a peaceful and not a military settlement in Kampuchea, but the countries of the Southeast Asian region should not be expected to achieve this result alone. Many aspects of the problem are international, particularly the presence of major power rivalry in the region and they can only be resolved at the international level.

In any case, the ICK became a unilateral affair in the absence of Vietnam, a key player in the Indochina tangle. Expressing its regret, Australia was sure that the absence of Vietnam meant that "this conference cannot realistically hope to negotiate a settlement at this session". However, Canberra warned that through its absence, Vietnam had worked not only against the region but also its own interest. Foreign Minister Tony Street noted:

Our chances of making progress would have been greater if they (Vietnamese) had participated. Vietnam itself is the greatest loser through prolonging its self-imposed isolation from the international community, and by its refusal to date to recognise that for their part its neighbours also have legitimate interests and concerns.

Foreign Minister Tony Street who represented Australia at the Conference, called in his address for the withdrawal of about 200,000 Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea, and stressed the self-determination for the Khmer people and

220 For text of the statement by the Foreign Minister Tony Street to the ICK on July 14, 1981, see Ibid, pp.372-74. For a good account on the ICK see Gareth Porter, "Kampuchea Conference : Cracks in the Coalition", Indochina Issues, No.18, July 1981.
non-interference in the internal affairs of Kampuchea. The noteworthy feature of Tony Street's address was that "the prerequisites for an acceptable settlement" of the Khmer problem that he listed out, included "an undertaking that a fully independent Kampuchea will not act against the interests of its neighbours" (obviously Vietnam). For the first time after Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, Australia seemed to have adopted a realistic approach by recognising the security concerns of Vietnam. Tony Street told the conference thus:

Australia does not deny that Vietnam has certain legitimate security interests of its own. However, that is no justification for this invasion of a neighbouring country. Even so we do not insist on an immediate withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea. A phased withdrawal would avoid the creation of a power vacuum which would result in a return to power of the Pol Pot Regime.221

The final declaration of the UN-sponsored ICK called for "the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Kampuchea... under the supervision and verification of a United Nations peace-keeping force / observer group" and "the holding of free elections under United Nations supervision". This meant the endorsement of the Australian peace proposal by the conference. What is more, the conference also shared Australian view of Vietnam's security concerns when it said:

The conference appreciates the legitimate security concerns of all States of the region, and therefore deems it essential for Kampuchea to remain non-aligned and neutral and for the future elected government of Kampuchea to declare that Kampuchea will not pose a threat to or be used against the security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States, especially those sharing a common border with Kampuchea.222

Impressed by the outcome of the Conference, Foreign Minister Tony Street announced on July 21, 1981, that Australia would "stand ready to assist" the ad hoc committee established by the ICK in its work, in particular, "to persuade Vietnam to join the negotiating process in due course".223

Australia's derecognition of Democratic Kampuchea

Australia supported ASEAN's diplomatic initiatives intended to bring more and more pressure on Vietnam to seek a negotiated settlement of the Kampuchean problem. However, as Vietnam stuck to its guns, Australia began to realise that a hostile stand against Hanoi would only prove to be adverse. Australia, therefore, began to drift away from the ASEAN stance when the Foreign Minister Tony Street in his statement to the ICK referred to Vietnam's security concerns. The subsequent Australian derecognition of Pol Pot administration was a clear manifestation of its deviation from the ASEAN stance.

As discussed already, the Whitlam government lost no time in recognising the GRUNK which was later rechristened as Democratic Kampuchea dominated by the Khmer Rouge leadership under Pol Pot following the 'liberation' of Kampuchea on April 17, 1975, even before its non-communist northern neighbours could do so. The Liberal government under Fraser that succeeded Whitlam's government in December 1975, continued the recognition for various diplomatic and strategic considerations.

Fraser government continued to recognise Pol Pot's group as the legal government of Kampuchea despite mounting domestic pressure on his government. While Canberra took cognizance of the fact that "Pol Pot's regime horrified the world", it refused to condone Vietnam's action in Kampuchea and on the otherhand condemned it. All said and done, Australia was guilty of supporting

notorious Pol Pot gang. The truth was that Canberra did not wish to displease ASEAN and hence Australia's adoption of an unrealistic approach on the issue of recognition of the DK. But the very ASEAN stand on Kampuchea was marred by inconsistency as the Australian scholars Grant Evans and Kelvin Rowley had pointed out. ASEAN countries had recognised the new regime in Uganda installed by Tanzania following the dislodgement of Idi Amin's "loathsome regime" in 1978. The US stand on Kampuchea too was "anomalous". In 1978, President Carter, whose foreign policy attached much importance to human rights, denounced the DK as "the worst violator of human rights in the world". Yet, even after the Pol Pot government was dislodged following Vietnamese military intervention, The American representative on the UN Credentials Committee supported Pol Pot group in 1979. The US defended its action on the grounds that lending support to the DK's seat in the UN did not mean supporting the DK regime. Like the US, other Western countries also were "embarrassed by their diplomatic support for the deposed Communist dictator, and sought to distance themselves from him, at least in public".

Recognition of Pol Pot group became a major issue in Australia. Prime Minister Fraser and Foreign Minister Peacock differed from each other on the issue of recognition of the DK just as they did in the case of suspension of the Australian economic aid to Vietnam. Like Australia, Britain also accorded "full recognition" to the DK on the grounds of its control of the territory and of Cambodia. However, concluding that these grounds were no longer valid after the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, Britain withdrew its recognition of the DK in early December, 1979. Even at this point of time, Peacock defended his government's recognition of the DK.

224 Grant Evans & Kelvin Rowley, Red Brotherhood at War: Indochina since the fall of Saigon (London 1984), pp.221-22.
225 Ibid.
The past deeds of the Pol Pot regime regarding human rights must severely be blamed ... In fact, Australia has repeatedly declared its condemnation and rejection of the regime's policy at the United Nations and elsewhere. The view, however, about Southeast Asia varies between the European countries and peoples and those at close proximity with the region. Australia especially cannot condone Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Cambodia. The Australian Government is well aware that withdrawal of recognition (of the Pol Pot regime) will be taken as an acceptance of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. It is for this very reason that the Australian Government has not withdrawn its recognition.22b

Shortly after, a perceptible change in Peacock's perception of the Kampuchean situation came to be noticed. Japanese scholar Kikuchi Tsutomo had pointed out that although Peacock supported the ASEAN policy toward Indochina and accordingly denounced Vietnam's policy towards Kampuchea at the annual ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference in Kuala Lumpur in late June 1980, he proposed the withdrawal of recognition to the Pol Pot administration again after his return to Australia.227 Prime Minister Fraser took a different stand particularly in view of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Perceiving Soviet expansionist designs in the military aggressions against Kampuchea and Afghanistan, Fraser, as Tsutomu had pointed out, felt the need for cooperation and solidarity among allies and friendly nations in order to counter the Soviet Policy. This being so, Fraser believed that it was imprudent to get Australia's relations with ASEAN and China impaired by differing with them on the issue of recognition of the DK regime.228

Since majority of the members of the cabinet supported Fraser, Peacock's proposal met with failure. Yet, the movement in support of derecognition of the DK continued to gain momentum in Australia. A concerted campaign was mounted by a number of members of Parliament belonging both to ruling and opposition parties. In course of an emergency debate in October 1979, a government back-bencher called for derecognition. The debate on this issue as Ngosyvathn had pointed out, continued in both Houses of Parliament during 1980.\(^{229}\)

Though the Opposition Labour Party condemned the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, it brought pressure on the Fraser government to retract the recognition of the Pol Pot group.\(^{230}\) The Fraser government which resisted pressure from his own coalition members and the Labour Opposition, could not but yield to the growing public opinion against the continuing recognition of the DK. Reluctant to recognise the new Heng Samrin regime and facing growing domestic criticism regarding its recognition of the Pol Pot regime known for its human rights violations, the Fraser government announced on February 14, 1981:

> Australia has no intention of recognising the Heng Samrin regime... and hopes that its action now in derecognising ... (Pol Pot's) regime will contribute to the emergence in Kampuchea of a government truly representative of the Khmer people.\(^{231}\)

Commenting on this announcement, an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs observed that "in real terms this statement marked the end of a long and relatively close involvement in Kampuchean affairs spacing the years from 1955 to 1981".\(^{232}\)

\(^{229}\) Ngosyvathn, n.13, pp.34-35.
\(^{230}\) Tsutomu, n.191, p.219.
\(^{232}\) Merrillees, n.33, p.48.
As anticipated, Australian decision to derecognise the DK came in for severe criticism from ASEAN and China. They were afraid that Australian move might encourage other nations to follow suit. Their fears proved right when in 1981 Holland abstained from voting on Kampuchea's seat at the UN. Luxembourg, Denmark and Greece also began to entertain second thoughts on their former support of the DK. The prospects of a "European block" supporting an "empty seat" at the UN session in 1982 seemed bright. It was under these circumstances that the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK), a brain child of ASEAN, was formed in June 1982 with the former Prime Minister Son Sann led KPNLF, the Sihanouk's faction and the Khieu Samphan - led Khmer Rouge. While Australia was happy with the participation of the KPNLF and the Sihanouk's faction in the national coalition, it disapproved of the association of Khmer Rouge, and thus did not choose to recognise the CGDK.

If Australia's decision not to recognise the CGDK was thoroughly disappointing to Australia's non-communist northern neighbours, it was because lot of manoeuvring by ASEAN, was in fact responsible for the formation of CGDK. Naturally Australia's decision delighted Vietnam, the main sponsor of the PRK regime. In any case, by the derecognition of Pol Pot administration and the non-recognition of the CGDK. Australia could establish a sympathetic rapport with Vietnam which formed a firm basis for the eventual growth of cordial relations between the two countries which is turn enabled Australia to play the role of a peace – maker in Kampuchea.

234 Tsutomu, n.191, p.221.