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THE COALITION GOVERNMENT OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA : A SOLUTION IN SIGHT ?

In a jungle of the 'Liberated Zone' during the formal announcement of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea on July 9, 1982, Prince Norodom Sihanouk as its head declared, "I launch an urgent and patriotic appeal to all our compatriots, wherever they are, inside the country or abroad, to join us in the struggle against the foreign occupiers".¹ The proclamation with a mixture of welcome and rebuke from different quarters adds a new dimension to the decades-old turbulence in Indochina region. The Coalition is the result of unity among the three resistance factions who have waged an isolated guerilla war since the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea almost four years ago. Meanwhile, the Government of Heng Samrin went ahead consolidating its power over the People's Republic of Cambodia.

The purpose of the paper is to study this new phenomenon—the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea and its attendant ramifications. All indications suggest that the Coalition Government was the outcome of mainly two factors: external pressure and internal compulsion felt by the resistance groups. Why was there external pressure for the Coalition to be formed by the factions ? To what extent is there a sense of internal compulsion ? In other words, does the Coalition have any inherent viability ? These are the pertinent questions to be asked by political scientists and observers alike.

The first part of the paper deals, as a backgrounder, with the various forces behind the Kampuchean embroglio ; the second part deals with the formation of the Coalition Government, its principles

1. *Asiaweek*, 23 July 1982, p. 25.

and objectives ; the third part analyses Hanoi's recent peace offensive in view of the constraints faced by and options left to her. Finally, the fourth part studies the viability of the Coalition.

FORCES BEHIND THE KAMPUCHEAN ISSUE

Kampuchea has been a territory which from centuries back witnessed strong external interference from different quarters—regional and extra-regional. The very geographical position of Kampuchea in the Indochinese region has long left it vulnerable to stronger neighbours. During the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century the weakness and almost constant dynastic quarrels of the Kampuchean royal family led to both Vietnam and Thailand absorbing substantial areas of Cambodian territory. This trend remained even after getting independence from French colonial rule in 1953 and since then with many ups and downs continued to remain when the Pol Pot forces gained power in April 1975. As Milton Osborne points out that this vulnerability has, both in historical and contemporary terms, always been greatest when internal factors have weakened the country and its power to resist external threat or even provided opportunities for major interference by external powers.² Presently, what the Kampuchean people themselves want, seems to be of little interest to the contending forces who maneuver for influence and domination.

In this backdrop of present Kampuchean embroglio, the forces at work can be grouped in order of importance as (a) regional (b) extra-regional and (c) internal. The regional and extra-regional forces with their mutual linkages can be grouped into four parties: (i) Vietnam and Soviet Union ; (ii) China; (iii) ASEAN and the West ; and finally (iv) UN and the Non-aligned Movement. The internal forces include (i) Vietnamese-installed Heng Samrin Government of the People's Republic of Cambodia ; and (ii) the newly-formed tripartite Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea.

2. Milton Osborne, "Can Kampuchea Survive ?", *Asia Pacific Community*, No. 5. (Summer 1979), p. 46

Vietnam and Soviet Union

The Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea in late December 1978 and subsequent installation of Heng Samrin Government in Phnom Penh was not an isolated act, rather the fulfilment of her long-time desire, a desire of forging an Indochina Federation in which Vietnam would dominate because of its geographic and demographic superiority. But for centuries past, Kampuchea's relations with Vietnam were worse than with any other people. A significant portion of southern Vietnam, containing the rich Mekong Delta, was part of the Khmer Kingdom until the late 17th century. Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City, was once a Khmer fishing village.

In the early decades of the 20th century, the major occupation of the Indochinese communists and nationalists was the movement against a common enemy—French colonialism. Once the enemy withdrew by mid-1950, the traditional rivalry between the two people again surfaced. But because of the policy of long-time Cambodian ruler, Prince Sihanouk, the independence and territorial integrity of the country could be maintained. When in March 1970 Lon Nol with the active military help from USA staged a coup against him, Sihanouk united hands with the Khmer Rouge and 'National Liberation Forces' of South Vietnam to fight against the Lon Nol regime. After the ouster of Lon Nol on April 17, 1975, a new leftist Government headed by Khieu Samphan was installed in Phnom Penh. But tensions continued to exist between the dominant Khmer Viet Minh (Pol Pot, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary), who were extremely nationalistic communists, and Hanoi Khmers (Chia Sim, Heng Samrin, Pen Sevan) who actively cooperated with the Vietnamese forces before 1975. Meanwhile, the Communist Party of Kampuchea (the formation of which was revealed in 1977) under the leadership of Pol Pot waged a genocidal war against its own population with the aim of building communism with Chinese help. The regime undertook a policy of wiping out all dissent, forcing hundreds of its opponents to take refuge in Vietnam—thus giving Vietnam the *casus belli*.

Internationally, the Pol Pot regime maintained friendly relations only with China, much to the ire of Vietnam and Soviet Union. From the beginning of 1977 Kampuchea provoked by China started putting active pressure on Vietnam to vacate the sanctuaries used by Vietnamese forces inside Kampuchea while fighting the US forces.

On the other hand, the unification of the two Vietnams in 1975 changed the basic power structure and great power relations in the region. Partly in response to a Peking-Tokyo-Washington axis by the end of 1978, the Soviet Union signed its own Friendship Treaty with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in November the same year. In such a situation, after a series of mutual provocations with Kampuchea the final Vietnamese offensive was preceded by an announcement of December 3, 1978 that a Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation (KNUFNS) headed by a former Khmer Rouge division commander, Heng Samrin, had been set up in a "liberated area" in Kampuchea. On January 10, 1979, with about 200,000 Vietnamese troops stationed in Kampuchea, the replacement of Pol Pot's 'Democratic Kampuchea' by a 'People's Republic of Cambodia' headed by Heng Samrin was announced. Immediately after, a 25-year Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation was signed between Vietnam and Cambodia. As Jitendra Mohan writes, "The invasion and occupation of Kampuchea was only one aspect of Vietnam's general policy of building up, by force if necessary, an 'Indochina bloc' conceived of as a system of compulsory and permanent 'friendship and cooperation' in furtherance of Vietnam's national unity and 'socialist' development."³

It may be recalled here that such a Friendship Treaty already has been existing since July 1977 between Laos and Vietnam, with the presence of some 50,000 of her troops on Laotian soil. Thus Vietnam paved the way towards realisation of the Ho Chi Minh doctrine of 'One party—One Federation' in Indochina.

3. Jitendra Mohan, "Why Vietnam Invaded Kampuchea ?", *Economic and Political Weekly* (24 January 1981). p. 1

Since then, with the recognition of Heng Samrin Government by over 30 countries and withdrawal of recognition from Pol Pot regime by some Western countries, the Vietnamese and their supporters seem determined to preserve the status quo in Kampuchea, so that the ASEAN and the rest of the world eventually will have no other alternative but to accept the *fait accompli* of a Hanoi-dominated Indochina "Unity bloc". The most notable country from Non-aligned Movement to recognise the Heng Samrin regime was India whose leader Mrs. Indira Gandhi while visiting Indonesia in September 1981 told in a press conference that India's recognition was based on the fact that the Heng Samrin regime was in control of most of the Kampuchean territory and also commanded maximum popular support. Even correspondents from some of the Western countries which opposed the Heng Samrin regime, acknowledged that it was in effective control of the country.⁴

China

It is well known that China actively supported the struggle waged by the Vietnam Workers' Party (VWP) for national and social liberation. Between 1950, when China established diplomatic relation with Vietnam, and mid 1978, when it completely stopped its aid to the latter, the total value of its military and economic aid to Vietnam is said to have exceeded \$20 billion. It was 'far bigger' than that given by the Soviet Union to Vietnam until 1978.⁵

Relations between Peking and Hanoi was increasingly strained when the former wanted the latter no more to allow the luxury of sitting 'on the fence' and asked Hanoi to take side with her in denouncing Soviet "hegemonism". But much to the indignation of China, Vietnam did the opposite by joining the COMECON and signing a Friendship Treaty with Moscow in latter half of 1978. Peking alleged that Vietnam and USSR had a three-part plan to

4. *The Amrita Bazar*, 24 September 1981.

5. B. E. Shinde, "Some Aspects of the History of Sino-Vietnamese Relations 1950-78," *China report*, Vol. XVII, No. 3, (May-June 1981), p. 13.

'encircle' China : firstly, by removing the Vietnamese Chinese from positions of authority; secondly, by compelling Laos and Kampuchea, through military threats into an Indochinese Federation; and lastly, by implementing the Brezhnev Plan for Asian Collective Security.⁶

Accordingly, China wanted to use Kampuchea as its trump card against Vietnam, but the plan was rebuffed by the latter through overthrowing the Peking-backed Pol Pot regime. Peking took this as a great blow and in February 1979 its troops marched into Vietnam to "teach a lesson" for her behaviour towards Kampuchea and the ethnic Chinese. On neither count does Hanoi seem to have learnt the lesson. Therefore, China, on the one hand, took a policy of closing the gap with ASEAN nations, giving them frequent warnings of Hanoi's "regional hegemonist" aspirations and on the other, intent on "bleeding" Vietnam, continued to extend active support to the guerilla units of the Khmer Rouge. During the height of tension in early 1979 the Chinese strongman Deng Xiao Ping labelled Vietnam as the "Asian Cuba".

ASEAN and the West

The Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea caused much alarm to the ASEAN nations. There are some grounds behind this : first, Thailand, being the frontline state, perceives Heng Samrin regime in Phnom Penh as a direct threat to her security. In the past, Kampuchea served as the buffer state between Thailand and Vietnam ; second, the consolidation of Vietnamese presence in Laos and Kampuchea has altered the regional balance of power in favour of Vietnam. G. W. Chowdhury quotes a senior Thai official as saying "We will have less flexibility now. There will be the five of us on one side and the three communist countries on the other. Their bargaining position is more powerful than it was ;"⁷ third, the refugee exo-

6. D. R. Sardesai, *Southeast Asia: Past and Present* (Dhaka: University Press Ltd. 1981), p. 441

7. G. W. Chowdhury, "ASEAN and the Communist World." *Asia Pacific Community*, No. 13, (Summer 1981), p. 44

dus and "boat people" from Kampuchea and Vietnam are causing great strains on ASEAN nations and particularly Thailand.

In such a situation, if ASEAN unconditionally accepts the incorporation of Kampuchea into a Vietnamese-dominated Indochina, the perception goes that the next logical candidate might be Thailand. So a major factor in making ASEAN a more cohesive grouping was the perceived common threat—the historic change in Indochina after April 1975. The Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea added further to their threat perception. However, Malaysia and Indonesia—under the 'Kuantan Principle'⁸...maintained that if Thailand accepted the status quo in Kampuchea and Vietnam assured its respect for Thailand's sovereignty, then the present tension along the Thai-Kampuchea border could be defused bringing peace in the region. Malaysia and Indonesia being especially susceptible to Chinese economic and political pressures and insurgencies from ethnic Chinese population feel that cooperation with the Indochinese countries is essential to making South-East Asia a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality—thus keeping super and regional power entanglements at a distance. Thailand's growing relations with China may deepen Vietnam's dependence on Moscow and increase hostility to ASEAN as both China and Vietnam are striving to forestall each other's influence in the region. But presently, the Indochinese crisis made the ASEAN countries form closer collaboration with China, though with some reservations still from Indonesia. As Chowdhury writes, "Their immediate concerns are for Moscow and her ally, Vietnam. Beijing might be a "threat" but not now; that threat is a concern of the distant future. Obviously the present dangers deserve greater attention than the future ones."⁹ Therefore, the ASEAN countries together with China and backed by world support are unanimous in their demand that unless Vietnam withdraws its troops from Kampuchea

8. Justus M. V. der Kroef "Asean, Hanoi, and the Kampuchean Conflict: between "Kuantan" and a "Third Alternative", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXI, No. 5, (May 1981), pp. 515-16.

9. G. W. Chowdhury, *op. cit.*, p. 46

and a free and fair election is held in that country, the Phnom Penh regime would remain unacceptable.

The US which once played a major role in this part of the world, now seems to be almost on the diplomatic sideline, leaving any major initiative to ASEAN and to China.

UN and Non-aligned Movement

Since the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea, the UN was trying to resolve the crisis through a political solution based on the fact that the situation in Kampuchea was a result of violation of the sacrosanct principle of non-interference and non-intervention in the internal affairs of states. With this end, the then UN Secretary General paid personal visits to the region and sent emissaries to use its good offices, but to no avail. So its endeavour had to be kept confined to adopting Resolutions during the consecutive General Assembly sessions. On September 18, 1981, the UNGA with a slightly larger plurality than the last two years (77 for, 37 against and 31 abstentions as compared to 74 for, 35 against and 32 abstentions in 1980 and 71, 35, 31 respectively in 1979) reaffirmed the right of the Khmer Rouge regime to Kampuchea's seat in the Assembly. In fact the increase in support of seating the Khmer Rouge in the Comity of Nations does not mean real support for, but a manifestation of putting intensified pressure on the intransigent Vietnam to abide by the UN resolution on Kampuchea adopted on October 22, 1980, the main points of which were:

- total withdrawal of foreign troops from Kampuchea;
- stationing of UN peace-keeping force; and
- UN supervised free election to instal a representative Government in Kampuchea.

Meanwhile, an UNGA-sponsored International Conference on Kampuchea (ICK) with the participation of 79 nations was held in New York on July 13-17, 1981. The Conference saw Chinese-ASEAN disagreement over provision that would limit Khmer Rouge freedom of action after a Vietnamese withdrawal, but the sides compromised to produce a Resolution that would involve the UN in future elections

free from armed menace by any faction. During the third week of July 1982, Austria's Foreign Minister Dr. Willibald Pahr, Chairman of the ICK visited Hanoi and Bangkok in an effort to bridge the gap in finding an acceptable solution to the 4-year old crisis.

The Non-aligned Movement, on the other hand, played an uneven role on the Kampuchean issue, mainly due to its holding of leadership during the time by Fidel Castro of Cuba, who orchestrated an empty-seat decision for Kampuchea during the 1979 Non-aligned summit meeting in Havana. However, the delegates to the Non-aligned Foreign Ministers' Conference on February 13, 1981 in New Delhi voted a Resolution noting tensions "in and around Kampuchea" and seeking the need for a comprehensive political solution including "withdrawal of all foreign forces".¹⁰ For the first time Hanoi found itself forced to enter a written reservation on a Resolution from a Non-aligned Ministerial meeting. But Vietnam so far in blatant disregard paid no heed towards world opinion branding it as an act of gross interference in the internal affairs of the People's Republic of Cambodia.

Heng Samrin Regime in Phnom Penh

Almost four years passed since the Government of Heng Samrin was installed in Phnom Penh by Vietnamese invasion and still its 150,000-200,000 troops are stationed there to provide security to the protege regime from guerilla activities by the resistance forces. Meanwhile, the Phnom Penh Government put first priority to national reconstruction to look after these people it does administer than to bother with less urgent task of mopping up guerillas who cannot hope to regain power.¹¹

As Sadao Ogura through his visits to Cambodia points out that reconstruction was progressing much faster than anticipated

10. Timothy Carney, "Kampuchea in 1981: "Fragile Stalemate", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, (January 1982), p. 85.

11. *The Times*, 29 March 1980.

immediately after the victory of the KNUFNS over the Pol Pot forces on January 7, 1979.¹² Over the past two years, thanks in part to international humanitarian aid, the threat of famine has been averted. With a view to bolstering agricultural production and other economic activities, the regime undertook a policy of pursuing a liberal economic philosophy at least for the time being, because any attempt to impose socialism will run up against the horrible memories of Pol Pot and the years of forcible collectivisation.¹³ A FAO report estimates that largely because of bad weather Kampuchea's grain shortfall for 1982 will be around 280,000 tons, slightly worse than last years.¹⁴

While Kampuchea has been clawed back from the brink of famine, reconstruction in real sense promises to be daunting because the task is clearly beyond socialist countries' capability. The alternative is the UN specialised agencies and Western aid donors. But international aid is hamstrung by the insistence of ASEAN and its Western allies that Heng Samrin's Cambodia, not recognised by the UN community should get only emergency, not development assistance.

In the political field, on May 1, 1981 the regime organised 'National Elections' which picked up 117 out of 148 candidates for a new National Assembly and on June 27 the same year the Assembly passed a new constitution for the land.¹⁵ Still the poor membership of the Cambodian Revolutionary Party is attributable to the policy of refraining from too fast an expansion which might prove rather damaging in the sense of potential dissident groups. As a screening process, all applicants to party candidacy must go to Vietnam for political training. A Vietnamese politburo office in Phnom Penh determines policy within the Khmer Party. On December 4, 1981

12. Sadao Ogura, "Hanoi's Southeast Asia Policy and Cambodia", *Asia Pacific Community*, No. 14, (Fall 1981), p.

13. Iain Guest from Phnom Penh, *Guardian*, 18 January 1981.

14. Daniel Southerland, "Life comes back to Kampuchea", *Emirates News*, 19 June 1982.

15. Timothy Carney, *op. cit.*, p. 81,

Heng Samrin replaced an "officially ailing" Pen Sevan as General Secretary of the Party who, it is reported, had been antagonising Hanoi by taking an increasingly independent stance.

In the field of maintaining public security and order there is considerable progress enabling the farmers to resettle in their villages and engage in different productive activities. Although the success from Vietnamese assistance resulted to some extent, the Cambodians themselves organised their armed forces totalling at present around 30,000 men, and strengthened their militia defence system as the first step to bolster security. Initially, there was greater response from the youth community to join the defence forces, mainly to avoid starvation. But once activities in agriculture and other fields started, this response fell off considerably.

Taking all the factors together, it may be said that Cambodia under Vietnamese occupation is moving toward stabilization somehow or other. The main problem for the regime is to contain the traditional bitterness between the Kampucheans and the Vietnamese. When the Kampuchean people were freed from compulsory labour and constant fear of death under the Pol Pot regime, they loudly expressed their gratitude to Vietnam. But as reconstruction progressed and internal public peace and order were restored, the deep-rooted anti-Vietnamese sentiment of the Kampucheans began to re-emerge.¹⁶ Being aware of it, the occupation forces try to keep as much a low profile as possible. There are reports that frequent complaints could be heard from Kampucheans about the occupation but they also say that faced with a choice, most Kampucheans would choose the Vietnamese over the return of the murderous Khmer Rouge.¹⁷ This sentiment was expressed also by Prince Sihanouk in an interview to *the Far Eastern Economic Review*.¹⁸ Thus while there is no great fervor for the Vietnamese-installed regime of Heng Samrin, it, like the Vietnamese army, does seem to be tolerated.

16. Sadao Ogura, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

17. Daniel Southerland, *op. cit.*

18. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 29 January 1982, p. 17.

FORMATION OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT

There was an increased awareness within the ASEAN of the need to seek a different path from that of China in solving the Kampuchean problem. Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew stated that the ASEAN had no interest in weakening the Vietnamese position to the point where China would exert new influence through the Khmer Rouge.¹⁹ Having failed to budge Hanoi through international pressure and out of fear that the UN seat might be lost because of Western criticism of alleged butchery by the Khmer Rouge, ASEAN backed by USA has resorted to a new ploy—the Coalition of anti-Vietnamese resistance forces.

The idea gained momentum after ASEAN's success in organising a tripartite meeting of the Cambodian resistance leaders in Singapore during the first week of September 1981, where the three agreed to try to agree on the formation of a Coalition Government for their Vietnamese-dominated homeland. There was an agreement to establish an ad-hoc committee to study ways of instituting the Coalition. It was a step forward given the severe differences among the participants—Prince Norodom Sihanouk, long-deposed former head of state and head of the MOULINAKA (Movement pour la Liberation National du Kampuchea), Khieu Samphan, titular President of the Vietnamese-ousted Khmer Rouge regime, and Son Sann, former Premier and presently head of the anti-communist Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF).

But soon differences again surfaced over the hefty conditions put forward by Son Sann and Khieu Samphan for participation in the proposed Coalition Government. Initially Son Sann remained adamant with his conditions—such as, the Khmer Rouge leadership should exile themselves 'voluntarily', a majority and key coalition portfolios be given to his faction and foreign support be provided to build up a non-communist army to match the Khmer Rouge so that KPNLF can 'enter the tiger cage (Khmer Rouge) with a stick in hand.' On the other hand, the Khmer Rouge remained inflexible in not submit-

19. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 21-27 November 1980, p. 20.

ting to those demands. The announcement of dissolution of their Communist Party was a warning that they should not be expected to make any further concession. Initially, they took the Coalition formula as a death warrant, for the Khmer Rouge feared that eventually the legitimacy of the Democratic Kampuchea Government would be relinquished. Prince Sihanouk on his part posed no conditions and expressed his readiness to assume the President's job as head of state.

After the Singapore meeting the ad-hoc committee for the Coalition in an endeavour to narrow down the differences had eight meetings extending over several months. ASEAN put utmost pressure to reach an agreement, but mainly the Khmer Rouge kept rigid. Then Foreign Minister of Thailand Siddi Savetsilla visited China to pressure her to persuade the Khmer Rouge to agree on, and it worked. After much coaxing and cajoling from outside and with mutual concessions finally the discordant trio signed in Kuala Lumpur the Joint Declaration of establishing a Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea on June 22, 1982.

Set-up of the Coalition

In the Coalition Government, Prince Sihanouk became the President, Khieu Samphan, the least unacceptable face in the Khmer Rouge was made Vice-President in charge of foreign affairs and Son Sann became Prime Minister. Instead of creating cabinet portfolios four 'Coordination Committees' were set up for handling the affairs of Defense, Health and Social affairs, Education and Culture and lastly Finance. Other than these titles the Coalition's structure is not very clear. Sihanouk is expected to hold less real power than Son Sann and Khieu Samphan. Son Sann vehemently opposed the inclusion of Ieng Sari or Pol Pot on the grounds of their brutal rule during 1975-78. But upon Khmer Rouge's insistence Ieng Sari was drawn in the Finance Committee.

Principles

After much haggling and bargaining among the three groups, four key principles were accepted for smooth operation of the

Coalition Government. These were tripartism, non-preponderance of any of the factions, consensus in decision making and retention of the "legitimacy and framework" of the state of Democratic Kampuchea. Under the Coalition arrangement each participating faction shall retain its own organisation, political identity and freedom of action, including the right to receive and dispose of international aid specifically granted to it. Coalition Government will have no right to take any decision infringing or restricting this autonomy.

Objectives

According to the Joint Declaration on the Formation of a Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, the purpose of the Coalition is to mobilise all efforts in the struggle to liberate Kampuchea from the Vietnamese aggressors, restore the motherland as a sovereign and independent country and bring about the implementation of the declaration of the ICK and other UN General Assembly Resolutions.²⁰ In concrete terms the coalition was meant for two distinct goals: withdrawal of Vietnamese troops and holding of free election to choose a truly representative Government. In the meantime the Coalition must strive to hang on for the dear diplomatic life to the Kampuchean seat in the UN.

VIETNAM'S RECENT INITIATIVES

Since late 1978, when the Vietnamese forces marched into Kampuchea, Hanoi's efforts to win international approval for the occupation were defeated decisively. Hanoi has been increasingly isolated from the rest of the world other than the Soviet bloc countries, with the exception of Rumania. In the joint communique at the end of the biennial meeting of the Indochinese Foreign Ministers held on 6-7 July 1982 (6th so far after the Vietnamese invasion), Hanoi indicated a unilateral partial withdrawal of troops and called for an International Conference on Southeast Asia to be participated by the five

20. *Beijing Review*, 28 June 1982, p. 7.

permanent members of the Security Council, the three Indochinese States, five ASEAN countries, and India and Burma.

During a recent visit to Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, Vietnam's Foreign Minister Thatch tried to sell the benign posture of partial troops withdrawal and assured the hosts that Vietnam would totally withdraw from Kampuchea only when there will not be any 'Chinese threat'. And this threat can be done away with a non-aggression pact by China, which may be unlikely. Even Thatch gave warning that if ASEAN continues to help the guerillas, then there may be prospect of retaliation through helping the insurgency activities in their countries and hinted at the possibility of opening her ports for Soviet military bases. During the first week of October 1982, at the end of a 4-day official visit to Moscow by Vietnamese President Truong Chinh, the joint Communique stated that Soviet Union and Vietnam would continue to give support to the Kampuchean people and condemned the Kampuchean 'coalition group' as the fuss which has been unleashed by imperialist and hegemonist circles and which is a direct interference in the internal affairs of the people's Republic of Cambodia.²¹

However, after close observation of Hanoi's latest diplomatic offensive, it can be said that there is some flexibility in Vietnam's approach towards the problem. Earlier, Vietnam depicted resistance war as just a border problem between Kampuchea and Thailand, and always insisted on a Regional Conference between the Indochinese states and ASEAN. Having failed to achieve that, she announced partial withdrawal of troops and a limited International Conference. But some factors, unfavourable to Hanoi, can be traced out to analyse the perceived flexibility of Vietnam's policy towards Kampuchea :

- a) the formation of the Coalition Government complementing Sihanouk's international prestige with the armed muscle of the khmer Rouge;

21. *The Bangladesh Times*, 10 October 1982.

- b) difficulty for an economically hard-pressed Vietnam in maintaining huge troops on Kampuchean soil. With less than \$ 80 million in currency reserves, Hanoi owes some \$ 3 billion, roughly two-thirds of that owed to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.²² Presently, the assistance from the Soviet bloc, according to Thai calculations, is as much as \$ 6 million a day, much to the chagrin of some COMECON countries.²³ This crisis in economy was recognised by the Party's Fifth Congress held in May 1982;
- c) from 1976 upto the invasion of Kampuchea, Hanoi received \$ 9 billion from western nations, Japan and COMECON, the Third World and International Organizations.²⁴ Much of Western aid was mainly in grants. However, now the West is reluctant to help Vietnam since that could possibly bankroll her military expansionism;
- d) with around 2 million tons of annual food shortage in Vietnam and with no immediate prospect of Kampuchea achieving food self-sufficiency, it seems difficult for Hanoi to indefinitely continue the occupation. Furthermore, the donors of food-aid to Kampuchea strongly support an abrupt cut off of the inside-Kampuchea segment of the UN's relief operation, coupled with continuation of aid to the displaced Khmers, including the guerillas, along the Thai-Kampuchea border;²⁵
- e) contrary to Hanoi's hints of offering full military base facilities to Soviet Union, it is concerned with any positive outcome of Brezhnev's recent overtures of reconciliation between Moscow and Peking. Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister already visited Peking for preparatory talks to start the normalisation process. There were earlier reports of Soviet dis-

22. *The Statesman*, 16 February 1982.

23. *Asiaweek*, 10 September 1982, p. 9

24. *The Statesman*, *op. cit.*.

25. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 20 August 1982, p. 39

satisfaction over nationalistic Vietnam's economic performance Besides, Moscow may not go too far in totally antagonising an increasingly cohesive and stronger ASEAN, when Soviet Union, manifestly desirous of a detente, has other headaches;

- f) declaring Peking as an arch foe Hanoi has to maintain on the Chinese border a gaint army to oppose her. In view of all the existing constraints faced by Hanoi, it might be, to a greater extent, unbearable for her to continue so for an indefinite period in the first front, where Cambodia is only the second front to her.

VIABILITY OF THE COALITION

Since the Coalition formula was aired more than two years back the ASEAN officials had to do a lot of back-scene work to patch up the resistance forces, then waging a resistance war in an isolated manner to achieve a common goal. The intensive pressure first by ASEAN on anti-communist Son Sann and then by China on the Khmer Rouge made them come to sense of making a unified and effective resistance to the many times stronger Vietnamese occupation forces. For whatever limited purposes the Coalition has been instituted, observers doubt its viability and smooth workability in view of its superficial unity. However, this problem can be studied in some degree taking into consideration the following factors:

Ideology virsus Pragmatism

So far ideological credance is concerned, it seems to be most irreconcilable between Khieu Samphan's Khmer Rouge and Son Sann's KPNLF. Khmer Rouge represents an extremely nationalistic and fiercely fanatic group of communists, who during their rule from 1975 to 1978 practiced the communist ideology to a degree hitherto unknown—going so far as to abolish money in an effort to build a new "self-reliant" society that went beyond anything tried in Tanzania,

North Korea or China.²⁶ They constructed an extremely stratified society with high degree of privilege for "good" Kampuchean and extreme forms of sacrifice, that is, physical annihilation for "bad" ones—which amounted to more than a million people of a country of 6 million.²⁷ With such brutality unleashed inside, the Khmer Rouge became 'cat's paw' for China's anti-Vietnam policy. After the ouster of Pol Pot forces by Vietnamese invasion, the Khmer Rouge spokesmen admitted that although some "errors" were committed during their four-year reign of terror, there were also some "positive" elements. As *The Economist* comments, "The Khmer Rouge's insistence on their born-again commitment to democracy and a mixed economy sits unconvincingly alongside their lack of contrition for their grisly past."²⁸

On the other hand, the KPNLF is a staunchly anti-Communist faction. Personally Son Sann is religious minded and a strong believer in liberal democratic values. He fell off with Prince Sihanouk as Prime Minister by the end of 1960s mainly because of his opposition to Sihanouk's policy of compromise with the communists. In between these two antagonistic ideological lines can be placed Prince Sihanouk. Basically the Prince is anti-communist and during his rule in the 1960s the Kampuchean army under the leadership of the then army chief Lon Nol wiped out many communists. But during the latter part of the decade, studying the correlation of internal forces which were then in favour of a strong peasant movement, Sihanouk compromised with some land reform and other measures. Now in the interest of making the forces of anti-communist nationalists stronger, Prince Sihanouk expressed his willingness to oblige—even to the extent of disbanding his tiny MOULINAKA movement. He said, "if coalition Premier Son Sann was agreeable, I am prepared to join

26. A. G. Frank, "Kampuchea, Vietnam, China: Observations and Reflections," *Alternatives*, Vol. VII, No. 2 (June 1981), p. 231.

27. Nobody still knows the exact population of Kampuchea, because of socially destructive deslocation prior to and after 1975.

28. *The Economist*, 26 June 1982, p. 51.

and hope I can persuade my followers also to join his Khmer people's National Liberation Front (KPNLF)".²⁹ About his joining hands with the brutal Khmer Rouge at the hands of whom he lost his children and grandchildren, Sihanouk remarked, "we have no choice, because Vietnam does not give any choice to us".³⁰

Internal Support Base

It is difficult to measure the internal support base of each of the three factions in view of the fact that almost the whole country and its population are supposedly controlled by the Vietnamese-installed Heng Samrin regime. However, reports from visiting journalists so far indicate that the Khmer Rouge really do not have any support among the masses. The nightmarish experience undergone by the people of Kampuchea is still vivid in their mind and they even shudder thinking of a return of Pol Pot and his cliques. This is the sentiment Heng Samrin and his patron Vietnam are up to capitalise through all possible means. Then the question arises—what keeps the 30,000 more Kampuchean still fighting for some of history's worst despots? This may be to some extent due to Kampuchean's traditional hatred for the Vietnamese, but to a greater extent, it is because the majority of the present Khmer Rouge guerilla force actively participated in the genocide and for what they were rewarded with extra privileges by the ousted Khmer Rouge regime.

Former Prime Minister Sann's KPNLF and its anti-communist line have a following among the middle and upper class Kampuchean and among the intellectuals in the cities. Visitors from Phnom Penh report that he has supporters among the mid-level officials of the Heng Samrin regime.³¹

Prince Norodom Sihanouk (Samdech as called by the people) who reigned supreme over Kampuchea for almost three decades still

29. *Asiaweek*, July 1982, p. 12.

30. *Newsweek*, 5 July 1982.

31. Daniel Southerland, *op cit.*

has a significant support among the masses, especially among the poor peasants, who still refer to themselves as his "children". Among the people there has a feeling and a dim desire to have the Prince make a comeback. This observation is evident from the 'anti-Sihanouk' campaign in the elections held under Heng Samrin, which was aimed at uprooting the people's support for Samdech.³² As Anthony Paul writes from Khmer Rouge zones, "Sihanouk's presence in an alternative government seems likely to make even more difficult Heng Samrin's reconstruction tasks".³³ However, his image might have been tarnished to some extent due to cooperation with the Khmer Rouge, the people's arc foe. It now depends on Sihanouk's ability to discern clearly to the people the real intention of joining hands with their once and future enemy.

Troops Strength

The Khmer Rouge has got the largest fighting force among the three Coalition partners—about 30,000 active guerillas. Next is Son Sann's Khmer Sereika—claimed by him to amount 9000 men under arms, but is estimated by others to field as few as 4000/5000. The Khmer Moulinaka of Sihanouk is said to be extending from a few hundred to 1500 men. The forces under Sihanouk's nominal command are at this stage disorganised and inconsequential. However, now it depends on foreign aid to build up a stronger non-communist guerilla force to match up with the Khmer Rouge. There are reports of defections in large numbers from Khmer Rouge and their intention to join the nationalist forces. It may be expected that as the resistance war goes on, the khmer Rouge forces will be depleting with no new recruits on the one hand, and Heng Samrin will have to face competition in recruitment with the non-communist nationalist forces on the other.

32. Sadao Ogura, *op cit.*, p. 20.

33. *Asiaweek*, 23 July 1982, p. 28.

Foreign Support

It is likely that the fear of erosion of international support from the Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea was averted through the creation of the Coalition Government. Sihanouk being one of the few founding members of the 1955 Bandung Conference still living, has high regard especially among the leaders of the Third World. A source from an ASEAN state claimed that "more than 20 nations have already offered aid—food or medicine, or money or weapons, and sometimes all four".³⁴ This may not be an exaggeration in view of the fact that majority of the nations was pressing from the beginning for a political solution of the crisis. Although Sihanouk made a strong plea for arms aid for the Coalition, its main supplier will be no doubt China which armed and still arms the Khmer Rouge. At the ASEAN Foreign Minister's meeting held in Singapore during the third week of June 1982, it was decided that they would provide moral, diplomatic and political support. Military aid is left to the decision of the individual countries, which most probably had been, and is expected to be, given by some ASEAN countries, particularly to the nationalist forces. The State Department indicated that US welcomed the Coalition but would provide no support of any kind to the Khmer Rouge, except political and moral support to the non-communist factions.³⁵

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the Coalition formula that it is devised just as an interim arrangement with the ultimate aim of realising the UN Resolutions on Post-Heng Samrin Kampuchea. But in a marriage of convenience among the trio, the Khmer Rouge with half-hearted commitment to the united front's charter still seems to be holding significant power in the front. In the event of a fall out by any of the partners, the Khmer Rouge stands to resume its position as the sole and legitimate representative of Kampuchean people. However, under

34. *Asiaweek*, 23 July 1982, p. 28.

35. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 2 July 1982, p. 11.

the present circumstances, all the three sides seem to have unavoidable reasons to keep the Coalition alive.

It is doubtful that the Coalition forces can ever defeat the 200,000 Vietnamese troops outright. By intensifying the guerilla activities against the occupation forces and with increasing world support the Coalition leaders may be able to force the economically hardpressed and diplomatically isolated Vietnam to seek a face-saving way for a peaceful political solution. If it fails, there is danger for the sponsors of the Coalition Government to get stuck with it, making it the end in itself. But for the moment, freedom and peace for a poor but proud people seem to be a far cry.