CHAPTER THREE
AUSTRALIA AND CAMBODIAN SETTLEMENT

The great tragedy of Cambodia is to have fallen prey to external states, which have no concern for the people.\(^1\) The country has been more a pawn on a chessboard of geostrategic foreplay involving China, the Soviet Union and the United States. The waves of their competitive interventions through client factions and client states were extremely divisive. Their antagonisms exacerbated Cambodia’s domestic crises inflicting unspeakable sufferings on its people. It produced political regimes of different shades resulting in political instability. The legitimacy of the governments was subject to challenge at various times; it is this matter which engaged the attention and resources of the United Nations over two decades before the Paris Agreement of October 1991.\(^2\) The complex negotiations involving several nations leading to the signing of the comprehensive settlement of this tragedy presents a unique case of conflict resolution through international intervention. Considered as the most ambitious and expensive undertaking as the peacekeeping operation in human history with a cost of US $ 1.7 billion, 22,000 military and civilian personnel, it also tells about the prospects for international cooperation and constrains to make the UN an effective international organization.

Though Indo-china is not in the immediate neighborhood of Australia, events here are linked to the evolution of its foreign policy. They have remained central and catalyst for a larger part of Australia’s foreign policy energies. Cambodia has been a major source of international tension and discord. Australia put a lot of diplomatic efforts to put an end to


this episode. After a series of peripatetic conferences and troubling negotiations, Paris Peace Agreement on a comprehensive political settlement was signed, and elections held. Ninety percent of the people summoned up courage, in the face of the real threats to reclaim their country by voting in the UN monitored elections. In what was once a killing field, democracy started taking root.\(^3\) The joint efforts of nations over Cambodia demonstrated that even the bitterest conflicts can be resolved by patient diplomacy and determined peacekeeping.

Against this background, this chapter outlines a sketch of the historical background of Cambodia. It discusses issues that are of relevance to Australia, recounts the Australian diplomatic role that led to the deproxification of the game played through client factions and states and, eventually to the exit of great powers from Indochina. It attempts to discuss the process of converting the killing fields to tilling fields in the 1990s. A postscript is added towards the end of the chapter.

3.1 Background: Significance of Indo-china for Australia

Indochina witnessed enough turbulence, upheaval, misery and destruction, and misfortunes in abundance. Their seeds were sown over a long stretch of time over a heap of poverty, corruption, underdevelopment, ethnic tensions, series of wars and civil wars. Leaders' faults, personal ambitions, economic greed and eccentric approaches to the problems added fuel to the fires. The result was a violent and anarchic Cambodia, making itself incapable of governing by “twenty two years of civil war, invasions, outside arms supplies, gross violation of human rights, massive dislocation of its population, and destruction of its infrastructures.”\(^4\) The wide ranging questions spanning the past, present and future need to be looked into to study the nature of this problem. The roots of the conflict got

\(^3\) Warren Christopher, In the Stream of History: Shaping Foreign Policy for a New Era (California, Stanford University Press 1998), p.68.

firmed in deep-seated ethnic enmity, dissent and division in the Khmer society and internationalized by the dynamics of the deep-seated regional Thai-Vietnamese and Sino-Vietnamese antagonisms, and the global Sino-Soviet and Soviet-American rivalries.\(^5\)

While Vietnam viewed the Chinese support to Khmer Rouge as subverting the unity of Indo-Chinese countries and denying its legitimate interests, Beijing was alarmed by Hanoi's growing strategic relationship with the former Soviet Union undermining its security, international prestige and credibility. China's punitive action against Vietnam in February-March 1979 was a demonstration of this competition. To Moscow, the control of the Indochina through Hanoi meant the assumption of the role of major power in the Southeast Asia. Access to military facilities in Vietnam also facilitated Soviet military competition with the United States. With the invasion of Cambodia during the Nixon administration widening the scope of war in the spring without the knowledge of Congress,\(^6\) the Cambodian conflict got further entrenched in the power rivalries of the United States, Soviet Union and China. The conflict, thus, affected the "political orientation of Southeast Asia."\(^7\) This made Cambodia badly devastated by war, foreign occupation, state repression and intimidation emerged as the focal point of grave conflict in the region, becoming synonymous with turmoil. Cambodia was a war, Cambodia was genocide, and Cambodia was an invasion, an occupation and a costly United Nations peacekeeping mission. Cambodia was a tragedy. Cambodia was a problem."\(^8\) The conflict was deep-seated, involved suspicion, hostility and confrontation on a number of levels: national, regional and international. It took the most important time of the international politics since December 1978.


\(^8\) Keith B. Richburg, Washington Post, January 31, 1999
The greatness achieved during the reign of King Jayavarman VII was weakened and shattered by internecine struggle aided and abetted by outsiders' competition to colonize it, and exploit its resources. Cambodia went through a series of ordeals in its history. The division of Vietnam into North and South, Prince Sihanouk’s rejection of American pressure to abandon neutrality and join American led anti-Communist alliance led to the breaking of diplomatic relations with America. He reluctantly tolerated the incursions of the rebel communists from Vietnam with attempts to limit Vietnamese implantation inside Cambodia. American and South Vietnamese forces also frequently violated Cambodia’s territory. South Vietnamese chased their Communist enemies inside Cambodian territory, destroyed its neutrality and made the country enter into the theater of Indo-China war. Vietnamese troops also penetrated into the Cambodian territory. In March 1970 a military ruler, Marshall Lon Nol overthrew Prince Norodom Sihanouk in a coup. US then was enmeshed in Vietnam. Due to its bombings in Vietnam, it also wreaked Cambodian’s infrastructures. The unification of Vietnam following the fall of Saigon in 1975, the rise of Pol Pot in Phnom Penh, the formation of the communist administration in Laos combinely ended the long battle between the communist bloc and the west backed system in Indo-China. The result was the conversion of the region as a theater of the Super power rivalry.

The year 1975 opens the darkest chapter in the Cambodian history as the Khmer Rouge (a small and extremely violent group of French educated Marxist intellectuals who drew their inspiration from Mao) managed to grab power and installed the most radical regime. The period from 1975-1978 witnessed the killing fields in Cambodia in the monstrously cruel regime of Pol Pot, which transformed country into a hell on earth covered with blood and tears, a Kampuchea which constituted a danger to peace and stability in Southeast Asia and a tool to serve the expansionist aims of the foreign reactionary forces.9 Its

9 Robert Shaplen, n.6, p.50.
anti Vietnamese attitudes caused border clashes, which ultimately gave the pretext for the invasion and the ouster of Pol Pot. The leadership of Heng Samrin with Vietnamese support proclaimed the People’s Republic of Kampuchea. Hun Sen succeeded him in 1985 and renamed the country as the State of Cambodia.

The third phase in Indo-China war started when on December 25, 1978 more than 100,000 Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia and overthrew the Khmer Rouge regime of Pol Pot. On February 17, 1979, less than three months after the invasion, China sent some 80,000 troops across the border to ‘teach a lesson’ to Vietnam which was seen as the vanguard of Soviet expansionism. China accused Vietnam of being an ‘oriental Cuba’ while Vietnam castigated China for promoting chauvinism. The invasion was seen as an offensive struggle to establish supremacy in Indo-china, and sinking Cambodia into the quicksand of what came to be dubbed Vietnam’s Vietnam. There was a fear lurking in the minds of the people of the conflict spreading and spilling over into Thailand, considered a serious threat to peace in the region. China showed its readiness to aid Thailand on the assumption that a threat to Thailand is a threat to China.

Cambodian problem came to act glue to hold the ASEAN together. ASEAN formed at the time of great regional turmoil, first to contain Indonesia, which in the early 1970s was aggressively pursuing a ‘confrontation’ policy threatening Malaysia, to put down the communist insurgencies that were sprouting throughout Southeast Asia. They showed remarkable unity in lobbying to effectively oppose the invasion and Vietnamese expansionism, though it had no power to repulse the Vietnamese forces from Cambodia.

Cambodia provided outsiders the ground to re-fight or continue the Vietnam War for others but without the liability of direct sacrifice. In fact cynics argued that the ASEAN states including Thailand are in no hurry to see the war end, and would like to have all the

\[10\] The Economist, 7 October 1989, p.32
communist participants in the war, including the Khmer Rouge, worn out by the continuing conflict so that communism as a general phenomenon would pose a smaller and at least less immediate threat to other parts of Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{11} Prince Sihanouk's bitterness is reflected when he said 'there is no reason for Thailand to encourage us to cease fighting, for Thailand it is 'one less war'.... As for China, it does not really want us to reach a settlement; there has to be an abscess in Asia and it is Cambodia. The Chinese are well aware that I will have enormous difficulty in reaching any settlement and they are tacitly in agreement with the Soviet Union in trying to maintain the deadlock.'\textsuperscript{12} The Khmers were used to fight coalition battle for them in Cambodia. Carrying war of attrition was to outlast its opponent and profit politically from the others' exhaustion. To quote John Foster Dulles' old admonition "to let Asians fight Asians" was given a new heed in Washington those days, allowing the deadlock to last for nearly a decade. The US strategy was to: encourage the relentless diplomatic confrontation of Vietnam by ASEAN and the People's Republic of China isolate and therefore damage as much as possible Vietnam's economy, endorsing the Coalition Government of the Democratic Kampuchea alliance, at least formally, but disavowing its Khmer Rouge component, while refusing to be drawn into a more overtly active role, except by limited supplies of weapons to KPNLF or Sihanouk's ANS- just as the US showed its willingness to do for the Afghan and Nicaraguan resistance. The US interest in the Cambodian conflict was obviously limited by the unhealed wounds of the Vietnam War and by disinclination to antagonize the People's Republic of China.\textsuperscript{13}


\textsuperscript{13} Justus M. van der Kroef, Cambodia: whose Vietnam? \textit{Asia Pacific Community, A Quarterly Review}, Spring, No.28, 1985, p.115.
US preferred to follow ASEAN lead and felt that "chances of persuading Vietnam to change its course are greater if the message comes from its neighbors". The reference to Vietnam's neighbors meant not only to ASEAN itself, but also to China. US military support for the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) was explicitly denied on the ground that, such aid, ‘is best undertaken by others’. CGDK was a large coalition opposed to Vietnam. ASEAN, Europeans, the USA have all been loath to give coalition anything more than political support. China supported Khmer Rouge, though with little enthusiasm, accepted Sihanouk as an ally because of what he symbolized. China seemed to have used ASEAN and Thailand to reach the CGDK to make it carry a war of attrition. US offered to accelerate its military aid to Thailand and wanted to see Vietnam drawn into a steadily more debilitating conflict in her own strategic interests. For Australia, as Gareth Evans wrote, there existed a "cultural and institutional gap" as well as political distance. There was no primary attention in security and commercial interests. However, the temperature of the Cold War brought Indo-China closer to the center of Australia's security thinking.

Australian position towards the region was shaped by the rise of communist China, Vietnam having emerged as regional military powerhouse, its long search for a great and powerful friend for protection, and changing regional views in the country. The 1952 Strategic Basis Paper noted that Indo-China was the "key to the defense of Southeast Asia."

Australia's commitment to the tune of 47,000 military personnel in Vietnam was a part of this policy to fight alongside the Americans with a force of 540,000 in 1965. This was the largest ever commitment made in the form of dispatching troops to Vietnam. Australian involvement in Vietnam as noted by Gareth Evans flowed not from any considered


assessment of Australian national interests but from a mindless following of the United
States. Failure in Vietnam was not a failure of national self-assertion, but a failure of
analysis. Three reasons were attributed to the involvement of Australia in Vietnam:

- to stop the advance of expansionist communism before it reached Australia,
- to get close to the US and sense of mutual alliance- in times of need,
- to ensure the presence of US forces in the region.

3.2 Australian Policy towards Indo-china

Australia, which recognized Cambodia while still under French rule, established
diplomatic relations in 1952-started aid with Colombo Plan. The first Australian legation was
opened on October 29, 1955 and started embassy in 1959. Australian contacts went even
deeper with Cambodia. After having broken off diplomatic relations with the United States,
Cambodia had asked Australia to represent its interests. Australian links extended to several
areas including the training of Armed Forces. Australian policy towards Indo-china can be
divided in four distinct phases: before Vietnam War, Australian involvement in the Vietnam
War, the end of the Vietnam War, and Australian involvement in seeking comprehensive
political settlement.

Australia was more a kind of artificial arm or limb or leg grafted on to the region,
whose sharing in the regional affairs, as Foreign Minister Hayden argued cannot be turned on
and off whenever convenience dictates. This has become, to quote Hayden, an inescapable
physical fact. Thailand considered Cambodia under Vietnam an unacceptable threat, which
had to be removed even if it meant relying on Chinese military power. Beijing considered 'a
threat to Thailand is a threat to China.' Whereas Indonesia and Malaysia saw China as the

16 Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, *Australia in the World of 1990s* (Melbourne University Press:

17 Bill Hayden, Speech at the graduation ceremony at the School of Modern Asian Studies, Griffith
source of a real long-term threat, to them the emergence of a strong and self-reliant Vietnam capable of rivaling China was not necessarily a negative development.\(^{18}\) Singapore accused Vietnam of Third World imperialism, and considered the invasion a serious threat. In a bid to woo Vietnam, Australia combined policy options - recognition, bilateral assistance and acceptance of refugees. Its policy towards Indo-china formed to be a part of Australia's wider regional agenda- broadening relations across the full spectrum of security, commercial, aid and humanitarian interests.

Before the Vietnam War it can be said, that Australia did not really have an Indo-china policy, did not really understand what was happening on the ground in Indo-china, and did not see Australian interests directly or independently engaged in that part of the world.\(^{19}\) All three countries in the region Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos were least understood. This period was termed as of blissful ignorance. Though Australia had links of some sort with Southeast Asian nations, there was a major gap in its understanding of Indo-china. There was so much of neglect that Australian Foreign Minister of the time was even quoted to have advised the Cabinet to restrain the US from entering upon active military intervention in Indo-china. Though 1952 Strategic Basis Paper noted Indo-china as the 'key to the defense of Southeast Asia, there were found no pressing reasons for Australia to focus on Indo-china, as it offered no commercial opportunities at that time.' The dispatch of Australian forces to Vietnam in 1965 injected an element of direct strategic concern in Australian assessments in its policy towards the region.

With its troops fighting in Vietnam against communist forces alongside Americans, the region came to Australia's attention. Australian policy of the time was an amalgam of


domino theory and forward defense. The security interests demanded that battle against communism be fought several dominos way, and preferably as far away as possible from the Australian mainland, as is found fully reflected in the announcement of Prime Minister Menzies in Parliament, 'the takeover of South Vietnam would be a direct military threat to Australia and all the countries of South and Southeast Asia. Communist China must see it as part of a thrust between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Australian involvement seemed to have been aimed at to engage America in Southeast Asia, to lock America for the defense of Australia and Southeast Asia, and buy a US security guarantee for itself by providing modest military support for the US in Vietnam.

After Vietnam War, the labor government under Whitlam injected a groundbreaking policy in its Indo-china policy. It projected a more independent image of Australia and provided a new beginning giving expression to national aspirations with a more regional focus. It pursued a policy of constructive relations with Indo-china. There were attempts to promote relations with Vietnam and Laos, and even with Cambodia, rebuffed by Khmer Rouge leaders.

Fraser Government continued Whitlam's approach to Indo-china. It subscribed to the view that stability in Indo-China was important to the security of the whole Southeast Asian region and thus ultimately of Australia - and that all could be best ensured by a continued US military presence.21 The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1978 changed the geostrategic perceptions of regional and global powers. The only positive point most acknowledged by many countries in private was that Vietnam had done the world a service in driving Khmer Rouge from power.22

20 Gareth Evans, n.16, p.402.
21 Ibid., p.216.
22 Ken Berry, Cambodia: From Red to Blue, Australia's Initiative for Peace (Canberra: Allen and Unwin in association with the Department of International Relations, RSPAS, ANU 1997), p.4.
The distrust and negligence toward Vietnam intensified. Australia, Japan and ASEAN stood against the restoration of Vietnam in international community. Australia denounced the invasion and demanded immediate and complete withdrawal from Cambodia and supported the self-determination of Cambodian people and peaceful settlement of conflict. It supported ASEAN activities in mobilizing nations against Vietnam, cosponsored ASEAN's draft resolution at the UN. It suspended bilateral aid to Vietnam, gave recognition to ousted Democratic Kampuchea regime. However there was a change of policy in Australia on October 14, 1980 under which it derecognized the ousted the Democratic Kampuchea on February 14, 1981. The Government made a policy to recognize the states not the Government.

Fraser Government emphasized on reviewing of Australia's regional relations within a broader framework. Within the Australian Government's Southeast Asia policy, Indo-China took a backseat to relations with the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) states, although initially a modest bilateral aid program to Vietnam was continued. Australia sought solution to problems, shared concerns, and encouraged dialogues. It followed a policy of reconciliation, started to seek international recognition of its participants in the political and economic development of Southeast Asia as a "nation within the region". It was taken as a demonstration of Australia's desire to transform itself into an Asia Pacific nation and recognition that it has a stake in the development of Southeast Asian situation. Prime Minister Fraser seriously feared the Soviet influence growing into this region through Vietnam. The government launched its vigorous diplomacy toward freeing Vietnam from international isolation through diplomatic contacts with an aid to Vietnam. Australia supported Vietnam for its membership in ESCAP and displayed enthusiasm for incorporating Vietnam into the development program of Southeast Asia. It also backed Vietnam in its admission to the United Nations. Canberra also supported Vietnam for membership in the Asian Development Bank. The stand of the Australian government was best summed up in
the statement of Foreign Minister Andrew Peacock, 'We are convinced that neither Australia or Southeast Asian countries gain anything by ignoring and isolating these Indo-Chinese countries. In the case of Vietnam, in particular, it is dangerous to let the country feel deprived of other alternatives except to seek friendly relations with other communist nations.'

Australia favored US involvement in the region for its stability and thought the normalization of US-Vietnam relations was vital to lay a "foundation for the improvement of relations between Vietnam and other nations for the stability of Southeast Asia." The exodus of people from the region since 1978 emerged as irritant issue to many Asian countries, including Australia. Domestic political considerations and diplomatic concerns for ASEAN made Australia increase the intake of refugees over 100,000 refugees despite such an influx having possible social, political and economic effects.

Pushed into the armpit of the Soviet Union, Vietnam also concluded the Soviet-Vietnam Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in November 1978. It later marched into Cambodia. Fraser Administration showed greatest alarm about the expansion of Soviet pressure into the Pacific and the Indian Ocean through the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. The implications of the conflict were considered of greater significance in international arena not confined to Indo-China only.

Australian cabinet reportedly faced divisions with a hard-line and moderate approach over the continuation of aid to Vietnam. The Prime Minister and most Cabinet members were for suspension of aid whereas Foreign Minister and his followers proposed alternate means such as the recall of Australian Ambassador from Vietnam. The latter's proposal was based on the facts that


1) the Cambodian military had provoked Vietnam by repeatedly attacking its borders before the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia; 2) the Pol Pot administration, which was expelled by the Vietnamese military, was also communist and had been internationally condemned for its inhumane acts; and 3) since Australia had not acted against the armed annexation of East Timor by Indonesia, it would be inconsistent if Australia chose to sanction Vietnam this time. Peacock and his followers also foresaw that the discontinuation of aid would accelerate Vietnam's inclination toward the Soviet Union.25

In view of the mounting domestic public outcries, Australian Government made it clear externally and internally that it would maintain its policy of not recognizing either of Cambodian administration. Australia looked for an opportunity to retract the recognition accorded to the Pol Pot regime in the expectation that the chances of solving the Cambodian problem by negotiation might increase, if Australia did not have to continue its recognition of a fictitious administration that was no longer governing Cambodia.26 At the same time, Australian concern was that the retraction of the recognition of the Pol Pot administration would be tantamount to a tacit consent to Vietnamese and Soviet expansionism. The difficulty was reflected in the Peacock statement saying that, '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. Australia especially cannot condone Vietnamese invasion of and occupation of Cambodia. The Australian Government is well aware that withdrawal of recognition (of Pol Pot regime) will be taken as an acceptance of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia.'27 Australia placed high priority on going along with

\[25\] Ibid., pp.66-67.
\[26\] Canberra Times, 14 July, 1980 quoted in n.24, p.68.
\[27\] Australian Foreign Affairs Record, (December 1979), p.674.
ASEAN and China. Retraction, the Australian Prime Minister feared," could very well be used as a pawn in future negotiation over the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia.  

Amid this crisis, came the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Prime Minister Fraser described the situation as "gravest crisis since World War II" and stressed the importance of cooperation and solidarity among allies and friendly nations in order to counter the Soviet expansion in Indochina and Afghanistan. Prime Minister highly valued the role of China in containing Soviet influence. The Hawke Government feared that Vietnamese domination of Indochina could pave the way for the further expansion of Soviet influence. This made Chinese attention grow in the region making it to be a chessboard of super power rivalry. The rapid increase of Soviet military power in the Asia Pacific region urgently called for the settlement of the Cambodian problem and lessening of Vietnamese dependence on the Soviet Union. Hawke government viewed the expansion of Soviet presence as induced by, in a sense, the ASEAN, Chinese and US policies towards Vietnam. The government felt that approach drove Vietnam toward the Soviet Union and consequently into the position that it had no one but the Soviets to rely on.

Learning from the experiences of displaying a mindless sycophancy to the Americans and understanding of the region, the Hawke administration charted a course for a distinctive, active and independent foreign policy to bring greater maturity and balance. It did not consider its alliance with the US preventing it from pursuing an independent and self-reliant policy. Soviet military presence in Cam Ranh Bay and Day Nang facilities gave Moscow increased surveillance and intelligence gathering capacity and a transit point for its Indian Ocean activities. This presence was feared to spread into the immediate neighborhood region. As the stability of Cambodia was considered very important to Australia, it was

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thought that the longer the situation lingers there, there would be Vietnam’s increased
dependence on the Soviet Union and the more obtrusive Soviet military power would be in
the region.

Though Australia recognized that Vietnam had certain legitimate security interests, of
its own, it saw no justification of their invasion of a neighboring country. Problem in
Cambodia was considered a greatest source of tension, and a threat to peaceful and secure
Southeast Asia. While Canberra attempted to involve itself in reconciliation politics in
Indochina, Southeast Asian countries’ desire was to keep it away. USA’s decline in the
region placed Australia on the notice. Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, stated
that Australia had the distinction of being first to withdraw from the war in Vietnam and in
advancing initiatives on Cambodia’. He said, ‘ Australia may not be the frontrunner in the
world, but had been the international forerunner in Indochina policy. Australia’s policy of
non-isolation for Vietnam has been described as the turning point in the entire modern saga of
Indo-Chinese affairs.’ 30 Australia’s role in Indochina was justified on the ground that:

the future of Australia lies in developing a mature and balanced set of relationships
with its neighbors in Southeast Asia. Indo-china is part of that neighborhood. There can be no
secure future for the whole of Southeast Asia without an accommodation between Vietnam
and its neighbors. It therefore desired to pursue the development of its relations with
Southeast Asia by developing with Vietnam a mature and productive relationship.31

Australia no longer felt to borrow the foreign policy perceptions. Foreign Minister
asserted, ‘ We make up our own mind, read the evidence ourselves, and listen carefully to
perceptions which have evolved in our own community.’ 32 Australian initiative questioned

31 Bill Hayden’s Statement to Parliament on 7 December, 1983, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*,
Vol.54, No.12 (December 1983), p.800
32 Ibid, p.803
basic assumptions of American policy, Indochinese policy of ASEAN countries, and strongly challenged China's stance.

To Hawke, Vietnam was not a Soviet puppet. He detected its intention to retain a certain measure of independence from the Soviet Union. The resumption of aid and trade took place to influence the Vietnamese foreign policy into an acceptable one, and to extricate Vietnam from international isolation. Australia thought it 'detrimental to condemn Vietnam and therefore reviewed that incorporating it into the economic network of Asia Pacific region. The Vietnamese are proud and resilient people and had to be treated with respect'.

These policy changes seemed to have grown out of the sufferings of Vietnamese people and domestic compulsion that formed the "sense of mission" and the desire for the political settlement of the Cambodian problem. Foreign Minister Hayden called the Cambodian problem "the gravest unsolved factor in the tension over Southeast Asia." Labor Government that was trying to carve a diplomatic role for foreign policy independence and autonomy of Australia developed a sense of 'role of Australia' in international politics. Australia under Labor party was in fact suited to be one of the nations involved in the Cambodian problem because it had fiercely opposed the Vietnam War while in opposition and established diplomatic relations with North Vietnam when it came to power in 1972. The background provided an excellent opportunity to present itself as an honest broker for resolving the stalemated Cambodian problem. The change in stand presented Australia as a "fair and impartial honest broker and to garner diplomatic flexibility that would enable it to approach all the parties concerned to facilitate talks among them." However it implanted deep distrust between Australia and ASEAN which expressed its concern that Australian policy would not only radically undermine ASEAN's diplomatic efforts, but also passively reinforce

33 Ibid., p.104.

34 Coral Bell, Dependent Ally- A Study of Australia's relations with the US and the United Kingdom since the fall of Singapore, Canberra Studies in World Affairs, No. 19 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1984), pp.228-229.
the hard-liners of Hanoi and favor Vietnam, which had been scheming to divide anti-Vietnamese forces.35

Australia sought to act as a facilitator for holding talks among the conflicting parties in a very complicated imbroglio. Foreign Minister Hayden’s cultivating Vietnam was viewed with suspicions by ASEAN. He was accused of being "led" by Vietnam. However with the passage of time, ASEAN nations started valuing his diplomacy. They began to ease their stiff attitude toward Vietnam and appeared ready to pay attention to Vietnam’s standpoint, for the political settlement of the Cambodian problem.

Undeterred by ASEAN reactions, Australia continued to seek a role in Cambodian settlement. Prime Minister Hawke during his visit to Bangkok in November 1983 appealed for understanding and expressed his desire for close consultation with the ASEAN on the problem. Foreign Minister Hayden sought understanding from friendly Indonesia. ASEAN then, seemed veering towards the Australian initiative. Meanwhile the visit to Canberra by the Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach in early March 1984 added weight to the role of the Hawke administration in the Cambodian problem, and also the softening of Vietnamese insistence.

The January 1985 communique of the 10th Indochinese Foreign Ministers’ Conference in Canberra praised Australia’s diplomatic initiatives, Hayden’s contribution, as an agenda for a Cambodia conference. The UN Secretary-General’s visit to Australia in March 1985, and Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Kapitsa’s visit to Australia suggested the increased importance of Australia in the Cambodia problem. It also suggested a search for a peace broker and a certain measure of international recognition to be given to the Australian involvement. Malaysian Foreign Minister Ahmad Rithaudeen supported and welcomed Hayden’s diplomatic efforts in recognition of the importance of clarifying Vietnam’s

viewpoint for the settlement of the Cambodian problem. Australia was emerging as a knowledgeable and responsible voice on the issue, and hence was accepted as a legitimate and responsible player. It was a cosponsor of ASEAN resolution in 1988. Foreign Minister Hayden paid several visits to Indo-China, held extensive discussions, and floated the concept of international tribunal to fix responsibility for Khmer Rouge genocide. A series of conferences and seminars were held to further the process. As a nation heavily dependent on regional trade, Australia, Hayden maintained, would be "delinquent if ignored this influence of conflict in Cambodia." It was thought that the issue had to be solved through a series of small steps each one to be planned and taken together with great care.

Australians were involved intensively in Cambodia both at the officials and non-official levels. The non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were operating extensively in health, water, agriculture, health and education sectors. They were providing humanitarian relief both inside and outside and were also searching for a negotiated settlement. Australia was also supporting international agencies like UNICEF, UN Border Relief Operation, ICRC, and WFP for food distribution. Australian NGOs offices were providing valuable support to their nationals both working for government and non-government sectors.

Premised on the intimacy and intricacy of its relationship with the region, Australia felt the need to be involved for the reconstruction of Cambodia and the rehabilitation of the social and cultural life of its people. Australia became engaged to explore views of the countries in the region in relation to the settlement in Cambodia. Australian leaders also met leaders like Prince Sihanouk, Son Sann and Hun Sen to seek their views and pass their views on to interested parties, though Australia continued its policy of non-recognition to Phnom Penh regime. Australia welcomed the joint Statement of July 9, 1984 of the ASEAN Foreign

36 Ibid., p. 1103

37 Bill Hayden, Speech at the Graduation Ceremony at the School of Modern Asian Studies, on April 3, 1985, Australian Foreign Affairs Record, Vol. 56, No. 4, (Griffith University: April 1985), p. 294.
Ministers calling for a comprehensive political settlement in Cambodia with a sense of urgency. It also supported national reconciliation in Cambodia. It favored ASEAN's role in Cambodian issue to increase its cohesiveness and influence. It also offered Canberra as a place for such a conference.

Australia wanted to test Vietnam's offer of dialogue with ASEAN on its troop withdrawal from Cambodia. Otherwise it thought, it would be exposed as the real obstacle to peace. Its role was seen as that of facilitator in offering to host the conference and ensuring participation in any peacekeeping force and aid to Cambodia following the settlement. Australia along with Canada and Sweden supported the UN resolution that called for the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces and creation of government that does not return the country to 'the universally condemned policies and practices of the recent past'.

Though some strategic thinkers and analysts saw Cambodia on the outer fringe of Australia's defense and broader security interests, in more distant region, the Australian White Paper of 1987 mentioned that Australian security could be directly affected by developments in this outer area and recommended that 'our broader defense policy needs to be responsive to such developments'.

3.3 Involvement: an element of changing context

Grounded in consideration of a strategic environment, international status and prestige and future role in Southeast Asia, Cambodia has always remained the central issue in China's relations with Vietnam and the ASEAN countries. The prime condition of China for normalization of relations with Moscow was the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia.

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ASEAN countries also maintained the same stand. Their positions were instrumental in a series of meetings between warring factions and regional countries. The centrality of Cambodian conflict started declining in the changing landscape of international relations as was indicated in Gorbachev's Krasnoyarsk speech of May 1989, that transformed the course of Soviet intervention in East Asia and lent significant support to the convening of the International Conference on Cambodia. The apparently growing contradictions within the communist system manifested in Moscow's desire to end its involvement in regional conflict, and a weakened Vietnam after five years of occupation were contributory to the Vietnam withdrawal from Cambodia. Vietnam, however, to trade off the withdrawal of its forces from Cambodia in return for regional endorsement of the government implanted in Phnom Penh, though it signaled a willingness to accept that its invasion of Cambodia had been a grievous mistake.41

The removal of the Sino-Soviet conflict, Sino-Vietnamese rapprochement, erosion of geo-political considerations and loosening of ideological affinity, emergence of new political thinking, economic concerns and considerations, downgraded value of Vietnam for the Soviet Strategic doctrine accelerated the momentum of accommodative politics. Withdrawal of the Soviet squadron of Mig 23s and part of the TU 16 squadron stationed at Cam Rah Bay air and naval facility was a further contributing factor towards rapprochement. The Soviet leaders spoke of "no military deployment beyond the country's own borders" and withdrawal of Soviet forces from Vietnam by 1992. There was also rapprochement between Hanoi and Peking. Feeling of isolation in Peking and Hanoi in the wake of the political changes in Eastern Europe and the economic crisis in the Soviet Union was 'fuelling the current drives to closer ties.'42 The dilution of the Chinese hostility to Vietnam was also visible in the


42 Murray Hiebert, Cambodia Discord, Far Eastern Economic review, 28 June 1990, p.17.
following months, despite Hun Sen survival being considered as a ‘slap in the face of the Middle Kingdom.’

Exhibition of weariness among the major actors gradually disappeared. The signs of shrinking economy resulting into reduced military and economic assistance to allies, the waves of democratization whirling around the world, proactive international initiatives for intervention for peace made them feel the Cambodian conflict a sore in international eyes. A regional approach to conflict resolution having failed gave way to diplomatic initiatives by permanent five to step in. Permanent five called on the warring Cambodian parties to the conflict to commit themselves to the process of legitimate role, and to form the Supreme National Council as soon as possible. The issue of ripeness, as reported in Zhou Enlai’s conversation with Henry Kissinger in 1971, (A helmsman must learn to ride with the tide, else he will be swamped by the waves.) seems to have been a critical factor for the construction of multilayered regional and international coalition for a successful diplomacy for conflict resolution process.

3.4 Initiatives

Australian initiatives in Cambodian problem present a good case for examining its diplomatic role in the region. Australia’s role in the Cambodian peace process sprung from its connections to Indochina, which date back to the early 1950s. Its ever widening contacts with a wider family of nations and increasing curiosity about the region tremendously generated interests including its partnership in the regional security arrangements. Australia was considered well positioned to actively work for Cambodian peace, with its alliance with

the United States and confidence. Its state of long standing relations with ASEAN and later’s willingness to negotiate on Cambodia were a positive factor. Australia’s knowledge and information on Cambodia were considered abundant both in quantity and quality. Its non-colonial history and non-threatening profile were assets for a role. Australia’s interests of pursuing settlement became a familiar mix of geopolitical, or strategic, economic and trade interests. The apparent desire on part of the international community to heal the long running sore also was a motivating factor. Cambodia was an Asian issue and it readily provided a springboard for Australia to establish its proactive diplomacy in the region, and demonstrate its attempts of reconciling its history with geography.

Initiatives come when critical actors want a speedy resolution, and are able to work out essential terms for a viable solution.\(^{46}\) And to be effective, mediation must take place at a propitious moment.\(^{47}\) Timing of an attempt at mediation has a significant effect on the likelihood of its success, though the third party intervention cannot direct the adversaries, it can only help them with its help. The time appeared ripe for international mediation in the context of P-5 being amenable to responsible efforts by regional parties to achieve a comprehensive settlement, cessation of global rivalry and UN emerging as a vehicle for conflict resolution. United States’ goal was to achieve a peaceful, prosperous and stable Southeast Asia, of which Indo-china is a part. There was an atmosphere of compromise and understanding. Destabilizing Thailand’s borders, creating a vexing refugee problem for nations in the region, preventing normal, economic, political and cultural relations between Indo-china and ASEAN were in nobody’s interests. Thailand also showed flexibility on

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Cambodian question and desired to push change from a battlefield into a market place. Warming trends between Moscow and Beijing were on the ascendancy also. Some of the Southeast Asian countries particularly Singapore was turning a blind eye towards its citizens' private business activities with the countries in Indo-china. 

The following reasons are attributed to have favored Australia’s role in comprehensive settlement:

ASEAN was no longer appearing cohesive in the late 1980s. This opened the door for Australia’s proactive role

Australia has no bitter past to recollect in Cambodia. Australia’s then existing state of relations with it also proved to be a contributing factor

Australia’s position appeared to be strong with its knowledge and information of Cambodia gathered by it, which was abundant both in quantity and quality. Australia undertook several fact-finding missions

Australia acted as a resource delegation and provided fresh idea every time. Australia played a role of go between for the confronting factions and major players in the Cambodian problem. Japan’s role was taken as dubious. It was extra cautious. Australia conducted several rounds of reconciliation meetings among central players.

It engaged in behind the scene maneuvers to formulate plan. Australia did not let the perception gap to be visible in its understanding of the Indochina politics.

Australia thought it necessary for promotion of confidence building measures among Asian countries.

Australia produced a road map toward normalizing relations with Vietnam and Cambodia. It intensified its efforts for peace.

Australia was an important bridge and an important link playing vital role in the region's economic growth. It was a striking symbol of the transformation of Indo-China from a war zone to a zone of prosperity and peace and as a symbol of Australia's willingness to
assist in that process. Australia had also shouldered large burden of Indo-Chinese refugees. Australia’s interests included creating commercial opportunities in Indo-china converting it into market place.

Australia spared no efforts to establish its credibility as an intermediary. Japan’s role was suspect to Beijing, Indonesia has no credibility with Chinese leaders. Australia appeared as a kind of circuit breaker. Prime Minister Bob Hawke argued the suitability of a role for Australia and said that:

There probably is not any other country in the world, which has relation with all the main players as Australia. Relations with ASEAN are good; no country has better relations with China. We have very strong – better than ever relations with the United States. And we have a capacity to talk and be listened to by Vietnam. In the resolution of the conflict, it is important to have a body or country, which can talk to all players. We don’t mean we are going to resolve that situation but we may be able to get dialogue faster than it might otherwise happen.49

Deeply hurt at the tragic state of affairs in Cambodia and alarmed at the problem being stalemated, Australia thought it proper to pursue it with a sense of urgency to achieve a comprehensive political settlement on different grounds:

The longer the situation continues, the greater would be Vietnam’s dependence on the Soviet Union, thus paving the way for more obtrusive Soviet military power in the region, increasing the chances of confrontation with China and the USA. Australia desired to insulate the region from super power rivalry to avoid the deleterious effects on regional security.

The Cambodian entanglement generating potential instability on Vietnam with its undue concentration on the military aspects.


Military, economic and social burdens imposed on Thailand as a frontline state: Thailand was bearing the brunt of a large share of the fallout from Cambodia on many accounts like: loss of Cambodia as a cordial neighbor, pressure caused by the influx of Cambodian refugees, Vietnamese military pressure on the border and presence of large Vietnam’s forces next door.

Vietnam should take up its obligations as constructive member in the region. Isolation and economic weakness alone cannot make Vietnam tired.

Australia was very much concerned at what the Vietnamese occupation and all the political and military activities associated with it are doing to the Khmer people themselves.  

Australia had lent support and involved itself in the United Nations and other multilateral mechanisms for dispute settlement and a range of peacekeeping operations as one of the consistent supporters of international peacekeeping e.g. Korean peninsula, Southeast Asia, and the Southwest Pacific. These activities were undertaken beyond its area of primary strategic concerns, in support of Australia’s international political interests.

3.4.1 Genesis of Australian initiatives

Australia’s proposal on Cambodian settlement arose out of its historical obligation and future stake in region. The geographical location of Australia imposed this realization and made it desirable to give a try to end state of affairs that severely threatened the security and stability of the region.  

The proposal reflected a fundamental element in its foreign policy- a commitment to Asia-Pacific region and awareness of Australia’s place within it. Australian efforts with Cambodia and APEC, led one senior Southeast Asian diplomat to refer to a ‘fresh breeze blowing from the South’. Bill Hayden gave four reasons why Australia should take up the proposal for comprehensive settlement:

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51 Ibid., pp.781-783.
Australia welcomed the joint statement of 9 July 1984 by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN member countries, calling for a comprehensive political settlement.

Australia is an extraordinarily opportune position to make the proposal because of our close relationship with ASEAN, our friendship with China and cordiality of our relationship with Vietnam.

Australia was encouraged by the willingness of ASEAN to negotiate and its invitation to the international community for negotiations.

Australia thought that Vietnam’s willingness to withdraw from Cambodia and to conduct dialogue with ASEAN should be tested. Vietnam would be exposed. If it did not come, it would be seen as a real obstacle.  

The proposal was an important step. It carried germ of the comprehensive settlement and provided a blueprint for settlement of the problem.

Prime Minister Hawke considered the initiative as one of the most important initiatives of his entire prime ministership as diplomatic effort to help bring about a lasting peace in the tragic, conflict-ridden country of Cambodia. The proposal had its origins in discussions, as stated by Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, Stephen Solarz had with Hun Sen and other leaders in Phnom Penh, during his visit to Cambodia in March 1989. The discussions were centered on the specific idea of a neutral United Nations interim administration for Cambodia. Solarz was for preventing Khmer Rouge’s returning to power which he said, presented the Khmer people with a "a fate worse than death".

US Congressional leaders were reported telling Chinese Ambassador in Washington that they

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53 Bob Hawke, The Hawke Memoirs, pp. 222-225. The ground work of initiatives was reflected in the Prime Minister’s address to the National Press Club in Washington D.C.

would prefer Vietnamese troops to stay in Cambodia. Solarz expressed himself against the concept of quadripartite interim government because it would provide Khmer Rouge a legitimacy to play, so either a tripartite government excluding Khmer Rouge or a UN supervised interim administration based on the Namibian precedent. Evans thought the idea worth exploring. Australia -with the benefit of its middle power status and the fact that it was clearly not supporting any of the factions might be well placed to sound out other Western countries on the idea. Australia was thought to be able to act as a go between, as the US with the superpower baggage could not sell the idea without the assistance of others.

Foreign Minister Evans referring to his discussions on the concept with Solarz, said on 28 October 1991, 'It follows the discussions that we had right at the outset of this whole exercise in 1989 when he (Solarz) put to me the idea in outline of the UN peace plan. I thought then that it had the potential to produce a settlement, said so to him, and he said to me that if you can make this work, if you can actually help produce a settlement, that will be worth of a Nobel Prize and I'd be delighted to nominate you. Prime Minister Hawke before the Australian Parliament said on November 5,1991, "In 1989 Senator Evans took up a broad idea which had been put forward in the first instance by Congressman Stephen Solarz, and turned it into a comprehensive, detailed and practical plan which envisaged a bigger role for the United Nations than any it has ever taken before in any comparable or vaguely comparable situation. To put it mildly, the Evans transformation of the Solarz idea was to create an exceptionally bold plan."

56 Ken Berry, n.22, p.23.
3.4.2 The Proposal

Australia fleshed out the Solarz proposal for a direct United Nations role intended to overcome the intractable problem of power sharing. It envisaged the establishment of an interim United Nations Authority in Cambodia to conduct elections to determine its political future. Based on this examination, Evans outlined the Australian proposal in the Senate on November 24, 1989 as follows:

The idea that I have found most attractive, and which I believe deserves very close examination by all the participants at the Paris Conference, is one that would involve building a transitional administration directly around the authority of the United Nations- some variation of the kind of UN administration which previously has been put in place in comparable circumstances, most recently in Namibia. Such an arrangement would mean that Cambodian party would be in a position to decide the country's destiny pending free and fair elections organized by the UN and held under international supervision. It would involve a compromise by the present Hun Sen administration - being prepared back from its present role as the de facto government of the country- and by the three resistance parties, which would not have the role in the transitional administration either.

The proposal addresses concerns about the Khmer Rouge being in a position of even marginal, transitional authority, which so many people have found abhorrent for obvious reasons, given its appalling record. It also clearly, preserves the objectives of a comprehensive settlement and, crucially, provides the framework within which the external players, including China, may be prepared to draw back from the conflict....

It would be difficult, if not impossible, for the UN to play the role envisaged for it were the Cambodian seat to remain occupied- as it is at the moment in New York- by one contesting group, the CGDK. Australia has never accepted the claim of either the CGDK or the Hun Sen Government to be the legitimate occupants of the UN seat, as was made clear on the last occasion the issue was tested in 1982. Other countries have in the past taken different
views about the occupancy question. But, as became very clear in the corridors of the Paris conference, there is very little, if any, dissent form the view that any international control mechanism to supervise the transition to peace in Cambodia should be under the authority of the UN, and that a logical corollary of this is that the Cambodian seat at the UN should be declared vacant, or at least occupied by whoever constitutes the transitional administration, for the duration of that transition period.

.....if UN itself were to be the interim authority, it follows that the Cambodian seat would have to be declared vacant. A sane and civilized way through the present impasse in that tragic country must be found, and the Australian Government will not rest until it is.59

Australian efforts centered on willingness of Cambodians and the role of the United Nations. Evans, on December 6, 1990, further said," it is important for the Cambodian parties themselves to appreciate that the international community does not have infinite reservoirs of commitment and patience to provide to the peace process, particularly if the Cambodians themselves are not willing to help maintain forward momentum." He sounded optimism that " the window of opportunity for progress' might be round the corner, leaving any other course other than the comprehensive settlement as a second best option. He went on to say:

If it becomes clear that, despite the best efforts of all concerned, a comprehensive settlement is unachievable, Australia, along with other western and regional countries, will need to review other policy options. But the Khmer Rouge military threat, on the assumption of continuing arms supply from China, would remain a major challenge to the survival of the SOC regime. The internal weaknesses of the SOC regime, with all that they imply for its long-term vulnerability, could be expected to continue.60


60 Quoted in Frank Frost, The Cambodian Conflict: The Path towards Peace, Contemporary Southeast Asia, Volume 13, Number 2 (September 1991), p.158.
The efforts for a comprehensive settlement continued with a slow pace. The progress was slow, just inching, not leaping forward. Three significant unresolved issues, namely, the demobilization provisions in the draft settlement text; associated weapons custody arrangements and how to deal in the settlement text with the issue of non-return of genocide, and how that should be linguistically addressed continued to be most contentious. Australia felt that only a comprehensive settlement under the UN plan will enable all Cambodians to determine their future through free and fair elections- elections, of course conducted and organized by the UN.61

The proposal provided ground to reinvigorate the peace process. It called for the enhanced role of the United Nations during the transitional period- in civil administration in conducting elections, to monitor cease-fire and cessation of external military assistance. It was assigned at ensuring neutral political environment conducive to free and fair elections. Multiple components of the operations included: military, electoral, civil administration, refugee repatriation and rehabilitation and reconstruction. They remain under-resourced and overstretched in UN administrative environment. Guided by the experiences of the vitality and credibility UN demonstrated in facilitating an end to the Iran-Iraq war, Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and its role in implementing the Namibian settlement, Australia undertook the difficult task of bringing an end to the conflict.

Australia favored conference, in Jakarta or elsewhere with permanent five as a means of exerting pressures on China and on the various factions, each of which had P-5 patrons. It stepped up its efforts with effective endurance by Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - Deputy Secretary Michael Costello in person, whom Ali Alatas termed as our traveling salesman. Australian efforts established that the central principle of UN involvement in the administration of Cambodia was acceptable to or at least not rejected out of hand by all.

61 Quoted in Frank Frost, n.60, p.160.
factions and major players. Costello's cabled reports to Evans sounded optimism about the chance of success being one in ten, which had come down from one in a thousand to one in twenty. That is encouraging but a ten percent chance is still a long shot and while a journey of a thousand miles may begin with a single step, it will be the last few steps of this journey which will be harder than all the rest. 62 His shuttle diplomacy was so hectic that he had thirty separate meetings in thirteen different countries over a period of just 21 days to sell the idea to all the principal Cambodian players. His visits were to make preliminary soundings. Series of meetings followed for dialogue rather than negotiation with short background papers dealing with resignation and replacement authority, sovereignty and other proposals. His tours, shuttle diplomacy did a lot of work "on fleshing out" the proposal. Discussions figured out many eventualities with multifarious scenarios to deal with. Revised version of the proposal was prepared after coalescing ideas, consultations, dialogues and discussions. A Cambodian Task Force was established in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to produce a comprehensive paper to produce an agenda for the meeting. Australian Technical Mission visited Cambodia. Australia revised the idea of Vietnam's national reconciliation council made of prominent Cambodian and representative elders but not part of the government. The idea of retaining the existing administration but the leaders standing aside voluntarily, delegating their executive authority to the United Nations to act in their place, was mooted to address the concerns of the State of Cambodia and Vietnam. The idea thus, put forward by Australia became a full-fledged Australian "initiative " or plan.

3.4.3. Responses to the Proposal

International response to the proposal was encouraging, with a slight concern over the footing of bill. Britain expressed its support to the proposal with reservations about the size and cost of the type of operation envisaged by Australia. France reacted cautiously and

62 Quote in Ken Berry,n.22, pp.36-41.
saw the acceptance of cease-fire by Khmer Rouge as a pre-condition for UN involvement. They showed preference to a quadripartite interim government solution. Soviet Union unreservedly welcomed the Australian proposal publicly as a breakthrough but thought not easy thing to have the Cambodian seat at the UN vacated. It expressed itself against involving P-5 too early, too deeply in the negotiations. Vietnam and the State of Cambodia saw P-5 favoring China. Australia thought P-5 could exert pressure on China. All parties to the conflict seemed to be prepared to subscribe to the language. Sihanouk saw a link in Australian proposal with his earlier proposal of UN trusteeship. He however, supported the proposal and urged Australia to pursue it. Hun Sen saw the UN operation in Namibia as a useful precedent for Cambodia. Vietnam's criticism was of UN's perceived lack of neutrality on the Cambodian issue. However the SOC and Vietnam gave their commitment to enhanced UN involvement including the UN organizing and administering elections and possessing the mandate originally intended for the international control mechanism. Vietnam considered Supreme Council more equitable than quadripartite formula. Foreign Minister even went so far to give the Australian proposal 60% chance of success -at a time when Australian officials were giving it only one chance in ten.

Foreign Minister Thach talked of step by step approach being more productive than a comprehensive settlement. ASEAN's reactions were mixed. Indonesia, though supportive, cautioned the long way ahead and not to expect the going to be very easy selling the initiative more widely. It put forward the idea of holding an informal regional meeting -creative version of Evans's plan -inviting Vietnam, Laos, Indonesia representing ASEAN, and not more as it would change the character of the meeting. Even Australia seemed supporting the idea that regional and international meetings were not mutually exclusive.64

63 Ken Berry, n.22, p.32.
64 Ibid., p.35.
Singapore favored the intensification of Australian efforts. Thailand gave general
support but continued to endorse the sequential approach as an alternative to a comprehensive
settlement. It preferred the idea to be tested further at an informal meeting, then put it before
the full conference. Japan found it more 'interesting'. Japan’s hosting of a conference on
Cambodia reconstruction in June 1992 reflected their desire to play a more prominent role in
the peace process.

Vietnam expressed its unequivocal support for the UN role in monitoring,
supervising, verifying cessation of foreign military aid, troops withdrawal and cease-fire and
holding of free and fair elections. Khmer Rouge and other factions voiced their concerns over
the Vietnamization of Cambodia. The outcomes of the plan were:

the creation of an internationally guaranteed sovereign, independent, neutral and
non-aligned Cambodia;

occupation of the Cambodian seat at the United Nations by the Supreme National
Council upon achievement of a comprehensive settlement;

respect for internationally accepted human rights principles and standards by any
elected Cambodian government; and

the need for arrangements for release and exchange of prisoners of war and civilian
internees, the repatriation and rehabilitation of refugees and displaced persons, as well as the
reconstruction of Cambodia in accordance with the principles agreed at Paris.65

Series of meetings confirmed that Australian Working Plan was a way forward. The
proposal got elaborated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and contained the
UN administration as the locus of executive authority during the transitional period. Three
permanent -five with the Soviet Union and US met in Paris on January 15-16,1989 and
agreed on a set of 16 principles, which would form the basis of subsequent discussions. Those

65 Ibid., p.75.
principles included strong endorsement of the main points of the Australian proposals, notably the concept of an enhanced UN role in the transitional period. The P-5 meeting followed in New York on 11-12 February, 1990, formed a task force to plan staffing and logistically support work by a UN administration in Cambodia. While UN seemed encouraging with the Australian proposal, neither China nor the Soviet Union seemed prepared to exert any leverage on their clients to compromise.

A two track international approach included the P-5 process meeting and the other Paris Peace Conference Process. Productive interactions between them continued. Indonesia as co-chairman convened Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM) on Cambodia, meeting of four Cambodian parties, Vietnam, Laos and ASEAN countries. Australia's contribution to peace process was recognized and invited to the peace process as a resource delegation. Australia was involved in intensive consultations with Indonesia in shaping the agenda for the meeting. Australian working Papers proved to be valuable resource and formed the basis for discussions during the meeting. Foreign Minister Evans made a general presentation during the plenary session.

A Task Force chaired by Costello with officers drawn largely from the relevant geographical desks, UN and Legal branches of the Department of Foreign Affairs, other dozen public servants, defense liaison officers etc. on January 2, 1990 was set up to prepare a document covering details of a comprehensive settlement. The Task Force divided the work in three stages: planning, fact finding missions to Cambodia and negotiating sessions. Technical missions visited Cambodia, Bangkok and Thai-Cambodia border to gather information on the administrative structures of the two competing entities to fill gaps in the data necessary for the development of a UN role in Cambodia.
3.4.4 Red Book: Formulation of the proposal

With inputs from consultations and information from technical missions, the task force began its truly marathon drafting sessions with the direct participation of Foreign Minister Gareth Evans. They discussed all issues and possible solutions that had to be dealt with in constructing a UN-administered settlement of the conflict. The Task Force produced 155 page series of working papers distributed at the IMC held in Jakarta from 26-28 February 1990 and main players. These papers are contained in a 155 pages book entitled 'Cambodia: an Australian Peace Proposal' generally known as Red Book. It was a product of a multi-layered peace making exercise conducted over a number of years. It brought together a wide group of countries as well as the Cambodian players. After a series of strenuous efforts, it was made possible to reduce a wide variety of complex problems involved in the Cambodian conflict to a single, detailed comprehensive plan. Australia put a lot of energy and effectiveness in on again and off again negotiations. The book examined in particular details a role for the UN in transitional period in civil administration, organizing and conducting elections and maintaining a secure environment in which Cambodian might exercise their electoral choice free from fear, intimidation and violence. The book envisaged a comprehensive political settlement, with a cessation of outside military assistance, an enhanced UN role in involving an effective UN presence to assure internal security in a neutral political environment, and a special representative of the UN Secretary General.

Working papers formed the basis of widespread discussions and negotiations towards a comprehensive settlement. These papers became a subject of widespread discussions with support from almost all participants, offering a practicable way forward, in a country in the words of Gareth Evans ' which endured the horrors of war, and its aftermath, for too long.'

Australia produced an idea and sold it with much greater perseverance, efforts and persuasion. It was possible only as it had no baggage from the past, no axes to grind, no immediate interests to protect, other than a genuine desire to see a terrible protracted conflict ended and regional stability improved accordingly. This earned Australia—a reputation as a respected partner with the necessary commitment to put its limited resources to full use in pursuing a selected target.

The objectives of a comprehensive settlement as stated in the Red Book are:

- to achieve conditions in which the Cambodian people can freely, secure from intimidation or coercion, choose their own leaders and determine their future, by means of free and fair elections; and
- to achieve a reconstructed Cambodia with internationally guaranteed sovereignty, independence and neutrality.

A comprehensive settlement was to provide for conditions in which the Cambodian people themselves can decide on these matters through fair elections in a secure environment. An enhanced role for the United Nations is the core theme of comprehensive package. Papers proposed 'United Nations Cambodia Task Force' (UNCTAF), for its various components—Civil administration (A), Electoral Organization (E), and Security Functions (S), as UNCTAF (A), UNCTAF (E), UNCTAF (S).

Peace Plan had six Working Papers. Working Paper -I dealt with the overall structure of government in Cambodia during the transitional period so as to ensure that the functions of civil administration, electoral organization and security were carried out in such a way that the people of Cambodia could freely determine their future and chose their leaders. It proposed the creation of Supreme National Council charged with the following functions:

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67 Ken Berry, n.22, p. 315
68 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n. 66, pp. 1-2.
69 Ibid.
to be the repository of Cambodian sovereignty during the transitional period

to be a symbol of the territorial integrity and unity of Cambodia

to make a formal declaration of Cambodia’s sovereignty, independence and neutrality

to devolve irrevocably, government authority during the transitional period to the UN Secretary General in the terms set out in the settlement

to occupy the seat of Cambodia at the United Nations and its specialized agencies at other international bodies and conferences and

to be source of consultative advice to the UN Secretary General and his special representative.

The paper talked of authority and involvement of the United Nations and root and branch replacement of Cambodian Civil Service. Sources of authority were outlined and government authority vested in the Supreme National Council, giving all authority to United Nations Secretary General, Security Council.

The Working Paper II described the UN role in civil administration, the repatriation and rehabilitation of refugees and displaced persons during the transitional period and the administration of short-term development assistance for national rehabilitation.

The Working Paper III emulated Namibian experiences as a background and discussed the UN role in the electoral process to ensure free and fair elections and the outcome to be genuinely representing the wishes of the Cambodian people.

The election of the Constitutional Assembly to be converted into the National Assembly of Cambodia on the adoption of the Constitution and the constituencies, voter qualifications and voter registration process and resource implications of the various aspects of the electoral process were also examined.

The Working Paper IV discussed the UN role in maintaining security so that the people of Cambodia may exercise their electoral choice in an environment free from fear,
intimidation and violence. The paper proposed four primary tasks for UN operation: verification of the withdrawal of foreign forces, monitoring the non-return of foreign forces, monitoring the cessation of external arms supplies and cease-fire and associated measures.

The Working Paper V identified means of achieving a sovereign, independent and neutral Cambodia, with appropriate international guarantees.

The reconstruction of Cambodia is contained in the Working Paper VI.

The Peace Plan also had a number of supplementary papers appended to it setting out possible provisions of a UN mandate for the operation, mainly drawing on the cases of UN operation in Namibia (UNTAG), Afghanistan (UNGOMAP) and Irian Jaya (UNTEA). Tasks for the UN for calling upon parties to exercise maximum restraint, possible dispatch of an advance party of UN military observers, to oversee the verification of troop withdrawal were included. A draft framework of negotiating text for a comprehensive settlement dealing with overall structure of Government, UN involvement, Cambodian sovereignty and the Supreme National Council, source of government authority civil administration, electoral organization, security function, guaranteeing a sovereign, independent and neutral Cambodia and reconstruction's indicative timetable in the implementation of a comprehensive settlement like: agreement by Cambodian factions, visit by UN technical mission, UN Security Council adoption of resolution, UN Assembly approvals, formation of Supreme National Council, preparation for elections, voter education registration, verification of drafting of constitution formation government and reconstruction, requirements covering a range of options, UN operation, summary of the resources implications indicated in the individual papers. Several documents relevant to the proposed comprehensive settlement were also appended to the book. Australia's guestimate was US $ 1.3 billion and the actual expenditure was 1.7 billion dollars. 

Australia worked very hard to sell the proposal. Its main points were translated into Khmer language to make several Khmer groups understand its contents. Australia prepared a Working Plan with a high degree of goodwill. Its access to all of the players-P 5 and regional players alike proved to be an asset in the peace process. The plan was so inclusive as was said that, "Indeed while the eventual Paris Agreements were considerably less detailed than the Australian proposals, as with the question of costing there is virtually no element of the Agreements which cannot be traced to the Red Book. These efforts justifiably earned Australia-a middle sized power with a public service small by comparison to any of the others involved in the Paris Conference - a reputation as a respected partner with the necessary commitment to put its limited resources to full use in pursuing a selected target."

The Book provided the currency of the debate, enabling the parties to recognize issues and assisted discussions. The status of the Australian Working Paper (AWP) was recognized as a basis for the discussion in Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM). French Foreign Minister Duma complimented the useful work done by Australia, which signaled that obstacles to the UN role could be overcome. Canberra's working closely with Indonesian officials in drafting a 'non-paper' entitled "Possible Points of Common Understanding" during the JIM was equally noticeable. These drafts drew languages of the Australian Working Papers. Australia worked hard in lobbying and discussions in consultations with other parties. Evans also developed productive relationship with Hun Sen, personal relationship with other Cambodian factions. Because of untiring efforts, ASEAN delegations appeared uniformly very supportive of the Australian positions.

Speaking of the UN role in the civil administration, security and electoral organization as the best way to achieve self determination for the Cambodian people and the

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71 Quoted in Ken Berry, n.22, p.77.
72 Ibid, p.76.
creation of an independent, sovereign and neutral Cambodian state, Evans described Australia’s activity in the following words:

We are just map makers, suggesting routes; you are the drivers who are going to have to get us there...! The first map we drew, with my Parliamentary statement last November, was very rough sketch- when we picked up and developed, just a little, some ideas about the UN's role that both Prince Sihanouk and the US Congressman Solarz had been talking about for some time. Since then we have been doing a lot more survey work, and the maps we have drawn have become more and more detailed - embodied now in 154 pages of Working Papers, with quite a lot more planning still to do.\(^{73}\)

Australia overworked with the various parties for an acceptable text regarding the reference to genocide, regrouping and cantonment and Vietnamese settlers. Even the most intransigent Cambodian People's Party (CPP) Politburo dropped enough indications in early March 1990 regarding the UN’s involvement in a civil administration during the transitional period pending the elections, saying that ‘the State of Cambodia is ready to discuss any formula which endorses Australian Foreign Minister Senator Gareth Evans’.

### 3.4.5 Peace process: Australian role

As the Cambodian civil war becoming a synonym for international proxy struggle, it started occupying the top agenda in regional and international meetings. Powers behind the proxy conflict were beginning to recognize that ‘they will benefit more from the normalization of their relations with each other that will result from an end to the conflict than they will by prolonging it any further.’\(^{74}\)

The diagnosis of this complex game with several parties and players started with initiatives and maneuvers, pronouncements and proposals. The twelve years of arduous

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\(^{73}\) Quoted in Ken Berry, n.22, pp.67-68.

\(^{74}\) Yoneji Kuroyanagi, n.18, p.57.
efforts to seek a solution were characterized by conciliation and hard line positions, humanitarian assistance, and struggle for legitimizing owns role and power by external as well as internal factions. The whole process was proceeding within the framework of the three-phase model that included diagnosis of the issues and players (1979-87), formula seeking for an agreed resolution (1988 –September 1990), and settling details for the final agreement (September 1990-October 1991). Series of activities and meetings were associated with the process of deproxification. The untangling of the Cambodian conflict from the tentacles of outside powers separating umbilical cords between patrons and clients in Cambodia was never an easy task. The task was to prevent the dialogue of diplomacy from being replaced by the dialogue of the battlefield. Australian ideas won wide international support. Canberra offered to host the conference to generate a climate of confidence, participation in peacekeeping force and aid to Cambodia following the settlement.

Australia’s role in various Cambodian peace negotiations began in 1984. All sorts of proposals ranging from UN intervention, free elections under international supervision, installation of all Khmer coalition sans the Khmer Rouge were dished out. First meeting between Sihanouk and Hun Sen took place in France in 1985. In the first Paris International Conference on Cambodia (PICC) that was convened with joint French-Indonesian chairmanship in Paris at the ministerial level in July /August 1989, brought together all four Cambodian factions, the six ASEAN, Permanent -five, Vietnam, Laos, Australia, Canada and India as well as Zimbabwe and the representative of the UN Secretary General. The main objective of the PICC was to achieve a comprehensive political settlement in advance of the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia. Meetings between and among factions


76 James Baker quoted in n.44, p. 34.
took place but failed to produce any progress on power sharing arrangements. It was labeled as a psychological breakthrough. Australia encouraged these factions to find some acceptable formula.

Vietnam announced the completion of full troop withdrawal. Soviet Union continued its engagement in negotiating a settlement of the conflict through the meeting of the Permanent Members of the Security Council (PMSC). N. Ryzhkov, Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers said in Singapore that "it is prepared to contribute its share to promote moving towards a just, mutually acceptable decision on the basis of a balance of interest, sensible compromise, taking into account the realities that have formed in Indo-China." It urged Vietnam and Cambodia to go for an enhanced UN role at the Jakarta Informal Meeting. It was only after a series of meetings of PMSC that the Phnom Penh regime agreed to delegate UNTAC "all necessary powers including those to conduct fair and free elections." Foreign Minister Gareth Evans proposed a fresh approach with reassurances to the factions by building up their confidence, encouraging them to reach accommodation on transitional arrangements. He offered for UN administered transitional period preceding elections. The Australians played their politics much like they play rugby, with rough and tumble scrums and a good deal of open field running. This was the character of our relationship with the government in Canberra as the Cambodia negotiations advanced.

These discussions and developments led to the fruition of the Australian proposal for a UN transitional administration of Cambodia outlined by Senator Gareth Evans before the Australian Parliament on November 24, 1989. Whenever the peace process ran into difficulties, Australia worked hard not to let the events overtake the process. Australia

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77 Quoted by Muthiah Alagappa, n.5, P.267.
79 Keith Scott quoted in n.44, p.55. The Cambodian initiative was reportedly taken without prior consultation with the United States.
actively worked with the UN Permanent five to offer a framework for comprehensive political settlement. Australian contributions were acknowledged and used as basis for P-five draft. Australia was also playing an informal go-between role amongst the Cambodian delegations. Australian Papers were proved valuable and were circulated as resource documents in conferences. Australian presence became all visible. They were providing consultations and drafting input on as needed basis. Australia produced ideas on the likely obstacles – demobilization, weapons custody, genocide and sovereignty issues. Australia also initiated the set up of the UN Trust Fund to be used for fact-finding missions, contingency planning and any other activities aimed at advancing the peace process. Australia remained as a lead country, with a wide range of accurate information on Cambodia became a facilitator throughout the process. Its Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were helpful in the collection of information. Throughout the process it appeared optimistic. It always saw the bottle as being half full where as other co-travelers saw it half-empty. Australia became the first country to accredit its ambassador to the Supreme National Council. It also contributed a communications unit of forty defense personnel to the UN Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC), fully funded by Australia. After the signing of Paris Peace Accords, and during the interregnum period, Australia remained in picture throughout, alert all the time to the details of the agreements, prodding the concerned parties to comply with its provisions. It never stood idle, and was always on the move arguing that UN and international community should pressure and persuade to make the process productive. Australia always came forward to sell the new idea. 80

The appointment of Australia’s Lt. Gen. John Sanderson as UNTAC commander was in recognition of its contributions. Gen. Anderson made a significant contribution to UNTAC as commander of the UN military contingent. Government reiterated its aid to Cambodia in

80 For details please refer to n.22.
troops, civil, and communications. Australia continued its watch over the progress of the accords. It circulated a paper, *Cambodia: Next Steps to strengthen the provisions of the accords*. Prime Minister visited Cambodia in 1992 and reaffirmed its commitments to seeing through the peace process to elections. The comprehensive involvement of Australia was also reflected in the appointments of Australian lawyer Mark Plunkett, as the Special Prosecutor and Justice Michael Kirby as the Secretary General's Special Representative on Human Rights in Cambodia. Australian Parliamentarians were a part of IPU observer mission. The first visit by the Foreign minister of the free Cambodia was to Australia, which was symbolic.\(^8\)

The second session of the PICC took place in Paris on 22-23 October 1991. During which four formal agreements on a comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodian conflict were signed on October 23 by the Cambodian factions involved as well as the nations participating in the Paris International Conference on Cambodia (PICC). The four agreements included: Comprehensive Political Settlement to the Cambodian Conflict; the Agreement concerning the Sovereignty, Independence, Territorial Integrity and Inviolability, Neutrality and National Unity of Cambodia; Declaration on the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia; and the Final Act of the Paris Conference on Cambodia. These agreements were demonstrations of the collective ability of the nations of the world to solve complex problems. At the signing ceremony, Australia pleaded that Vietnam be welcomed back into the mainstream of regional life including all Indo-Chinese states into the economic dynamism of Southeast Asia. One of the main objectives of the Paris Accords was to ensure that the people of Cambodia "shall have the right to determine their own political future through the free and fair elections of a constituent assembly, which will draft and approve a new

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Cambodian Constitution and transform itself into a Legislative Assembly, which will create the new Cambodian Government.82

The successful outcome of the Cambodian peace process was an important element in building a climate for an open dialogue in the region. Australia’s coalition building demonstrated the value of regional efforts and regional solutions and its relevance in the sphere of conflict resolution and avoidance. The creation of bodies such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and second track equivalents emerged as byproducts of the process. The process also helped foster a confident sense of regional identity and the evaluation of a far more peaceful and cooperative region than any other parts of the post Cold War world. It also placed a demand on reforming the UN and making existing UN structure more relevant, effective and responsive to the post Cold-War.

The Paris Accords, as envisaged by the Australian Peace Proposal (APP), established the Supreme National Council (SNC) as the "unique legitimate body and source of authority in which, throughout the transitional period, sovereignty, independence and unity of Cambodia are enshrined." Chaired by Prince Sihanouk, SNC consisted of six representatives' from the Phnom Penh regime along with two each from the Khmer Rouge, the KPNLF and the FUNCINPEC. APP also called for the SNC to occupy the UN seat of Cambodia, and laid out a simple process for moving from an elected constituent assembly to a legislative body that would install a new government. Accordingly, SNC occupied the UN seat of Cambodia was to act in partnerships with the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). UNTAC was given all powers necessary for the implementation of the Paris Accords.

In twelve years of diplomatic maneuver, there were several ups and downs, ins and outs. Thanks to persistence, imaginative and, pioneering researches and draftsmanship of

82 News Release, n.78.
Australian diplomats on the Cambodian problem. Their roles in conception, negotiation and implementation of the Paris Agreements were graciously acknowledged. French Foreign Minister Dumas referred to Australia’s initiatives in Cambodia, having brought to bear ‘when hope was weakening’ a veritable second mind to the settlement process. He was further quoted having said at the signing ceremony that no one ‘will forget that the agreement we are going to sign shortly owes much to the initiative which Australia was able to bring to bear the moment when hope was weakening.’ Australia worked hard to make the parties return to the task from a new starting point. Prince Sihanouk singled out Australia for special mention. Hun Sen, on the eve of his visit to Australia said on October 24 remarked, ‘Let me tell you the real father is Gareth Evans.’

Australian Foreign Minister called it a marvelous day for the Cambodian people who had suffered beyond measure through more than twenty years of war, civil war and horrifying genocide. He said no people have been more deserving of peace and opportunity to rebuild their nation. The Minister termed it privilege and expressed delights to sign the documents, not because their substance is very close to that which ‘we first proposed in late 1989 and early 1990, and because we were able to play some useful part in the complex negotiating process.’ He gave credit where it was due. He mentioned the ASEAN dialogues, led by Indonesia; the driving force of the Permanent Five; the work of many other members of this conference; and of course the work of the Cambodian parties themselves.’ These documents culminated after a series of overlapping and informally coordinated forums and processes. He also warned the roadblocks, mistakes, misunderstandings, accidents and setbacks that lied ahead in the stage of implementation. However, Australia seemed determined not to be disheartened at the difficulties, committed itself to these documents, and pledged support and assistance for the people of Cambodia. It kept prodding Permanent Five not to allow the

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84 Quoted in Ken Berry, n.22, pp.202-203.
extraordinary achievement of these agreements to unravel through lack of application and commitment to their implementation.\textsuperscript{85}

It was a long and twisting road to reach the Paris Peace Agreements. The signing of the agreements had many implications. As Gareth Evans mentioned Cambodia has been returned to Cambodians. It brought an end to the tragic period. It produced the prospects of wounds healing that had gone deep and painful. These agreements envisioned political stability, economic prosperity and above all, the observance of human rights. Australia thought it opportune to bring Vietnam into the mainstream of regional life, injecting dynamism into Southeast Asia for the benefits of the region. Paris Peace Accord provided a sense of achievement to Australia when it felt that Australia’s proactive diplomacy bore fruit. Australia’s engagement in the region was recognizable with the proactive engagement becoming as bipartisan approach. It showed its will and capacity to make a meaningful contribution to the peace process in Cambodia. Foreign Minister Evans had a dig at the Australian press and said, ‘Not a single Australian newspaper ran a front page story on the final signing of the settlement agreement in Paris, notwithstanding that Australia had played a central role in bringing the settlement about.\textsuperscript{86}

The elections in Cambodia staged on Sunday, May 23, 1993 were unprecedented involving a $2 billion budget and the dispatch of 16000 regular troops, over 3000 police officers and 3000 civilian officials who took direct control of five key government ministries: Foreign Affairs, Defense, Finance, Public Security and Information. Under the Paris Accords, UNTAC was charged to oversee the complete withdrawal of foreign forces from Cambodia, supervise and monitor a cease-fire, canton and disarm the armed forces of the four Cambodian factions; to supervise the detection and removal of the estimated one million land


\textsuperscript{86} Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, n.16, p.717.
mines sown throughout the country and to raise public awareness of the danger posed by deadly devices. UNTAC was also tasked to foster an environment of respect for human rights; coordinate the repatriation of refugees from camps in Thailand and last but not the least, organizing and conducting free and fair elections for a constituent assembly.

3.5 Assessment

Australian Working Plan proved bold and farsighted initiative. Despite the inherent difficulties and complexities, all parties tired of protracted conflict, and burdened with the economic problems with large budget deficits, no longer wanted to become the pawns of power game. Punitive mood was waning - US towards Vietnam and China towards Vietnam. Vietnam was considerably weakened and its effect on Cambodia was cumulative. China also felt the need for closer links with Socialist States like Vietnam and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. It wanted to erase Tiananmen scar of June 1989. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe made strategic concerns converge with economic interests. The past ideological, economic and military rivals were all looking for an escape from the situation and Australian proposal seems to have come handy to all of them.

Time appeared opportune to give the UN the lead role. The changing atmosphere in international politics seemed to change the mindsets of big five. Moscow could not continue to prop up Vietnam and the State of Cambodia economically. Vietnam and Cambodia were pushed at the lower strata of its foreign policy. Australian proposal was thus the only way out of this morass for all of them.

An atmosphere of closer cooperation among nations had already dawned. APEC had thrown a wider agenda of engagement with regional countries. Nations were coming together to accelerate economic integration. This followed the reassessments of their strategies, reordering of their priorities and primacy of geo-economic over geo-politics. All these
considerations had cumulative effect, created a very favorable climate for the reception of the Australian initiative for the settlement of Cambodian conflict.

The Australian initiative, though initially unsuccessful, played an important role in mobilizing international support for a UN managed settlement and in linking the results of the Paris Conference to the diplomacy of defining an operational plan for peace in Cambodia. As the Perm Five consensus on a framework agreement grew, Evans’s effort naturally merged with it.87 Australia moved from perceived interpolar to respected prime mover of the settlement diplomacy in Indo-china.88 It was not an easy task to persuade the Cambodians to come to the table. However both parties appreciated Australia’s ideas and role, not to make the momentum lose. Australia did several things to change the tide of the Cambodian peace process. Foreign Minister pursued with a zeal, brilliance and vision for details. Australia played long-term, consistent and constructive commitment to the process of breaking the diplomatic logjam and injecting real thrust into the process. During the whole process, Australia produced new ideas and approaches and pursued them with the same vigor with which it had promoted the original idea. The detailed ideas Australia put forward remained the only credible, coherent and workable proposal for almost a year and elements of it were drawn upon repeatedly and reflected in the ensuing texts to emerge from other sources.89

3.6 Post Script

Cambodia, badly devastated by war, foreign occupation and state repression, refuses to go unreported even after years of the largest UN peace efforts ever undertaken. The UN supervised elections under the 1991 Paris Peace Accords on May 23,1993 produced a new coalition of enemies, a system of co prime minister that yoked together, Mr. Hun Sen and the

87 Richard H. Solomon, n.44, p.56.
88 Bob Hawke, n.29, p. 226.
89 Ken Berry, n. 22, p.55.
royalist leader Prince Ranariddh. This marriage of convenience in the post election scenario belied the expectations of the Cambodian people for economic recovery and political stabilization. The post election arrangements divided the conflict-ridden society more than uniting it. The legacy of political and armed conflict, economic backwardness and inequality and institutional weaknesses continued to inflict the people of Cambodia. Weak institutions were unable to restrain the arbitrary actions of individuals seeking personal, political and economic advantage. Even the National Assembly in particular, seemed unwilling to view itself as a branch of government. Finance Minister Sam Rainsy was made to pay a heavy price for denouncing corruption, treason and smuggling.  

High incidence of violence and corruption continued to erupt in Cambodia. The institutions of government were considerably weakened to withstand the pressures of principled less power politics. The country continued to remain the captive of the turbulent past. Creating a stable and durable civil order remained an uphill task. Graft and official dishonesty were highly conspicuous. Pervasive corruption retarded the rehabilitation of the country’s economy and chasing away foreign investors. The continuing conflict in Cambodia injected an element of social dislocation. The country was seen as full of contradictions. They made the Kingdom of Cambodia, as has been described by King Norodom Sihanouk, 'is like a body whose important parts have been chopped off by foreigners and whose own children have hacked off an arms and allege and gouged out one eye.'

Cambodia’s heavy reliance on external assistance makes its development a victim of political manipulation. Prime Minister Hun Sen concedes that it could take decades for Cambodia to repair damage inflicted by decades of conflict. It could take years for Cambodia to catch up with other economies in the region. Added to this are sporadic military action,


insecurity and the ever present of danger of social-economic isolation. Though it is now a member of the ASEAN, its memberships in the regional organization was delayed. The country remains geographically and militarily divided over the treatment of Khmer Rouge forces for their past misdeeds. Administration remains divided on the basis of party lines. The distinction between party and civil service appears blurred. The integration of the armed forces or civil servants adds to an element of uncertainty. Though partners in the government, CPP divisions continue to be CPP; FUNCINPEC divisions continue to FUNCINPEC; KPNLF divisions listened only to its leaders; and the administration largely remained supportive of CPP. Further, the military, like civil servants, composed of soldiers from all of the factions, who participated in the elections, are underpaid. 

These problems created crises in governance resulting on July 26, 1997 an overthrow of the first Prime Minister Prince Ranariddh, who was charged on three counts: illegal importation of weapons, unauthorized negotiation with the leaders of the Khmer Rouge (1975-79), and unlawful movement of troops in the city and key provinces. FUNCINPEC remains an informal mass organization and looked like a remnant of feudal patronage. It was outwitted by CPP. Ranariddh squandered the public mandate. He was said to have preferred a backroom politics to transparency. Prince’s support base was mainly international community. They linked their assistance and funding to Cambodia to the participation of all exiled politicians to ensure the credibility of elections. Along with the EU, the US or even the UN, ASEAN tried to influence Hun Sen to persuade him adopt a more flexible approach to the critical issue of the Prince’s return. Hun Sen is not trusted by the international community as has been remarked by the Economist “every time you put on pressure, he gives a little, but what he gives with one hand he takes back with the other.” Sideshows of agonies from the countryside refuse to go. Political parties have not been able to grow and put an end to the

93 The Economist, 7, March 1998, p.35
cycles of envy, resentment and conflict among themselves. The past record of social strife and dislocation in Cambodia has made the trust and traditional values erode irreparably. It is unlikely that magic will emerge to put all these pieces together again that easily, no matter how strenuous are the efforts of international community. All these efforts show that problem in Cambodia is greater than the Cambodian conflict, which did not seem to have been resolved by bringing the hostilities to a conclusion.

Events in Cambodia had their focus on King Sihanouk. After 1993, he decided to be far from politicians. He had unwaveringly condemned the undemocratic events and remained neutral by distancing himself from the warring groups. King even indicated alienation-preferring to kill himself rather than see his country facing more problems and falling apart. The inability to influence and prevent Cambodia from descending into an abyss of self-destruction. He faxed a letter to the media on October 22 and wrote, "I have no power at all, no way of ensuring the territorial integrity of Cambodia."94

Cambodia suffered and endured. Post UN operated politics did little to help recover the nation from sufferings. In such a scenario, rule of law, norms of accountability and transparency take a long time to firm their roots in Cambodia. Though an active, and liberal civil society has begun to take root, it has not yet been that effective.

The developments in Indochina have high stakes for Australia. Its future remains closely related to the future of Southeast Asia. It was but natural for Australia to involve itself in the political and economic development of the region as a "nation within region". This belief prevailed upon Australia to work for the comprehensive settlement of the Cambodian problem. The wish of the labor Party for the "role of Australia" nicely fitted into this framework. Australia presented itself as an honest broker working for the facilitation of dialogues between the parties concerned. It was also necessary for a country like Australia to

94 Phnom Penh Post, 24 October 1997.
95 Quoted in Ibid.
step into the picture to justify a place and role in the Asia Pacific region for itself. Given the strategic significance of Indochina and Vietnam and also the historically deep-rooted Sino-Vietnamese conflict and rivalries for supremacy, country like Australia with no colonial baggage proved highly positive.

The background to the settlement has been a complex process in one of the great dramas and tragedies of modern times. Selling the Australian initiative – considered to be one of the great good news stories of the twentieth century – has shown that a medium sized nation like Australia, with only relatively small but highly competent foreign service, can actually make a difference in world events. Australia's role in Cambodia has increased its acceptability by countries in the region. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir said, 'Malaysia wholeheartedly welcomes this new thrust in your foreign policy and looks forward to working closely with Australia as you reduce your Eurocentric stance and become more and more a member of the region where geographically and politically you belong.' Australia's good work in Cambodia was seen as midwifery to a broader strategic partnership with the countries in the region. Cambodia, touted often as a case study of successful multilateralism in action, 'may owe more to Jakarta-Canberra partnership than most people know.' They are demonstrated in a wide array of programs and interactions. Australian search for a comprehensive political settlement in Cambodia is just but one powerful example of this policy.

With ASEAN incorporation of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos into its economic mainstream, and the two parties beginning to work together, Cambodia appears to be on the path to new stability and peace. The symptoms of hope and prosperity from the unspeakable terror of the past seem to be emerging on the battleground. It has now more political stability

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96 Ken Berry, n.22, p. XI.

97 *Canberra Times*, 10 August 10,1984.

but has social and economic problems. The moot question today is how to address the genocide of the Khmer Rouge regime. Prime Minister Hun Sen warns that proposed Khmer Rouge genocide tribunal could embarrass former international backers of the rebel regime unless a courtroom consensus can be reached. The discussions between Cambodia and international community for bringing the Khmer Rouge leaders into trial have become a public debate. He wants the trial to be a collaborative arrangement that would give him veto power over any indictment. National Assembly has passed legislation that will enable a special tribunal to shed light on the darkest chapter in Cambodian history. The tribunal will be presided over by both Cambodian and UN-appointed judges. Phnom Penh has argued that an international tribunal with an unspecified number of defendants would jeopardize national stability and sovereignty.

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100 *Washington Times*, 7 April, 2000